

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLING AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

FRIDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2017

TABLING

The Speaker:

REPORT ON NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES (NCSL) LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT 2017

INTRODUCTION

The annual National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Legislative Summit took place in Boston, Massachusetts, USA from 6 to 9 August 2017, and the Western Cape Provincial Parliament (WCPP) was represented by the Deputy Speaker, Mr PJC Pretorius, and the Manager: Committee Support, Mr M Sassman.

The Conference catered for both political representatives (legislators) as well as legislative staff, mainly from the various state legislatures of the USA, but also for some 230 international delegates from, inter alia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Parliament, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, Italy, Japan, Kenya, India, Nigeria, Palau, Portugal, South Africa, Switzerland, Taiwan and Uganda.

BACKGROUND

The NCSL is a bi-partisan non-governmental organisation (NGO) established in 1975 to serve the members and staff of state legislatures of the United States (states, commonwealths, and territories). NCSL has three objectives: to improve the quality of state legislatures; to promote innovation and communication among state legislatures; and to ensure state legislatures a strong, cohesive voice at federal level. All state legislators and staff members are automatically members of NCSL. (<http://www.ncsl.org/aboutus.aspx>)

Included in the programme of the Summit were a host of committee meetings of the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries (ASLCS). The ASLCS is a platform

for legislative staff to lend an ear, offer advice or just to hear or share suggestions or concerns. It allows the voices of legislative staff to be heard and practical solutions to be sought. The programme included many meetings of such committees, which covered an array of topics, including deliberations on Mason's Manual Commission - to review the Mason's Manual text, and Mason's Internal Citations. International delegates also attended these meetings.

The ASLCS Committees comprise of A-Committees: Bylaws and Standing Orders, Inside the Legislative Process, Site Selection, and Technology; B-Committees: International Communications and Development, Legislative Administrator, Membership and Communication, and Support Staff; C-Committees: Canadian-American Relations, Professional Journal, and Programme Development. (These are Standing Committees, which fall under the umbrella of the Executive Meeting and Business Committee with meetings held regularly.

The Research, editorial, legal and committee staff (RELACS) also gathered for their annual business meeting, including presentation of awards and discussion of staff section activities. International delegates also attended these committees.

PROGRAMME

The NCSL programme entailed a host of sessions covering various topics and events, including NCSL business meetings, social events, as well as a dedicated programme for international delegates. The sessions were geared for either legislators or legislative staff, with some sessions open to both categories.

The international programme commenced on Saturday, 5 August with registration for international delegates, followed by an afternoon opening reception where the NCSL Executive Committee Members hosted all international delegates, followed by a President Elect Reception for Senator Deb Peters, NCSL President Elect.

On 6 August, the programme commenced with a session for international delegation introductions. This session was followed by a panel discussion on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) in Education. The international delegates thereafter participated in roundtable discussions focusing on how to increase STEM curriculum in education to prepare the workforce of the future.

A General Session followed, including a panel discussion by Governor Charles Baker (Massachusetts), Speaker Robert A. DeLeo (Massachusetts House of Representatives) and Senator Stanley C Rosenberg (Massachusetts), on the topic "From Politics to Statesmanship: Solving Problems in a Bipartisan World".

During the four days of the Summit, about 65 sessions and discussions were held daily, with an average of about six sessions running simultaneously, covering a broad spectrum of topics of interest to legislators and staff, including some of the following:

An **International trade panel discussion**, dealing with potential challenges and opportunities international trade offers states, along with possible implications moving forward. This related to the formal withdrawal of the USA from the Trans Pacific Partnership and discussions around reopening the North America Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico.

Drafting from Someone Else's Template: Legislators often ask that legislation be drafted based on model language provided by a special interest group, or from bills or statutes from

other states. Crafting language that is appropriate for specific needs requires due diligence from researchers and drafters.

Medicaid: Challenges and Opportunities: States need to be ready to respond and adapt if Congress and the Trump administration make changes to Medicaid. It may come with a new price tag – along with opportunities and challenges - for the states. The administration, health experts and others shared what federal changes may mean for states and about best practices for improving efficiency and effectiveness in state Medicaid programmes.

