NEVADA’S ISSUE ORIENTATION PROGRAMS FOR LEGISLATORS

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New Member Orientation—Background

Nevada’s Legislative Counsel Bureau has provided for new member orientations at least since 1977.

Program Growth from 1-2 days…

In the early years, the typical program included:

- A tour of the capital city
- A tour of the legislative building
- A mock floor session
To Six ++ Days

Now a six-phase process

- Initial meetings with staff, building safety, administrative matters, including:
  - A community orientation (schools, living accommodations, restaurants)
  - Practical information (offices, pay, attire, making travel arrangements, etc.)
  - Early on a staffer is assigned as liaison to each member
- Subject matter briefings
- A “Legislator Academy”
- Mid-session orientation
- End-of-session orientation
- Interim orientation
Subject Matter Briefings

Topics are proposed by staff and approved by leadership

Since the 1990s:
- Education (P-20)
- Health and Human Services

Most recently added:
- Reapportionment and Redistricting
- Transportation
- Energy and Economic Development
- Public Employee Benefits, Retirement, Collective Bargaining
- Mining
Academy

Topics:

• Public Policy
• Being an Effective Legislator
• Mock Committee Meetings and Mock Floor Sessions
• How a Bill Becomes a Law
• Negotiation and Consensus
• Working with Lobbyists and the Media
• Ethics in the Legislative Environment
Mid-Session Orientation

Topics:

• First House Deadlines and Bills in the Second House
• Working your Bill in the other House
End-of-Session Orientation

Topics included:

• Working with the Executive Branch
• Conference Committees
• Governor Vetoes and Special Sessions
Interim Committee Orientation

Topics:

• Introduction to the Interim Period
  • Purpose and Types of Interim Committees
  • Open Meeting Law

• Legislative Staff Services

• Developing Legislation—from Concept to Bill Draft

• Working with Constituents
Lessons Learned

Process
• Education and health care—two most requested topics
• Mock committee hearings and mock floor sessions greatly appreciated (excellent response to 1 scripted and a 2nd unscripted)

Strategic
• Keep staff in forefront
• Stagger training to fit immediate needs
• The concept of “the freshman class of . . .” seems to work well, so build in group activities and networking functions
• Solicit feedback
  • Survey
  • Do evaluations at the end of each segment
Assembly Bill 260 (2011 Session)

• Requires newly elected legislators attend a mandatory training program prior to taking part in their first legislative session
• Designed by the majority and minority leadership of both houses
• Conducted between the general election and the start of the next legislative session
• Program cannot exceed 10 days
• Recorded electronically and made available to any legislator who is unable to attend the training session. Such a legislator shall submit a form attesting completion of the training to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.
• Leadership may excuse members for reasons of illness, emergency, employment, or other good cause.
Recent Changes and Future Directions

• Impact of term limits:
  • Larger groups
  • Less allegiance to institution—springboard to other things

• Demographic changes—Younger members are more tech savvy, demanding:
  • Quicker response times
  • Bottom line versus background
  • Doing own research on the fly

• In the future:
  Need to do a better job of helping legislators identify with the legislature as an institution
  New Session: “Beyond Google—Quality Research for Policy Decisions”
Thank you.