Chair’s Corner:

By Catherine Wusterhausen, LRL Chair 2016-2017
Assistant Director
Texas Legislative Reference Library

Earlier this year, I participated in training seminar for legislative interns. The presentations covered a wide range of topics: office etiquette, ethics, research techniques, legislative process, and dealing with the press. As I chatted with the group, many of the interns remarked on how unique their experiences in the first few weeks of the session had been. It’s an experience that’s very familiar to anyone who has worked in a legislative agency; the legislative environment has its own vocabulary, rhythm and rules, and the demands of the work can be overwhelming at times.

Fortunately, as members of the LRL staff section, we have a community of experts ready to help with every challenge. One of the greatest benefits of NCSL is the opportunities it provides to connect with colleagues and share ideas and resources. Need help with a tricky 50-state search? A quick question to the LRL listserl will bring a flood of responses. Working on policy research? The NCSL website is a great resource and issue specialists can help you delve deeper. Interested in staff development? Webinars, professional development seminars, and legislative staff university sessions at the Legislative Summit can meet your needs.

How can you get the most out of NCSL? Get involved! Over the next several months, you’ll have a number of opportunities to get active, learn from your colleagues, share your expertise and expand your knowledge and skills.

In February, the LRL sponsored a webinar focusing on legislative staff training programs, which highlighted best practices from three states with well-developed training programs.

We hope to produce more webinars in the future, so we're always looking for topics or suggested speakers!

Later in the spring, we will be asking for nominations for the office of LRL secretary. This is the first step in a four-year commitment to the LRL’s executive committee. It’s a great way to get more involved in NCSL and to help shape the direction of the LRL. We are also looking for candidates for the Legislative Staff Achievement Award, which has a nomination deadline of April 21, and for documents to be considered for the Notable Document Awards which has a nomination deadline of April 28.

In August, the Legislative Summit in Boston will offer a diverse array of training and networking opportunities, including programs on communication, ethics, and responding to change.

Finally, mark your calendars now for the LRL’s 2017 Professional Development Seminar in Helena, Montana, Sept. 13-16!

Catherine
LRL 2017 Notable Documents Awards

Submission Deadline: April 21, 2017

By Elizabeth Lincoln, Minnesota

The annual Notable Documents Awards are presented by the Legislative Research Librarians Staff Section.

The award was established in 1998 to recognize excellence in state documents that explore contemporary topics of interest to legislators and staff and present substantive material in an outstanding format.

Many states are not represented in the nominations, as we typically receive nominations from 20 or fewer states. Be sure your state is represented in the nominations this year!

Nominations are due April 28, and there is a simple form to fill out to submit a document. The committee reviews each document and uses a scorecard to rate each one. Visit the LRL home page for more information.

The purpose of the awards is to:
Formally recognize excellence in documents that explore topics of contemporary interest to legislators and staff by presenting substantive material in an outstanding format.
Advertise the extensive range of information available to legislators and staff.
Increase participation by legislative research librarians in the states information network.

Visit the LRL home page to see the guidelines for selection and a list of previous winners.

Nominations are due Friday, April 28. (Please note the earlier deadline!) Watch for reminders and a nomination form on the NCSL LRL listserv soon.

Contact Elizabeth Lincoln at elincoln@lrl.leg.mn or Megan McClure at megan.mcclure@ncsl.org if you have questions.

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2017 LRL Officer Elections

A great way to volunteer for NCSL and becoming more involved with LRL is to become an officer! The 2016 LRL Nominating Committee is currently seeking candidates to run for Secretary. The deadline for declaring your candidacy is Friday, May 19. Jennifer Bernier of Connecticut serves as the chair of this year’s Nominating Committee.

The Secretary serves for one year and then automatically moves up for one-year terms as vice-chair, chair and immediate past chair. During those four years, you will make valuable contacts, learn more about NCSL, be involved in planning the PDS and Legislative Summit programs, and have a lot of fun! As vice-chair and chair, you will serve on the Legislative Staff Coordinating committee which meets four times a year in various locations. Attending these meetings is not mandatory, but it is worthwhile to attend if you can as you meet the officers from other staff sections and learn about how other states’ legislatures work.

