

## Powerful Persuasion - Keeping Your Cool While Dealing with the Media

By **Terri Franks-Smith**  
Chief Fiscal Officer  
House of Representatives, Idaho

Notes from an address by Roger Harvey, Vice President, Bose Public Affairs Group, Indianapolis  
NCSL Leadership Staff Section Seminar - Indianapolis - September 5, 2008

It is important to understand the journalists' roles. They are in the business of telling stories, but that story is not necessarily your story. They are looking for all sides of the story but only want the facts. If you want them to run your "fluff," buy an ad.

Journalists are more overworked than ever, with more demands on them (web versions, blogs, podcasts) and fewer staff and resources. They are competing with other bloggers who are in essence "citizen journalists." They have more pressure from their editors and news directors to break stories—to be first.

Political reporters are usually experienced and well-versed on the issues. They tend to be the fairest and usually have friends on "both sides of the aisle." They understand the political arena and are sensitive to manipulation.

Building a relationship with the news media is essential. You need to return their calls on a timely basis, treat them with courtesy and respect, and be on time. If you're not the best source for a story, you can work to provide someone else who is. Try to determine the nature of the journalist's story and accommodate his deadline. Every office should have a clear media policy for staff and one person should be established as the media contact. By providing accurate, timely and credible information, you develop a history with the media that pays off.

Preparation is the key to a successful interview. You should:

- ◆ Work to determine the reporter's questions and focus.

- ◆ Allow yourself time to brainstorm before responding (even under pressure).

- ◆ Understand what the journalist controls and what you control (they can ask the question but you control how you answer the question).

- ◆ Be prepared, but if things go astray, find ways to bridge back to your message.

- ◆ Develop 3-5 key message points; reiterate them if necessary.

- ◆ Use index cards for reference.

- ◆ Assume that the microphone is always on.

These are helpful hints to be used in controlling your message:

- ◆ Speak in headlines—short succinct sentences using action verbs.

- ◆ Use specific information and examples to "put a face" on your message.

- ◆ Don't argue with the reporter – reporters always have the last word.

- ◆ If asked about problems, use a bridging technique to also talk about solutions.

- ◆ State the case by using such phrases as:

"The real issue here is..."

"If I understand your question correctly..."

"I think it's important for your readers to know..."

Clear and effective communications are paramount. Accept that it is OK to say "I don't know but I will find out." Ask a question if you don't understand the reporter. Try to stay to just the facts—do not offer opinions, don't speculate on outcomes and don't

veer off-topic. Avoid repeating negative answers. Don't be emotional and angry and don't say "no comment." Above all, be authentic, sincere and transparent at all times.

There are a few tips to getting quoted. Remember that reporters are storytellers and they are looking for strong, action words that evoke emotion. They look for analogies and comparisons. During an interview, cliches are acceptable but only in moderation. The use of rhetorical questions can help you frame your talking points. You should strive to be articulate, accurate and accessible.

Many interviews come during times of crisis. We should take ownership of the problem and remember that crises present opportunities to show leadership. Good crisis management has three objectives: to fix the problem, to explain how you are correcting it, and to tell

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Jan Shirrell & Laura Bauman  
with Roger Harvey.



# LSS Chair's Comments

By Tom Wright, Chair  
NCSL Leadership Staff Section  
Executive Committee 2008-2009



*Dear Fellow Leadership Staffer:*

It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be selected from among my peers to chair the Leadership Staff Section for the next year. Our next annual meeting will be held in Austin, Texas, and we are currently working on the specific dates and location within Texas' capital city. I hope we will have this information available to you within the next couple of weeks.

As many of you are aware, the recently concluded meeting held in Indianapolis was one, if not the most, successful meetings our group has ever had. Kudos to Laura Bauman, Jan Shirrell, Greg Gordon and the many others from Indiana who worked many long hours in fashioning great programs but also put together interesting tours of the many interests Indianapolis has to offer. I also wish to thank the members of the Indiana legislative delegation who participated and allowed their staffs to put together one of the best programs I have attended in the short time I have participated in LSS. It was also exciting to have a large contingent from Massachusetts involved in our Indianapolis meeting, and hopefully, we will see new staff from states that have not participated in our seminars previously.

