

NEWSLINE

LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH LIBRARIANS

Vol. XXV No.4

Winter 2001

Chair's Column

By Johanne Greer, Maryland
LRL Chair

The legislative session has begun for most of us, and I know everyone is a little overwhelmed with the extra pressure it adds to our lives, but it is also an exciting time to work for the legislature. In Maryland things really change during our sessions for those of us who work full time, year round. With the influx of lobbyists, interns, pages, seasonal staff, as well as 188 legislators, the whole environment goes through a metamorphosis. Then there are the school groups visiting to see their state legislature at work and the various interest groups supporting or protesting legislation currently under consideration.

Since the Library and Information Services section is the only area within the Legislative Services agency that is open to the public, the reference librarians workload increases tremendously. Not only are the library hours extended during the week, but we are also open on Saturdays. We provide extensive research to legislators and their staff as well as to state agencies such as the governor's office or county and local governments, and we also provide assistance to the public. Most people visiting the legislature for whatever reason, pay a visit to our library. Between the legislative requests and the assistance to the public, the research we do is so varied that our jobs can't help but be interesting. We are constantly exploring the latest advances in many different fields and are ourselves learning in the process. It is also rewarding to help a patron discover a new way of doing something or bring a new understanding of an issue to light. Our research skills reach beyond the walls of the library. What a great job we have.

NCSL provides a tremendous amount of support to me with all of its insight on studies and reports. The staff always seem to be a step ahead of the latest "current issue" and come through for me with exactly what is needed. We are so fortunate to be affiliated with such a multifaceted organization. I urge all of you to use NCSL as much as we do in Maryland.

This month I had the pleasure of being the regional coordinator for Jennifer Bernier (CT) who is out on maternity leave (congratulations!). I got an opportunity to speak with some of my counterparts in the New England area. Everyone was a little harried, but took time to assist me with my questions. (The

questions and responses are in the Coordinator's Corner column.) However brief the communication was with my colleagues, it was time well spent. I want to thank all of the regional coordinators as well as those of you who took time out of your busy schedules to respond. These efforts by everyone help our staff section remain one of the best in NCSL.

Unfortunately, due to my duties during the session, I was not able to attend the Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee meeting in Savannah, Georgia. I have heard that it was extremely busy but also a very good meeting. Nan Bowers (NV) attended and reported on the activities of our staff section. Jonetta Douglas (IA) was there in her capacity as a member of NCSL's executive board. They have contributed to this newsletter with summary reports of their task force committees. Their participation gives the Legislative Research Librarian's staff section a strong presence and voice in NCSL activities.

Reapportionment affect is hard to say at this point. Certainly continuing the shift of power to the western, more urban areas, away from the rural areas.

Peggy Jones, Nebraska

The Nebraska Legislative Reference Library is pleased to have this opportunity to participate in *Newsline* discussions.

The Nebraska Legislature will spend the majority of its time formulating a plan to address teachers' salaries; preparing a biennial state budget; and redrawing district lines for the states' congressional and state legislative districts, the State Board of Education, the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, the Nebraska Supreme Court, and the Public Service Commission.

Several bills have been introduced proposing various plans to increase teacher compensation and to pay for such increases. There is no way to know at this point how the Legislature will resolve the issue.

The budget debate will occur in the Spring. The state constitution requires the Legislature to pass a balanced budget, meaning that it cannot spend more money than it brings in.

While much preliminary work has been done on redistricting, the Legislature is awaiting the population data from Census 2000, which will be available by April 1, 2001. The Legislative Research Division, of which the Reference Library is a part, is providing legal and clerical staff support for the Redistricting Committee. The division is also providing GIS staff

support, Geographic Information System map drawing. The division will maintain records related to the 2001 redistricting effort, and the Reference Library staff is assisting in the organization of those documents.