NCSL Task Force on Agriculture: The Task Force began with a tour at noon on Saturday, followed by meeting sessions on Sunday. The agenda of the Task Force covered the following topics: Food Safety Modernization Act and the Produce Safety Rule; Food Freedom and the Growth of the Cottage Food Movement; Putting Workers to Work: Addressing Labour Needs and the H-2A Program; and a Business Session: Legislator Roundtable and Task Force Planning

Energy Policy Summit: Discussions were held on issues relating to grid infrastructure challenges and solutions, a rapidly transforming energy market, the risks posed by declining baseload resources, and the technologies that are enabling this transformation.

NCSL Task Force on Military and Veterans Affairs: Issues were examined affecting military-community relations and the health and well-being of service members, veterans and their families. The Task Force topics that were covered included: The State of U.S. Military Readiness; Putting Veterans First: State-Federal Cooperation; New Hampshire's Military Access Projects; Roundtable discussion on Veterans Workforce Development; and The "APP" for Veterans.

NCSL 50-State Bill Information Service Training: The NCSL's 50-State Bill Information Service (BIS), available exclusively to state legislators and legislative staff, provides access to the full text of legislation in the 50 states, C.C. and the U.S. Congress. The BIS was developed in partnership with State Net/LexisNexis. A separate training session for legislators and legislative staff was also held on the BIS.

Creating Transparency, Openness and Trust: Modern Approaches to Redistricting: To the Public, redistricting processes are a mystery, with questions about transparency, openness and trust. Different ways were examined to address redistricting itself and the political needs to engage the public.

State and Federal Budget Update: Presentations were made on the NCSL's latest findings on state budget and tax actions, which were followed by a roundtable discussion of individual state fiscal situations. An update was also given of federal budget and tax activity and the potential impact on states.

Cost Analysis of the Principal Pipeline: A strong school principal pipeline can improve the quality of principals, better matching them to schools and reducing turnover of teachers and principals. Presentations were made on a first-of-its-kind study estimating the cost of building these pipelines, which include job standards, preservice preparation, selective hiring and placement, and on-the-job evaluation and support.

NCSL Task Force on Innovations in State Health Systems: The Task Force on Innovations in State Health Systems explored a variety of issues and opportunities faced by

state policymakers as they reform their own health systems. Task force members discussed innovative ideas from their own states, potential new flexibility with anticipated federal health changes, with a view to learn more about initiatives to address “health in all policies”.

Legislator Compensation Decisions: Do Commissions Help?: Delegates deliberated on the issue of how much states should pay legislators for their service, and how these pay rates should be determined. It was explored how legislator compensation commissions operate in states that have them, and whether this approach to setting legislator salaries is an effective approach to this challenging issue.

5G and Small Cell Development: As 5G technology is implemented and the demand for wireless services continues to rise, preserving the authority of state and local governments over zoning and land use decisions for personal wireless service facilities is important. The next generation of wireless infrastructure was also discussed.

Keeping Homes Heated: Discussions were held on new infrastructure and better management tools required to ensure the stability and reliability of the energy delivery system.

Immigration in 2017: The role of state and local law enforcement in federal immigration policy was discussed, including sanctuary policies, and actions by states and Congress. Issues raised were, inter alia: What do these administration’s orders on immigration enforcement mean for states, and how have the courts weighed in?

Expecting the Unexpected: This session dealt with preparing for and dealing with or finding solutions for unexpected situations such as a sudden special session, protestors at the legislature, a natural disaster, cyber security or security threats.

International Perspectives on Election Systems. Representatives from Canada, Mexico and Germany shared their experiences in conducting elections in their respective jurisdictions.

New Initiatives on Civility, Citizenship and Public Service: This topic covered engagement with the Legislative Effectiveness Committee on briefings pertaining to new initiatives designed to revive “civility and respect” in the legislative process and recognition of the honourable and patriotic qualities of public service.

Legislative staff University: Willow Jacobson, associate professor at the University of North Carolina School of Government, shared research findings and practical ideas to motivate people, to recognise and reward employees, and strategies to improve moral.

Critical Status: How Financing can Help Address America’s Infrastructure Crisis: This session dealt with the issue of underutilised or misunderstood financial tools available to help build, maintain and operate critical infrastructure in the USA.

Cyber security Task Force: Internet of Things: The discussion covered the issue of interconnection of devices that communicate wirelessly and send and receive data via the internet, and methods of addressing security concerns.

General Session: Voters’ Opinions: Where do we stand? The keynote speaker was Frank Luntz, a well-known political commentator and pollster, and a lively question and answer session followed.

Communicate to Succeed: The discussion covered issues such as practical tips and tools needed to give short, compelling presentations efficiently and effectively.