Under the LRL Bylaws, the role of the secretary is as follows: “The secretary shall serve a one year term and shall record minutes of all staff section meetings and perform additional duties as may be assigned by the chair. The secretary shall preside at LRL Executive Committee and staff section meetings in the absence of both the chair and vice chair. The secretary shall succeed the following year to the office of vice chair.”

For questions or more information, please contact Nominating Committee chair Jennifer Bernier at 860-240-8888 or LRL liaison Megan McClure at 303-856-1355.
LRL Legislative Staff Achievement Award

The annual Legislative Staff Achievement Award was created by the Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee to recognize excellence in supporting the work of a state legislature and strengthening the legislative institution. Each staff section associated with NCSL may name up to two recipients—individuals, teams or legislative offices—for recognition each year. Recipients of the awards are presented with a plaque and are recognized by the NCSL Staff Chair during the legislative staff luncheon at the NCSL Legislative Summit.

All members of LRL and legislative libraries are eligible for this award. Nominations may be submitted by the nominee or by other members of the staff section.

More information such as award criteria and the nomination form can be found here.

For more information you can contact the nomination committee chair Sonia Gavin or the NCSL liaison to LRL Megan McClure (303) 856-1355.

LRL at the Legislative Summit

The NCSL Legislative Summit will be in Boston, Mass. this year, from Aug. 6–9. LRL will be co-sponsoring and participating in a wide array of professional development and networking sessions throughout the Summit. Here are a few of the sessions with brief descriptions. For more information visit the Summit website to view the full agenda and see registration and booking information.

LRL will be holding its annual ceremony to recognize the winners of the Notable Documents Awards. Followed by the LRL business meeting.

Other LRL Co-sponsored sessions:

Inquiring Minds Want to Know
Critical thinkers know how to evaluate massive amounts of information filled with sophisticated rhetoric designed to sway their decisions. In today’s world bombarded with instant information, learn how to filter out bias, recognize misrepresentations, and teach others how to distinguish bias from fact.

Research Methods—Which One Do I Choose?
Good legislative research—whether for a specific member, a committee or a program evaluation—requires having the data needed to make sound decisions. A research method is a systematic plan for gathering evidence, and a range of methodologies exist. How do you decide which method is best suited to achieve your objective? Learn several approaches to designing the appropriate methodology.

Legislative Staff Breakfast
Barbara Dershowitz takes the crazy out of change. A practical change management specialist, Barbara eases the path of change for individuals and organizations, delivering them—fully-functioning, sane, and intact into a new normal that is stable, feels right, and works to their best advantage. Named Chief Experience Officer of the Year by SmartCEO magazine, Barbara is author of the book, The Secret Life of Change.
Big Ideas in the Big Sky
Get Ready for the LRL PDS in Helena, Mont.

By Sonia Gavin, Legislative Librarian

The 2017 LRL Professional Development Seminar will be hosted in beautiful Helena, Mont. Sept. 13-16! Come to the Big Sky country and see our beautiful Capital city. While in Montana, you can plan your trip to visit Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks and follow the Lewis and Clark Trail. A full slate of sessions is being planned for you including topics such as Being a State Employee During Difficult Times, and The Montana Constitutional Convention. More topics to be revealed later.

Fur trappers also traversed the area early in the 19th century. In 1864, “the Four Georgians” discovered placer gold in Last Chance Creek. The ensuing gold strike brought thousands of “get-rich-quick” miners to the fabulously rich Last Chance Gulch. These early residents considered the names of “Pumpkinville” and “Squashtown” but settled on “Helena”.

Once the placer gold ran out, Helena could easily have become a ghost town. Its key geographical location, however, made it a vital redistribution center for businesses supplying scores of other gold-mining communities. The town soon became the territorial banking center, and home of such broad-based commercial enterprises as T.C. Power and Brother. Simultaneously, farms and ranches spread across the fertile Helena valley. When Helena secured the territorial capital in 1875, the city also became the political focus of Montana. The city’s victory over Anaconda in the “Capital Fight” of 1894 only solidified that political dominance.

Today, Helena thrives as an educational, commercial, recreational, cultural, and political center for the entire state of Montana – while celebrating a real appreciation for the community’s colorful, storied past. Helena is the center of Montana’s population of 1,005,141, and within the city limits reside approximately 30,000 (2010 estimates). The greater Helena area population is 63,395.
LRL is fortunate to have three of our members serving on the Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (LSCC), the legislative staff governing body that serves with the NCSL Executive Committee.

