Western Legislative Innovations Report

September, 2010

*Western Legislative Innovations* is a product of the Committee on the Future of Western Legislatures, Council of State Governments-WEST (CSG-WEST). In preparation for our September 14, 2010 Western Legislative Innovations Fair, CSG-WEST asked each of our 13 Western legislatures to submit brief papers outlining legislative branch innovations. The goal of this publication is to advance CSG’s long-held commitment to “sharing good ideas across state borders.”

From Alaska to Hawaii and points in between, we received dozens of creative ideas for running legislatures more efficiently and with greater transparency. Western innovations come in all sizes and shapes—ranging from new technology to member and staff training to capitol renovation to constituent communications and more. One state legislature offers child care for children of legislators and staff. Another turned its capitol into a modern art gallery, complete with curator. And another created a public access room in its capitol to bring the public into the legislative process.

We appreciate the lawmakers and staff who took time out from their busy schedules to contribute to this product. Special thanks go to the Idaho Legislature for publishing it.

If lawmakers find only one new idea in *Western Legislative Innovations* to apply to their own legislatures, we will be satisfied with our work.

Arizona Senator Carolyn Allen
Chair, Committee on the Future of Western Legislatures

Washington Representative Sam Hunt
Vice Chair, Committee on the Future of Western Legislatures
Alaska
The Alaska Legislature’s Capitol Complex Adds a Childcare Facility And a Public Lounge

In 2009, renovations were completed on the newest addition to the Alaska Legislature’s Capitol Complex. The Thomas B. Stewart Legislative Office Building, named after legendary Alaskan Judge Stewart who served in the territorial House of Representatives and was the driving force behind the Alaska Constitutional Convention, gives the Legislature an additional 14,000 square feet of office and meeting space. Two important additions in this new space are a public lounge and a childcare facility operated by an independent contractor.
The City and Borough of Juneau purchased the building from the Masons for $725,000 and sold it to the Alaska Legislature for $1, exhibiting the City’s dedication to supporting the Legislature and improving access for Alaskans. A sky-bridge connects the two buildings for ease of access to a Senate committee room, the public lounge, the Chief Clerk’s office, as well as other meeting and office space.

The public lounge was a much-needed addition where groups of constituents can gather and plan their office visits.

The childcare facility was warmly welcomed by those Legislators and staff with small children.
Childcare Facility

**Issue:** Shortage of Childcare Facilities in the Capital City

**Innovation:** Alaska Legislature Creates a Childcare Facility in Capitol Complex

Like many states, Alaska’s Legislature holds annual sessions in the state capital. Unlike most states, the sheer physical size of Alaska means it is often inconvenient and prohibitively expensive for the majority of members, and downright impossible for a select few, to travel home for weekends or holidays.

This reality has likely limited the participation of those who might otherwise run for a House or Senate seat, because they are either unwilling or unable to be away from their families for long periods of time, which means missing out on school, as well as important cultural and family functions during our 90-day sessions.

For those Alaskans who do choose to serve, each January brings the tumult of moving entire households from one part of the state to another, securing temporary housing, re-locating school-aged children, and seeking short-term, full-time childcare for those children not yet in school.

Juneau is wonderful in countless ways, but available quality childcare is extremely limited, especially for infants and toddlers: current vacancy rates are virtually zero to one percent for this particular age group. Imagine trying to secure short-term childcare in such an environment. In response to this real need, the Alaska Legislature agreed to set aside space in our new building for a child care center, to be operated by an independent contractor.

The result was The Discovery Preschool—a high quality, licensed day care and preschool facility run by Blue Shibler as an LLC. The Discovery Preschool serves 30 children year round, 25% of which belong to local legislative staff.
This innovation has been an unqualified success. During the 2010 legislative session, an additional nine children of Legislators and out-of-town legislative staff attended The Discovery Preschool. Furthermore, The Discovery Preschool adjusts its hours to meet the varied and unpredictable floor session schedules for the three months that the Legislature is in session. The facility also serves state and city employees’ children as well as the general public.

Public Lounge

**Issue:** No Public Waiting Areas  
**Innovation:** Alaska Legislature Establishes a Public Lounge in the Capitol Complex

Like many historical buildings, Alaska’s Capitol is a beautiful showcase of the rich history of this young state; however, it also served as a frustrating reminder of how inadequate the space was to meet the needs of constituents, and, most importantly, the public process Alaskans so rightly expect and deserve.

By setting aside space in the new building for a public lounge, the Legislature has demonstrated its continued commitment to encouraging the public’s involvement in state government.
Before the creation of the lounge, constituents often had to stand in overcrowded hallways and compete for coveted bench space with fellow Alaskans in order to meet with their Legislators. This situation discouraged the general public from visiting the Capitol as there was simply no convenient or comfortable space to wait for committee meetings or floor sessions, nor was there adequate access to wireless internet spaces.

We now have a comfortable space for both the public and staff alike. The lounge includes a kitchen for employee and Legislator use as well as a complimentary coffee bar for constituents, several couches and tables, wireless internet, and a large screen television to watch committee and floor sessions through the locally-produced Gavel to Gavel program.

This space provides a much needed respite for Alaskans, both visiting from out of town and Juneau locals alike, who are actively participating in their government.
Arizona
Here in Arizona, we are committed to the latest technology, and using it to serve our
great citizens. In the past five years, we have made tremendous progress in transparency,
and as a result our electorate is better-informed. In this document, I have highlighted
some of these innovations.

**ALIS Remote/Paperless Senate**

The Arizona Legislative Information System (ALIS) allows members and staff to go paperless. The program provides easy access to legislative documents (bill versions, amendments, bill status, calendars, committee agendas). ALIS saves the state thousands of dollars, by not having the need to print documents prior to going to the floor or committee.

**Legislature website (live proceedings, video archive, bills)**

The Arizona Legislature has been recognized in a national study of government webcasts, and its online archive of video is one of the most-viewed. Of 518 government agencies studied, Arizona ranked #4 in most-archived webcasts created, and #7 in most live webcast viewers. Arizona is one of the only states in the country that requires committee agendas distributed five days in advance, and all are posted online.
Real-time Budget Transparency

As part of the Arizona Legislature’s commitment to an open process of establishing a budget for the state, the Joint Legislative Budget Committee is putting all major budget documents on the Web. Anyone with access to a computer can now see the latest updates on the state budget, economic analysis and a fiscal history for the state. The JLBC site even includes updates on overnight borrowing, in light of recent cash flow concerns.

Request-to-Speak system

In the past, people interested in speaking before a committee had to fill out “speaker slips”. Now, the public can directly express their views on bills by stepping up to a kiosk right in front of the hearing room. Committee members can directly access all opinions on bills. Once a person has created an account at a kiosk, future requests to speak can be done online.

Expanded public access on first floor

In 2009, the Senate reconfigured several meeting rooms and offices. The goal was to have an entire floor dedicated to public access, furthering the mission of transparency at the Legislature. The Majority Caucus Room moved to this public first floor, and was greatly expanded, with seating for one hundred, more than doubling previous capacity. Security was also improved with this redesign, with all members’ offices moved off the public floor.
Arizona Capitol Television

In 2007, Arizona Capitol Television brought Senate and House live proceedings into the state’s living rooms. ACTV can be seen on the state’s two largest cable systems, Cox and Comcast, and on the Web at azleg.gov. Arizona Capitol Television provides live and recorded coverage of all Senate and House floor and committee and commission meetings. ACTV and the Legislative Broadcast Center produce original programming, including a half-hour interview program, a half-hour roundtable discussion program and a monthly magazine-style program on special events at the Capitol.

Research materials

Much of the work done by the nonpartisan Senate Research staff is now online, readily available for people across the state. The Legislative Summary offers an overview of all legislation approved by the Legislature. It features searchable text, and includes vetoed bills, memorials and resolutions. Research Briefs, also published online, features information on issues discussed at the Legislature.
California
Human Resources Innovations in the California State Legislature: Policies and Training for a Professional Legislative Staff

The California State Legislature is bicameral, with a State Assembly comprised of 80 members and a State Senate comprised of 40 members. Together, the 120 members of these two houses represent almost 37 million California residents. Over the past 20 years, both houses have developed policies and procedures to recruit and retain a professional staff. While both houses employ similar human resource policies, this paper will focus on some of the innovations created by each house, specifically (1) the California State Senate’s human resources policies that are stricter than current law regarding harassment, discrimination, and workplace violence prevention, and (2) the California State Assembly’s CAPITOL Institute—a bipartisan training program that focuses on the institutional functions and operations of the California State Assembly.

The California State Senate: Zero-Tolerance Policies and Mandatory Training on Harassment, Discrimination, and Workplace Violence

Like many public sector employers, the California State Senate must continuously strive to recruit and retain a talented and diverse professional staff. To this end, over the past 20 years, the California State Senate has developed a number of human resource innovations, including zero-tolerance policies against harassment, discrimination, retaliation, and workplace violence, and mandatory training that all Senate members and staff are required to attend on a regular basis. These policies are stricter than
current laws protecting employees and are designed to create an employee-centric and family-friendly workplace. These innovations, together with a solid human resource structure, have led to a highly professional and stable legislative staff that enjoys a positive work environment—a work environment that has earned the California State Senate a reputation as having one of the highest levels of professionalism in the country.

