Leadership, Initiative Brought Apollo 13 Home

Leadership, initiative and the great minds at Mission Control brought Capt. James Lovell Jr. and his two shipmates back to Earth safely in 1970.

Lovell, the keynote speaker Sunday, was captain of the ill-fated Apollo 13 space mission. The mission, which was supposed to be the third lunar flight landing, took off at 13:13 CST on Saturday, April 11.

“Right then, I should have known something was going to happen,” Lovell said. Not only did something happen, several things kept on happening. Soon after launch, one of the engines on the second stage rocket shut down two minutes too soon. Lovell said if there had not been a safety switch, the engine and the ship would have disintegrated.

“Almost every flight has some sort of crisis,” he said, “an experiment doesn’t work, something goes wrong. We thought, ‘Now we’re safe. Our crisis came at the beginning of this flight.’”

On day three of the flight, just after a national broadcast that was roundly ignored by the networks — Lovell said he heard a hiss and a bang and the ship started rocking. At first, nobody knew what was happening. Mission Control told the astronauts that something was wrong with their electrical system and two fuel cells—which provided both oxygen and power—had died. The landing on the moon couldn’t happen now and even a return to Earth was looking iffy.

Lovell said the astronauts used the lunar lander’s engines to position the command module for re-entry. After almost missing the Earth and nearly suffocating due to an air scrubber failure, the crew finally made it home, splash landing in the Pacific Ocean “a couple of days early.”

“So what’s the moral of this story?” Lovell asked. “I shouldn’t really be here—200,000 miles out, no oxygen, no electrical power, going in the wrong direction…. I’m here really because of those characteristics—good leadership, initiative, trying to figure out ways of solving problems…. Lots of things the people on Earth (at Mission Control) thought about were worse than the situation we were in, but they kept working. That’s why I’m here.”

Lovell said one thing kept the astronauts huddled inside that little module in the inky blackness of space going. “You have to have a positive attitude in anything that you want to do. We had that on 13,” he said.

“There was never any talk in 13 about not getting home. Every time we had a crisis—and they’d come up one after another—we’d try to figure out how to get over that crisis. It’s like playing solitaire. You keep pulling up a card and as long as you place the card someplace, the game keeps going. It’s only when you pull up that card and there’s no place to put it that the game has ended. That did not happen on Apollo 13.”

—Jennifer Ginn
Performance Funding is Motivating Colleges, Universities

States are turning to performance funding to increase the number of students earning a degree or certificate from a postsecondary institution, but it’s not a magic bullet.

States have funded universities and colleges based on how many students are enrolled. Performance funding takes all or part of the base funding and rewards schools doing well on certain goals—such as on-time graduations or the number of students earning a degree in science, technology, engineering or math.

“We do think it’s important,” Michael Baumgartner, vice president of finance and special projects for Complete College America, said at Sunday’s Education Task Force meeting. “We think every state should move in the direction of performance outcomes, but there are other things that need to be done.”

Baumgartner said states have tried performance funding before, but the money tended to be small and often disappeared. Data systems also weren’t easily available to track students across their college careers.

Brett Visger, deputy chancellor of institutional collaboration for the Ohio Board of Regents, said the Buckeye State’s funding formula changed this year to emphasize degree completion over course completion and the stop-loss provision that kept institutions from losing too much money was removed. Instead of using one year’s worth of data, Ohio also is shifting to three-year averages.

“The good news is performance funding is a big deal,” Visger said. “We’ve been at it a couple of years and we’ve seen people do what they’re paid for, even in incremental ways.”

Jason Dudich, associate commissioner and chief financial officer of the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, said his state began performance funding in 2003. The measures included, however, have changed every biennium. In December 2011, the commission announced its focus on three main goals—completion of degrees, progression through the institution and the productivity of the institution.

Dudich cautioned that states have to be willing to use a significant percentage of their education funding to make the system effective. Indiana is using 5 percent of its total higher education budget for performance funding this year.

“Half a percent doesn’t do anything,” he said. “Higher percentages create results.”

—Jennifer Ginn

New Compact Aims to Ease Transmission Line Siting Process

A new transmission line siting compact developed by CSG’s National Center for Interstate Compacts could be the key for states hoping to spur transmission line growth without the interference of the federal government.