In the event you aren't aware of what the Leadership Staff Section has to offer leadership staff, I encourage you to contact either Brian Weberg of NCSL at [brian.weberg@ncsl.org](mailto:brian.weberg@ncsl.org), myself at [tom\\_wright@legis.state.ak.us](mailto:tom_wright@legis.state.ak.us) or any LSS committee member whose contact information is listed in the LSS section on the NCSL website so we can provide information you may be seeking. Our meetings provide useful guidance and experiences that are very helpful in assisting us in our day to day duties as leadership staff.

I also want to acknowledge our past chair, Dawn Reese, for her hard work and dedication in leading our section. Dawn has led us through two annual meetings, both of them very successful. I look forward to her guidance and mentoring as we progress through the new year.



I look forward to working with many of you this year and next as we put together our program for the Austin meeting in September 2009. It is my hope that we can come close to meeting the lofty standards set during our Indiana meeting this year.

I encourage you to contact me anytime if I can provide you information regarding our leadership staff section or if you have any questions regarding our goals and mission.

*Tom Wright*

*"Always tell the truth – that way you don't have to remember what you said."*

Mark Twain



# Transitions – Embracing Change Summary

**Tom Meier, Equis Consulting**

Notes by Dawn Reese Leer, Immediate Past Chair

Tom Meier with Equis Consulting gave an outstanding seminar on managing change. He spoke about the four phases of transition and how we move through change. We took notes on the handout he gave us as he walked us through an interactive session on change and transition.

## The Phases of Transition:

### Stage 1. Denial

In denial we filter out the negative, and it lasts about 90 days. There are two types of denial: constructive denial – you want the change; assumptive denial – you don't want the change, you never saw it coming, and it takes you by surprise. It can be a like a punch in the stomach.

### Stage 2. Resistance

Resistance is normal. In resistance we filter out the positive information. It is a psychological counterbalance to denial. The intensity of the resistance will mirror the intensity of denial and vice versa. If you were really in denial you will really be in resistance. If you were slightly in denial you will be slightly in resistance. There is no choice about moving into resistance from denial – it is automatic. There are two types of resistance: functional resistance – attached to constructive denial; and toxic resistance – attached to assumptive denial. Don't make a decision from resistance because it would be a reaction and not a decision. It is best not to act from resistance.

Notes from NCSL Leadership Staff  
Section Seminar - Indianapolis  
- September 2008

### Stage 3. Exploration

This is the only stage with no filter. It is the first picture of what the future could look like. We problem solve and see the opportunities. The only manual shift, an internal shift, is from resistance to exploration. Make a pro/pro decision list because you see possibilities.

### Stage 4. Commitment

Congratulations! When you get to commitment – you are done! You have managed the change. You are up and running and made the commitment to move forward. Remember commitment is not without reservation, but you have made the decision and commitment to move forward.

For more information, please feel free to contact Tom Meier. To receive your complimentary handout from Equis Consulting on Transitions and Embracing Change, visit the Leadership Staff Section's Website at [www.ncsl.org/programs/legismgt/lss/lsshome.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/legismgt/lss/lsshome.htm)



## Powerful Persuasion

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what you are doing to prevent it in the future. Be sure to include these points in your interview.

In the political world, it is common to have people at your press conference who do not agree with you--opponents, detractors and even hecklers. It is important not to respond to these negatives and not to get angry. Try to have a lighthearted "non-answer" in mind if you expect hecklers. If there is a jerk in the room, don't let it be you.

Everyone needs to remember that in this day and age, almost everyone has a cell phone and most of those phones have camera and video capability. There is really no time in public when you are "off the record" and care must be taken to act appropriately. It isn't hard to take a cell phone video and load it on You Tube for the world to see.

Roger Harvey is available for questions and consultation at: [rharvey@bosepublicaffairs.com](mailto:rharvey@bosepublicaffairs.com)



# National News from LSCC

By **Gary VanLandingham**  
NCSL Staff Chair

The Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (LSCC) is working on several major projects to strengthen NCSL's services to legislative staff. As you may know, the LSCC is comprised of two representatives of each of the ten staff sections, plus staff who are serving on the NCSL Executive Committee. The LSCC recently met in September for its first meeting of the year; it will meet in January, May, and July as well.

