



# NLPES News

National Legislative Program Evaluation Society  
 Website: [www.ncsl.org/programs/nlpes/](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/nlpes/)

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## Chair's Corner Wade Melton (Florida)



Every summer, the southeastern states begin their preparations for hurricane season. Most households put together a small preparedness kit which includes water, nonperishable food,

flashlight/batteries, a radio, first aid kit, etc. This year has already been a busy season and a record year for tropical storms. However, the fourth hurricane of the season has had a dramatic effect on our whole country. Hurricane Katrina first hit the southern end of Florida as a Category 1 storm before slamming into Louisiana as a Category 4 storm. The coastal regions of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and western Florida were severely damaged by the high winds and a 10-to 30-foot storm surge. The New Orleans levee system was breached by the storm and Lake Pontchartrain flooded parts of the city. The official death toll is 1,242 (still rising) and nearly a million citizens were displaced. Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst natural disasters our country has faced, and most states have accepted persons displaced by the storm. All of us in the NLPES community express our sympathies to all the states and individuals affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The last couple of months have also been very busy for the NCSL. Approximately 7,000 people attended the annual meeting in Seattle, Washington. The sessions offered something for everyone in attendance, including legislative program evaluators. The new

NLPES executive committee assumed its duties on the last day of that meeting. I am sorry to say goodbye to Kate Wade (WI) and Phil Durgin (PA) who have provided a number of years of valuable service to the NLPES community. I would also like to warmly welcome to our new committee members, Trish Bishop (VA) and Leslie McGuire (GA).

The new year has already begun with an outstanding fall training conference hosted by the State of Pennsylvania. Nearly 150 individuals from 37 states attended. This is the best state representation NLPES has had since it began hosting training conferences. This representation speaks well about the quality of sessions that NLPES brings to its members. Congratulations to Phil Durgin and his staff for a job well done! If you have not previously attended NLPES training, plan to attend next year in Park City, Utah.

I'm truly honored to serve as your Chair in the upcoming year. I first want to thank Martha Carter (Nebraska) for her leadership this last year. I would also like to express my appreciation to all the members of the Executive Committee for their continuing service to NLPES, especially Ken Levine (Texas) for serving as Vice-Chair and Tim Osterstock (Utah) for serving as Secretary. Finally, I'd like to send out a special thank you to Joel Alter (Minnesota) for hosting our Question of the Month and James Barber (Mississippi) for serving as the NLPES Newsletter editor. If you should have any questions, concerns, or ideas, please feel free to contact me or other members of the Executive Committee.

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## Learning Opportunities at the 2005 NCSL Annual Meeting

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Bob Boerner (NLPES Liaison, NCSL)

This year's NCSL Annual Meeting and Exhibition, held in Seattle, Washington, from August 16-20, offered unique urban experiences, including the Pike Place Market, the majestic Cascade Mountains, and informative training sessions. The NCSL Annual Meeting gathered together legislative leaders, lawmakers, staff members and policy experts. NCSL's "Strong States Strong Nation" offered over 140 sessions on the hottest topics. Bill Gates was the opening plenary speaker.

The NLPES Executive Committee met twice during the week to discuss upcoming events for the staff section, including planning of the NLPES Fall Training Conference in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Wade Melton, Staff Director, Chair of the Team Support Council, Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, was named the new Chair of NLPES on August 19.

Marion Higa, Hawaii State Auditor, was one of the featured speakers on the "Auditing and Legal Issues"

session held on August 16. Other speakers at the session were Jan Yamane, Hawaii Administrative Deputy Auditor; Gay Taylor, Utah General Counsel, Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel; and, Tim Osterstock, Audit Manager, Utah Legislative Auditor General. The staff section also offered four other sessions, "How Agencies Deal With Auditors," "Auditing the Election System," "Evaluators' Perspectives on Educational Accountability," and "Performance Measurement Systems – What's Reasonable to Expect? What's Not?"

At the NLPES Annual Business Meeting and Luncheon, Joe Lawhon, Chair of the NLPES Awards Committee, presented awards to the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor for Excellence in Evaluation and to the Arizona Office of the Auditor General for Excellence in Research Methods. A total of 19 offices were presented Recognition of Impact certificates. The 2005 recipient of the NLPES outstanding achievement was Wayne L. Welsh, Utah Auditor General (retired).