The two top officers from each staff section are automatically members of the LSCC. Chair, Catherine Wusterhausen and vice-chair, Julia Covington represent LRL, along with member at large, Sonia Gavin.

Below is Catherine’s report from the LSCC winter meeting.

At the winter Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee meeting, held in Scottsdale, Ariz. in January, the focus was on encouraging staff participation in NCSL.

The Staff Section Officers Workgroup discussed plans for professional development seminars, and exchanged ideas for encouraging staffers to consider serving in leadership positions in their staff sections.

The Legislative Institutions Subcommittee explored options for increasing awareness about legislative staff accomplishments; suggestions included producing videos highlighting staff achievements and including more staff-focused articles in State Legislatures magazine. Look for articles focusing on “What staff want you to know” in upcoming issues, including one out in this month’s issue by Megan McClure focusing on libraries.

The Professional Development Subcommittee reported on planning for the Legislative Summit, which will feature sessions focusing on communications, managing change, and ethics, and many other exciting topics.

The Strategic Planning Workgroup highlighted efforts increase outreach and encourage legislative staff to participate in NCSL; and the Information Technology subcommittee shared plans to encourage greater use of e-learning options, including developing guidelines for creating webinars and increasing awareness of e-learning opportunities.

Did You Know?

The NCSL Executive Committee is composed of 63 members: seven officers, 30 at-large legislators, four regional legislators from the Council of State Government, six ex officio members, and 16 legislative staff.

The LSCC is made up of the NCSL staff officers, legislative staff serving on the NCSL Executive Committee, the staff officers of the NCSL Standing Committees, two officers of each of the ten staff sections, and four discretionary appointees.

OUR AMERICAN STATES

A New Podcast from NCSL

The Our American States podcast is where you hear compelling conversations that tell the story of America’s state legislatures, the people in them, the politics that compel them, and the important work of democracy.

Episodes currently available include:

- Online Sales Tax
- Leadership in the Legislature
- State Marijuana Policy
- The Security of American Elections
- Education: No Time to Lose
- The State of State Legislatures 2017
Preserving the Alaska Constitutional Convention Materials

By Jennifer Fletcher, librarian, Alaska

Legislative librarians are often tasked with making records available to the public, especially those pertaining to the legal framework of their state. In Alaska we recently digitized our state's constitutional convention records in order to post them on our legislature's website.

Our constitution was drafted in 1955-1956, three years before statehood. Our framers sought to learn from the 51 other constitutions of our nation (state, federal, and territorial) as well as the 1948 Model Constitution. They looked to the future and the constitutional questions that might arise by making recordings and verbatim transcripts of the floor proceedings. Both have been indispensable in determining the framers' intent in relatively new or unsettled areas of law, such as the constitutional right to privacy and legality of wiretapping. One somewhat humorous point of contention arose over what we should name our local unit of government (boroughs), and how it should be pronounced. My personal favorite moment: one respondent stated borough should be pronounced "same as the burros used in Alaska during the gold rush." Proceedings transcripts cannot address every possible interpretation or ambiguity, however.

The Convention delegates commissioned several background reports for guidance, which also help address issues of interpretation and ambiguity. The Public Administration Service Reports are one example, a three volume collection of general surveys of the constitutional provisions of other states and commentary on what has worked well. They also contain suggestions on contemporary developments such as legislative councils and post-audits.

The framers were particularly concerned with how their work would support the Alaska statehood effort. Correspondence regarding an Alaskan version of the Tennessee Plan (electing and sending a Representative and Senators to Congress prior to admission as a state) and discussions with one of its main proponents led to the plan's inclusion in the constitution. The Convention was publicized heavily in print and some committee hearings broadcast on television. Delegates were in contact with or were members of the Alaska Statehood Committee, and kept in touch with statehood advocates monitoring Congressional support and opposition.

