

My CSG

by Sen. Beau McCoy

Nebraska State Senator 2009–2017

2016 CSG NATIONAL CHAIR, 2011 CSG TOLL FELLOW



Thousands upon thousands of earnest Americans in our nation's history have sought to make a difference in the lives of their fellow citizens by serving in state legislatures. Eight years ago I joined these ranks as a freshman lawmaker in the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature.

My CSG story began on the second day of my legislative career when our speaker of the Legislature, knowing my desire to grow as a leader, stopped at my desk on the chamber floor and strongly suggested that I apply to

The Council of State Governments Midwest's leadership program, the Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development, or BILLD. I did as he suggested and that summer I fell in love with the CSG organization and family. Eight years and countless CSG events and conferences later, my belief in the mission and purpose of CSG is unshaken.

As is the case with many things in life, legislators, members of the judiciary and members of the executive branch get out of CSG what they put into it. I chose to embrace every opportunity to educate myself with the rich opportunities at CSG for policy knowledge, leadership development, mentorships, friendships and just plain fun!

My CSG journey has been a rewarding and deeply satisfying experience. No matter how many chances I have had to give back to CSG at the regional and national levels, they pale in comparison to the wisdom I have gleaned from some of the most special people I have ever had the privilege to know. Coast to coast, I have watched my colleagues at CSG give their precious time and serve this organization unselfishly. Perhaps that is one of the chief reasons that The Council of State Governments has remained vibrant and relevant for more than eight decades.

Eight years of involvement with CSG has taught me that in an age of cynicism toward government and government officials, there are actually thousands of well-meaning and hard-working public servants who toil daily to improve the lives of their constituents. I'm deeply proud and honored to call these public servants across America my colleagues and my CSG family."

Colorado state Sen. Nancy Todd

2015 CSG WEST CHAIR,
2009 CSG HENRY TOLL FELLOW



I have had the honor of serving 12 years as a Colorado state legislator. Since my first year I became involved with CSG West and attended my first conference in Breckenridge, Colorado, followed by my first national CSG meeting in Puerto Rico. Through the years, I have had the pleasure of serving on several CSG committees, as vice chair

and chairing committees, on the executive boards both regionally and nationally, and ultimately as the CSG West chair in 2015. The experience I have gained has been rich in the friendships and expertise garnered from other leaders across the United States. CSG is an organization that serves all branches of government, seeks bipartisan solutions, and challenges elected officials to rise to a cooperative and collaborative level of governing. I encourage all our newly elected officials to attend and get involved with The Council of State Governments. I am a proud CSG supporter!"

Rhode Island state Rep. Marvin L. Abney

2015 CSG HENRY TOLL FELLOW



Since my election in 2012 through my 2016 appointment as chair of the Rhode Island House of Representatives Finance Committee, CSG has been with me every step of the journey. From outstanding Policy Academies to the Henry Toll Fellowship, and workshops at regional annual meetings and national conferences to in-depth research provided by an excellent CSG staff; all have been instrumental in my growth as a legislator. CSG continues to help me grasp the art and science of public service at the highest levels. Most of all, I am provided an opportunity to learn from, and grow with, some of the highest caliber of elected colleagues in this country."

Kansas state Sen. Vicki Schmidt

2007 CSG HENRY TOLL FELLOW



CSG is an organization that is full of so many resources, both for me as a legislator and for our legislative research department. No matter the topic, CSG has current information on how other states are addressing key issues, and the staff at CSG is always helpful and ready to answer any questions. I also have been fortunate to attend leadership events sponsored by CSG. In that experience, I have been able to forge friendships with public officials throughout the United States and Canada. They, too, have become resources for me. And as the only organization that encompasses all three branches of government, the opportunity CSG provides to network is unmatched by any other organization!"

Nevada Assemblyman Michael Sprinkle

2015 CSG HENRY TOLL FELLOW



CSG has always provided me with the opportunity to discover who I am as a legislator and public servant. It has given me the skills to do what is right by the people who have elected me to office. The leadership academies as well as regional and state conferences have helped me discover evolving issues and trends, which then allows me to return to my state and help Nevada move forward. Mostly, I feel CSG has my best interests at heart and works hard to allow me to grow as a legislator."

Delaware state Rep. Deborah Hudson

2007 CSG NATIONAL CHAIR,
1998 CSG HENRY TOLL FELLOW



My first few visits to CSG meetings were at the regional level, with CSG's Eastern Regional Conference, where I found a tremendous variety of tools to assist me as a new legislator. I began to access filed legislation from adjoining states to solve problems—seamlessly—as a region, and to not be in conflict with other surrounding states.

Eventually, I attended the national CSG meetings where the agenda focused on emerging trends in states and featured interactive sessions with experts on contemporary issues—what a gold mine for a young legislator!

Today, I am in a leadership position and really push my colleagues to participate in CSG. Engagement with CSG will lead legislators to high levels of professional development sessions on key state issues and to top-drawer leadership training, which can easily enhance a legislator's ability to serve citizens of their district and state."

Tennessee Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris

2014 CSG NATIONAL CHAIR, 2010–11 CSG SOUTH/SLC CHAIR,
2002 CSG HENRY TOLL FELLOW



CSG's greatest strength isn't the depth of policy knowledge its staff and leadership have, though this is a great asset. CSG's greatest strength isn't in the national and regional events and webinars they host throughout the year, though these events are worthwhile. CSG's greatest strength is its members—the public servants who come from all three branches of state government in all 50 states and U.S. territories—because they want their states to be the best they can be.

States are the bedrock foundation of our federal system, the repository of liberty in our republic. CSG helps keep states strong. CSG helps state leaders do the hard work of freedom by strengthening states, decentralizing power and preserving individual liberty. This is important because strong states make democracy and our entire republic work better.

I've always been proud to participate because it helps me keep Tennessee strong."

Oklahoma Commissioner and Cabinet Secretary of Public Safety Mike Thompson

2012 CSG HENRY TOLL FELLOW



The CSG is an extraordinary organization that I am proud to be associated with. The most beneficial aspect of being a CSG Henry Toll Fellow is having the luxury of reaching out to an abundance of gifted CSG colleagues who have a wealth of experience and talent. At times, we may feel that we are alone in our state or organization, struggling to find solutions to complex issues. This isn't always true. The access to The Council of State Governments' network is a treasured resource to help solve arduous problems or develop sensible options that everyone benefits from. As an agency head of a statewide organization with more than 1,400 employees, I look forward to many years of being a productive part of CSG."