Kansas Rep. Tom Sloan told policymakers in a legislative briefing unveiling the new compact Sunday afternoon that the 2005 Energy Policy Act gave the federal government authority to order construction of high-voltage transmission lines if states don’t approve them.

“That offends many of us who represent the states,” Sloan said. “Also, it specifically says states can band together in an organized compact to address this issue. It pre-empts federal intervention.”

Crady deGolian, director of the compacts center, said the initiative was membership-driven. Sloan and North Dakota Rep. Kim Koppelman separately approached CSG about such a project.

“This wasn’t something that was conceived at our office in Lexington,” said deGolian.

The compact sets timelines for when action must be taken on proposed interstate transmission lines, such as when public hearings and evidentiary hearings must be held. It would only take effect if the line runs through three contiguous states that are all members of the compact.

“Good planning leads to good siting,” said Bill Smith, executive director of the Organization of MISO States. “Good planning makes siting easier.”

Smith said this compact is timely because the energy industry has gone beyond being just a local or state concern.

“The industry is becoming more and more regional in scope of geography as opposed to the utility-by-utility islands throughout the country,” he said.

“The goal of this whole process was to address the need for a more robust and resilient national electric grid system and to do it in a collaborative manner in which state issues and processes are protected,” Sloan said. “We’re all familiar with the nature of public hearings, where you have folks come in and express reservations, ideas and concerns. What I’ve also seen is it took 12 years to build 14 miles of transmission lines in one instance, and that doesn’t serve anybody’s interest.”

The compact language is now in final form and is ready to be introduced in states beginning in the 2013 session.

—Jennifer Ginn
Barry Anderson used to compare the fiscal cliff to “Thelma and Louise.” Now, he’s taken to using Wile E. Coyote as the metaphor to illustrate what is going on in Washington.

“If you remember Wile E Coyote, he’d go off the cliff, he’d have a look on his face but those legs would keep on turning,” Anderson, deputy director of the Office of Communications at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, said during the CSG Intergovernmental Affairs meeting Sunday. “But the important thing is he wouldn’t fall until he looked down. I think that’s what congress is looking at now. They can go off the cliff, but they won’t fall because they won’t look down.”

Anderson said it would take more than two months past the Dec. 31 deadline for the negative impacts to begin to take effect, but going over the fiscal cliff would not be good for anyone.

He initially thought that it would be good. “I’m a longtime middle of the road, not R or D, very much interested in our fiscal sustainability and I saw this and I said good,” he said. “Washington only responds to budget matters when they see a crisis, and I’ve never seen a crisis as big as this. This will finally force us to recognize the difficult situation.”

The fiscal cliff encompasses a number of elements, including the sequester that came as part of the Budget Control Act of 2011 and the expiration of the Bush tax cuts. Other parts of it are the payroll tax holiday and the debt limit, as well as the expiration of the TANF program authorization and the alternative minimum tax increases.

But all of those things will take some time before they take effect. “There is this idea that we can go off the cliff and the real pain won’t occur right away,” Anderson said.

That’s where Wile E. Coyote comes in, he said. Members of Congress on both sides are basically using threats of going off the cliff to get what they want in a deal.

“I think that’s a pretty dangerous view.”

—Mary Branham

No One-Size-Fits-All Communications for Emergency Management

When it comes to emergency communication, no one size fits all.

That was the recurring theme during the State Emergency Communications session Sunday morning.

From amateur radios to social media to emergency-management-specific tools, many things can ensure states are able to provide services people need during a disaster.

Chris Essid, deputy director of the Office of Communications at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, said states should have redundant systems in their emergency communications.

“Having satellite. Having land mobile radio. Having all types of different technologies. We look at it as a tool kit,” Essid said. “You have different tools in your tool kit for different situations.”

The federal government is prepared to make $7 billion in grants available for state emergency communication systems, he said, and states should have a plan for their systems in order to benefit from those grants.

Communication is key in an emergency situation, said John Madden, director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management in Alaska.

“Communication does not feed people,” he said. “It enables them to be fed.”

With that in mind, Madden said states should ensure whatever communications system they use will work in times of emergency.

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With that in mind, Madden said states should ensure whatever communications system they use will work in times of emergency, not necessarily by cost or how often they will be used.

“If the question is ‘How often will you use it?’ my honest answer is I hope I never have to use it,” Madden said.