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## Wayne Welsh Recognized for Contributions

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The NLPES Outstanding Achievement Award for 2005 was presented during the recent NCSL Annual Meeting in Seattle to Wayne L. Welsh for his contributions and service to NLPES and the field of legislative program evaluation. Wayne, a CPA, was hired by the Auditor's Office in 1975 and served as the Office's director from 1984 until 2004. Under his leadership, the Office is credited with identifying

potential state-fund savings of more than \$100 million. He served on the LPES (now NLPES) Executive Committee from 1978 until 1980, and his office hosted the section's training conference in 1990 (and will hold it again in 2006). During his career, Wayne served as a member of a number of professional organizations, including representing LPES on a GAO committee to revise government accounting standards and helping to develop the National State Auditor's Association's performance audit peer review process.

NLPES thanks Wayne for his past leadership and wishes him well in his retirement.

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## Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor and Arizona Office of the Auditor General Receive Awards

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During the 2005 NCSL Annual Meeting in Seattle, NLPES recognized two offices for their outstanding work. The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor was selected as the winner of the 2005 NLPES Excellence in Evaluation Award. The Excellence Award was given for the Office's cumulative work for calendar years 2001 through 2004. During this period, the Office issued audits covering such topics as the State Lottery, the State's

subsidized health insurance program for lower-income residents, No Child Left Behind requirements, and water quality regulation. In addition, the Office has hosted the NLPES Question of the Month and has previously received two NLPES methodology awards.

NLPES congratulates the Minnesota Legislative Auditor's Office for a job well done!

The Arizona Office of the Auditor General was selected as the winner of the 2005 NLPES Excellence in Research Methods Award. The Excellence in Research Methods Award was issued for the Office's work in conducting the audit entitled Behavioral Health Services' HB 2003 Funding for Adults with Serious Mental Illness (Report No. 04-03, April 2004). The report used a quasi-experimental design, including pre- and post-analysis and control group

comparisons, to analyze outcomes for three programs implemented by five regional authorities. The Office collaborated with the agency in developing a research design and implementation strategy that created baseline data and processes for generating additional outcome data that can be used for future analysis.

NLPES congratulates the Arizona Auditor General's office for a job well done!



**Minnesota Auditor General Performance Audit Staff**  
**Jim Nobles Auditor General**



**Arizona Auditor General Staff**  
**(responsible for awarding-winning report)**

### **Nineteen Offices Awarded Certificates of Impact**

During the NCSL Annual Meeting, NLPES awarded Certificates of Impact to the evaluation/audit offices in the following states: Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and Wyoming.

## **Fall Training Conference: "Performance Evaluation: A Keystone of Good Government"**

Pennsylvania's Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) hosted this year's training conference starting with an opening reception at the State Capital. Senator Robert Tomlinson, the Committee's chair, welcomed guests to the Capitol Building, a national architectural treasure with its dome inspired by the great domes of St. Peter's in Rome and the U.S. Capitol. Tours of the Capitol were offered and Pennsylvania products—ranging from chocolate to tofu—were available to sample while a jazz trio played in the background.

The conference theme—Performance Evaluation: A Key to Good Government—was reflected through both plenary and panel sessions. Several sessions were devoted to contemporary issues confronting state legislatures, including homeland security, lottery and gaming programs, and rising health care costs.

At the opening plenary session, Dr. Jeanne Lambrew, currently a professor at George Washington University and the former Program Associate Director for Health at the Office of Management and Budget, reminded participants of the pivotal role state Medicaid programs play in serving groups not covered by private insurers and the resulting challenges for states during times of fiscal crises.

Government accountability professionals had several opportunities to consider how they approach gathering and reporting information. Panelists, including NLPES members and staff from national "think tanks" and statistical organizations, shared their insights on how they plan their work and the standards and processes they rely on to produce objective, quality reports for legislators, their staff, interested parties, and the public. Dr. Nancy Kingsbury, the Managing Director for Applied Research

and Methods at the GAO, also described approaches used by the GAO and highlighted activities currently underway at the GAO to address its mission.

No meeting of performance auditors would be complete without focusing on results. NLPES members shared information on savings to the public resulting from implementation of their report recommendations and the outcomes of various privatization and consolidation and education system reforms activities. A panel of New Mexico and Pennsylvania legislators and former legislative staff also shared with participants what they look for in NLPES member reports and the types of report findings that lead to legislative action.