Zero-Tolerance Policy Against Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation

The California State Senate has established policies and complaint procedures to informally resolve any complaints from employees about discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. The cornerstone of those policies and procedures is the zero-tolerance policy against harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. The Senate’s policy covers the following areas:

- **Harassment**: To quote the Senate’s *Personnel Policy Manual for Senate Employees*, the policy prohibits “sexual harassment (including harassment based on gender, pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions), as well as harassment based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender identity, age, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, family care or medical leave status. The Senate will not tolerate harassment of employees by Senate members, managers, supervisors, co-workers, or members of the public . . . Sexually harassing conduct can . . . include . . . unwelcome conduct such as requests for sexual favors, unwelcome sexual advances and conversation containing offensive sexual comments.”

- **Discrimination.** The Senate’s policy also covers discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including childbirth, pregnancy, or related medical condition), national origin, ancestry, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, legally protected medical condition, family care status, veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation, or any other basis protected by state or federal laws.

- **Retaliation**: The Senate’s policy provides for investigation in cases of retaliation against an employee for opposing sexual harassment or participation in related investigations. To quote the Senate’s *Personnel Policy Manual for Senate Employees*, “An employee will not be disciplined or otherwise penalized because of a good faith complaint, regardless of whether or not the complaint is sustained.”
Zero-Tolerance Policy Regarding Workplace Threats and Violence

The Senate also has a zero-tolerance policy against violent, threatening or intimidating behavior involving the Senate’s members, employees, or visitors. The policy covers (1) any physical action that can cause physical or mental injury or harm; (2) any non-physical, verbal or written threat; and/or (3) other assaultive or abusive behavior. Specific examples might range from hitting, shoving, or engaging in dangerous or unwanted horseplay, to expressions of anger, including making menacing gestures or raising one’s voice in a menacing way. The Senate’s policy also prohibits the possession of weapons on any of its premises or wherever its business is conducted.

The Senate has a zero-tolerance policy on this subject because intimidation is not conducive to a good work environment. This behavior can also be a precursor to workplace violence, so it is important for Senate members and employees to recognize this type of behavior to prevent escalation.

Reinforcing These Policies: Mandatory Training for All Senate Staff and Senators

To carry out the Senate’s zero-tolerance policies against harassment and workplace violence, all staff and elected members of the Senate are required to attend and participate in classroom prevention training at least once during each two-year session of the Legislature. The training is provided by the Senate personnel staff in charge of enforcing the policies, and is offered at various times throughout the year. It is designed to explain and convey the importance and meaning of the policy. The training includes examples and affords participants the opportunity to interact with the trainers and to obtain clarification about rights and obligations. The mandatory nature of the training is strictly enforced. To quote the Senate’s Personnel Policy Manual for Senate Employees, “failure to attend this training will result in corrective action.”

In addition, all members and staff supervisors are trained on the roles and responsibilities of managers in promoting a safe, secure work environment. These responsibilities include exhibiting leadership by example by refraining from inappropriate conduct, as well as assuring that all employees are knowledgeable about the policy and held accountable for maintaining a violence-free work environment.
Resolving Violations of the Senate’s Policies Against Harassment and Workplace Violence:

Mandatory training on the Senate’s zero-tolerance policies against harassment and workplace violence is an important step in prevention. Nevertheless, when incidents occur, the Senate has policies and procedures in place to resolve them, as follows:

- **Harassment or discrimination:** When an incident of harassment or discrimination occurs, employees are encouraged to come forward and report it promptly to the Deputy Secretary of Human Resources, who is responsible for investigating the matter. Staff may also file complaints or inquiries with the Secretary of the Senate, or their Senator or supervisors. All Senate members or staff supervisors are also notified of their responsibility to inform the Deputy Secretary of Human Resources immediately if they receive complaints or observe harassing conduct. The Deputy Secretary of Human Resources or appropriate designee investigates complaints, meeting separately with the employee and with others who are either named in the complaint or who may have knowledge of the facts. Upon completion of the investigation, the Deputy Secretary of Human Resources then orally reports the findings and conclusions to the employee. If a violation is found to have occurred, the Senate Rules Committee takes appropriate action as necessary, but not before the accused is informed of the nature of the investigation, afforded an opportunity to respond, and told of the outcome of the investigation. Affected employees also have the option of directing complaints or inquiries to other legal channels available to all workers in California, namely the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

- **Workplace threats or violence:** As part of their training, all Senate employees are informed that they are responsible for immediately notifying the Chief Sergeant-at-Arms or the Deputy Secretary of Human Resources of any threats that they have witnessed or received, or any behavior regarded as threatening or violent, when that behavior is Senate-related or involves Senate personnel or Senate-related events or matters.

**Mandatory Ethics Training for Senate Members and Staff**

State law requires designated Senate employees to file “Statements of Economic Interest” with the Fair Political Practices Commission. These same employees are covered by the Senate’s conflict-of-interest code, and are required to attend an ethics orientation course once in every two-year session. Courses are offered at various times throughout the year, and the mandatory attendance requirement is strictly enforced.
Human Resource Structure and Planning

The above policies have evolved over the past 20 years into their current form, but their evolution has been guided by an effective human resource organizational structure. The organizational structure is headed by a Deputy Secretary of Human Resources with an extensive human resource background. The Deputy Secretary of Human Resources, in conjunction with the other human resources professionals employed by the Senate, monitors the current recruitment, compensation, and evaluation and training systems for effectiveness. She also develops the compensation and benefits plan, a succession plan, as well as cross-training and staff development where appropriate. The Deputy Secretary of Human Resources ensures that these plans are flexible and competitive with other public and private sector employers. Audits of the existing systems are conducted to ensure that the Senate is competitive with other employers. An example of such an audit might include a salary survey comparing Senate salaries with salaries in the executive branch, Assembly, and other relevant governmental employers. Adjustments are made according to audit findings, in order to ensure that the Senate is offering an attractive place for good employees to enjoy a long and productive career.

The Deputy Secretary of Human Resources is guided by an over-arching goal of creating an employee-friendly workplace. This goal recognizes what the best employees want:

- Good pay and benefits
- Great training, abundant opportunities, and a nurturing environment
- Reasonable and flexible scheduling and work rules
- Recognition of achievement and input into decision making
- Fairness, safety, and equal opportunity

For more information about human resource innovations in the California State Senate, contact:

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California State Senate
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Innovations in the California State Assembly—The Robert M. Hertzberg California Assembly Program for Innovative Training and Orientation for the Legislature (CAPITOL) Institute

Created in 1998, the Robert M. Hertzberg CAPITOL Institute is a comprehensive bipartisan Assembly member and staff training program that focuses on the institutional functions, policy, and administrative operations of the California State Assembly. Since the passage of term limits in 1990, an average of 30 new members have been elected to the State Assembly every two-year session. The CAPITOL Institute training programs have been designed to develop a foundation of institutional knowledge and ensure a functional and productive government infrastructure.

The CAPITOL Institute training programs provide instruction and information that address issues and duties facing newly elected members and newly hired and reclassified staff. In addition, the CAPITOL Institute provides quality training courses for existing staff to keep them up-to-date on Assembly rules and procedures. Training sessions include multimedia presentations such as PowerPoint and video presentations created by the Institute.

Examples of courses provided by the CAPITOL Institute to new members include: Ethics, Introduction to Floor Session, Legislative Process/How to Work a Bill, Committee Chair/Vice Chair and Mock Session and The California Budget Process. For Assembly staff, courses offered by the CAPITOL Institute include: Legislative Process, Practical Management Techniques, Standing Committee Consultant Training, Chief of Staff Training, Field Representative Training, and Constituent Services.

The CAPITOL Institute also facilitates the California State Assembly’s mandatory Ethics, Sexual Harassment Prevention, and Violence Prevention training programs, which are required of all members and staff during each two-year session.

For more information about the Robert M. Hertzberg CAPITOL Institute in the California State Assembly, contact:

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Colorado
Colorado General Assembly  
Best Practices to Improve Efficiency and Transparency

Over the last decade, the Colorado General Assembly and the legislative staff agencies have designed and implemented several innovations in training, procedures, and the use of technology to make it easier for legislators and members of the public to interact and efficiently complete the public's business. These innovations continue as the General Assembly studies new ways to use social media to facilitate public access to the committee process.

New Member Orientation
With the advent of term limits in the late 1990's, the number of new legislators following each general election increased significantly. Legislative leadership and the legislative staff agencies have worked to expand the "new member orientation" program to three, multi-day phases spread over the months of November and December. Even before the November general election, the legislative staff sends a "save the dates" postcard to all candidates informing them of the dates for new member orientation so they can plan accordingly.

On Thursday immediately following election day, the legislative leadership and nonpartisan staff agencies host Phase I of new member orientation. In this phase, the newly elected representatives and senators receive an orientation to the House and Senate chambers and the staff services available to them, meet the directors of the legislative staff agencies, learn about the legislators' legal rights and responsibilities, and receive information on benefits and State Capitol security and safety procedures.

A couple of weeks later, the new members return to the State Capitol for three days of training in the process for drafting and amending bills; mock committee hearings, complete with scripts and explanations, both for committees of reference and appropriations committees; and scripted mock second and third reading proceedings. This is also the new members' opportunity to learn more fully the services and support the nonpartisan legislative staff agencies provide. Finally, at the end of Phase II, each newly elected representative and senator receives his or her own state-issued laptop and instruction on how to access the intranet services that are available to legislators.

Phase II also includes a day of programs for the spouses and companions of the newly elected legislators. They receive an overview of the legislative process, information from the Chief Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate on what to expect the first day of the legislative session, and a thorough, behind-the-scenes tour of the State Capitol building. They also meet with a panel of returning legislators' spouses and companions to discuss the expectations and challenges that face the spouses and companions of legislators.

