

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.