Dr. Don Kettl, the Dean of the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania, and Susan Tompkins Willie, Director, the Government Performance Project (GPP), discussed the Project's latest Report Card for States. Dr. Kettl reminded participants that effective management is critical for governments to adequately respond to citizens routinely and during times of crises. He emphasized that information is a key to effective public management, and performance evaluation and audit systems are a crucial component of an effective state management infrastructure.

Thirty-seven states participated in this year's conference. In addition to the informative program, participants experienced Pennsylvania history and hospitality at a dinner at the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, complete with a living historian and the opportunity to tour the museum's galleries, and enjoyed networking activities in Hershey, the Gettysburg National Military Park, and a nearby resort golf course.

Earlier this year, NLPES sent a survey to all member offices to collect information on a wide variety of issues affecting the field of legislative program

evaluation. This effort has now been completed, and the report on the survey results "Ensuring the Public Trust-2004-Legislative Program Evaluation's Role in Serving State Legislatures" is being finalized. It will be distributed at the NLPES conference later this month, and copies will be sent to all member offices. In total, thirty-seven members responded to the survey- if you returned a survey, thanks! If you didn't, you should feel really, really guilty!

The survey updates and expands information from the prior survey, which was compiled in 2000. It includes both summary information on the offices' responses to over sixty questions as well as profiles of individual offices. In addition to descriptive information about the offices (organizational placement, staffing, reporting relationships, research standards used, and products), the report provides data on the various methods that the offices use to interact with their legislatures, other governmental stakeholders, and the media. The report also includes assessments of the offices' use of various NCSL and NLPES services. Watch for your copy! It is sure to be a bestseller.

In a related topic, NCSL has released the results of its 2004 survey of legislative staff regarding use and satisfaction with various NCSL services. NLPES members submitted 159 responses (15% of the total). Major findings of the survey were that staff were relatively satisfied with many of NCSL's services, but could not travel to many NCSL meetings and were not very familiar with some NCSL activities. The Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee (consisting of officers from each of the ten NCSL staff sections and legislative staff members of the NCSL Executive Committee) is using the survey responses as they work to improve NCSL's professional development, marketing, and communication efforts. You can find the survey responses on the NCSL website: <http://www.ncsl.org/legis/lsc/Blueprints.htm>. The survey results start on page 44 of this document; the rest summarizes the work of the LSCC during 2003/04.

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## Personal Observations of the Fall Training Conference

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**Ann Renaud** (*Legislative Policy Analyst, Florida OPPAGA*)

This past September, I had the opportunity to attend my first National Legislative Program Evaluation Society conference in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I had a great experience at the conference, and met a lot of wonderful people from other states through networking activities and informational sessions.

One of the best things about meeting these people from other states was that it allowed me to learn their perspectives on common issues of program evaluation and policy analysis. For each day of the conference,

there were breakout sessions, where a panel of speakers from other states would discuss the different strategies that their state uses to address public policy issues. These discussions covered various topics including privatization, education reform, and economic development.

It was also interesting to learn from a national level about the public policy issues that states are facing. I attended two sessions that had speakers from George Washington University and the U.S. Government Accountability Office. The presentation given by Jeanne Lambrew of

George Washington University's School of Public Health about the challenges of rising Medicaid costs, was particularly helpful because it related to a Medicaid waiver project that I am currently working on.

The networking and sightseeing activities at the conference were also a lot of fun. They included a tour of the Hershey factory in Hershey, PA, a tour of Gettysburg, a dinner at the National Civil War

Museum, and a reception at Pennsylvania's capitol building. The tour of the capitol building was absolutely amazing and I suggest visiting there if you are ever in Harrisburg.

The host state did an excellent job planning the networking activities. Overall, I really enjoyed my time at the conference and look forward to attending future conferences held by the National Conference of State Legislatures. Thank you, Pennsylvania!

## **State Profile**

### **Ohio Legislative Office of Education Oversight**

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As one of the organizations within the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society, the Legislative Office of Education Oversight (LOEO) has been in operation for over 15 years, but its doors will be closed in December 2005. LOEO served as nonpartisan staff to the bipartisan Legislative Committee on Education Oversight, comprised of five Senators and five Representatives. LOEO's mission was to provide independent evaluations of education programs funded by the State of Ohio. LOEO addressed such difficult questions as:

- What factors contribute to a quality education?
- How do kindergarten students who have participated in Head Start compare to non-participants on selected school readiness measures?
- How does the average academic performance of students of different racial/ethnic groups and economic status compare to one another statewide?
- Under what conditions should the General Assembly support community/charter schools in the future?
- Should electronic community schools receive the same amount of state funding as other community/charter schools and school districts?
- What poverty indicator should be used to distribute funding to school districts with concentrations of students in poverty?