In mid-December, the new legislators return to the State Capitol for Phase III of orientation. In this phase, they receive a more comprehensive overview of the state budget, the state revenue structure, and state spending limits. They also receive information concerning funding and policy related to K-12 and higher education; the judicial branch and adult and youth corrections; human services, including child welfare, services for person with developmental disabilities, and public benefits.
programs; and health care, including Medicaid, children's health benefits, indigent care, and mental health services.

At luncheons during Phases II and III, the new legislators participate in panel discussions that include a welcome from the legislative leadership; experienced legislators discussing what to expect as a legislator; former legislators discussing what it means to set statewide policy and to be a public official at the state level; lobbyists discussing the role they play in the legislative process and how best to work with them; and members of the press corps discussing how to effectively work with the press.

**Legislative Management Team**

Several years ago, the legislative leadership recognized the importance of ensuring that the heads of the various legislative staff agencies maintain good communications and collaboration. To this end, the Chief Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, the State Auditor, and the Directors of the Legislative Council Staff, the Joint Budget Committee Staff, the Office of Legislative Legal Services, and the Legislative Information Services form the Legislative Management Team ("LMT").

The LMT meets regularly during the legislative session and throughout the interim to foster communication, serve as a collective resource to the legislative leadership, and improve service to the Colorado General Assembly by cooperating on operational matters affecting the agencies, including issues regarding physical plant, security, information systems, telecommunications, personnel, and financial activity. The collaboration of the LMT has been a crucial factor in successfully designing, implementing, and maintaining the expanding technological resources of the Colorado General Assembly.

**Colorado Legislative Information and Communications System (CLICS)**

The Colorado General Assembly and its legislative staff agencies use a single, unified computer system to draft, introduce, assign, amend, enroll, and generally track legislation from the original bill request through Governor action. Since 1999, legislators, the staff of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and all five legislative staff agencies have used the Colorado Legislative Information and Communication System, or CLICS, as the single computer system for handling bills.

In the years since it was first implemented, the system has expanded to include automatic internet postings of introduced and amended bill versions, committee reports, committee summaries, daily legislative calendars, bill history and status information, vote tallies, fiscal analyses, and House and Senate journals. Many of these items are posted almost immediately in "near real-time", providing increased transparency and public access to the legislative process, especially for citizens who live far from the State Capitol in Denver. New this year, the House journal that is accessible electronically is cumulative from the first day of session and is fully searchable. The Senate journal is expected to follow suit in the 2011 session.

Beginning in the 2010 regular session, the daily House calendars included hyperlinks to the actual bill text for each bill scheduled for hearing in committee or for consideration on second or third
reading. And, with the annual publication of the Colorado Revised Statutes, the source notes following each statutory section include hyperlinks to the final enrolled versions of any acts amending that section in legislative sessions since 2009.

Improved Electronic Access for Legislators and the Public
Over the past five years, the Colorado General Assembly has implemented several innovations in computerized access to bills, research, and proceedings to enhance the legislators' ability to serve the public and the public's ability to participate in the legislative process.

In 1999, the Colorado General Assembly began using a legislative intranet, accessible only to legislators and legislative staff. Through the intranet, legislators can directly access bill and calendar information, including the Joint Budget Committee's schedule; submit bill requests and research requests; and access the results of their research requests. The legislative intranet also includes a personal file manager feature that allows each legislator to create his or her own list of bills to track and easily access throughout the legislative session. All legislators and legislative staff have wireless intranet connection throughout most of the Capitol building to ensure that all of these resources are at their fingertips in their offices as well as during committee hearings and while in session on the House or Senate floor.

During the 1999 legislative session, the General Assembly also launched a public internet site. Over the years, this site has expanded to provide the public access to all of the introduced bills and committee reports, as well as calendaring information, committee summaries, fiscal notes, voting tallies, status sheets, and updated bill summaries. This information is available for the current legislative session and for past regular and special sessions going back to 1999. On the General Assembly's website, the public can also directly access:

- streaming audio of legislative hearings;
- streaming audio and video of second and third reading debates;
- the Colorado Session Laws going back to 1993;
- the Colorado Revised Statutes;
all of the executive branch rules and regulations;

information concerning open records requests, ballot issues, house and senate district maps, legislative committees, and tours of the State Capitol; and

reports on pertinent statewide issues.

Through the General Assembly's website, the public can view live video feeds from the floors of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Viewers also have access to each chamber's calendar and the bills and resolutions under discussion.

Each legislative staff agency has its own internet website that is accessible through the General Assembly's site. On the agency sites, legislators, staff, and the public can access reports, issue papers, hearing documents, and other information provided by the staff agencies. For example:

- **Office of the State Auditor:** Website includes all of the audit reports that have been released since 1999, information for how a member of the public may request an audit, and frequently asked questions concerning the operations of the Auditor's Office and the Legislative Audit Committee.

- **Legislative Council Staff:** Website includes information concerning citizen initiatives, including the ballot analysis prepared prior to elections; legislative committee information including membership, meeting schedules, reports and other documents presented at hearings; issue briefs on a wide variety of topics, including school finance, health care issues, and criminal justice issues; revenue forecasts and other economic forecasts used in preparing budget requests for various state programs, fiscal analysis of bills, and research memoranda on fiscal policy issues; and access to the legislative library collection of reports, superceded Colorado statutes, and reference materials.

- **Joint Budget Committee Staff:** Website includes an overview of the state budget process; all staff budget briefing documents and funding recommendations; the annual budget bill and associated documents that
summarizes the bill and highlights significant year-over-year budget changes; the annual appropriations report, which includes summaries of the final action on the annual budget bill and other legislation that includes appropriations and was passed during the same legislative session; and the appropriations history, which provides a history of state appropriations by fiscal year, department, and fund source, going back to fiscal year 1982-83.

- **Office of Legislative Legal Services:** Website includes access to the Colorado Revised Statutes and to the Colorado Session Laws going back to 1993; the digest of bills, which includes a summary of each bill that passed in each legislative regular or special session going back to 1939; information on the Committee on Legal Services, including membership, meeting dates, and meeting agendas; access to the Office's bill drafting manual; and summaries of Colorado state law on various topics of public interest.

All of this information enables the citizens of Colorado from the comfort of their own homes and offices to monitor the issues of concern to them as the General Assembly deals with those issues throughout the year. In addition, the availability of public wireless internet access throughout most of the Capitol building ensures that persons who choose to come to the Capitol to observe or participate in the legislative process have access to all of the information they need to be informed on the bills and issues in which they are interested.

**Improved Public Safety and Presentation of the History of the State Capitol**

Approximately five years ago, the Capitol Building Advisory Committee and the Capital Development Committee concluded that major life-safety renovations were necessary in the Capitol building to ensure the safety of those working in and visiting the building. Over five years, portions of the building were closed to allow updating of the wiring, installation of fire-protection systems, and the building of three additional stairways in the corners of the building.

*A timeline of Colorado history, found in Mr. Brown’s Attic.*
In the course of the safety improvements, the Capitol Building Advisory Committee and the State Historical Society also expanded the public's access to certain areas in the dome of the building and created a State Capitol museum: Mr. Brown's Attic, named for the person who originally donated the land upon which the State Capitol was built. The museum includes photographs and an explanation of the construction of the State Capitol, exhibits related to the Colorado state emblems, and photographs of notable Coloradans. With these changes, school children, tourists, and Colorado's citizens have an excellent and entertaining opportunity to learn more of the history of the state and its government.

In 2008, the Speaker of the House of Representatives instructed staff to install kiosks in the basement at which the public can access information concerning the Capitol building and the General Assembly. Today, the kiosks provide a picture tour and explanation of highlights of the Capitol building, a step-by-step explanation of how a bill becomes a law in Colorado, a history of the stained glass found in the Capitol building, a video of House floor action, a listing of state representatives and senators by county, and the Capitol office directory of representatives and senators. Also, on the third floor, television monitors provide a video tour and explanation of the Capitol building that runs in a continuous loop.

Innovations in Progress
The Colorado General Assembly continues to explore new ways to use emerging technologies. Legislative staff are currently exploring the use of twitter to keep the public informed of actions in committees of reference, including last minute calendar changes, progress through the hearing calendar, and any pertinent announcements by the committee chair concerning restrictions or limitations on testimony. Colorado is also considering allowing persons who wish to testify on bills in committee to sign up electronically prior to the hearing.
The Joint Budget Committee has been working with Legislative Information Services to create an "e-budgeting" system. This system will be designed to create a central repository of historical appropriations information by line item and fund, as well as a central data system to track budget requests, staff analyses, and legislative actions; to produce general managerial reports, appropriation bills, and other staff products; and to more efficiently respond to legislative research requests. In general, the new system will provide better, automated service and broader access to the budgetary process for the members of the Joint Budget Committee, other legislators, and members of the public.

As technology continues to advance, the Colorado General Assembly will continue looking for ways to improve the public's access to legislative proceedings and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the legislature and legislative staff.
Hawaii
A Wise Legislature...
(...is one that broadens its citizens' knowledge base)

In 1989, a remarkable shift occurred at the Hawaii legislature, one that profoundly changed the way our common everyday citizens are involved with our state government. That year, the Hawaii State Legislature unanimously passed SB 832, or Act 331, as it came to be known.