Gathering, studying, and digitizing these documents to make them available online necessarily required becoming familiar with them. The experience I gained in these processes has greatly helped with research. For example, reading through the text recognition results to correct errors left memory of the contents. Knowing a document's context has helped with interpretation and identifying additional resources. I consider this greater awareness to be just as valuable as the increased ease of access provided by digitization, and a wonderful opportunity to start down the path to expertise in Alaska Constitutional research.
State News

Late last year, in preparation for an article in the NCSL State Legislatures Magazine, legislative librarians around the nation were asked: What are three things you would like legislators to know about legislative librarians and/or librarians?

The article is out now in this month’s issue of the magazine!

Atlantic Northern Region

Regional Director: Christine McCluskey, Connecticut

Connecticut—Jennifer Bernier, Carrie Rose, and Christine McCluskey, Connecticut Legislative Library

• That we exist!
• The breadth of services and resources we can provide.
• That our library was created specifically to serve legislators and their staff, so they should not hesitate to ask us anything.

Vermont—Michael Chernick, Vermont Legislative Council

• The wide variety and types of research that is available
• The scope of bibliographic and legal resources on which Legislative Council can draw (both paper and online)
• That all services provided to legislators are confidential and nonpartisan

Atlantic Central Region

Regional Director: Annette Haldeman, Maryland

Maryland—Annette Haldeman, Maryland Dept. of Legislative Services

• The library has a number of print and electronic resources very useful to legislators, including committee bills files (in print, microfilm, and soon to be digitized), reports mandated by the legislature over the course of history, and so much more. And if we don’t have it, we can order it for you or borrow it from another library.

• The library is always happy to help in answering any questions that you might have, ranging from finding a phone number to compiling 50-state research. We are also adept at finding the appropriate contacts within agencies to help answer your questions. We can be reached by phone, email, or by an in-person visit, whichever you prefer.

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In addition to providing reference and research, the Maryland Library and Information Services unit is also involved in a number of other tasks, including bill indexing, production of the synopsis, compiling the Maryland Clipper, and video streaming meetings in the Joint Hearing Room. Information Desk Staff also mark video recordings of bills heard in committee and provide a link on the Maryland General Assembly website that goes directly to the beginning of a hearing for any bill (previously, website users had to sift through the entirety of the committee’s bill hearings for a particular day to find the legislation that they were interested in). In short, our staff is happy to help with a number of tasks related to various aspects of the legislative process.

North Carolina—Jane Basnight, Russell Miles, and Julia Covington. North Carolina Legislative Library

- The Library has many documents that will help you in your work: legislative studies and committee minutes, superseded statutes, historical budget materials, statistical resources and more!
- The Library staff will compile legislative histories for you.
- The Library staff adheres to the same statutory legislative confidentiality requirement that applies to all legislative staff.

Great Lakes Region
Regional Director: Anne Rottmann, Missouri

Missouri—Anne Rottmann. Missouri Legislative Library

- The Missouri Legislative Library is not only a source for current material, but we have a strong historical collection on the legislature and the state as a whole. We have a very good state document collection.
- We help the General Assembly and its staff and are also available to help the general public with questions about legislation, statutes, rules, etc.
- We have strong contacts with not only state government, and other libraries in the state, but also on a national level. As we often say, “if we don’t know the answer, we know someone who does”.
- Not only do we have the ability to search on many platforms, but we have the training and experience to know which way is the best, so that we do not waste a lot of time in searching for an answer.
- Every request made to the library by a staff person or a member is confidential.

Ohio—Debbie Tavenner, Ohio Legislative Service Commission

- The Legislative Service Commission (LSC) Library is a library just for the members of the Ohio General Assembly and its staff. Our focus is to get the legislative customers the best answers and materials possible to respond to their questions and information needs. The librarians have a master’s degree in library science.
- The LSC Library is an archives for legislative publications—everything is not on the Internet! It is the place to locate copies of older bill versions and explanatory documents.
- The LSC Library, like the rest of the LSC, must treat all communication with legislators as confidential.