Rest assured that LSCC meetings aren't a junket. The meetings are pretty grueling. The first meeting of the day begins at 7:30 AM and various subcommittee and working group meetings last until 6:30 PM that evening and then again the next morning, followed by Executive Committee meetings throughout this second day. So, folks don't go to LSCC meetings to hang out, but instead, often look forward to getting back to their day jobs where the pace is somewhat saner (at least on a good day).

Currently, the LSCC is working on several major initiatives:

- ◆ The Legislative Institutions subcommittee is assessing major trends that are affecting legislative staff nationwide, including the pending retirement of Baby Boomers, technology changes, economic stresses, and increasing partisanship and term limits. The subcommittee will develop strategies to help legislatures address these challenges and guide NCSL activities in future years.

- ◆ The Marketing and Outreach

subcommittee is developing better ways to market NCSL's services so that legislative staff and legislators understand what NCSL can do for them and how they can best get involved with the organization.

- ◆ The Professional Development subcommittee is working to strengthen NCSL's training programs for legislative staff, including options for expanding programs for staff entering management positions as well as those beginning their legislative careers.

- ◆ The Technology subcommittee is working to develop a capacity to deliver high quality professional development programs via the internet to staff that cannot travel to NCSL meetings.

- ◆ The Staff Section Officers subcommittee is working to ensure that staff sections receive needed support from NCSL in hosting professional development seminars. The committee is also working with the technology committee to identify ways that the staff sections can use e-learning technology to deliver skills development programs for staff who perform specific functions in their legislatures such as committee research and program evaluation.

- ◆ The Standing Committees workgroup is working to strengthen the role of legislative staff in NCSL's Standing Committees, which meet three times a year to develop NCSL's lobbying position on federal issues.

- ◆ The Member and District Staff Training workgroup is developing a prototype seminar that will be held next spring for member and district staff.



- ◆ The Strategic Planning workgroup is establishing plans to accomplish to goals of Nancy Cyr, who will serve as Staff Chair next year.

It is truly an honor to serve as your staff chair this year. NCSL is the premier organization for legislative staff, and it provides a wealth of opportunities to learn, share information, and meet colleagues and make friends who share our role in supporting representative democracy. This fall, I and the other national officers (Nancy Cyr, Staff Vice Chair, and Sharon Crouch-Steidel, Immediate Past Staff Chair) have had the pleasure of visiting each of the ten staff section's professional development conferences. Each of the meetings was superb, and showed the talent and dedication of legislative staff.

If you have any questions or suggestions for LSCC programs, feel free to contact me at [gary.vanlandingham@oppaga.fl.gov](mailto:gary.vanlandingham@oppaga.fl.gov), or the other national officers. You can get more information on all of NCSL's programs for legislative staff at its website at [www.ncsl.org](http://www.ncsl.org).



## Annual Legislative Staff Achievement Award

This year's recipient of our annual LSS Legislative Staff Achievement award is [NANCY BUTCHER](#), Office Manager/Administrator, West Virginia House of Delegates. Dawn Reese Leer, LSS Chair, presented Nancy with the award at our Professional Development Seminar in Indianapolis, Indiana. Congratulations, Nancy!

Nancy became involved in the Leadership Staff Section in 2000. Her contribution began with chairing various LSS Committees, continued with hosting a very successful LSS Professional Training Seminar in Charleston, West Virginia in 2003, and peaked in 2004-2005 when she served as the Chair of LSS. She faced many obstacles chairing the section during a time when we could not find a host state for our PDS, so we held a joint meeting with LINCOS for the first time ever—meeting in Rhode Island where we had no leadership staff active in our staff section. Nancy continues to be an indispensable workhorse of LSS, enriching us with her witty sense of humor and guiding us with her vision.

Nancy has worked for the Committee on Finance, West Virginia House of Delegates, since 1997. She has held various positions from Receptionist to Assistant to the Committee. She also serves as the NCSL State Ambassador for West Virginia.

When presenting the award to Nancy, Dawn surprised her with a "Nancy Story" from a former colleague.