Act 331 created the Public Access Room (“PAR”), a wonderful resource that has grown into a full-service, non-partisan, year-round facility which exists solely to help members of the public at the legislature. Act 331 was shepherded through the legislature with the help and encouragement of many individuals and groups – Common Cause, the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, the Council of Churches, and numerous private citizens who knew that they needed a better connection to the legislators they had elected.

This groundbreaking legislation was based on the premise, as quoted from Act 331, that “...opening up government processes to public scrutiny and participation is the most viable and reasonable method of protecting democracy and the public interest.”

The newly-created PAR opened in March 1990, in the corner of a storage room in the basement of the Capitol, utilizing nothing more than willing volunteers, some borrowed furniture, and a lot of heart.

1 Excerpts from Act 331, 1989 Session Laws of Hawaii, are telling:

- “...[A]n informed and active citizenry is the most dynamic force of democracy.
- “Good government is impossible unless people are allowed the greatest opportunities to voice their concerns and participate in the decision-making process.
- “Of the three branches of government, the legislature relies most heavily on direct public input...[I]t is imperative that the legislature provide timely information to the public and make every effort to encourage citizen participation.
- “...[R]ecent criticism indicates that full public participation in the legislative process is being precluded because information about bills, resolutions, hearing dates, and other relevant data, is not readily accessible to the general public...”
Now two decades have passed. How this wonderful resource has grown…

Over the years, innovations on the part of both the Legislature and the Public Access Room have greatly added to peoples’ ability to be effectively involved with the legislature. This shift, in turn, has helped Hawaii’s legislators have greater access to information that can only come from informed communication with the people they serve.

A couple of years after the PAR’s creation, it got its first paid staff. This really helped, because PAR’s workload had grown considerably in two short years. Among the staff’s responsibilities were answering phone inquiries, assisting walk-in patrons, maintaining updated sets of all versions of several thousand bills and resolutions (later superseded, thankfully, by electronic copies), photocopying testimony for members of the public, and conducting workshops at the Capitol.

In 1994 the PAR became part of the centralized non-partisan Legislative Reference Bureau (“LRB”), the only one of the bureau’s five divisions that exclusively serves the public at large. Funding has always come through legislative appropriation of state general funds.

An additional service was given to the PAR’s coordinator as well – administration of the Legislative Broadcast Project on behalf of the House and Senate Clerks’ offices. While this was technically not a specific PAR project, the clerks knew that a non-partisan facility like the PAR was the ideal place to house this important service.

This contractor-implemented program, also created via Act 331, had begun providing the public with enthusiastically-received live and tape-delayed coverage of certain public hearings, by way of local public television stations. In 1997, the broadcast project was made a permanent feature of the legislature.\(^2\)

The PAR’s current office space is fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It houses six public computer stations, including one that is wheelchair accessible and adaptable for those with various physical disabilities. Another PC has software installed that will read web pages to blind and visually impaired individuals. A public TTY telephone for the use of deaf and hard-of-hearing patrons was installed years ago.

Our PAR staff also works closely with mental health service providers in order to serve people with a wide range of physical, mental, and emotional abilities.

The Legislature has consistently added features to its superb website, www.capitol.hawaii.gov, continuing to increase the depth and range of information provided to the public.

That has meant, in turn, that the Public Access Room’s range of services has needed to grow as well. And grow we have…

In 2000, the Public Access Room began accepting, processing, and delivering email testimony to legislative committees. (To our knowledge, we are still the only state in the nation whose legislature accepts and considers email testimony.)

\(^2\) In a typical year, roughly 350 hours of live and tape-delayed committee hearings and floor sessions are broadcast to O‘ahu and the Neighbor Islands as well; broadcasts have been transmitted live to our Neighbor Islands since January 2003.
This crucially important innovation proved to be particularly helpful for our Neighbor Island citizens, giving them real opportunities to be actively involved at the legislature – something previously possible only for people who lived in, or who could afford to travel to, the Capitol in Honolulu. (Please see selected statistics at the end of this article for a clear indication of the ways that public participation in the legislative process has grown over the years.)

As additional features were added to the legislature's website in order to facilitate citizen involvement, PAR's workload grew, necessitating the need for more staff. In January, 2001, a second full-time year-round PAR staff position was added to enhance the Coordinator’s and session hires’ ability to serve the public.

This proved particularly crucial in 2002, when the Public Access Room began coordinating the “America’s Legislators Back-to-School” (“BTS”) Program. Through BTS, legislators go into their district schools simply to talk to students about their lives as legislators, give them interesting, age-specific information about how representative democracy really works, and hopefully interest them in political lives as they grow older. Approximately 5,000 students are reached through BTS each year.

In 2003, the PAR greatly expanded the legislature’s Outreach Program, offering free legislative process and participation workshops and tutorials all across our island state, as well as at the Capitol. Through these workshops, people are not simply taught the theory of legislative process – they are also given background material, skills, and resources to help them become active and timely participants in their own legislative governance. This project primarily unfolds in early November and early December each year, in advance of the legislature’s January opening. (In 2007, this outreach program was expanded to include our small, far-flung, and least populated islands of Molokai and Lanai.)

Web-based versions of these workshops have educated participants from as near as downtown Honolulu and as far away as Calcutta, India.

The Public Access Room’s very popular newsletters are published monthly during legislative sessions (January through late April or early May), providing yet another way to educate, inform, and entertain a broad swath of Hawaii’s citizens. Electronic copies go to about 1,200 citizens; 1,000 hard copies are distributed among legislators’ offices so lawmakers can share them with their constituents; and copies are included in workshop packets. Each issue focuses on aspects of the legislative calendar that are relevant at that particular time.  

All these resources provided by the PAR are wonderful. Still, there is always more that needs to be done:

- The next innovation, hopefully initiated in time for the beginning of the 2011 session, will be a series of moderated online discussions of topics under consideration by the legislature. These will be hosted on the Public Access Room’s website (www.hawaii.gov/lrb/par).
- Filmed workshops are on the way, and will be available at a variety of places – on the Public Access Room’s website, on the Legislature’s website, and on local cable television stations. These will allow a huge expansion in the number of people who can provide real and solid input to their legislators.

3 Please see www.hawaii.gov/lrb/par for newsletter links.
And who knows what else? Doubtless, the public will soon let us know.

Watching these resources grow over the years has been most satisfying. A better-educated public can provide better testimony. Better testimony contributes to the creation of better laws, grounded in the vitally important interplay between lawmakers and the citizens they serve. And better laws, inevitably, will contribute to better lives for us all. Marvelous!

### Selected Public Access Room Statistics

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workshop Participants</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>1,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Neighbor Island workshop participants)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>224</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email testimony received</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>1,345</td>
<td>1,197</td>
<td>3,569</td>
<td>4,123</td>
<td>4,237</td>
<td>12,493</td>
<td>7,841* (Senate only; to 2/5/08)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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4 Due to an overwhelming increase in participation in the email testimony program, the House began having its committees process their own testimony when the 2008 legislative session began. Three weeks into that session, the Senate Sergeant-at-Arms office began doing the same. Thus, in fewer than three weeks' time, the Public Access Room staff had processed and delivered 7,841 documents to the appropriate Senate committees. This practice has continued since, thus relieving PAR of this responsibility.
Hawaii’s Public Access Room (PAR)

Your Office at the State Capitol

Don’t make Hawaii’s Legislature do it alone.

You’ve got lots of power – let PAR help you put it into action

- Office resources
- Workspace
- Computers
- Expert staff assistance
- Never a fee for services

State Capitol, Room 401
Phone: 808.587.0478
For 20 years, PAR has been dedicated to helping you participate in the Hawaii State Legislature.

PAR is for the Public

Not sure where to start? Come by, phone or email. We'll be happy to help you as you take it one step at a time.

Add your voice.
Do it for yourself.

Do it for Hawaii.

In 1990, the Hawaii State Legislature established the Public Access Room (PAR) to provide the public with necessary resources for participation in the legislative process.

It’s the first stop for Hawaii’s citizens when working with the Legislature – whether from home, office or at the Capitol.

We are deeply non-partisan. We maintain our objectivity in order to serve the needs of those who use our facilities and services.

There is never a fee for services.

The PAR is a division of the Legislative Reference Bureau, a non-partisan agency of the Hawaii State Legislature.
Participate in Your Democracy

All of Hawaii benefits when people share their diverse ideas, experiences and expertise.

PAR provides the tools you need

An Office for Work at the Capitol
Just walk on in!

