NLPES News

National Legislative Program Evaluation Society

A Staff Section of the National Conference of State Legislatures

NOVEMBER 2009

Chair's Corner
James Barber (Mississippi)

The saying goes that "everything old is new again," and this adage certainly applies to my serving as chair of the NLPES Executive Committee and the current state of NLPES.

I had the privilege of serving as chair of the Executive Committee from August 2000 until July 2001. It was both rewarding and challenging to provide leadership to our organization during that period. Now I find myself back at the helm after several years' absence from the Executive Committee. Since my election in 2006, it's been a pleasure to serve with the members of the current Executive Committee, none of whom were on the committee when I last served.

While serving on the Executive Committee again, I have noticed that many issues being discussed are actually "old" issues faced by Executive Committee members of years past. However, the solutions to those issues have "new" twists to them. Some examples follow.

Communication

Over the years, the Executive Committee has made conscious efforts to communicate with member offices and their staffs regarding services provided by and through NLPES and NCSL. In the "old" days, such communications typically occurred through telephone calls, faxes, or an online bulletin board (which was truly radical for its day). Presently, communication is less of a challenge since we now live in a virtual world provided through our laptops or telephones. NLPES members can communicate with each other instantly through e-mails, listserv postings, responses to the Question of the Month, and soon through wikis and discussion forums on the NCSL portal.

Training and Professional Development

The Executive Committee has traditionally played a role in providing training to legislative evaluators and auditors. In the "old" days, such training usually occurred during fall training conferences or the annual NCSL Legislative Summit. Again, thanks to our virtual world, training is literally at the fingertips of all NLPES members. Within the last year, the Executive Committee has begun placing training modules on the NLPES website. These modules can be used for self-study or presented as classroom sessions. In addition, the Executive Committee has produced short training sessions for managers and podcasts on various topics.

As in the past, the Executive Committee will continue to provide services and resources to our member offices and their staffs by the most efficient and effective means possible.

In closing, I'm sure that all of you know that the Executive Committee chose to cancel the 2009 fall training conference in Hawaii due to concerns about the nation's economy and its potential impact on attendance. Hopefully, the Hawaii State Auditor's office will have the opportunity to host a fall training conference in the future. The good news is that the Executive Committee already has plans in the works for the 2010 fall training conference, which will be held October 4-6 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The Performance Audit Division of the Louisiana Auditor's Office will host the 2010 conference. Members of the National Legislative Services and Security Association, another staff section of NCSL, will co-locate their fall training conference in Baton Rouge with NLPES. Plan now to attend this upcoming training event.

Inside the NEWS

Utah Office of the Legislative Auditor General Presented 2009 Excellence in Evaluation Award

NLPES chose the Utah Office of the Legislative Auditor General as the recipient of the 2009 Excellence in Evaluation award. The award was presented to the office that had contributed the most to the field of legislative program evaluation during the four-year period beginning January 1, 2005, and ending December 31, 2008. Each submission was evaluated based on three criteria: impact, body of work, and furthering the field of legislative program evaluation.

The Utah Legislative Auditor General's office successfully meets the challenges of an increased demand for its audits as well as requests for short-term 'hot topic' information. The Utah office's body of work covers a wide range of subject matter. The office takes on projects dealing with large, sometimes controversial, issues as well as smaller scope projects that are instrumental in legislative decision making. The office's format for reports allows readers to grasp important messages quickly. The office has also made significant contributions to the field of evaluation through its participation and leadership in NLPES activities and sponsorship of the 2006 NLPES Fall Training Conference.

Congratulations to John Schaff and his staff for a job well done!

Florida OPPAGA and Washington JLARC Presented 2009 Outstanding Evaluation Methodology Awards

NLPES chose the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and the Washington State Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) as recipients of the 2009 Outstanding Evaluation Methodology award. Congratulations to the staff of OPPAGA and JLARC for jobs well done.