Essid said while new technology may be the wave of the future in emergency communications, states must still maintain and fund legacy systems until those new systems are ready to go.

“Emergency communication will not have a single definition; it is situational,” Madden said. “It’s range of hazards. It’s all sorts of things and that makes it very, very complex. The failure of communications can result in failure in other things.”

—Mary Branham

Congress Looking Like Wile E. Coyote on the Fiscal Cliff Debate

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—Mary Branham
Puerto Rico Gov. Luis G. Fortuño, top left, was presented with an engraved bowl at Sunday’s luncheon for his service as 2012 president of The Council of State Governments. Making the presentation was 2012 CSG Chair Kansas Senate Majority Leader Jay Scott Emmer. CSG Midwest staffer Cindy Andrews, top right, talks with Illinois Rep. Dave Winter. Middle left is Rep. Armond Budish, minority leader in Ohio and the chair of the Midwestern Legislative Conference. Capt. James Lovell Jr, bottom left, signs a copy of his book, Apollo 13. Hasan Davis, commissioner of Kentucky’s Department of Juvenile Justice, received a medallion from Fortuño at Sunday’s Toll Fellows graduation ceremony. Photos by Rodney Margison
West Virginia Sen. Jack Yost, top left, works with CSG Associate Director of Policy and Special Libraries Jennifer Horne at the social media boot camp Sunday. Middle left, Seth Benjamin, senior researcher at the Japan Local Government Center, takes notes during a session. Top right, Idaho Rep. Maxine Bell makes a point during the State Emergency Communications session. Above left, Puerto Rico Secretary of State Kenneth McClintock, Kansas Senate Majority Leader Jay Scott Emler and Colleen Cousineau, executive director of CSG’s Southern Legislative Conference, pose for a photo. At right, North Carolina Rep. Rosa Gill smiles for the camera. Photos by Rodney Margison
Going Global to Protect American Jobs

In the dismal economic news of the past few years, U.S. exports have been a bright spot, Puerto Rico Gov. Luis Fortuño said Sunday. “There is tremendous growth, for both the U.S. and Canada in terms of emerging markets that create unique opportunities for all of us,” Fortuño, the 2012 CSG president, said during the International Committee meeting. “There is a demand for quality throughout the world.”

That’s not just goods, it’s also services, he noted. “Our goods and services are the standard of excellence throughout the world,” he said. “We still have to look for different policies and strategies to make sure, in a rather challenging economic climate, that we are able to do better,” said Fortuño.

Going global will be important in protecting American jobs, said Fortuño and Gary Doer, Canadian ambassador to the United States. Doer said it’s particularly important to maintain good relationships between the U.S., Canada and Mexico—Fortuño added Latin America to the mix. Doer stressed the importance of energy to North America. “It is very, very important when we look at the security of our region to have more partnership in the region and use more resources in the region,” Doer said.

That’s particularly true of using oil from Canada to displace the oil from the Middle East. Part of that is the Canadian oil sands, but the pipeline to bring that oil from Canada to the states still has not received federal approval, he said. “That is going to have a huge impact on the U.S. economy,” Doer said of the pipeline. Not only will jobs come through support industries in the U.S., he said, but cheaper energy could bring manufacturing jobs back.

“I believe jobs are starting to return,” said Doer. He said concerns about intellectual property and security also are prompting moves back to the U.S. Fortuño added companies will want the quality of products to be consistent wherever they are made.

—Mary Branham

New Challenges for Energy Production

The emerging availability of oil and natural gas due to the process of hydraulic fracturing has been perhaps the biggest game changer for the energy sector and many states in recent years.

That was the assessment of former Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal, who spoke Sunday during a session hosted by the CSG Energy and Environment Policy Task Force. But as Freudenthal told task force members, fracturing, as the process is often referred to, is not a new concept. “Various forms of fracturing have been around since the oil and gas business started,” he said. “Hydraulic fracturing is a theory that has been well understood. It is a technology that has been able to evolve because of changes in materials and changes in technologies. … It’s kind of like all these guys who turn out to be overnight sensations in the music business. Not really. They’ve been at it 20 or 25 years.”

The oil boom of recent years has brought radical change for some states that were previously not known as energy producers. Impacts to the environment, roads and the very nature of communities themselves are being felt in states like Pennsylvania.