Computers with internet access – prepare (and print) testimony; research legislative issues; work on email; monitor news and legislative broadcasts

Work space – a convenient place to use your laptop (free wireless & charging site); hold small meetings; do paperwork, read, or just take a break

Equipment – photocopier (for testimony and legislative correspondence only); television (monitor broadcasts and hearings via closed circuit cable); telephone, TTY and fax machine

Reference materials – Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS); Session
Laws; Journals; English, foreign language and American Sign Language dictionaries; local directories; manuals and books; information sheets and newsletters

Office Essentials for use on site – a variety of office supplies are kept on hand – just let a staff member know what you need

Expert Staff to Assist You
In person, by phone, or via email

Legislative process – identify, locate and understand measures, actions, procedures and deadlines

“How to” – locate your legislators; offer testimony; track measures; navigate the Legislature’s website

Identify resources – statutes; administrative rules; studies and reports; previously considered legislation and testimony; State offices; Legislative Reference Bureau divisions

PAR Website, Newsletters and Information Sheets – clear, accessible materials on the legislature and effective participation
Individual and Group Workshops
At the Capitol, or Off Site

Drop-in workshops – regularly scheduled throughout Session, no appointment necessary (contact us for times)

Schedule a workshop – as time and logistics permit, at the Capitol or at your group’s meeting site

Community workshops – as part of ongoing outreach efforts, PAR offers workshops throughout the islands – let us know if you’d like to be informed of our schedule

Online workshop materials – at http://hawaii.gov/trl/par

PAR is here to help you

Call 587-0478
(see reverse for Neighbor Island info)
Email par@capitol.hawaii.gov

You’ll discover how right it feels to participate in your government. It’s important. That’s why the Legislature has ensured you have the tools you need to do your part.
Hawaii’s Public Access Room (PAR)

Hawaii State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St., #401
Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: 808.587.0478
Fax: 808.587.0793
par@capitol.hawaii.gov
http://hawaii.gov/lrb/par

Office Hours
Hours during Regular Session (Jan – April):
8 a.m. – 6 p.m., Monday – Friday
8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Saturday

Hours during Interim (May – December):
9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday – Friday

Toll-free Phone Numbers

- Kauai: 274-3141 x 7-0478
- Oahu: 587-0478
- Maui: 984-2400 x 7-0478
- Molokai & Lanai: 800/468-4644 x 7-0478
- Big Island: 974-4000 x 7-0478

[March 2010]
Idaho
The Idaho Capitol Restoration and Expansion Project:

The Idaho Legislature’s Efforts to Increase Public Participation in the Legislative Process

In 1998, the Idaho Legislature authorized the Idaho State Capitol Commission to create a master plan that would ensure the Capitol’s survival for future generations. Although the commission developed a master plan in 2000 and the Legislature set aside funding to restore the building, economic conditions over the next five years put the project on hold. In 2005, a second effort yielded a more stable funding source with a modified master plan, and this historic project was underway.

The Legislature moved out of the Capitol Building in the spring of 2007 and conducted two legislative sessions in 2008 and 2009 in an historic, but cramped vacant county courthouse building across the street during the two and half years of construction. The project not only saw the complete restoration and rehabilitation of the building but also a major expansion with two underground atrium wings. The project came in on time to the day in mid November, and slightly under the $122.5 million budget.

While much of the focus was on the aesthetics, design and physical form of this historic project, the Idaho Legislature also saw in this project an opportunity to greatly expand the public’s participation in the Legislative process. The most basic of the immediate needs was simply space. We had outgrown our Capitol Building. A lynchpin decision was made by legislative leaders and Capitol Commissioners to keep the Capitol as a working Capitol, and not move functions out of the building to other locations. We did not want our Capitol Building to turn into a museum, but rather continue to function as the vibrant center of state government.

Committee Hearing Rooms: Creating space for committee hearing rooms was a high priority. The small, cramped space in the old Capitol set-up did not allow the public adequate seating to participate in this very important process. Committees are the work engines of state legislatures where face-to-face public participation is a unique opportunity in our system of government.
After much debate and discussion as to how best to expand the Capitol Building, the decision was made to build wings on either side. After first considering above-ground wings, which would have diminished the scale of the existing dome and been prohibitively expensive, the Legislature and the Capitol Commission supported the construction of underground atrium wings with a long, wide skylight down the center of each wing, and new large public hearing rooms opening off the main corridors.

Previously the largest public hearing room in our Capitol Building would seat only about 80 people, and the regular germane committee hearing rooms could accommodate only about 25. With the new atrium wings the average seating in the germane committee hearing rooms is now triple the former seating at 75, and there is also a large auditorium style hearing room for special hearings, events and joint committee hearings that will seat 240.
Concurrent with this physical design to accommodate public participation in the Legislative process, was the development of technological approaches to reach out statewide to Idaho citizens and allow them a broader, easier participation without physically having to come to the Capitol.

**Idaho Legislature Live:** This award winning project is a cooperative effort between the Idaho Legislative Services Office and Idaho Public Television to broadcast live floor action of the Idaho Legislature. This initiative was developed in concert with the restoration project and includes cameras that are located in the House and Senate chambers, as well as our joint budget setting committee. The system includes a new control room for IPTV who manages and operates this system. The broadcasts are not only on local cable channels but can also be accessed through the Idaho Legislature’s web site. In addition to the live video coverage of House and Senate floor action, and coverage of the budget committee, the other germane committees also now have live audio coverage on the internet. Over 80,000 citizens took advantage of this access to the Idaho Legislative process during the last legislative session.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) awarded Idaho Public Television the “My Source Community Impact Award for Engagement” for “Idaho Legislature Live” at the Idaho State Broadcasters Association’s Best In Broadcasting Awards Dinner held in Sun Valley, Idaho.

**Hearing Room Teleconferencing:** An important aspect of the new technology in selected hearing rooms is the ability to teleconference. We have one Senate hearing room and one House hearing room, as well as our large Capitol auditorium that now have teleconferencing capability. This system ties in to our Idaho Education Network system which enables us to accommodate teleconferences through statewide locations and save on the obvious time and travel associated with traditional meetings, as well as keeping legislators and their constituents mutually informed.
**Idaho Legislature Web Site:** Our Legislative Web site, [www.legislature.idaho.gov](http://www.legislature.idaho.gov), has been in existence since 1995, but has gone through three major revisions, most recently this year. Like many state legislative web sites it is designed foremost with the public in mind. Access to legislators, bills, agendas, live broadcasts of legislative action, public information, tours and upcoming events, all of which are designed to be easy to use and understand. A public wireless system was also installed in the Capitol Building.

**GEMS:** Six years in development, and operational beginning with the 2009 Legislative Session, the Idaho Legislature’s government electronic management system (GEMS) replaces an archaic thirty year old bill drafting system, and was designed to provide a single, integrated system to provide Idaho Code and Session Law research, draft and track legislation, manage information flow between Legislative staff and the House and Senate, produce and manage legislative calendars and daily journals, update the Idaho Code, produce all publications, and automatically update the Idaho Legislature’s website. At a time when many large-scale IT system conversions fail, or have significant problems, GEMS is a case study in how a large and complex new system can be successfully developed, tested and implemented using in-house staff expertise.

Idaho’s Information Technology Resource Management Council honored the Legislature’s GEMS program with two achievement awards for 2009. The GEMS project coordinator was selected by a group of Idaho industry executives as IT Manager of the Year, and the GEMS project itself won top honors in the Digital Government Applications category. This seamless and integrated information management system allows the public to access real time documents, events, floor action and search capabilities through our web site, that once again, increase the public’s understanding and participation in the legislative process.

**Idaho Capitol Tour Program:** Another new program initiated in conjunction with the Capitol restoration program, is the Capitol Tour Program, designed to give school children and other visitors to our Capitol Building a more informed and enjoyable experience. Utilizing a few in-house staff, but mostly a 40-person cadre of volunteer tour guides, the new Capitol Tour
program saw almost 12,000 visitors go through our newly restored Capitol Building in four months. Idaho Public television produced a short documentary on the history and restoration of the Capitol Building, *Capitol of Light*, which is shown to tour groups in a ‘welcome room’ set-up for that purpose. Curriculum materials for all the fourth grade classes that visit the capitol have also been produced for teachers and students, as well as a children’s video. A self-guided tour pamphlet was also produced for those visitors not taking the organized tours. We have also initiated a new Capitol Gift Shop, a small operation with Idaho themed merchandise that has become self supporting after only four months in operation.

**Historical Interpretation:** Also as part of the Capitol Restoration and public interest and participation, the Idaho Historical Society in cooperation with the Legislative Services Office developed a new historical display in the atrium level of the Capitol Building. In a series of displays, some interactive, the story of the Idaho Capitol Building is told, as well as a history of the state and a series of displays that explain the role and function government.

**Summary:** The last four years have been an exercise in commitment by the Idaho Legislature to reach out to the citizens of Idaho. The Grand Reopening of Idaho’s restored and expanded Capitol Building on January 9, 2010 marked the beginning of a new era in citizen participation in Idaho’s legislative process. Through a comprehensive approach that included expanded public hearing rooms, live broadcasts of House, Senate and joint budget committee floor action through the internet and cable channels, access to bills, legislators, calendars and information through a comprehensive web site, a public wireless network, teleconferencing capability, an emphasis on public tours and historical interpretation, the description of our Capitol Building as the “People’s House” has never been more true.
Montana
Montana Legislature

Innovations in Legislator Training and Support, and Public Access

Legislator Training:

The Legislative Branch staff has conducted legislator training since fall of 2002. It began with new legislator orientation in 2002, and in 2008, was expanded to include all legislators and advanced training. In the fall of 2010, a Leadership Training component will be added with the leadership from the 2009 session passing the torch and assisting the new leadership in the transition for the 2011 session. A Leadership Notebook, patterned after the President’s Notebook from Colorado, was compiled for the 2009 Leaders and included information regarding logistics, session staffing, support services including committee staffing by the permanent staff, session standing committee and other appointments, the proposed legislative branch budget, the basics of the leaders authority, the relevant constitutional and statutory provisions and legislative rules.

Legislative Rules Training is receiving an overhaul. Guided by a Rules Subcommittee of the Legislative Council, staff is preparing handy reference tools for legislators to refer to the most common motions, rules for committees, and rules regarding votes. There will be rules training conducted for the new members of the House and Senate Rules Committees, for all legislators, for permanent staff, and for committee chairman. Also, a Presiding Officer Training is held for the newly appointed committee presiding officers.