Florida

The Florida report, *Redirection Program Achieves Lower Recidivism and a $14.4 Million Cost Savings Compared to DJJ Commitment*, demonstrated difficult and sophisticated research methods. To assess the outcomes of the Redirection program, OPPAGA staff analyzed a cohort of youth who successfully completed Redirection or residential commitment by August 31, 2007. OPPAGA staff tracked the subsequent delinquency outcomes of these youth for a minimum of five months and a maximum of three years, depending on when they completed the program. The staff compared outcomes for Redirection youth who had been committed to low, moderate, and high-risk residential programs. The staff used statistical techniques to control for factors related to recidivism, including age, gender, race, number of prior referrals, a non-law violation of probation prior to admission, region, county of residence, and time out of the program.

Washington

The Washington report, *Comparing Costs and Characteristics of Housing Assistance Programs*, demonstrated innovative or unusual applications of established methodologies. A key objective of this report was to compare the total cost of providing housing to low-income households through the use of the two basic approaches to housing assistance: capital subsidies and rent subsidies (vouchers).

The staff's approach to evaluating the costs of vouchers in comparison to capital subsidies started by dividing the costs of each alternative into its component parts. The question posed by the staff was: What are the total costs incurred in order to provide the subsidized, low-income housing, and who incurs these costs? JLARC engaged consultants who are experts in the area of life cycle cost analysis and capital planning and development. Working with these consultants, JLARC staff developed a life cycle cost model to analyze the costs and financing for low-income housing. To obtain information necessary for the model's development, JLARC's staff and consultant met with and interviewed personnel who work in the field of low-income housing. To determine the total cost for capital developments, the JLARC model calculated the present discounted values for rental income, development subsidies, forgiven property taxes, and land residual values. The present discounted values were then converted to monthly equivalents to allow for comparison to monthly voucher costs. To ensure that the model worked as intended, JLARC staff demonstrated it and explained its features to a university professor with expertise in housing policy and quantitative methods. JLARC also obtained feedback on the model from managers of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.

Twenty-Two Offices Awarded Certificates of Impact

During the Legislative Summit in Philadelphia, NLPES awarded Certificates of Impact to the evaluation/audit offices in the following states: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Texas (Sunset Commission), Utah, Washington, Wisconsin and West Virginia.

Learning Opportunities at the 2009 NCSL Legislative Summit

Bob Boerner (NLPES Liaison, NCSL)

This year's NCSL Legislative Summit and Exhibition, held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from July 20-24, offered social events at the National Constitution Center on Independence Mall and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, a session on "How to Make Your Boss a Rock Star," a plenary session with Bill Gates Jr., and numerous informative training sessions. The NCSL Legislative Summit brought together legislative leaders, lawmakers, staff members and policy experts. NCSL's Legislative Summit offered more than 150 sessions on the hottest topics facing states.

Members and officers of the NLPES Executive Committee met twice during the week to discuss upcoming events for the staff section, including planning of the 2010 NLPES Fall Training Conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. James Barber, Deputy Director, Legislative PEER Committee, Mississippi, was named the new Chair of NLPES on Tuesday, July 21.

Mitzi Ferguson, Deputy Legislative Auditor, Division of Legislative Audit, Arkansas, moderated the NLPES session that featured a DVD presentation from David Walker, former comptroller of the United States, describing some of the vast economic troubles that may be in our future. Session attendees also participated in a roundtable discussion of how legislative program evaluation offices can provide critical oversight during hard times.

NLPES Webcasts Are Coming Soon

Bob Boerner (NLPES Liaison, NCSL)

The NLPES staff section intended to hold its 2009 professional development seminar this fall in Honolulu, Hawaii. The NLPES seminar was designed to coincide with the 2009 Governmental Professional Development Conference sponsored by the Hawaii Chapters of the Association of Government Accountants and the American Society of Military Comptrollers. The seminar was to include selected plenary and concurrent sessions that would have been of interest to members of all the organizations. However, due to the country's economic condition and the distinct possibility that the NLPES seminar would have been poorly attended, the NLPES Executive Committee decided to cancel its 2009 professional development seminar.

On October 14-16, the Hawaii Chapters of the Association of Government Accountants and the American Society of Military Comptrollers jointly sponsored the 2009 Governmental Professional Development Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Three sessions from this conference were recorded by the Hawaii Office of the Auditor and will be offered as NLPES webcasts. They will soon be posted on the NLPES Web portal page. The following audio sessions will be available.

