



NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas

Our Mission:

- *Improving the quality and effectiveness of state legislatures*
 - *Promoting policy innovation and communication among state legislatures*
 - *Ensuring legislatures a strong, cohesive voice in the federal system*
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The National Conference of State Legislatures was founded in 1975 in the belief that legislative service is one of democracy's worthiest pursuits. Representing the citizens of a district and the people of a state is the very essence of free government. The National Conference of State Legislatures is a bipartisan organization dedicated to serving the lawmakers and staffs of the nation's 50 states, its commonwealths and territories. The Conference is a source for research, publications, consulting services, meetings and seminars. It is the national conduit for lawmakers to communicate with one another and share ideas. The Conference is an effective and respected voice for the states in Washington, D.C., representing their interests before Congress, the administration and federal agencies.

The legislators in the 50 states together represent 250 million people of varying politics, diverse cultural backgrounds and different economic conditions. Fairly representing this diversity of constituents can be daunting. But NCSL offers a variety of services to help lawmakers tailor policies that will work for their states and their constituents. For each legislature, at least one NCSL staff person is assigned as a lead contact--or state assignment staff-- to help make access to NCSL's services easy.

Information Requests

Each year the Conference answers more than 16,000 questions from legislators and staff on issues from AIDS to taxation, pollution to child welfare. The researchers at the Conference respond quickly--sometimes within an hour. So the lawmaker working on an amendment on the floor of the House during debate on a critical bill can depend on fast service from NCSL.

Consulting Assistance

Lawmakers turn to the Conference for help in crafting legislation, in seeking witnesses to testify before committees. NCSL also conducts special workshops on specific issues and training programs for legislators and staff. The Conference draws from the best minds in the country, as well as its own professional staff, to meet states' needs. At lawmakers' requests, NCSL travels the states, testifies before legislative committees and provides consulting services.

OnLine Information Services

NCSLnet has been developed by the Conference as the electronic information network for state legislatures, providing comprehensive services through World Wide Web, telnet and dial-in systems. NCSLnet gives lawmakers immediate access to virtually all NCSL products, including LEGISNET, NCSL's computerized research database of abstracts of thousands of legislative research reports, public policy documents, journal articles and research currently underway, and 50-state surveys. NCSLnet costs nothing to use, and you can query the system through your own offices, or ask NCSL to do the searching.

Meetings and Seminars

Legislators and staff have opportunities each year to attend NCSL meetings on subjects as varied as criminal sentencing, the drug problem, economic development, health care, Medicaid, energy, environment, education and state tax policy. NCSL invites experts to present their perspectives on these and other issues. Each year NCSL conducts some 20 seminars and training programs that some 4,000 of you attend. And in late July or early August thousands of legislators and staff get together at NCSL's Annual Meeting--five days jam-packed with informative sessions and nationally known speakers on current issues confronting the states.

Publications

State Legislatures magazine is widely hailed as the most informative and influential state public policy monthly in the country. Like all the other numerous publications the Conference produces, it is sent free of charge to all legislators and staff, and is for sale to the general public. You also receive *Conference Report* four times a year. It describes the dozens of meetings and issue seminars NCSL sponsors, the new books published, the new research the Conference is undertaking and the consulting projects NCSL is conducting in various states.

State-Federal Relations

NCSL is recognized as the states' most effective lobbying voice in Washington, D.C. At a time when the federal government increasingly attempts to shift costs to the states, it is more important than ever for state legislators to speak out against unfunded mandates proposed by Congress and the administration. NCSL takes maximum advantage of its principal assets in lobbying--the political link between state lawmakers and members of Congress and the information the Conference develops on state approaches to issues. NCSL frequently arranges for state legislators to testify before Congress on a variety of issues, and schedules regular meetings with lawmakers and members of Congress and the administration to voice states' concerns about federal legislation and regulations.

Special Services for Legislative Staff

The Conference offers a wealth of learning and professional development opportunities for legislative staffers, whether new or experienced. The Conference conducts an annual seminar to help staff directors and supervisors improve their management skills, and another to help new staff people sharpen their skills in research, program evaluation, fiscal analysis, bill drafting and other legislative procedures. Staff members can come together and share common problems and information in one of NCSL's ten professional staff organizations for researchers, fiscal officers, leadership staff, legal services staff, legislative clerks and secretaries, computer users, research librarians, program evaluators and security, and legislative information and communication personnel.