In addition, in the first week of session, a Law School for Legislators is held by the State Bar of Montana in conjunction with legislative staffers. Held since 2002, topics have ranged from fundamentals of the Montana Constitution, statutory construction, agency rulemaking and ethics, separation of powers, tribal law, open meeting law, and Attorney General Opinions.
In order to assist in the development of relationships between caucuses and chambers, a Legislative Dinner is held the night of caucuses and events like a trivia contest on various aspects of Montana including history, geography, and culture are intended to focus legislators on the entire state and build relationships and greater civility.

Electronic documents:

Montana has had a web presence since 1999. The LAWS database (Legislative Automated Workflow System) containing bill draft requests, status and text of bills, votes, journals, minutes, hearing and floor schedules, and agendas is included on the legislative website.

A new feature was added for last session, an advanced agenda. This advanced agenda was developed primarily for the floor session for legislators, and is also available to the public. The advanced agenda for each day of the session includes a link to the bills on the agenda, any proposed amendments, a link to the votes from the Second Reading on each bill. This effort will be highlighted in this year’s training and will allow a legislator to opt to no longer receive printed copies of agenda and bills on their desk. In addition, legislators may opt to receive email and phone messages and correspondence regarding bill draft requests electronically, too. There are no plans to go “paperless” entirely, but this allows legislators and staff to do as much business electronically as the legislator’s desire.

The legislative website contains additional information for legislators and the public. Access to legislative publications and general information about the legislative process and how to find and contact legislators is available.

Audio and Video access:

Building from an initial effort in 2001 when TVMT – Television Montana began, Montanans can now access legislative proceedings through Cable Television in over 50 communities (and adding more as possible) and also through video and audio streaming through the legislative website. Audio archives of House and Senate floor sessions and audio minutes of all session and interim committees are available. TVMT broadcasts legislative committees and House and Senate floor session live throughout the session and also rebroadcasts committee hearings after hours. During the interim, interim committee meetings are broadcast and rebroadcast for the public’s benefit. An Audio/Video Coordinator has been hired and new improvements to assist in audio and video access to specific bills and issues is being worked on currently.

Other public, school, and media resources:

In addition to training for legislators, Montana has implemented a Media Training to assist the incoming Capitol news corps in understanding the resources available to them. In addition, the
Legislative Information Officer will be assisting the media representatives in registering and obtaining their media passes. A guide for the media representatives has been published entitled, “Covering the Montana Legislature: A Reporter’s Guide” contains information on resources, media access, registration, parking workspace, decorum and dress, technology, and emergency contacts.

The Legislative Council has also recently sponsored a Teacher’s Institute in conjunction with Project Citizen, the Alliance for Teaching Representative Democracy in America, the NCSL Trust for Representative Democracy, and the Montana secretary of State. The institute was aimed at Montana teachers of social studies, history, government, and civics who are assigned to teach in the 2010-2011 school year. Its purpose is to encourage and enhance teaching about representative democracy, the role of the state Legislature, the legislative process, and the importance of and avenues to civic engagement.

The Legislative Information Office has also worked with the Governor’s Office, the Secretary of State, and the Montana Historical Society to develop a web page and a brochure for visitors to the Capitol Building. It provides groups, especially visiting school groups, a guide to how to set up both historical tours of the building and presentations about the Legislature.

Legislative Services Division staff and the Legislative Information Office have produced numerous brochures for legislators and the public. Legislator brochures include Administrative Rules, Conference Committees, A Guide on Requesting and Sponsoring Bills, Legislative Leadership, A Guide to Interim Activities, a guide to the Legislative Branch staff, A Legislator’s Handbook. Brochures and publications for the public include the Legislature at a Glance, A Student Guide, How to Testify Before a Legislative Committee, Contacting Legislators, Montana LAWS about the free, online source of Legislative Information, and An Introduction to the Montana Legislature. The Legislative Fiscal Division has developed series of brochures that profile each state agency and their structure and function, primary functions, and historical expenditures, and Fiscal Pocket Guides on numerous finance and budget issues such as taxes, and revenues. The Legislative Audit Division publishes, in addition to the traditional audit reports, brief summary reports for easy reference. Much of this information is available on the legislative website and in hard copy form.
Constituent Services:

Most of Montana’s legislators do not have permanent personal staff and are supported through the nonpartisan staff. Those who need personal staff during session hire on a temporary basis. The Session Information Office designed a new system called the Legislative Messaging System, based on Microsoft Access, to track and assist legislators’ in managing constituent communications. It presents the public with two means of sending messages to legislators. A person may telephone the office directly and leave a message with an operator or a person can send a message by means of a web form on the legislative website. The form appears on the legislative website and replaces the former email system. Users are prompted for their name and contact information. They then choose a legislator to whom they want the message sent, type their message, and send it. These messages are delivered to legislators. The web form does not allow attachments, thus alleviating the problems with viruses that occurred under the former email system.

All requests are given to each member. The session information office doesn't respond to constituents on behalf of its members. Most legislators address constituent correspondence on their own. However, about ten percent of its members write messages on the back of the printed emails, and the office emails those responses back to the constituents. Next session the office will send messages electronically to the legislators if they request it.

The Legislative Messaging System also functions as a warehouse for constituent data. This wealth of information about each constituent is not passed onto to members. Rather, it is stored in the session information office for reference purposes. The system allows an operator to enter a caller's name and contact information into a database. Should the caller phone again at a later time to leave another message, an operator can retrieve the caller's name and contact information from the database, bypassing the necessity of the caller repeating information provided in a previous call. The system also contains a large field wherein operators can type a caller's message, thereby providing a better opportunity for callers to go into more detail than under the previous system. Once an operator has completed a caller's message, the message is stored in a database and delivered to the appropriate legislator, either in paper form or electronically.
Nevada
Innovations at the Nevada Legislature

Assembly and Senate

Session Manager

The Nevada Legislature has developed an in-house, electronic bill processing program, which is called Session Manager. From introducing a bill, sending it to committee, scheduling hearings, amending a bill, official floor votes, sending it to the other house for processing, and delivering it to the Governor, every step of a bill becoming a law is handled in Session Manager. A portion of Session Manager also controls the messages and information that is displayed on the large projection screens in the chambers.

In the 2007 Legislative Session, the Nevada Legislature started using e-agenda, which is the agenda for each day’s floor session that is posted 30 minutes before the floor session is scheduled to begin. This e-agenda contains a hyperlink to particular documents or to bill history pages. The goal was to provide greater public access to the legislative process. After each daily floor session, the history clerk uses Session Manager to generate a daily file of measures to be handled at the next floor session based on actions that occurred that day.

Session Manager also contains an interface for the Speaker of the Assembly and President of the Senate to identify legislators who wish to speak on the floor. A member cannot speak until the Speaker or President activates the member’s microphone.

Contact for More Information: Susan Furlong Reil, Chief Clerk of the Assembly  
(775) 684-8555  
sfreil@lcb.state.nv.us

Broadcast and Production Services

Emergency Broadcast System

The Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) Emergency Broadcast System can send pre-programmed messages or live messages to any one of its many zones within the Legislative Campus. This system is operated on a personal computer and allows the console technician to immediately inform all staff of a potential situation with a click of the mouse.
**Fire System**

The LCB fire system is graphically monitored by our Legislative Police Console Technicians. Any trouble, fault or alarm is immediately displayed at the console. This allows our Legislative Police to respond to situations based on information from the system instead of waiting on the monitoring company to inform the Legislative Police.

**Chambers/Committee Room Automation**

All audio and video systems are integrated into a software program that allows staff of Broadcast and Production Services (BPS) to monitor and control all 33 cameras along with 17 digital audio systems from one “Control” room. Each legislator desk station in both chambers has a set of buttons that control their microphone, voting, request to speak, and page to Sergeant at Arms. Committee rooms have similar features, as well. The presiding officer from both houses has a touch screen that allows them to monitor and control this system.

**Control Room**

All committee meetings and both Chambers’ floor sessions are broadcast via our website and in-house cable network. In 1991, we began videoconferencing our Legislative hearings from our capital in Carson City to our largest city (Las Vegas) over 400 miles away. With some legislators living in the rural areas of the State, we also can tie into the University System’s videoconference network to save on time and travel for those members. “One Man, One Meeting”: One operator can control cameras, audio, and video recording while linking the recorded material to a time-stamped agenda. This process minimizes the resources needed to produce such an enormous amount of material. The format in which this material is produced allows the public, legislators, and staff to easily navigate through the material.

**Production Room**

Broadcast and Production Services creates in-house training, orientation, and public service announcement videos. We create original soundtracks from our in-house recording/editing studio. We have provided “Presidential” and “On Camera” teleprompters for such events as the Governor’s State of the State Address and dignitary speeches.
**Roadshow**

Staff from BPS can take committee meetings on the road while still conforming to open meeting standards. We have a fully mobile, software-controlled audio system with recording equipment that can be taken to the most remote parts of our State. This allows residents in the rural parts of Nevada to participate directly in the legislative process.

Contact for More Information:
Dan Dalluhn, Broadcast and Production Services Supervisor
(775) 684-6990
dalluhn@lcb.state.nv.us

**Constituent Services Unit**

**Constituent Communications and Casework**

The Nevada Legislature has one central, nonpartisan Constituent Services Unit within the LCB Research Division. The office handles various types of requests from constituents on behalf of the legislators. During session, each analyst in the office can handle up to several hundred e-mails a day. That number drops to about a dozen e-mails a day during the interim when the Legislature is not in session.