Recovery Act Update and Reporting Requirements

Speakers Marcia B. Buchanan (U.S. Government Accountability Office), John W. Cox (Grant Thornton LLP), John Radford (State of Oregon Controller) and Charles Cook (American Society of Military Comptrollers) offered an update to the Recovery Act and its reporting requirements.

Identity Theft

Bruce E. Sullivan, retired after over 30 years with the U.S. Department of Defense and now with Visa Inc., provided details on how identity thieves obtain personal information and described methods for reducing the potential for becoming an identity theft victim.

Network Security

Arnold Laanui (Federal Bureau of Investigation) offered his perspective on identity theft. He also provided a threat assessment strategy to help recognize how identity thieves use open source information and explained how identity thieves obtain data from unsuspecting victims.

STATE PROFILE: Texas State Auditor's Office

The "Lone Star State" is often thought of as a place of vast expanses full of cattle and oilrigs. Texas *is* big: It's the second largest state, both in total area (268,601 square miles) and population (24.1 million), and the distance from Beaumont on the state's eastern border to El Paso, which borders New Mexico, is greater than that from New York to Chicago. Average annual rainfall varies from 8 inches in areas of West Texas to 56 inches in parts of East Texas. When it comes to industry, however, there is much more to Texas than longhorns and petroleum. Texas is a hub for semi-conductor manufacturing; shipping and transportation; and has more wind turbines than any other state in the nation. (It is also one of the largest producers of rattlesnakes!) Texas is home to three of the nation's ten most populated cities—Houston (4th), San Antonio (7th) and Dallas (8th). Texas has approximately 296,000 state employees who work for 117 state agencies and 66 higher education institutions. These facts leave little wonder why we say, "Texas: It's Like a Whole Other Country," and for those non-native Texans, "While I wasn't born here, I got here as fast as I could."

Office Location

The Texas State Auditor's Office is housed in the Robert E. Johnson Building, one block north of the state capitol building in Austin. Interesting fact: Completed in 2000, the Johnson building is home to four of the five legislative service agencies that support the Texas Legislature and is one of three state office buildings linked to the Capitol through an underground tunnel system.

Office History

The 48th Texas Legislature created the first "State Auditor and Efficiency Expert" position in 1929. The position was in the executive branch, and the individual serving was appointed for a two-year term by the governor, who could also remove or discharge the appointee at any time. The position was changed to "State Auditor" in 1943 and moved to the Legislative Branch. Other changes in the law required the State Auditor to be a certified public accountant, to be appointed by a six-member joint committee that included the lieutenant governor, speaker of the House, and chairpersons of two Senate and two House committees. Prior to 1987, the State Auditor's Office primarily issued financial opinions. In 1987, the Legislature expanded the State Auditor's authority to perform audits of all agencies, including institutions of higher education, and to perform economy, effectiveness and efficiency audits; special audits; and investigations. The Legislature also required audits to follow generally accepted government auditing standards. Since 1943, Texas has had only four state auditors; the longest term was twenty-five years.

Current Authority

The State Auditor's Office (Office) has the authority to audit all state agencies and institutions of higher education and any entity that receives appropriated funds from the state.

Office Staff

The Office employed an average of 198 professional and support staff in the most recent fiscal year (September 1, 2008, through August 31, 2009). Many of our employees have one or more certifications. They include the following:

- Certified Public Accountant (36 employees).
- Certified Government Auditing Professional (29 employees).
- Certified Information Systems Auditor (17 employees).
- Certified Internal Auditor (21 employees).
- Certified Fraud Examiner (21 employees).

Audits and Reviews

In 2009, the Office completed 52 audits and reviews. This included financial opinion audits, financial and compliance audits, and performance measure certification audits.

Investigations

The Office has a Special Investigations Unit (SIU) that investigates alleged fraud and illegal activity and presents the results to prosecuting authorities. In 2009, the SIU issued three public reports. The SIU also provides training on detecting and reporting fraud.