Gulf Coast Region
Regional Director: Robin Boatright Stadler, Louisiana

Louisiana—Frances Thomas, Robin Boatright Stadler, Robyn Cockerham, Jenna Steward. David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library

- The Library's resources are older than legislators, staff, & lobbyists. If they need to check the "institutional memory" of the legislature to contact us.
- The library has subscription databases, electronic resources, and print publications that are not available on the Internet.
- They are always welcome to come in person to the library to use our resources or to talk personally to a librarian about a research need.
- When they are given conflicting information or if their conversations start to feel like a game of telephone where it is difficult to decipher fact from fiction as information becomes distorted, we are happy to serve as their fact checkers and find the information in a recognized reference source. My main example would be times when they are told that the state ranks first or last on a topic, but the actual rankings are nearly dead middle.
- We provide information services other than research, such as converting the format of a particular piece of information, citation checking, ready reference, talking points, fact checking, etc. We can do research for you on what other states are doing, and our library collections range from historical budget numbers to the latest information on drones and biotechnology.

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State News cont.

Mississippi—Diane Clincy, Legislative Reference Bureau

- Most Legislative Libraries contain a considerable amount of information regardless of how small they may appear. Many librarians are aware of their library limitations due to advancements in technology and other budget issues, but they often know how to make the system work within these limitations in order to provide patrons with any assistance they may need.

Tennessee—Eddie Weeks, Tennessee General Assembly

- Not everything is on the Internet.

When you ask me for something from 20 years ago, it’s not just a matter of downloading it. Most resources of information from more than 10 years ago are paper or even microfilm.

I don’t just type words into Google and send you the results. I use many resources, both print and electronic, to find what I think is the best possible answer to your question. It can take time to find what you need.

- Not everything on the Internet is true.

Don’t believe everything you read. I will be glad to verify (or disprove) any information you provide, but don’t discount what I provide you with one thing you see on a web site.

- Not every question can be answered.

I wish that I could answer every question, but some questions cannot be answered. Don’t get mad if I ask for more information or tell you I can’t answer your question to your satisfaction. There is no way to know if you’re the first left-handed legislator who was born in a certain city.

Central Southern Region

Regional Director: Molly Otto, Colorado

Colorado—Molly Otto, Joint Legislative Library, The Colorado Joint Legislative Library

- Provides nonpartisan research assistance to members of the Colorado General Assembly and their staff, Colorado Legislative Council staff, the staff of Colorado and federal agencies, and the public.

- Library resources include historical and current legislative materials, such as House and Senate Journals, Colorado Session Laws, and statutes from territorial times (1860-1876), and statehood (1876-current). In addition to these resources, the library maintains the Colorado General As-

sembly-Statutory Reports database, the Colorado Legislators Past and Present database, and provides assistance with legislative history requests, which are described below.

The Colorado General Assembly-Statutory Reports database consists of reports that are required by statute to be submitted by the executive agencies to the Colorado General Assembly, from 1991 to current. These reports are useful since they summarize specific activities of programs that are managed by Colorado agencies, departments and divisions. The database can be searched by department, agency, statutory citation, next due date, recipient, or text search.

The Colorado General Assembly Past and Present database, provides a legislative profile of each member who has served in the General Assembly from 1865 to current. These profiles include members’ years of service in the House, Senate or both, birth and death date and place; occupation; party; committee membership, etc. This database is often used in genealogical research and provides background information on specific members.

- Library staff provide users assistance with legislative history requests, by locating print resources and recorded testimony on specific legislation, from committees and the House and Senate. The library has legislative recordings from 2002 through 2014, available for users to download for free. Users can also access recordings from 2012 to current on the Colorado General Assembly website.

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Kansas—Cindy Roupe, State Library of Kansas

The Kansas State Library which was recently (2010-12) renovated as part of a larger renovation of the Kansas Statehouse.

- The State Library of Kansas provides reliable, authenticated tools: library staff index all legislation, bind all versions of all bills, hold extensive newspaper clippings, and provide online research resources.
- Since 1975 the library has operated a Legislative Hotline which is a year-round, toll free phone number used by constituents to locate their legislator, provide bill status, and answer questions about legislative procedure.
- In addition to the Hotline, State Library reference staff answer questions through instant message chat about the legislative session. Use of this service has increased steadily since beginning in 2008.

Much like California and Texas, the legislative library in Kansas is an executive branch agency with statutory authority to provide library services to the legislative branch.