The office has a database to log all constituent requests. If written documents were provided to a constituent, those documents can be linked into the database. Consequently, this database provides a history when staffers leave the office. One major advantage with this database, therefore, is that each constituent request does not need to be handled from scratch. Staffers can search the database to determine if someone else had a similar request, and then quickly obtain answers and information.

In Nevada, State legislators do not have district or full-time personal staff, so it would be very difficult for them to handle all of their constituents’ inquiries without the assistance of CSU.

Contact for More Information: Paul Mouritsen, Manager of Constituent Services
(775) 684-6740
mouritsen@lcb.state.nv.us
Information Technology Services

Online Opinion Poll

The public’s point of view relative to measures before the Legislature is captured in online opinion polling, a feature of the Nevada Legislature’s website. Users of the website can express their opinion online or call the legislature and staff will enter their opinion for them. During the 2009 Legislative Session, there were 33,368 visitors to opinion poll webpages, which averages to 278 visitors per day during the 120-day session.

When a member of the public enters an opinion on a bill using the opinion poll, that person is also required to enter an address that is stored in a database. Every day a query is run against the database to retract all the new information that has been entered. The results are put into a text file, and that text file is processed against a statewide database to determine within which Assembly and Senate district that address is located.

The results of each address are appended back into the text file to show the Assembly district number and the Senate district number. A database query can then be run, and the results can be presented by legislative district. Staff can check the internal opinion reports and provide the results back to the legislator. Legislators may request that a letter go out to constituents in their district who expressed an opinion on a specific bill. Using the opinion reporting feature, staff can create a mail merge file and send letters with the legislator’s message to the constituents.

Interim Committee—Sign up to Receive Committee Information

Interim committees staffed by the LCB have a link available on the committees’ webpage that allows users to sign up to receive committee information, including agendas, minutes, and bulletins. The sign-up form is submitted via e-mail to a legislative mailbox. Staff for each committee monitor the committee folder for new e-mails. When one is received, staff copy the contact information into a data source, usually a Microsoft Word document.
When information is produced for a committee, for example, a new agenda is created or minutes are prepared, the secretary will create an e-mail with the agenda or minutes attached and mail merge the e-mail addresses from the data source. Users who signed up to receive committee information will receive the e-mail message with the document attached. Additionally, the secretary will create labels for users who wish to receive copies of committee documents via the United States Postal Service.

This online system replaced the manual process of sending out contact cards via the postal service requesting whether a contact wished to continue receiving committee information or not. The online system has saved much staff time and money.

Contact for More Information: Darla Zumbro, Information Technology Services Chief
(775) 684-6810
zumbro@lcb.state.nv.us

Legislative Gift Shop: Real and On-Line

In 1997, after several years of unsuccessful attempts to recruit a private sector vendor to open a gift shop in the Legislative Building, the Nevada LCB was authorized to sell Nevada souvenirs. To make the endeavor economically feasible, the two staffers who were already responsible for selling the publications of the LCB were called upon to sell souvenirs as well.

The Gift Shop started small, primarily selling products such as clothing, playing cards and desk clocks embossed with the Legislative or State Seal, and items produced by inmates in the State’s Prison Industries Program such as cloth-covered notepad holders with images of the Legislative Building silkscreened on the front from artwork drawn by employees of the LCB.

As a service to the people who frequent the Legislative Building, the Gift Shop also sells stamps and bus tickets, which helps to draw customers into the shop.

The Gift Shop has slowly grown to specialize in products made in Nevada such as hand-crafted turquoise and silver belt buckles and earrings, and wooden puzzles in the shape of Nevada with pieces for each county. As time permits, the inventory items are photographed and cataloged on our online Gift Shop.

After a small initial investment, the effort has been funded by reinvesting the proceeds of the sales. What began as a place to purchase small Nevada souvenirs has evolved into a location where, in addition to continuing to reinvest in inventory, the proceeds from the Gift Shop are used to fund the salaries of certain LCB personnel.

Contact for More Information: Brenda J. Erdoes, Legislative Counsel
(775) 684-6830
erdoes@lcb.state.nv.us
Research Library

The Research Library staff of the Nevada LCB compiles several specialized databases for use by legislators, legislative staff, and the public.

Legislative Histories

The oldest and largest database contains compilations of legislative records for nearly 4,000 bills and resolutions. These legislative histories include a bill history, bill summary, copies of all versions of the bill, any available committee discussion and exhibits for the bill, and Senate and Assembly actions from the official journals. Some legislative history records include veto notices, ballot language, and links to background legislative studies. The legislative history database is searchable by bill number and year, with advanced searches by subject, keyword, and bill status, also.

Legislator Information

In the legislator database, you can locate data on all Nevada legislators from 1861 to the present time. There are many searchable fields, including by name, county, years of service, committee assignments, leadership positions, plus other categories. Option buttons help guide your search, and the brief or expanded format provides two levels of detail.

Legislative Districts and Schools

Often teachers, parents, or students want to know the names of legislators representing a particular school address. Sometimes the information is for planning a visit to the Legislature, writing letters, or conveying opinions. The library staff compiles a database to access the information by school name, address, city, and legislator.

Contact for More Information: Nan Bowers, Legislative Librarian
(775) 684-6827
bowers@lcb.state.nv.us

W100975
New Mexico
The New Mexico Legislature decided in the early 1990s to make the State Capitol something more than another functional government building. As part of a more general renovation to improve committee rooms, public spaces and offices, it also transformed the Capitol into a showcase for the work of New Mexico’s artists.

What began as a modest collection of 14 works of art and 17 art furniture groupings has blossomed into a museum-quality collection of more than 600 pieces valued at $6 million.

The collection draws daily praise from pleasantly surprised tourists as well as those who visit specifically to see the art. Capitol regulars not only admire the collection, but also use the individual pieces as landmarks to navigate the round building. It’s much easier to spot a giant buffalo head made from landfill-bound material than it is to spot a room number!
The Capitol Art Foundation was created in response to the New Mexico Legislature's desire to establish a nonprofit foundation to assist in the acquisition of New Mexican art for the newly renovated State Capitol. The collection began with financing set aside during the renovation of the Capitol, and subsequent acquisitions have been loaned, donated or purchased with proceeds from fundraising activities and charitable donations. The foundation is governed by a board of about two dozen art professionals and lovers, and it employs a curator. Board members are appointed by the New Mexico Legislative Council, upon recommendation from the board, and represent the artistic and geographic diversity of the state.

The result is a model for preserving, interpreting and exhibiting contemporary regional and local art that serves as an example for state capitols everywhere.

~

Capitol Art Foundation
New Mexico Legislative Council Service
411 State Capitol
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
(505) 986-4600
www.nmcapitalart.org
www.nmlegis.gov
Oregon
Oregon Legislative Assembly

New ‘Legislative Days’ Interim Committee Schedule Creates Savings, Efficiency, Certainty & Camaraderie

Oregon’s committee-centric legislative system requires extensive work by committees during interim periods. In the 18 months between the close of the 74th Oregon Legislative Assembly in June 2007 and opening day of the 75th Legislative Assembly in January 2009, the 28 committees of the Senate and House held 181 committee meetings on 112 separate days.

A new system of “Legislative Days” is allowing each of the 11 Senate and 14 House interim committees to meet six times for a total of 150 meetings on just 18 separate days between July 1, 2009, and January 10, 2011. The system streamlines the process for legislators, staff, members of the lobby and the public and saves money on both per diem and mileage payments to lawmakers.

Background: Oregon’s Constitution calls for the Oregon Legislative Assembly to meet beginning on the second Monday in January in odd numbered years only – a remnant of the days when Oregon was primarily an agrarian state. Since 1971, sessions have averaged 180 calendar days, stretching most years into late June and July. In 2005, the Public Commission on the Oregon Legislature was established and the effort to modernize and streamline the Legislative Assembly and its processes was begun. Beginning in 2007, through a joint resolution the two chambers agreed on a set of internal deadlines, including a sine die date. In both 2007 and 2009, the assembly met each of its deadlines and adjourned on time.

During the 2009 session, other changes were made to continue the modernization process and to save funds in light of a $3.3 billion revenue shortfall for the 2009-2011 biennial budget. Lawmakers sent to a vote of the people a proposed Constitutional change that calls for the Assembly to
meet every year and sets strict limits on the duration of the sessions. The establishing of “Legislative Days” and a set interim committee schedule by the presiding officers of the Oregon Senate and Oregon House of Representatives is another of the major modernization and cost-saving measures instituted by the Assembly.

**Practical application:** Before the implantation of “Legislative Days,” interim committee chairs were allowed to schedule committee meetings at times and places convenient for themselves and the other committee members. Creation of the three-day committee schedule was a difficult task. Staff members in the offices of the Senate President and House Speaker teamed with the Committee Services office to schedule meetings of the 25 committees in eight different meeting rooms over the three-day period. By comparison, however, setting the schedule one time was a far more efficient use of staff time than the previous practice of scheduling each committee separately, a process that involved multiple calls to each committee member to confirm availability, time and place.

Widespread acceptance: From the initial discussion of the concept, it became obvious that one benefit in addition to cost savings and increased efficiency is that that the pre-scheduled dates would give legislators greater certainty with regard to time requirements of their office in the interim months. Knowing that committee meetings would be held on 18 pre-determined dates over an 18-month period allowed lawmakers greater flexibility in their “civilian careers” and in scheduling personal and family events. The same was true for members of the professional lobby and legislative staff. Knowing when lawmakers would be in the Capitol gave both of those groups more certainty in their lives, as well.