Other Office Functions

The Office's state classification team is responsible for maintaining the state's classification plan (job classifications and descriptions) in the State's General Appropriation Act. This team also performs compliance audits to ensure that agencies conform to the classification plan and assists state agencies with human resources-related questions. The classification team released six reports related to the classification plan in 2009. In addition, the Office has a professional development team that coordinates and provides continuing education opportunities for auditors, accountants, investigators and other professional staff both for the Office and for outside entities. During 2009, the professional staff sponsored 197 courses that were attended by 3,171 public and private sector employees.

Communicating the Office's Message

The Office maximizes electronic distribution of reports by using a listserv to distribute reports to the public. Reports also are provided via email to members of the Legislative Audit Committee, the Office's governing committee, and legislative committees.

Facts about the Current State Auditor

John Keel, the current State Auditor, was appointed in 2004. He is a CPA, CGAP and CFE. In 2008, he received the David M. Walker Excellence in Government Performance and Accountability Award (State Government Level). Prior to his appointment, he served as director of the Texas Legislative Budget Board for ten years. He also worked in the Texas Lieutenant Governor's Office, the Office of the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, and the Office of the Texas Attorney General.

Most Difficult Working Environment for Audit Fieldwork

This summer, a team had to review a contractor's financial records in a building with no air conditioning and no running water. By the way, the average temperature that week was more than 100 degrees.

Shortest Turnaround Time for a Project

In 2007, the office investigated suspected abuse at the Texas Youth Commision. The investigation, which was documented in a 60-page report, was completed in fifteen days. Forty-four staff worked on the project, which took more than 2,900 hours of staff time.

What Can a Russian Learn in Texas?

Ksenia Zemlyanova (Texas Sunset Commission)

What are the first three things that come to a Russian's mind when hearing the word 'Texas?" Thanks to mass media, children's comics and old western movies, a common answer would be more than stereotypical: "Cowboys, cacti and saloons."

That was rather close to what I, a true victim of the above, was thinking back in August while trying to fall asleep on a ten-hour flight over the Pacific Ocean, traveling from my home country of Russia to the United States of America. It was the beginning of my eighth trip to the United States, although this time I was in a new capacity—not an exchange student, summer camp staff, or interpreter—as a participant in the LEAP Program with a goal of learning about the American political process.

Let's LEAP!

The Legislative Education and Practice (LEAP) Program is sponsored by the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. LEAP affords young professionals from Georgia, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine who are pursuing careers in government the opportunity to gain comparative experience in the United States through four-month internships in state-level governments and non-governmental organizations. The program is administered by NCSL and the American Councils for International Education.

I decided to participate in the program not only because it was another chance for me to go to the United States, but also because I could get an inside perspective of American politics. When I was completing the LEAP Program application, I wrote that I wanted to learn about transparency and accountability of the government and about the involvement of citizens in the political process. Having worked for the Perm, Russia, city government for over eighteen months (maintaining the city's official website, writing news and press releases, and arranging press conferences), I knew firsthand how reluctant most of the Russian officials were to reveal information to the public. I saw how information was processed before it appeared in newspaper pages or television news and how hard it was to make the political process anywhere close to transparent.

How does Sunset work?

In spring 2009, I received my fellowship placement information, which was the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission in Austin. I was very happy, not only because I realized that I could leave my winter coat, hat and boots at home because I would not need them in a Southern state, but because, according to what I read about the agency on its website, Sunset was a unique place, especially to someone from Russia. I found out later that I was not mistaken.

The Sunset Advisory Commission, created by the Texas Legislature in 1977, serves to identify and eliminate waste, duplication and inefficiency in government agencies. The commission questions the need for each agency, looks for potential duplication of other public services or programs, and considers new and innovative changes to improve each agency's operations and activities. The Sunset process has streamlined and changed state government. Since the first reviews, fifty-five agencies have been abolished and another twelve have been consolidated. In addition, the Legislature has adopted a large majority of the recommendations of the Sunset Commission. To my knowledge, there is no agency in Russia that would perform similar functions. That is why I was very excited to start my fellowship at Sunset, hoping to learn as much as possible and bring the new knowledge back to Russia.

What did I learn?