In November of 2000, the voters passed Initiative 415, which prohibits state senators from seeking more than two consecutive four-year terms. This is the fourth time voters have approved a term limits initiative, however the previous three were invalidated by the State Supreme Court. The Speaker of the Legislature estimated the average length of service for state senators today is about six years and noted that most of the 26 candidates elected last November had no opposition. The Speaker of the House estimated that under term limits, half of the current legislators will be out of office in 2006.

Nebraska will not be effected by reapportionment. The state will retain its three house seats.

Robbie LaFleur and Carol Blackburn, Minnesota

Governor Ventura's proposed budget includes significant changes that will prompt legislative debate. Highlights include: rebating the current \$925 million surplus; dramatic reform of the state funding formula for education, resulting in a significant reduction in property taxes; lowering the sales tax rate slightly and broadening it to include more services; lowering income tax rates, reducing the reliance on health care taxes; and continuing to reduce motor vehicle license tabs.

Other hot topics include

- lowering the DWI limit to .08
- racial profiling
- sale of wine in grocery stores
- whether Jesse Ventura's color commentary for the new XFL is an appropriate activity for a Minnesota governor!

Minnesota does not have term limits.

We are all waiting to see how Minnesota's tripartisan government (Independent governor, DFL Senate, and Republican House) manages the redistricting process.

Jonetta Douglas, Iowa

- teacher compensation
- utility bill relief
- morning dove hunting
- (I know hard to believe) tax cuts

Probably the biggest affect that reapportionment will have on Iowa is that we will either still be session in June or we will have gone out and come back for a special session. But there seems to be general agreement that the odds are slim for getting all the numbers and a plan that will fit the time frame for this session.

Coordinator Suzie Carroll, Louisiana

From Suzie

- Dept. Economic Development Reorganization
- Prescription Drugs
- Medicaid funding
- State Employee Group Benefits Program
- Groundwater/Aquifers
- Redistricting
- Election reform

- Legislative Sessions
- Early Childhood Education Programs
- Teacher Retirement/Recruitment/Retention
- Tobacco Settlement Securitization
- TOPS scholarship (Higher education) funding and eligibility
- Minimum Foundation Program (education finance) funding and teacher pay
- Budget Balancing/State Budget Mgt. in times of fiscal crisis
- Sentencing Guidelines
- Gaming- Land Based Casino & Riverboats
- DNA Testing

The limit applies to service on or after January 1996; they have not yet seen the direct results. There are attempts to reorganize staff structure to assure a strong base for the future.

Census estimates and statewide population totals indicate that Louisiana experienced a moderate population growth rate and considerable in-state migration. These estimates and totals suggest that the state will have to undertake a significant degree of redistricting to address these changes in population patterns. Because the state has retained all of its congressional seats, congressional reapportionment will be less problematic than in 1990, when the state lost a seat. Louisiana will also benefit from a longer election cycle for its state House and Senate. In the 1990s round of redistricting, elections were held in 1991. For the current round of redistricting, elections will be held in 2003. Regardless, under a state constitutional provision, state

legislative districts must be reapportioned by December 31, 2001.

Helen Hanby, Alabama

- Shortfall in projected finances (especially education budget)
- Truth in Sentencing
- Economic development in rural areas
- Reapportionment

State does not have term limits.

It is too early to ascertain reapportionment's affect on the legislature; will have to be addressed this session.

Meldia Rose, Arkansas

- Teachers salaries
- Nursing homes law reform

Although Arkansas has term limits in place, have not yet seen the results.

State kept the same number in Congress as in past years. Like others, they will address the reapportionment issue this session.

Florida

- Nursing homes law reform
- Local growth planning reform
- Pensions reform
- Reapportionment
- Elections/voting reform

Florida does have term limits and this is the year/session they go into effect. There have been special interim meetings and more training for the new members than in the past, thus increasing the staff's workload.

Florida gained one seat in Congress. The legislature will begin to

address reapportionment this session, with a special committee.