West Coast Region

Regional Director: Danielle Mayabb, Nevada

Jennifer Fletcher, Alaska Legislative Affairs Agency

- Libraries are increasingly focusing on making resources available electronically, one example of which would be our Alaska Constitutional Convention (1955-1956) resources.
- We participate in legislator and staff trainings in order to ensure they are aware of the services we provide, and offer individual training in doing good legislative history research. For example, we are responsible for collecting and making available the committee bill files at the end of each legislature, and we try to ensure committee aides are properly trained in the keeping of those records. These items are vital public information which we make accessible.
- We are open to the public, which means we often receive questions about the legislative intent behind bills.

California—Maeve Roche California State Library

- How differently all of the legislative libraries are structured or supported (i.e., some are connected to the legislature, while some are independent of the legislature)
- The mission/duties vary among the libraries (i.e., some legislation, or are involved in the documentation process, and some provide news clipping services).

Call for State News questions: Have a question or series of questions you are curious to know about your colleagues and their institutions? If so, please email Megan McClure with your State News question suggestions.

LRL Member News

Louisiana—Bethany Reisch has joined the Poynter Legislative Research Library staff as a librarian. Bethany has a background in academic libraries. She is a research librarian for the Fiscal and Resource & Infrastructure Divisions of House Legislative Services. She is also the cataloger.

Welcome Bethany!

Maryland—The Maryland legislative library recently hired two new reference librarians. We are pleased and happy to welcome Rich Sigwald and Brooke Smith, who both joined the reference librarian team in November. Rich was most recently employed in the Baltimore County Library system and received his MLS from Clarion University. Brooke recently relocated here from McKeesport, PA and also recently received her MLS from Clarion.

North Carolina—We are delighted to announce that we have a new staff member, Kelsey Lewis. She began in September 2016 as our Boards and Commissions assistant. Kelsey has a BA in Geosciences from Skidmore College and a MLS from UNC–Chapel Hill. Welcome Kelsey!
NCSL Publications

Note: Legislators and legislative staff are entitled to a free copy of all NCSL publications. You will need your NCSL password to download the documents from NCSL. If you don’t have a password, you can create one on NCSL’s website.

LegisBriefs

April 2017

- Regulating Autonomous Vehicles | Vol. 25, No. 13
- State Newborn Health Screening Policies | Vol. 25, No. 14
- Improving the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program | Vol. 25, No. 15
- Helping Consumers Navigate Vehicle Recalls | Vol. 25, No. 16

March 2017

- Tackling the American Civics Education Crisis | Vol. 25, No. 09
- A New Era of School Choice | Vol. 25, No. 10
- Supporting Higher Education for People with Disabilities | Vol. 25, No. 11
- Legislative Action on Redistricting Commissions | Vol. 25, No. 12

February 2017

- Funding the Next Generation of Elections Technology | Vol. 25, No. 05
- Energy Efficiency and Renewables in Lower-income Homes | Vol. 25, No. 06
- Promoting Digital Literacy and Citizenship in School | Vol. 25, No. 07
- Refinancing Student Loans | Vol. 25, No. 08

January 2017

- State Efforts to Protect and Pay for Clean Water | Vol. 25, No. 01
- Reclassifying English Learners into Mainstream Classes | Vol. 25, No. 02
- State Highway Patrol Funding and the State Highway Fund | Vol. 25, No. 03
- Legislative Sessions: A Primer | Vol. 25, No. 04

News from LRL’s Liaison

Hello LRL,

I just wanted to let you all know that the LRL Portal on the NCSL website is updated regularly at least two or three times a month, with any news I think you all may find interesting. Webinars and training opportunities, NCSL documents and reports, research and NCSL news along with notices for awards, and the LRL newsletter are all things that have recently been up on the portal. I encourage you to think of the LRL portal as a way to keep up with what’s going on with LRL and your peers as well as happenings at NCSL that you might find useful.

Another great resource is the Legislative Staff Services portal. I also keep this page updated with information, training opportunities, newsletters from other staff sections, and other NCSL research documents and news.

Also, I am working on collecting staff profiles for NCSL’s State Legislatures Magazine. We are seeking to highlight legislative staff. Do you have some work or a project you’ve been working on (like Jennifer Fletchers on Alaska’s Constitutional Convention materials) that you are proud of or that your library peers would find interesting? Do you have a colleague who you think is just great and want to recognize? Do you have a great legislative story you want to tell? Let me know! NCSL wants to get the word out!

- Megan McClure