“I think the debate about hydraulic fracturing has turned into absolutely an emotional zoo,” Freudenthal said. “It’s more than just a technological issue; it is a cultural issue. It’s a change in the expectation people have of what their communities are going to be.”

On other energy sources, Freudenthal described nuclear power as a “missed opportunity.” The Japanese earthquake and nuclear disaster last year have produced an overreaction from which the industry may have trouble recovering. “Everybody is so spooked by it right now,” he said. “The public is where the public is and if you talk to utilities, they’re scared to death about isolating that much capital for that long to see if they can (build) a new (nuclear) facility. We’re just now recovering from Three Mile Island … We are who we are and we all grew up with too many Godzilla movies.”

Renewable forms of energy, which are on the rise, face their own challenges and unresolved issues, including transmission lines, storage and integration, into the energy grid, Freudenthal said.

—Sean Slone
Here are the words, and the number of people who chose them, to describe a leader in one word.
Moving to Data-Driven Criminal Justice Systems

State policymakers should take a data-driven approach to public safety policy, panelists said Sunday.

“Despite the run-up in justice spending, states aren’t getting much bang for their buck in reducing recidivism, specifically, or more generally improving public safety,” said Adam Gelb, director of the Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center for the States.

Gelb provided a quick overview of the large scope of the criminal justice system. Today, one in 100 adults is behind bars. One in 31 adults is under correctional control. One in 14 state general fund dollars is spent on corrections, the second fastest-growing segment of state government. One in eight state employees is in corrections.

“When we are spending $2 billion, we should spend based on the facts,” said Pennsylvania Corrections Secretary John Wetzel.

Since Wetzel’s appointment in 2010, the state stopped construction of a new prison and proposed a flat budget for corrections. “I am probably one of the few cabinet secretaries in the world that tells people we have more money than we need,” he said.

Pennsylvania and 16 other states participate in the Justice Reinvestment Initiative of The Council of State Governments Justice Center. The project brings together key stakeholders in a state, provides an independent review of state data and systems, and guides a redesign of the justice system to improve outcomes. Wetzel and other panelists said the Justice Reinvestment projects are strictly nonpartisan.

“We all agree that folks going out the back door of corrections should be less likely to commit another crime,” Wetzel said.

The goal of the Hawaii Hope program, said Circuit Judge Steven S. Alm, is “swift, certain and proportionate response to crime.”

He sees no downside to a state’s participation in the Justice Reinvestment program. Even after 13 years working in the justice system, he said, the data analysis shed new light on Hawaii’s issues. “We learned of inefficiencies at all levels,” he said.

David Guice, a former legislator who is director of North Carolina Division of Community Corrections, emphasized the importance of a systemic review of data.

“In North Carolina, we had plenty of data but not data-driven processes,” Guice said. Now, as prison beds are closed, the state reinvests in community corrections and can document improved public safety outcomes.

—Debra Miller

Corporations Seek Sustainability Solutions

Environmental sustainability has become important to industry in their way of doing business and ultimately corporate bottom lines.

Speakers from three businesses shared their efforts with the CSG Energy and Environment Policy Task Force Sunday morning.

“We’ve been engaged in sustainability for a long time; it’s just that we didn’t necessarily talk about it,” said Fred Bedore, senior director of business strategy and sustainability for Walmart Stores.

In 2005, the company developed aspirational sustainability goals for the energy they use, the waste stream they produce and the sustainability of the products they sell.

Bedore said the holistic approach is not just a “feel good” corporate policy but actually reinforces the productivity loop for the company.

“The reality is if we can work on our own operations to do things more efficiently with less waste, it means less cost,” he said. “If we can work with our supply chain partners to be more efficient and reduce waste, that means we’re going to be able to buy for less. If we can buy for less and operate for less, it means we can sell for less. If we can sell for less, it means we can grow our sales. So it reinforces itself. That’s why we engage on sustainability.”

Teri Shanahan of International Paper said with forests around the world shrinking due to factors such as agriculture, grazing and illegal logging, sustainable forestry is an important part of what her company does to ensure it has a long-term future.

Colin Meehan, a clean energy analyst for the Environmental Defense Fund, said his organization has been working with numerous corporations on corporate sustainability issues for 20 years. The group works with those corporations to find sustainable solutions they’re willing to publicize so other companies in their industry can reap the same benefits from implementing them.

—Sean Slone