Welcome to the first week of the Legislative Staff Certificate Program!
Natalie Wood
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Our American Legislatures: Understanding Their Characteristics and Procedures

Natalie Wood, Center for Legislative Strengthening
Today’s Goals:

1. Learn similarities, differences among state legislatures

2. Review changes over time

3. Learn the W’s of Legislative Procedure
Our Story

In 1974, three organizations represented the interests of legislators and staff, but their influence was diluted. So seven inventive legislative leaders and two staffers got together and envisioned a single national organization to support, defend and strengthen state legislatures. The three organizations dissolved, and on Jan. 1, 1975, the National Conference of State Legislatures was born.
About Me
YOU THINK YOU'RE TOUGH ENOUGH FOR AN

ICEBREAKER
A Framework for Categorizing Legislatures
Legislative Sessions

- Limits in 39 states
- Special sessions also limited
- Chamber autonomy
Legislative Sessions in 2022

Who’s in Session?

Who can meet remotely?

Who has remote committees?
Let’s Discuss:

- Describe “in session” and “interim,” if you have one, in your legislature
- What was session like this year?
Legislator Pay

- National Average: $39,216
- Full-Time Average: $76,253
- Hybrid Average: $31,546
- Part-Time Average: $13,111
Legislator Time
Staff Size

NATIONAL TOTAL 1979–2015

Number of Legislative Staff as of 2015:

- 0-250
- 251-500
- 501-750
- 751-1000
- > 1000
Staff Roles in 1619
Staff Roles Now
Staff Roles Now

- Legal Counsel, Bill Drafters and Editors
- Fiscal Analysts and Economists
- Committee and Research staff
- Press Secretaries and Communication Directors
- Chief Information Officers and Program Developers
- Clerks and Secretaries/Parliamentarians
- Leadership and Caucus Staff
- Security/Sergeant-at-Arms and Services
- Legislative Research Librarians
- Program Evaluators and Methodologists
- Human Resource Directors
- Legislative Aides or Assistants
Your Roles

- Describe your legislative office
- What role does it serve within the institution and what is your role on the team?
- How does the nature of session impact staffing in your state?
Term Limits, Turnover, Party Comp

State Partisan Composition

Source: NCSL, 2018
Parliamentary procedure “W's”
WHY?
WHERE?
WHO?
WHEN?
WHAT?

What are the basic principles of parliamentary procedure?
Parliamentary procedure is reasonably logical and simple when you understand the concepts or purposes behind it. Think of it in terms of principles that impose order, openness and fairness rather than rigid, detailed technical rules. The 10 basic principles that govern procedures for group decision making appear below.

1. The group must have the authority to take the actions it purports to take.
2. A meeting of the decision-making group must take place.
3. A proper notice of the meeting must be given to all members of the group.
4. A quorum must be present at the meeting.
5. A question must be before the group upon which it can make a decision.
6. An opportunity to debate the question must be allowed.
7. The question must be decided by taking a vote.
8. A majority vote to take an action or decide a question must occur.
9. No fraud, trickery or deception resulting in injury to any member must occur.
10. To be valid, any action or decision of a body must not violate any applicable law or constitutional provision.
WHAT?
Smoke-out: In South Dakota, one-third of the members of a house can require a committee to deliver a bill to the full body by the next legislative day.

One-liner: In Nebraska, a brief, one-line description of a bill or resolution.

Note from Mother: In Oregon, a note from a legislator or committee administrator authorizing Legislative Counsel to work with the person possessing the note on drafting a measure or amendments.

Lock out: In Louisiana, the temporary disabling of the voting machine of any member who does not answer a quorum call before a record vote (House Rule 4.5) (Also see Quorum Call)

Ulcer Gulch: In Washington, a slang term for area in the Legislative Building used by lobbyists and general public for telephone calls and messages.
Think about a time legislative rules and procedures impacted your job. How and why did they affect your work?
Decorum In Debate

- Appropriateness and propriety of behavior, conduct or appearance
- Proper order, etiquette and conduct of members during a floor session
Reflection on decorum

What examples of decorum have you observed over the past year?
Thank you!
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Module 2: The Model Code of Conduct for Legislative Staff

Director, Center for Ethics in Government