Georgia

- Flag (passed, new one adopted and flying over the Capitol)
- Education innovation: facilities, security, finance
- Motorcycle helmets
- Water resources

State does not have term limits.

Georgia gained in population numbers, so there will be two new representatives to Washington, DC next year. A special session will address reapportionment in the summer of 2001.

Mississippi

- Flag (with the approval from the voters in MS)
- Teachers salaries
- Education funding
- Prison funding

State does not have term limits.

Mississippi lost one congressional seat with the 2000 census report. There will be a special session in the summer of 2001 to draw new district lines.

Eddie Weeks, Tennessee

- Budget
- Teacher shortages
- HMO liability
- Long term care for elderly
- K-12 funding
- Lottery

State does not have term limits.

Tennessee remains unchanged in Congress and they do not anticipate changes in districts.

**Coordinator Irene Stone,
California**

Nan Bowers, Nevada

- energy costs/regulation
- new business and gaming taxes proposed through initiative
- how to handle the voter passed initiative legalizing medical use of marijuana
- revisiting election reform
- death penalty
- education reform

Term limits have passed in Nevada, but will have no impact until the 2008 elections.

With reapportionment, Nevada's 63 member legislature will be even more heavily weighted towards the growing Las Vegas area. Rural and northern counties want to add members to the total number of legislators, hoping to offset the powerful southern Nevada delegation. Rural and northern counties are more Republican, Las Vegas is more Democrat, so the Democrats may gain several seats in the next election.

Shirley Dallas, Washington

Currently the budget is an all consuming dragon. The Washington State Caseload Council will issue their forecast Monday, Feb. 19, but it is expected to confirm the suspicions. The Legislature may need to trim \$500 million to a \$1 billion from the Governor's proposed budget issued last December. Medical costs for the poor, other social services, increased K-12 enrollments (that alone is expected to require an additional \$300 million), energy impacts and shortfalls from the last

six months of the current biennium all impact this budget. The Senate is precariously balanced in favor of the Democrats and the House is still a 50-50 split, so neither party holds sway. So far the Legislature is insisting that no new taxes will be passed.

Regarding a recent term limits question, I talked to the Code Reviser, Dennis Cooper, because there have been both U.S. Supreme Court and Washington State Supreme Court rulings, but the initiative that established term limits is still codified in the Revised Code of Washington. Dennis' response was pretty "cloudy." He said a person would need to read the rulings because they did not specify backing out the language from the RCW. Recently, an initiative was found to be illegal and the court did specify that it be stricken from the RCW.

OLYMPIA (AP) — A citizens' panel has been sworn in to begin the politically sensitive job of redrawing Washington state's legislative and congressional district lines. Once detailed census data is available in March, the process can begin in earnest. The panel has until the end of the year to redraw the districts. At least three votes are needed to approve the plans. The Legislature has only limited authority to change the maps.

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Kristin Ford, Idaho

Biggest issue is the general fund surplus in our state and what to do with it: tax relief in the form of rebates/rate reductions/income tax credits & exemptions. Other

issues: school facilities, funding for their repair and construction; confined animal feeding operations; regulation and siting.

Term limits will not have any effect until another election.

Reapportionment changes: Congressional level: no real changes expected, perhaps a slight district line change. State level: Definite changes expected; predictions are that the more rural eastern portion of the state will lose four seats to the urban Boise area and to the north end of the state that have had higher population growth rates.

