

WYOMING AND NCSL

Getting Our Money's Worth



With limited staffing resources, the Wyoming Legislature relies heavily on the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) to augment services. However, in Wyoming's experience, even states with larger staffing components can benefit greatly from NCSL's services. We view NCSL as the premiere resource for state legislative information in the country. Think of NCSL as your personal legislative "consultant."

NCSL staff provide professional development, research and technical services with a unique state-level, legislative perspective that legislators and staff cannot get from any other resource. Below is a summary of the ways NCSL has assisted the Wyoming Legislature the last several years.

TECHNICAL SERVICES

- NCSL provided a comprehensive staffing study for the Legislative Service Office in 2001 that analyzed the services provided by the Office and made recommendations regarding how to improve legislative staffing and administrative operations. As a result of that study and with implementation assistance by NCSL, the Legislative Service Office created a general research function and a public outreach function for the legislative branch.
- In 2004, NCSL provided the LSO with a grant to provide a workshop for Wyoming social studies and civics teachers to provide professional development about how to teach about the legislative process in the most engaging and accurate ways.
- In 2006, NCSL staff provided a review of information technology services and staff provided by the LSO. The study "kicked" off the Wyoming Legislature's current initiative to completing revamp its bill drafting, processing and tracking systems.
- In 2008, NCSL conducted a comprehensive classification and compensation study of LSO staff that has been used to analyze and guide staff compensation decisions. The analysis conducted by NCSL has also provided LSO's management with a formalized record of individual job responsibilities within the agency.
- In 2010, NCSL facilitated a peer review and evaluation of the LSO Program Evaluation Section, including: the quality review process, quality of the evaluation reports and staff competency.
- NCSL conducted a confidential survey of Wyoming legislators to determine their satisfaction with the LSO Legal Division. NCSL provided the Wyoming Legislature's Management Council with analysis of survey result in December 2010.

PRESENTATIONS AND TESTIMONY

- In 2008, NCSL conducted research and provided a presentation to the Wyoming Legislature's Select Committee on Legislative Technology and Process about Wyoming's legislative voting system and how it compared to other legislative voting systems around the country.
- In 2009, NCSL provided testimony and assistance on felony voting rights before the Wyoming House Judiciary Committee.
- In 2009, NCSL partnered with the Policy Consensus Initiative and Sheridan and Johnson County legislators to convene community town hall meeting to discuss collaborative governance. NCSL staff worked with the Sheridan and Johnson County legislators on organization, how to run a meeting effectively, how to educate the public and at the same time work with the constituents' concerns. Staff also attended the two-day meeting to observe how these legislators effectively built consensus with their constituents.

- This year, in advance of the 2011 General Session, NCSL health policy staff provided two briefings for all Wyoming legislators about the provisions within the federal Affordable Care Act and how the Act affects states.

LEGISLATOR TRAINING

- NCSL staff have been providing training at the Wyoming Legislature's New Member Orientation sessions for the past decade. Topics include: "How Wyoming's Legislature compares to other states," "Services of the National Conference of State Legislatures," "Importance of Custom, Decorum, and Tradition to the Legislative Institution," "Organization and Hierarchy of Rules and Procedures" and "Ethics: Reflections Series."
- NCSL staff have been providing training to all Wyoming legislators over the past several years on the following topics: "Ethics Refresher," "Working With the Media" and "Using Social Media."
- NCSL staff spoke at the 2010 and 2011 Wyoming Women's Legislative Caucus Leap into Leadership conference, which provides training for women in Wyoming who would like to run for elective office. The Wyoming Women's Legislative Caucus recognizes the expertise and knowledge NCSL shared through presentations at Leap into Leadership in 2010 and 2011. NCSL staff traveled to Casper and Cheyenne to lead sessions on what makes women legislators successful and challenge participants to cultivate those leadership skills in themselves.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND NETWORKING

- Provided involvement in affinity groups such as staff sections for legislative staff (e.g. legal, program evaluation, communications) or for legislators (e.g. NCSL Women's Network.) This is where legislators and staff can find a home with NCSL and learn from individuals who have similar interests and backgrounds.
- Many LSO staff attend annual professional development meetings provided by NCSL. The meetings focus on staff's various areas of expertise (e.g. legal, budget/fiscal, program evaluation, information technology, communications). These training sessions provide valuable skills, but also a network of peers that LSO staff contact throughout the year to glean information from other staff who work within the legislative environment.
- NCSL has been offering more policy and professional development webinars. These webinars are invaluable for legislators and staff, saving time and travel costs to attend. NCSL offered 20 webinars and archived recordings to provide free online training for legislative staff in 2010. Two of the webinars, Ethics for Legislative Drafters and Creating Great Legislation, provided a total of 2.5 hours of free continuing legal education (CLE) credit for Wyoming legislative staff attorneys who participated.

RESEARCH

- NCSL staff prepare numerous research products for Wyoming legislators and legislative staff throughout the year. Many Wyoming legislators work directly with NCSL staff and others make their research requests through the LSO staff.
- NCSL staff prepare state-to-state comparisons on a variety of "hot" policy topics, saving Wyoming staff from calling individual states and gathering the information themselves.
- In addition to policy research, LSO staff often use NCSL staff for research regarding legislative operations and administrative issues.

FREE PUBLICATIONS

- New legislators are provided with NCSL's Effective Legislator series of audio CDs when first elected to help them get up to speed on their new roles as state policy makers.
- NCSL provides some bulk discounts for volume purchasing on publications that are not produced by NCSL staff. The Wyoming Legislature purchased *Republic on Trial* at a discounted rate for all new legislators elected in 2010.