My experience with the agency has been positive since the day I started. My first day at work, all the staff were wearing badges with names written in Russian, and a big poster on the wall read "Welcome, Ksenia!" That day I also got my own desk with a computer and a separate landline. Business cards arrived a week later. I received a full new-employee training within the first couple of weeks, along with five other new members of the team. And after that, work started. As a side note, I like to call my Sunset experience "work," not "fellowship," because I perform real duties, as if I were a real employee of the agency.

My fellowship supervisor and interim director of the Sunset Advisory Commission, Ken Levine, assigned me to the team that was evaluating the work of Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB). What does the assignment mean to me? Many different things. First of all, I get to learn a lot about Texas agriculture, and my vocabulary has already increased by about a 100 agriculture-related terms. Second, I get to attend overview meetings with agency employees, write meeting summaries, do background research on the Texas conservation agency and agencies in other states, analyze past legislation, and put together the agency fact sheet. I have actually become part of the Sunset process and can learn about it from the "inside." Also, I have the opportunity to observe different work styles and adopt best practices. For example, my project manager, Sarah Kirkle, treats me not as an intern (especially not as an intern from another country) but as any other member of the team. She gives me a variety of assignments and is always there to help me with advice, if needed. Actually, all the Sunset staff are very nice and friendly are fairly knowledgeable of Russia, to my pleasant surprise.

The Texas conservation agency review has also given me a great opportunity to travel and explore rural Texas. I got to visit Temple, Texas, a couple of times. It is a small town in north Texas, considered by many among the last on the list of travel destinations, but I know better! Actually, Temple was the first place where I saw people wearing cowboy hats, speaking of stereotypes, Finally, my fellowship at the Sunset Commission has given me some perks. For example, through the Sunset Commission, I have an opportunity to attend free training seminars. I am currently enrolled in a seven-week program titled "21 Rules of Leadership.”

Although I have five weeks remaining in my fellowship, I have already learned a lot. I hope to implement the new knowledge when I go back to Russia. The LEAP Program involves an outbound project, which I have to develop while in the States and implement after I return to Perm. The ideal project would be to establish a similar agency, but much as I would like to see it happen, I realize that I need to take one step at a time. We can start with sharing knowledge about the Sunset process and see how it goes from there.

I can continue describing my current American experience for a long time, because there is so much more to tell. I get to stay with a wonderful host family (which is a part of the LEAP program) and learn about the American culture and everyday living. I also have to perform ten hours of volunteer service, which I have already exceeded. I also get to meet a lot of great people here in Austin, and I know for sure that the friendships I make here will last a long time. But all of this is a totally different story.

I almost forgot. Cacti do grow in Austin, and they look very pretty and add to the beauty and diversity of this wonderful city. As for saloons, I have not seen one yet. But the Sixth Street entertainment district totally makes up for that.

From Family to Farms: Evaluation in Three Settings

Carol H. Ripple (North Carolina General Assembly, Program Evaluation Division)

When I interviewed for a position in North Carolina’s new Program Evaluation Division, John Turcotte asked how I might evaluate the management structure of agricultural research stations. My career had been in developmental psychology, not agronomy—I didn’t have an answer. But research stations soon became my life, and fortunately I found the basic principles of evaluation readily apply across content areas and settings.