Rhonda Fisher, California

- ELECTRICITY
- California's Economy and Population, including energy, small business, population and immigration, Tribal and Latino issues, income inequality
- Agriculture, including pesticides, farm labor, milk pricing and regulation, invasive weeds, exotic/destructive insects, crop-related issues
- Performance Budgeting and Strategic Planning and Budget Reform
- Banking and Finance, including wire-transfers, predatory lending, fraud/identity theft, privacy, ATMs, e-commerce, mergers securities
- Education, including assessment, school and class size, governance, school choice, school facilities and school finance, school safety/violence, teacher recruitment and retention, K-12 and higher education
- Elections, Reapportionment

and Constitutional Amendments

- Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials, including air pollution, water pollution, solid waste disposal and recycling, regulation of toxics, brownfields, environmental justice
- Health, including managed care, mental health, patient rights, pharmaceuticals, public and environmental health, substance abuse
- Housing and community development, including markets and affordability
- Human services, including child welfare, adult and senior services, welfare reform, collaboration and integrated services
- Insurance
- Jobs and economic development, including high tech, NAFTA and the World Trade Organization, consumer protection, e-government
- Judiciary, including alternative dispute resolution, domestic partnerships, domestic violence, jury reform, tort reform
- Labor and Employment
- Local Government including structure and finance, infrastructure, land use and smart growth
- Natural Resources, including watershed management, takings, motorized recreation
- Public Employees, Retirement, and Social Security
- Public Safety, including hate crime and sexually violent offenders, gun control, drug court and treatment, gangs, violence prevention, racial profiling
- Revenue and Taxation
- Transportation, including mass transit and passenger rail,

traffic safety, congestion management, toll roads, airports, rail safety, new technology -

- Water, Parks, and Wildlife, including flood management, endangered species, introduced species, fisheries

California's term limits mean we have more new legislative members and new staff with less legislative experience. They don't have the same opportunity to develop networks. Increased workload.

Reapportionment will be a main preoccupation for the legislature for the next year. There may be a marginal difference in the seats—possibly in favor of Democrats. It probably will be challenged in the courts.

Barbara Porter, Oregon

- Self serve gasoline
- Safe haven legislation
- Land use
- Education funding

Term limits have increased the workload to orient new members.

No effect from reapportionment.

Coordinator Jennifer Bernier, Connecticut

Information gathered by Johanne Greer

Lynn Randall, Maine

Hot topics in her state are: health care costs especially for prescription drugs, urban and suburban sprawl, and the governor's proposal to purchase laptop computers for all 7th graders.

Term limits have not posed a problem in Maine because there was always a lot of turnover. Members can serve two 4-year terms. Leadership positions will be affected most because members will serve in those capacities for only one term, which doesn't give them much time to learn everything that is expected. Lynn noted that there is not as much interest in getting reports from other states. The library makes an effort to let members know that other state reports are available and they conduct a series of classes including library resources.

Changes in population are not expected to affect legislative redistricting, and Maine will keep the same member of congressional seats.

Myla Padden, New Hampshire

Education funding. A statewide property tax was initiated three years ago to address this problem, but it needs another source of revenue. Another hot topic is judicial reform due to the impeachment trial of a chief justice of the state supreme court who was later acquitted.

There are no term limits in New Hampshire.

New Hampshire's population has not changed enough to add or lose any congressional seats or change the legislature's districts.

Deborah Priest, New York

A hot topic in her state is education—mainly charter schools because the school aid formula was overturned in the courts so now the legislature has to start

from ground zero. Brownfields is another perennial problem, and also prisons—they are still being built, but they have not proven to help in reducing the crime rate.

New York does not have term limits.

Population shifts mean that New York will be losing two Congressional seats in the 2002 elections.

Kate Tait, Rhode Island

Budget. To be competitive with its border states, Massachusetts and Connecticut, Rhode Island is trying to reduce the capital gains tax. Another hot topic is the education formula—to make the more affluent and poorer areas equal. The safe baby act—establishing places where a mother can leave an unwanted child without facing criminal charges, and allowing gay marriages.

Rhode Island does not have term limits for legislators.

Population changes will require reducing the number of state Representatives and Senators.