*For many, many years, Nancy was the fearless leader of the West Virginia Legislature's co-ed slow pitch softball team, [The Legislative Bills](#). When I first started playing, she was our pitcher, and she would also catch from time to time--all while playing barefoot! The funny thing is that she was better than most of the players on our team and in the league! She could smack the crap out of a ball, which isn't too hard to believe since Nancy doesn't put up with much gruff in real life!*

John Mullins, a past chair of LSS, shared a few of his fun filled "Nancy experiences" at our luncheon in Indianapolis and also spoke of her dedication.

*Nancy is truly the focal point of the Committee on Finance staff. Her organizational skills, multi-tasking abilities and in-depth knowledge of the entire government structure have her often serving as "counsel to counsel."*

*When any unique constituent question arises, Nancy is the first to have the solution. She knows most of state government on a first name basis and can get things done quicker than the most savvy politician. Her abilities have made those she serves powerful and efficient - and they are aware of her value.*

*Lobbyists in West Virginia have a respectful fear of Nancy. In addition to her many duties, she isn't the least bit intimidated to walk out into a crowded, noisy hallway next to her committee room and tell special interest, "We're having a meeting in here, so shut up!"*

*Since becoming active in LSS, Nancy has tried to make the section inclusive, fun and more like a family - not simply a collection of professionals attending continuing education.*

Nancy's continued dedication and participation in the leadership Staff Section make her an excellent and very deserving recipient of this year's achievement award.



Nancy Butcher of West Virginia receives her award from Outgoing LSS Chair, Dawn Reese (PA).



John Mullins



# Self-Preservation in the Legislative Environment

by **Nancy Butcher**  
**Office Manager/Administrator**  
**House of Delegates**  
**West Virginia**

I'm not sure what I was thinking when I volunteered to "review" this session for the newsletter. "Self-preservation in the Legislative Environment" conjured up lots of images in my mind, but nothing even close to the wonderful treat that we were served! I only hope I can relate some of the interesting and helpful information we received.

The program agenda "description" to this session was spot on. For those who did not get to attend our annual training seminar, here is how this session was introduced:

"Long hours, tight deadlines, quick turnarounds, tiny margins of error, high stress, changing priorities—how do you survive in this environment? This session will emphasize the importance of taking care of yourself to enable you to think clearly and be creative while you work through the turmoil of legislative life."

Anyone who works for the Legislature, regardless of what state you are in, knows of the pressure and stress that are involved with legislative duty. Constituents, state agencies and their personnel, lobbyists and members make life, on some days, a living nightmare. Time pressure is another thing that adds to the stress. Having survived two heart attacks (both at the end of the legislative session), my knowledge of stress relievers grows each year. This upcoming year's stress reliever info came during our annual training seminar. Dr. Vicki Mech-Hester of Mech-Hester Solutions was the facilitator of this fun-filled session.

On the outline that Dr. Mech-Hester passed out, Point #3 entitled "Take Time to Take a YOU Turn," a quote by Ben Franklin was included. It read, "We stand at the crossroads, each minute, each hour, each day, making choices. We choose the thoughts we allow ourselves to think, the passions we allow ourselves to feel, and the actions we allow ourselves to perform. Each choice is made in the context of whatever value system we've selected to govern our lives. In selecting that value system, we are in a very real way, making the most important choice we will ever make." WOW!!!! What a statement! Making the right choices begins with making notes to ourselves. Dr. Mech-Hester explained that we need to be proactive, we need to put things first, we need to think win-win (balance all aspects of our lives), we need to strive to understand and then be understood. We need to nurture relations (find a friend at work) and renew ourselves by finding time for ourselves. She also explained that we all know what we should do and we need to lean forward into our lives. We need to begin each day as if it were on purpose and make it a good day!



"Celebrate What's Right with the World," says Dr. Mech-Hester. She also adds, "When we see the good in things, we implicitly acknowledge that solutions exist for the many challenges before us." She says that when we believe it, we will see it, that we need to recognize abundance and possibilities and that unleashing energy to fix what's wrong is a move beyond the negative. We need to ride the change and see the potential in everything (being a positive thinker), go to the edge and be your best for the world (give 110%) and to remember that we have a choice. We can choose how we go through each day. DeWitt Jones said, "Do it and believe!"