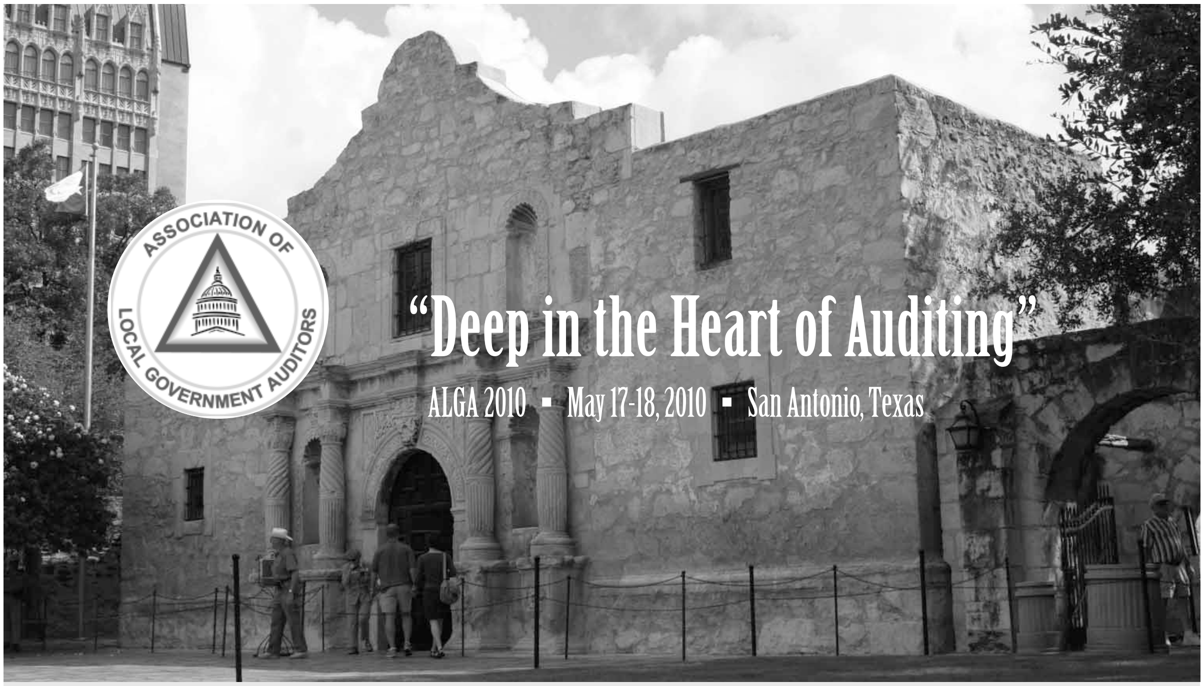
Though this was my first legislative position, I had evaluation experience at Yale and at Casey Family Services, the direct service arm of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. At Yale, my applied research on child development and social policy included evaluations of state-funded prekindergarten, child-care outcomes and infrastructure, and state child-welfare services. We provided independent methodological and content expertise for program administrators, funders and participants, not to mention academic colleagues and journal editors. The main challenges lay in balancing grant writing, teaching, publishing and research. Our goal was to affect policy (as when our data helped convince Iowa legislators to support the state’s prekindergarten program) and improve practice (e.g., changing data structures in Rhode Island’s child welfare agency).

At Casey, evaluation created an opportunity to work closely with program providers. We used participatory strategies to engage staff in evaluation design, data collection and interpretation of findings. We evaluated initiatives for adults (for example, financial literacy and transportation) and families (such as after-school care and parent-child literacy). The biggest challenges lay in gaining the trust of program staff; promoting evaluation as part of program planning; and communicating findings effectively to agency administrators, staff and program participants. Our goal was to encourage the use of data, often to streamline (e.g., when staff effort far outweighed program benefits) and improve practice (building logic models to define programs).

Legislative program evaluation brought with it a dramatic expansion of topic areas. The request to examine research stations arose because the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the state land-grant universities share responsibilities for North Carolina’s eighteen stations, resulting in a complicated structure that differed from all other states. In our evaluation, the importance of focused research questions was quickly apparent: academic research could last years, but we had just four months. We gathered data from documents, stakeholders and databases, and we visited and interviewed staff at all 18 research stations—3,000 miles and many hours later, we had great pictures to enhance our presentation as well as awareness of the stations and agricultural research under way.

When it came time to issue the report, my academic background turned out to be double-edged. The department accused us of bias when we recommended transferring management to the universities and reducing the number of stations. I’d been used to presenting evaluation findings to interested audiences and doing a lot of handholding to convey results to stakeholders. The angry farmers at the briefing wearing bright orange “NO TRANSFER” stickers were not interested in holding my hand, but at least their derisive outbursts were minimal. It was a breathtaking introduction to legislative program evaluation.

But to return to the similarities: Across settings, detailed evaluation plans based on focused research questions and a clear idea of data types, sources, and collection methods is essential to keeping projects focused and feasible. Thinking about how the data will inform findings and how recommendations will emerge from the findings from the outset makes writing easier. Last but not least, communicating results clearly, concisely and appropriately for the audience at hand is key to achieving evaluation goals, whatever they are.