Susan Southworth, Connecticut

The Office of Legislative Research has loaded a “2001 Major Issues” document on their Web page, with links to bills, reports and analyses of those topics that will be constantly updated as the session progresses. See www.cga.state.ct.us/olr and click on Major Issues. The six top issues are identified as: Spending Cap impact on current budget (even though we have a huge surplus), reworking the Education Cost Sharing (school finance)

formula to address towns’ perception of inequality, Prescription drug costs, Mental health services esp. for children, Transportation (economic and environmental costs and the need for public transit), and Voting procedures in the wake of Bush v. Gore.

No term limits in Connecticut.

Reapportionment: the obvious impact is that CT is losing a congressional seat, so the fate of one of our four Democrats and two Republican representatives lies in the hands of our reapportionment commission. Both our houses are controlled by the Democrats.

Michael Chernick, Vermont

Major issues include continuing review of Act 60, the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1997 and Act 91 of 2000 relating to Civil Unions. With respect to Act 60, the future of the sharing pool, the funding mechanism that requires towns that spend above the state grant level to send a percentage of the extra expenditure to the state will receive particularly close attention. Also, the costs of prescription drugs and health care in a boarder sense.

Vermont does not have any form of legislative term limits.

Reapportionment will not affect the number of congressional seats, Vermont will remain at one district with 608,000 persons. Within the legislature, the question will be whether Chittenden and Franklin Counties in the northwestern portion of the state receive added seats, and if yes, which other districts in the 150 member House

would be impacted. In the Senate, once again, the topic of ending the six seat county-wide delegation in Chittenden County will be examined, but it will probably remain as it is currently constituted.

Pam Schofield, Massachusetts

- Education reform and the MCAS, (the state testing plan;)
- Prescription drugs
- Health care
- Tax cuts
- Affordable housing

We will have the same number of members of Congress from Massachusetts, but there will be reapportionment due to population shifts.

What’s New?

Welcome Baby

Cassandra Elizabeth Bernier greeted mom and dad, Jennifer and Brad Bernier, on December 18, 2000 at 5:59 a.m. She weighed 7 lbs. 15oz. and was 21 inches long. She joins five year old sister Victoria “Tori.” Jennifer is assistant librarian in Connecticut’s Legislative Library and will return to work in April.

Managing the Library Nevada *From Nan Bowers*

The Research Library maintains a small loose-leaf notebook titled *Monthly Actions* that helps keep us on track. In it there is a page for each month of our two-year work cycle. Entries on a given month provide a reminder of tasks to be performed. For example, some of the entries for October of odd numbered years read ‘micro-

fiche committee minutes', 'update interim studies list', and 'update vetoed bills file'. March of even numbered years has the entry 'shelf read half of book collection', which prods us to schedule a complete shelf reading every 4 years. Other entries are more frequent. Every third month there is the entry 'check links on Web site'. At the beginning of each month at a library staff meeting, we look over the previous month list to see how we did, look over the new month list to check entries, and add new entries as we think of them. The notebook is a fairly new idea, but seems to be helpful as a management tool.

Promo Materials

At the last Professional Development Seminar business meeting in Baton Rouge, LA, the Legislative Research Librarians saw some examples of library promotional materials from our colleagues. These materials were extremely well done and informative. We thought it would be helpful if they were made available to all of us. So, if you have produced any materials such as brochures, bookmarks, fliers, instructions on compiling legislative histories, Web page promotions, etc. anything that promotes your library, please send five copies to Rita Thaemert at NCSL in Denver. Rita has agreed to compile a folder or packet with these materials that will be available for anyone to check out as you would a book from the library. We have not worked out all of the specific details yet, but are hoping to have a link on the Legislative Research Librarians home page that will allow you to check out the materials online. They would then be sent through the mail. Thanks for the packets received from Minnesota, Montana, Nevada,

New York and Wisconsin. And thanks for your input in making this project a success.

