



Title: Building Democracy: The Story of Legislatures – The Modern Legislature

Description:

Welcome to Our American States. This is the fifth episode of a special six-part miniseries from the National Conference of State Legislatures called Building Democracy: The Story of Legislatures. A movement grew to create state legislatures that were more responsive, representative, transparent and independent within the United States in the mid-1960s. Prior to this, many states operated as 'sometimes governments', but this was inefficient. This episode details how legislative reform was conducted throughout the United States.

Key Takeaways:

- From the Revolutionary War to after the Civil War, a distrust of executive power led to a time of legislative supremacy. [3:45]
- The 1960s were one of the most tumultuous and divisive decades in American history. And state legislatures were not immune. [4:55]
- the 1960s were an era of social change and revolution. In short: legislators began working more, with more staff and more pay. [8:55]
- Is it too much? Is it too little? Let's talk about the legislative salary during the early 70s. [11:40]
- Who is Charles McCarthy and why was he critical in creating legislative services? [13:00]
- The House Research and Fiscal Analysis Departments and the Legislative Reference Library is created in Minnesota. [15:00]
- By 1979, NCSL's data shows there were just under 27,000 legislative staffers, and that number peaked in 1996 at almost 36,000. [17:10]
- Women begin to lobby for women's rights issues in 1974. [19:45]
- Women had to overcome cultural perceptions and stereotypes about their sex. [22:25]
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 paves the way for African Americans into many state legislatures. [25:05]
- The first known formal convening of women lawmakers began in Connecticut with the OWLs [26:00]
- After the Watergate scandal, state governments began to create stronger ethics infrastructure. [30:20]

Guest List:

[Senfronia Thompson](#) - Former Dean of Women Legislators in Texas

[Fred Risser](#) - Served 58 years in the Wisconsin State Senate.

[E. Dotson Wilson](#) - Chief Clerk of the California Assembly

[Bill Pound](#) - Former executive director of the NCSL

Resources:

[The Supreme Court and the Undoing of the Second Reconstruction](#)

[Kathryn Morrison](#)

[Ford Foundation](#)

[The Wisconsin Legislature](#)

[Charles McCarthy](#)

[Passage of Proposition 140](#)

[Alan Rosenthal](#)

[Roe vs. Wade](#)

[Equal Rights Amendment](#)

[Eddie Bernice Johnson](#)

[Barbara Jordan](#)