In order to fulfill its mission of conducting independent and impartial studies, LOEO reports were *of the staff*, not *of the Committee*. This distinction allowed the staff to come to conclusions and make recommendations based on research findings, without having to obtain agreement from Committee

members. The Committee or other members of the General Assembly were free to act or not act on the LOEO recommendations.

All of LOEO's assignments came from the General Assembly. In the office's early years, most studies were initiated by Committee members. During the last ten years, most of LOEO's studies were assigned in statute and included such topics as: community/charter schools; the availability of speech, physical, and occupational therapists in schools; all-day Kindergarten; class size reduction; funding for career-technical education; funding of student transportation; teacher professional development; achievement gaps; academic intervention services; and the progress school districts are making in hiring highly qualified teachers.

LOEO evaluations followed the auditing and evaluation standards of the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) and the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. LOEO received three awards for its work from the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In the midst of continuing exploration of school accountability issues such as community/charter school and the implications of the No Child Left Behind Act, language was included in the budget bill of the 126<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to eliminate LOEO. No explanation has been given to the office for this action. LOEO will complete its final study regarding highly qualified teachers and close at the end of December 2005.

One definition of success is to be an "unobtrusive part of an institution of great worth." LOEO has strived to accomplish this by providing impartial, thorough, accurate, and fair evaluations of education programs. One newspaper account has credited us with raising the level of discourse about education in the state. We are pleased to have had the opportunity to serve the people of Ohio.

*(Editor's note: NLPES member offices express their appreciation to Dr. Nancy Zajano and her staff at the Ohio Legislative Office of Education Oversight for their contributions to our profession and support of NLPES. We wish you well in your future endeavors.)*

## Legislative Staff Management Institute (LSMI): New and Improved

David Pray (*Division Manager, Mississippi PEER*)

How many times have you gone into a store and seen a familiar product with “New Formula” or “Improved” splashed on the label? How many times did you buy the product thinking that the only thing “new” or “improved” was the label?

Well, the Legislative Staff Management Institute (LSMI) has a new “California Style” that really takes the program to new heights. This is not a slight toward its former sponsor, the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. After all, it was the excellent program offered by the Humphrey Institute that set such a high standard and established LSMI as NCSL’s premier management program for legislative staff.

The University of Southern California and California State University, Sacramento, have teamed up to provide an eight-day program that provides staff with a wide range of effective management tools for facing and addressing the complex issues found in state legislatures. These include interpersonal and organizational communication, team building, coaching, negotiation, networking, and managing organizational culture. The program uses a series of high-energy trainers who build on each other’s work to provide a highly integrated but broad-spanning curriculum.

Everyone has been through excruciatingly dull team building and communication seminars. However, the fast-paced, hands-on sessions offered at LSMI don’t give participants a chance to get bored. For example, the very first session brought team building to a new level with a “Bio-Hazard” exercise in which teams had to learn quickly to perform together or “die.” Another session introduced the class to new concepts in organizational communication with a “Meta-4” exercise in which participants had to form teams quickly and then negotiate how these various teams could work together toward a common goal. Other hands-on exercises taught key negotiation skills applied to a variety of settings (we’ll never buy cars or houses in the same way again!).

LSMI participants also got a chance to put these team building, communication, and listening concepts to

practice in rafting down the south fork of the American River. Nothing enhances team building like being in a rubber raft with five or six other people and hurtling down Class IV whitewater rapids--breakdowns in communication and strategy can produce immediate (and wet) results!

The program also provided personalized feedback through a session on effective leadership. As part of this session, participants received a Leadership Effectiveness Assessment based on a survey that participants and the people who work for them completed prior to attending LSMI. These assessments were always helpful, sometimes painful, in highlighting the areas of strengths and weaknesses of each participant’s leadership skills.