Professional Development Seminar

The fall 2001 LRL PDS will be October 11-13 in Richmond, Virginia. This will be a joint seminar with the Research and Committee staff section. Hosting LRL will be the Legislative Reference Center in the Virginia Division of Legislative Services. We're planning a writing workshop, a leadership program and tours, both historical and instructional. Mark those calendars and stock up on film because fall in Virginia is guaranteed to be beautiful.

2001 LRL Directory

We are updating the staff directory and ask that each state check their entry in the 2000 directory and fax any changes to Rita Thaemert at NCSL 303-863-8003. She also needs to know if there are no changes.



NOTABLE DOCUMENT AWARD

**The National Conference of State Legislatures'
Legislative Research Librarians Staff Section**

presents an annual notable document award. The award is designed to give recognition to documents for excellence in the presentation of contemporary issues relevant to state legislators and staff. Awards will be presented at the 2001 NCSL Annual Meeting in San Antonio.

PURPOSE

- To recognize excellence in documents that explore topics of contemporary interest to legislators and staff by presenting substantive material in an outstanding format.
- To advertise the extensive range of information available to legislators and staff.
- To increase participation by legislative research librarians in the States Information Network.
- To encourage deposit of documents with NCSL and CSG.

AWARD CRITERIA

- Prominent display of title, author, publisher, date, and contact source.
- Title reflects actual content.
- Relevant to identifiable readership.
- Contributes knowledge of concern to legislative bodies.
- Innovative in presentation and organized in a clear fashion.
- Contains strong bibliographic information.
- Published in last two years.
- Expands understanding of government processes, function, or relationships.
- Attempts to provide balance and perspective from within the political spectrum.

Up to five annual winners may be selected. Eligible nominations considered for award are produced by federal, state, local government agencies, and not-for-profits, and may include reports, serials, Web sites and combination of formats.

Deadline for nominations is April 15, 2001.

**For further information contact:
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NCSL Publications

Copies of all NCSL publications listed here are available from the Marketing Department at 303/830-2200.

Books

Mason's Manual

Inside the Legislative Process: 1998-1999

Governing for Results in the States: 10 Lessons

The Case for Representative Democracy: What Americans Ought to Know About Their State

State Budget Actions 2000

State Tax Actions 2000

STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORTS

Auto Pollution Efficiency in 2000, Vol.25, No.13

Religious Land Use: State and Federal Legislation, Vol.25, No.14

Greenhouse Gases: State Case Studies, Vol.25, No.15

Disaster Mitigation, Vol.25, No.16

The Link Between Energy Efficiency and Air Quality, Vol.25, No.17

Reducing Energy Bills in Public Buildings, Vol.25, No.18

Greenhouse Gases, Vol.25, No.19

LEGISBRIEFS

State Recognition of American Indian Tribes, Vol.9, No.1

Comprehensive Cancer Control, Vol.9, No.2

The Fate of School-to-Work, Vol.9, No.3

Integrating, Improving Criminal Justice Information, Vol.9, No.4

Protecting People Against Severe Weather, Vol.9, No.5

Urban Revitalization and Sprawl, Vol.9, No.6

Testing Violent Sex Offenders for HIV, Vol.9, No.7

The High-Tech Court Room, Vol.9, No.8

The Invasion of Exotic Species, Vol.9, No.9

Medicaid's Home- and Community-Based Waiver, Vol.9, No.10

Adult Business Regulations, Vol.9, No.11

The Electoral College, Vol.9, No.12

Insurance Information Privacy, Vol.9, No.13

Religious Land Use—State and Federal Legislation, Vol.9, No.14

Funding School-Based Violence Prevention Programs, Vol.9, No.15

Funding for Low Income Home Energy Assistance, Vol.9, No.16

State Funding for the Arts, Vol.9, No.17

Violence at Home: People and Pets, Vol.9, No.18

Thanks to all of the staff section members and others who submitted columns and information for this issue. We welcome your ideas and submissions. *Newsline* is published four times annually by NCSL's Legislative Research Librarians Staff Section and is edited and formatted by Rita Thaumert.

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