Learning to take time for ourselves is one of the hardest things I have ever tried to do. Taking the time to say to myself that in order for me to give the 110%, I have to give that to myself. The opportunity to hear presenters, such as Dr. Mech-Hester, is one of the tools that I have had this year to help me find the right "self preservation." This session was FUN! The interaction with one and another was so insightful...reminiscing about this session brings a smile to my face and heart...it was that FUN!

One last thing, being a part of the Leadership Staff Section has also provided me a tool that I could not live without... counterparts...counterparts from across this great nation who experience the same types of turmoil that I experience in the legislative environment. We are not only counterparts, we are great friends who are there to share things with and who are more than happy to assist in finding a solution to whatever the environment brings. If you have never attended one of our annual training seminars, I hope this is the year that you add us (LSS) to your "To Do" list for 2009. You won't be sorry!

**Notes from NCSL Leadership Staff Section Seminar  
- Indianapolis - September 2008**



# Professional Development Praised by Legislative Leaders

by **Sheila Hardy**  
**Assistant to Caucus Chairman**  
**House of Representatives–Minority**  
**Kentucky**

Notes from NCSL Leadership Staff  
Section Seminar - Indianapolis  
- September 2008

Some of the best of the Hoosier State Legislative leaders discussed the important role played by dedicated, professional legislative staff in the opening meeting of the 2008 NCSL Leadership Professional development Seminar. They provided a fun, motivational and most insightful look at Leadership Staffers from Leaders' viewpoint. LSS former Chair, Laura Bauman, Chief of Staff, Senate Minority, moderated the panel composed of The Honorable Richard Young, Senate Minority Leader; The Honorable Connie Lawson, Senate Majority Floor Leader; The Honorable Dale Grubb, House Majority Caucus Chair; and, The Honorable David Frizzell, House Minority Whip.

The most notable message echoed by all panelists was their strong belief as legislative leaders in the importance of personal development for staff. Senator Young stated that he is "always telling various professional staff that they are mandated to take time for personal development, for no jobs are more complex than those of government staff. They (staffers) make government work." Floor Leader, Senator Lawson shared further the importance of professional development stating that as the government and the legislature have become more complex and is a tougher challenge today, it was the responsibility of the staff to carry back seminar information and update the training of local staff.

"A good professional staff person is worth their weight in gold," Rep. Grubb told the audience of staffers. The discussion reminded attendees that it is easy for staffers to

get so busy day to day in the minutia that they seldom give themselves credit for encouraging and making possible the best efforts from the legislative leaders. Panelists noted that Professional development not only teaches new ideas and methods, it builds professionalism. For the Legislative Leader, the more confidence he or she can have in their staff, the more they can focus on the bigger picture of leading and making good laws for our governments.

Hearing the inside thoughts of these state leaders as they shared their feelings on the importance of those who served them was encouraging and enlightening. Certainly it was a gift to staffers' ego, but much more importantly was the message of what leadership staff truly meant to the really important people who share the responsibility, the stress and the glory of running our states – the elected officials.

Invaluable insight from the esteemed panel of Indiana leaders touched on individual characteristics as well. They placed great importance on such qualities as trust, patience and loyalty, with loyalty being tantamount to the professional success of staffers and legislative leadership. Other important qualities included that one must be able to multi-task; to be adaptable; to give gentle direction, yet be schooled in candidness. Leaders agreed that a good Leadership staffer serves almost as a psychologist, thinks as a generalist, and works with others as a team.

The panel was a great opening to a great seminar!

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## Did you know our staff section has a website? [www.ncsl.org/programs/legman/lss/lsshome.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/legman/lss/lsshome.htm)

It's the place to go for the most up-to-date information on what's going on with the Leadership Staff Section. You'll find:

- ◆ Complete meeting information, including agendas
- ◆ On-line registration for meetings
- ◆ Recent newsletters

- ◆ Upcoming activities
- ◆ Contact information for LSS officers and your NCSL Liaison
- ◆ NCSL information, including policy issues, state legislative data, NCSL's federal activities, and contact information for NCSL's issue specialists

◆ And MUCH more!

"Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards."

–Vernon Sanders Law



# WHERE DO YOU DRAW THE LINE?

by **Tracy Campbell**  
**Administrative Assistant to the Majority Whip**  
**West Virginia House of Delegates**

Notes from NCSL Leadership Staff  
Section Seminar - Indianapolis  
- September 2008



In our legislative journey, some legislative staff may be walking a fine line between the political and institutional street. We often need DO NOT ENTER signs and flashing CAUTION lights to determine where the line is between our political roles while working on campaigns and our institutional roles while working at the Legislature.

During the seminar, we joined our colleagues to discuss the ever so important and sometimes critical dilemmas that we encounter while working in the Legislature. Panelists Laura DeVivo, Senior Policy Advisor to the Speaker (North Carolina), Jamie Jo Franklin, Chief of Staff, House Majority Caucus (Kentucky) and Tom Wright, Policy Director, House Finance Committee (Alaska) each described personal experiences they have faced during their legislative travels and offered suggestions and advice.

This open panel discussion was extremely informative. I have been attending the NCSL Leadership Staff Section since 2004, and I can honestly say the open panel discussions

are extremely effective and significant. Sharing your ideas, experiences, and war stories with your colleagues is always a remarkable learning tool, not to mention the fact that you feel a sense of understanding that you are not alone. Somewhere, somehow, someone has been or is standing in your shoes.



*Mark Your Calendars!!!*

**Annual NCSL Legislative Summit**  
**July 20-24, 2009**  
**Philadelphia, PA**

**Annual LSS Professional**  
**Development Seminar**  
**September 8-12, 2009**  
**(tentative dates)**  
**Austin, TX**



**Who said this? ...**

*"It's great for the state of Alaska."*





## 2009 Philadelphia Legislative Summit - July 20 - 24

The **Philadelphia** attitude prevails -- cherishing individual liberty, innovation, hard work and a commitment to the next big thing. It's symbolized everywhere, even in the statue commemorating Rocky at the foot of the steps of the Philadelphia Art museum.

**NCSL's 2009 Legislative Summit** is the next **big thing for the states** -- a gathering like no other. Where Republicans and Democrats from across the country come together to work on the nation's toughest issues. Where legislative staff gather to sharpen their skills and make the institution strong.

Watch your mail box in late January for the early brochure, and be among the first to come to Philadelphia. Housing and registration will open February 1.

Visit the Philadelphia Convention and [Visitor Bureau website](#).



## Recipe

### Pennsylvania Apple Cake

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 2 eggs                   | 1 teaspoon baking soda                            |
| 2 cups sugar             | 1/2 teaspoon salt                                 |
| 1 cup cooking oil        | 1 teaspoon vanilla                                |
| 2 cups all purpose flour | 1 cup chopped walnuts                             |
| 2 teaspoons cinnamon     | 4 cups thinly sliced pared tart apples (5 medium) |

Beat eggs with a mixer until thick and light. Combine sugar and oil; pour into eggs with mixer on medium speed. Stir together flour, cinnamon, soda and salt; add to egg mixture with vanilla; beat to mix. Stir in walnuts. Spread sliced apples in a buttered 12x9x2-inch pan. Pour batter over apples, spreading to cover. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 1 hour. Remove from oven and cool. Spread with Cream Cheese Icing.

Cream Cheese Icing: Soften 2 3-ounce packages cream cheese. Beat until fluffy. Beat in 1/4 cup melted butter; then beat in 2 cups powdered sugar and 1 teaspoon lemon juice. Spread over cooled cake. Refrigerate.

Makes 12-15 servings.



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*It's great for the  
state of Alaska."*

(Tom Wright's response when asked  
what he thought about  
Alaska's Governor Sarah Palin being  
selected as Senator John  
McCain's presidential running mate.)



Aurora Hauke,  
Tom Wright,  
(LSS Chair),  
and Josh  
Applebee from  
Alaska.

## NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

Comments about this issue, suggestions, or articles for the next newsletter  
will be gladly received by the Communications Committee.

We encourage you to contact the committee chair or newsletter editor with your ideas.

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