Please join us in San Antonio, Texas, at the 22nd ALGA Annual Conference, on May 17-18, 2010, as we delve "Deep in the Heart of Auditing." The Association of Local Government Auditors' annual conference will be held at the Holiday Inn San Antonio Riverwalk beginning with a welcoming reception on Sunday evening, May 16. Featured topics will include the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and implementation issues, public corruption, integrating the Internet and technology to promote audit productivity, managing through tough economic times, common challenges encountered by audit executives, and assessing risk in schools. The conference will offer 15 CPE credits and the pre- and post-conference workshops will provide up to 12 CPE credits. Mark your calendar!

2010 ALGA Annual Conference – May 17-18

ALGA member rate: $450
Non-member rate: $550
Guests: $145

Pre- and Post-Conference Workshops – May 16 and May 19

Topics to be announced soon!

Hotel

The Holiday Inn San Antonio Riverwalk is offering the prevailing federal per diem rate of $117/night plus applicable taxes. To book your room, call the Holiday Inn at (210) 224-2500 and ask for the Association of Local Government Auditors group rate. The cutoff date for this special rate is April, 14, 2010. After this date, rooms will be offered on a rate and space available basis only.

General Information

As it becomes available, general information will be posted to ALGA's Web site at www.governmentauditors.org. Also, plan to stay for the 18th Biennial Forum of Government Auditors, May 18-20, 2010, hosted by the Southwest and National Intergovernmental Audit Forums. For more info visit www.auditforum.org.

Office Happenings

Minnesota

The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor recently hired Julie Trupke-Bastidas as a permanent evaluator. She was previously working on a temporary basis.

Texas Sunset

Joey Longley, director of the Texas Sunset Commission for the past fourteen years, recently retired. Ken Levine presently serves as interim director. Texas Sunset has promoted Jennifer Jones to Assistant Director, Karen Latta to Senior Manager, Chloe Lieberknecht to Senior Policy Analyst and Amy Trost to Senior Policy Analyst. The commission has also hired the following new policy analysts: Leonard Chan, Emily Johnson, Heidi Bush, Erin Gilmer, Robert Romig and Shawn Shurtleff.

Washington

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) of Washington State is now three years into a unique initiative to review the effectiveness of over 500 tax preferences. JLARC is charged with reviewing tax preferences over a ten-year period to determine whether they are meeting their public policy purposes and to make recommendations to continue, modify or terminate them. JLARC has accumulated the first three years of reviews and posted them online at:

http://www.citizentaxpref.wa.gov/reports.htm

JLARC is also pleased to welcome Dana Lynn and Peter Heineccius to our office as research analysts. Dana and Peter will assist with JLARC's tax preference reviews.

Keenan Konopaski, JLARC's deputy, has been elected as a state representative to the Pacific Northwest Intergovernmental Audit Forum (PNIAF). PNIAF is a regional chapter of the Intergovernmental Audit Forum, established by the Government Accountability Office to foster collaboration within the audit community and promote professional development.

From the Editor

Just a brief word from the editor—As you can see from the Chair's Corner on page one, I'll be wearing two hats until July 2010 when Kathy McGuire of Florida OPPAGA will become chair of the NLPES Executive Committee. While I'm not exactly a glutton for punishment, it will be fun and rewarding to serve NLPES in both capacities.

I'm sure most of you are trying to close out projects in anticipation of the beginning of your upcoming 2010 legislative sessions. At PEER, we try to avoid the "reindeer on the rooftop" syndrome at the end of the year, but it's always a challenge to complete everything in time for January 1. Here's hoping that each of you has a restful holiday season!

James Barber

NLPES-NEWS is published three times a year by the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society, a staff section of the National Conference of State Legislatures. NLPES serves the professionals of state legislative agencies engaged in government program evaluation. The purposes of NLPES are:

- To promote the art and science of legislative program evaluation.
- To enhance professionalism and training in legislative program evaluation.
- To promote the exchange of ideas and information about legislative program evaluation.

NLPES News Editor: James Barber (MS)
601-359-1226
james.barber@peer.state.ms.us
www.ncsl.org/programs/nlpes/

National Conference of State Legislatures ◆ 7700 East First Place ◆ Denver, Colorado 80230 ◆ 303-364-7700