Disruptive Innovation in Higher Education: Panellists covered innovative strategies that could bring about significant change in higher education.

Voter Confidence: This topic covered aspects such as measuring and increasing voter confidence, as well as determining its impact.

Bio Technology and the Role of the States: Panellists covered aspects such as learning how new models for more efficient research and design, innovative pricing and working directly with patients impact doctors, costs and state and federal health policy and patients around the world.

Water Knows No Boundaries: Panellists discussed how Innovations in data collection and withdrawal practices can help states manage the demands for surface and groundwater and decrease interstate conflicts over this precious resource, and also how to best promote sustainable water use through learning from other states.

What Would it Take to Balance the Federal Budget?: The federal government is spending some \$500 billion a year more than it raises in taxes, and the national debt is now nearly \$20 trillion (77 percent of GDP). Without action, the debt will reach \$25 trillion by 2027 (89 percent of GDP), and would threaten the stability of the nation's finances. Addressing the problem is politically difficult. An overview was given of the federal budget, followed by presentations and discussions on how the federal government can get its fiscal house in order.

Legislature Pride: Reclaiming the Image of Public Servants: Legislators worked hard to get elected because they care about their communities and about important issues that affect their states, and they want to make things better. But many citizens don't see legislators that way, and public opinion of elected officials seems to decline every year. Presentations were made on learning how to reverse that trend and to reclaim and rebuild the image of public servants.

Public Pensions: Legislative Oversight and Plan Governance: Public pension trustees oversee public retirement systems, but state legislators, governors and others also play key roles in determining and funding benefits and deciding how assets are invested. A presentation was made on how states are approaching emerging issues in pension plan governance and what they mean for funding discipline.

First Stop: Jail or Treatment: Panellists emphasised that jails are frequently the first stop for individuals suffering from mental health and substance abuse problems, and that deflecting these people from arrest and prosecution to treatment and services in the community is an emerging "public health" approach. Delegates also explored ways in which states are detouring people away from jail.

Preparing for Natural Disasters: Hurricanes, fires, floods and tornados take an enormous toll on states and their citizens, and a number of experts shared what was needed and where the new administration was headed.

Bill Drafting Systems: A Collaborative Effort: Several states have upgraded their electronic bill drafting systems and many others are considering changes. Delegates discussed

factors that are critical to designing a stem that works for drafters and editors, impediments to avoid and implementation strategies utilised by IT professionals to develop these new systems.

Legal Landscape of Autonomous Vehicles: Bryant Walker Smith, a nationally recognised expert on autonomous vehicles, shared his insight on the existing legal framework, legislative trends and how laws may need to change to address this technology.

HOSTING THE SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION

The NCSL leadership hosted a reception for the full South African delegation where state legislators and staff, as well as NCSL office-bearers, interacted with members of the South African delegation. The Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the full South African delegation, officially thanked the hosts for their friendship and willingness to share legislative practices and experiences with delegates from South Africa.

VISIT TO MASSACHUSETTS STATE LEGISLATURE

International delegates visited the Massachusetts state legislature, were taken on a tour of the facilities and also attended a mock sitting in the House. Although there are some similarities with procedures in our legislature the way business is conducted and legislation is dealt with differ greatly. It was nevertheless a worthwhile experience to see first-hand how business is conducted in their state legislature.

INVOLVEMENT OF PRIVATE SECTOR IN CONFERENCE

Representatives of private sector companies could also register as delegates for the conference and a large number did attend. For the full duration of the conference businesses manned their promotional stalls in an adjoining hall, and all delegates were invited to visit the exhibitions and interact with company representatives. Exhibitors showcased and promoted their products and services, covering a wide range. This was an interesting and a greatly beneficial opportunity, as much of the exhibited information, reading material, reference sources, research tools, etc related to the public and legislative sectors.

CONCLUSION

Attending this conference was an extremely valuable learning experience, in terms of the varied topics discussed, as well as in terms of interacting and sharing experiences with legislators and staff from the United States as well as other international delegates. In this regard, valuable interaction took place with senior officials from Australia, which could lead to further contact with state legislatures in future.

It was clear that the various states in the United States regard the NCSL as an organisation as a critical part of their daily operations, particularly in forging close ties among states themselves and also assisting states in their relations with the federal government. The NCSL also serves as an invaluable central source of research and information for states.

In this regard moves in South Africa to establish a legislative sector support network is encouraging and should be supported.

The Western Cape Provincial Parliament should build on its already sound relations with the NCSL.