Two caveats that alumni of previous LSMI programs always seem to mention were living in a college dormitory at the University of Minnesota and “dorm food.” Mention no more! The California program houses participants at a four-star hotel located about six blocks from the training center. Breakfast and lunch were catered from some of the excellent local eateries, and the group dined each night at one of the superb downtown restaurants. Other highlights were an afternoon trip into San Francisco and dinner at Fisherman’s Wharf, and attending a local minor league game (we rooted, rooted, rooted for the home team, but they didn’t win, which was a shame).

One thing that hasn’t changed about LSMI is the opportunity to meet other legislative staff from around the country and make new friends. Because the LSMI participants come from a wide variety of states and positions (including partisan and nonpartisan offices, leadership, information systems, administration, evaluation/audit, fiscal, legal, and research), we learned much from each other. We also created a network of friends that we can call upon in the future.

Overall, the ‘new and improved’ LSMI was a wonderful and highly valuable experience. We encourage all offices to consider sending middle- and upper-level staff to the 2006 program. If demand allows (the 2005 program received 39 applications for 30 available slots), the sponsors may be able to provide two sessions per year in future years. It is an opportunity not to be missed!

### POSITION OPENING

The Colorado Office of the State Auditor is seeking to hire an IT Audit Supervisor. Minimum qualifications include four-year degree in accounting, computer science or management information systems or four-year degree in a related field with 30 hours of IT coursework. Contact Kelly Carney, Director of Human Resources, at 303-869-2800 for more details.

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## Office Happenings

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### **Maine**

The Maine Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability is now fully staffed and in business. In addition to Executive Director Beth Ashcroft, staff include Diana Friou, Principal Analyst; Wendy Cherubini, Analyst; Scott Farwell, Analyst; Susan Reynolds, Analyst; Jennifer Reichenbach, Analyst; and, Lorna Pelkey, Administrative Secretary.

### **Minnesota**

Barb Wing retired in June after fifteen years of hard work, mostly as confidential secretary for the Program Evaluation Division. Shelly Watterud, who was previously in the office's Financial Audit Division, is taking over many of Barb's duties. Also, Jean Barnhill moved to Arkansas this fall to run her horse and website businesses after twenty-five years of service providing secretarial and human resources support to the Minnesota office.

### **Mississippi**

The Joint Legislative PEER Committee welcomes three new evaluators—Chad Allen, Lonnie Edgar, and Yohhana Goode.

### **New Mexico**

The New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee welcomes three new performance auditors—Bobby Griego, Charles Sallee, and Usha Shannon.

### **North Carolina**

Jim Johnson, Fiscal Research Director of the North Carolina General Assembly, Fiscal Research Division, is retiring December 31, 2005.

### **Texas Sunset**

Emilie Leroux has left the Texas Sunset Commission to do volunteer work with hurricane victims, with a move to Australia in the very near future.

### **Washington**

Ruta Fanning was recently appointed Legislative Auditor for Washington State's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee. Ruta comes to JLARC with more than 20 years of distinguished public service experience in Washington State government, serving in such positions as Director of the Office of Financial Management, Interim Director of the Higher Education Coordinating Board, Vice President for Finance and Administration at The Evergreen State College, and Staff Coordinator—at separate times—for both the House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Committee. Her work experience also includes private consulting specializing in financial management and public education issues. Welcome to JLARC and NLPES, Ruta!

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## 2005-2006 NLPES Executive Committee

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(L to R) Rakesh Mohan (ID), Tim Osterstock (UT), Steve Hendrickson (CA), Joe Lawhon (KS), Martha Carter (NE), Ken Levine (TX), Priscilla Anderson (SC), Wade Melton (FL), Trish Bishop (VA), Leslie McGuire (GA), and Gerry Schwandt (MI).  
Not pictured: Jan Yamane (HI)

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## More From Harrisburg

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**Dr. Jeanne Lambrew**  
George Washington University School of Public Health



**Dr. Nancy Kingsbury**  
Government Accountability Office



**Dr. Don Kettl (University of Pennsylvania), Susan Tompkins Willie (The Government Performance Report)  
Pennsylvania State Representative Ron Raymond**

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## From the Editor

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As you can see from the articles in this newsletter, NLPES member offices have been busy this summer and fall with events such as the NCSL Annual Meeting, Legislative Staff Management Institute, and fall training conference in Harrisburg. For those of you who could not attend those events, I trust that this newsletter will inform you and make you feel a part of the great things happening in our staff section.

*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.

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