At the close of the first set of “Legislative Days” in October 2009, however, another benefit emerged. Lawmakers discovered that because the entire
membership of the Legislative Assembly was together in the Capitol at the same time, they found a renewed sense of camaraderie. Past practice had meant that during the 18-month interim period, legislators saw only their colleagues with whom they shared a committee assignment. In an age of increased partisanship, the quarterly three-day meetings have been invaluable in allowing lawmakers to maintain their personal relationships with one another.

The Senate, which meets periodically during the interim to confirm executive nominations to state boards and commissions made by the governor, has combined its interim sessions with Legislative Days to achieve further savings.

Additionally, the Legislative Days schedule has also been an effective tool for allowing the majority and minority leadership offices to schedule and conduct caucus meetings.
Utah
Two projects that may be of some worth to our sister-state legislators are Utah's comprehensive district profiles and a collaborative new system which has significantly reduced the time it takes to provide fiscal notes for pending legislation.

**District Demographics**

New census data will be available next year. Based on the last round of data the Utah Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel created a minutely-detailed, finely-crafted demographic analysis of each legislative district and made them available to the senators and representatives. They were a big hit with legislators.

The report included a district analysis of the following topics:

- Age
- Race
- Birthplace
- Citizenship
- Languages Spoken in the Home
- Educational Status
- Employment by Industry
- Household Income
- Poverty Status
- Home Ownership
- Household Type and Size
- Commuting Method
- Commuting Time

The report also provides insight on questions such as:

- What does your district look like?
- How many school-age children live within your district?
- What percentage of adults in your district graduated from college?
- In what industries do the residents in your district work?
- How does your district compare to the state and other districts in your chamber?
- Is the poverty level higher or lower than the state average?
- Do residents of your district spend more or less time than other Utahns commuting to work?
- Which other districts are most similar to your district?

Filled with color charts and tables, this 50+ page report gave each legislator the opportunity to be uniquely informed and attuned to his or her district.

You can find these demographic reports on our web site:

- www.le.utah.gov

Find Legislators near the top left of the page, then click on District Demographics.
More Effective Fiscal Note Process

This year legislative staff – working across office boundaries, with no additional resources – remodeled the fiscal note process and significantly improved the speed and effectiveness of the legislature.

Here is the story, as told by Jonathan C. Ball, Director of the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst:

[Legislative staffers] Mark Allred, Richard Amon, and Stan Eckersley worked together to significantly improve the process by which we develop fiscal notes on proposed legislation, whereby getting policymakers better information in less time and in turn improving the effectiveness of our legislature.

Utah's fiscal staff has three days in which to calculate the cost for each bill introduced in the Legislature. In past years, at least one of these days was lost to paper-pushing. A bill would be numbered by our lawyers, sent to the Fiscal Notes Manager (that's Stan) who would read each bill and manually assign it to an appropriate fiscal staff person (like Rich). That staff person would then send the bill to state agencies for input. We would wait for agency responses and then develop the fiscal note.

As you can imagine, one person reading and assigning every bill (there were 1,100 in 45 days last year) represented a bottleneck that took time off the 72 hour clock. Further, once a bill was assigned, it often sat in an analyst's in-box until that analyst had finished staffing committees or helping legislators. So a bill that was numbered at 9:00 am one day often would not go to an agency until well after 7:00 pm, and would not be received until the next morning.

Last summer, Stan and Rich approached Mark Allred - an I.T. professional in a separate staff office - about automating at least part of the fiscal note assignment process. Stan and Rich discovered that for each bill, Mark was logging the sections of law that were addressed by that bill. Stan and Rich, with their fiscal colleagues, developed tables that associated sections of code with impacted agencies and interested fiscal analysts.

Mark was also logging each bill’s drafting attorney, subject codes, and standing committee. Together Mark, Stan and Rich developed some complex algorithms that used Mark's existing bill data and Rich and Stan's new agency/analyst data to associate bills with fiscal analysts and state agencies. Mark then wrote code to

On the last week of session we shortened our turn-around deadline from 72 hours to 24 hours.
instantaneously assign a numbered bill to one or more fiscal analysts and at the same time request input from appropriate state agencies.

The three implemented this change in our last General Session and it was a huge success. **Bills that previously languished in the assignment queue for at least 24 out of 72 hours went out immediately - representing a 33% efficiency increase.** Typically on the first day of General Session the proportion of numbered bills for which we have completed a fiscal note is between 50% and 60% (2007 GS 56%, 2008 GS 59%, 2009 GS 58%). This year, our percent complete on the first day of Session was 92%! Of the nearly 1,100 bills numbered this year, only a handful took more than 72 hours, and in each of those cases the sponsor was notified of the delay before the 72 hours ran-out.

On the last week of session we shortened our turn-around deadline from 72 hours to 24 hours. We've tried this in the past and, while it was a nice goal, it was never seriously considered achievable. This year, to my astonishment, when we went from 72 hours to 24 hours, every fiscal note was completed within those 24 hours. There were no "late" fiscal notes in the last week of General Session.

This was not only a fiscal process improvement, it was a boon to legislative effectiveness. In the past, our Rules committees would hold bills until the fiscal note was complete. In some years, standing committees would cancel meetings as no legislation had been assigned to them by Rules. This year, Rules had plenty of bills with fiscal notes to assign to committees. Our Senate Rules committee even assigned bills to committees before the fiscal note was done, knowing that the fiscal note would catch-up by the time a standing committee met. In almost all cases a bill sponsor had his or her fiscal note in-hand before presenting a bill to a standing committee or on the floor.

Mark, Rich and Stan did all of this with no additional resources and within a six month period. They tracked and tested their algorithms during implementation and tweaked them to address any issues they found. Their professionalism and competence were matched only by the quality of their results.

*For more information on either of these projects, please contact Mike Christensen, Director of the Utah Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.*
Washington
On September 14, 2010 at the Council of State Government-WEST’s Legislative Innovations Fair, the Washington State Legislature partnered with TV Washington (TVW) in a display of innovative ways technology is being used to improve legislative efficiency, save costs and increase public participation and awareness.

Founded in 1995 by legislative action, TVW is a public-private partnership that provides cable TV viewers across the state with live and taped coverage of legislative, executive, judicial, and community events. In addition, TVW’s website streams live meetings and has an extensive library of legislative, executive, judicial, and community interest events. This includes coverage of legislative committee sessions and senate and house floor action. Gubernatorial press conferences and bill signing ceremonies are televised as are sessions of the Washington State Supreme Court. Many state commissions, boards, and agency events are also broadcast. The expansive programming includes interview programs with state leaders, authors, and other significant figures. As time allows, TVW also covers significant local government events as well as complete coverage of major party state conventions. Another presentation is the Video Voters Guide that includes presentations by candidates for statewide elected offices.
TVW is also involved in education with a website (www.TeachWithTVW.org) that provides video resources for teachers and students. The site is also available through Washington’s K-20 Network that provides high speed Internet access to each of Washington’s 295 school districts as well as community colleges, universities, career and technical schools, and libraries. Programming includes a judicial branch overview, a recommendation for clemency heard by the Clemency and Pardons Board, legislative debate on a proposal to amend the state constitution, and a presentation on the centennial of women’s suffrage in Washington.

TVW also provides its Emmy-nominated series “Engaged--students becoming citizens,” which showcases students learning about government through programs like YMCA
Youth in Government, the Legislative Youth Advisory Committee, Project Citizen, and the “We the People” state finals.

Beyond TVW, the Washington Legislature leads the way in its use of technology to improve legislative efficiency and transparency. Examples include:

✦ Electronic Bill Books: the legislature is transitioning from paper bills and floor amendments to an application on each member’s laptop that includes the latest bill, or substitute, and amendments to be offered to that bill. In addition, the EBB has all information for each of the committees--agendas, bills assigned to the committee, amendments, and any Power Point presentations by government officials and members of the general public who appear before a committee. The EBB also allows members and staff to make notes on their laptops relating individual bills and presentations. It also enables members to note how they plan to vote on a bill or amendment if it comes up for committee action. Contents of the EBB (without members’ personal writings) are made available to the general public prior to each committee meeting or for items on the House or Senate floor calendar.

✦ Electronic Town Hall Meetings: Working with respective caucus staff members, legislators can schedule and hold electronic town hall meetings via telephone. The town halls are announced in advance to a member’s district, and members of the general public can dial an 800 number to participate. A number of robo calls are also made at the time of the town hall to invite people to stay on the line and participate in the meeting.
Wyoming
Wyoming residents don’t have to linger in the lobbies of the Wyoming House and Senate in the Capitol in Cheyenne to participate in policymaking or sit in the House and Senate Chamber galleries to follow the progress of legislative sessions. Technology evens the playing field for people from all over the state to actively participate in the legislative process. The Wyoming Legislature offers a variety of services to help residents participate in their government, focusing on ways to improve access to the Legislature in a rural state like Wyoming. For most residents, the State Capitol in Cheyenne is several hours away and most people do not have the luxury of driving to Cheyenne to actively participate in legislative sessions. So, the Wyoming Legislature has developed options to bring the Wyoming Legislature to the people of the state. Three innovations to increase remote participation are provided below. These innovations may provide models for states with limited staff, such as Wyoming.

POSTING RECORDED VOTES ONLINE IN REAL TIME

The Wyoming Senate and House of Representatives use a combination of oral and electronic means to record roll-call votes. This type of voting system incorporates the accountability and tradition of verbal vote taking (one voice, one vote) with the technology and speed of electronic voting software to streamline the tabulation and reporting of recorded votes. The Wyoming Legislature combines the rich tradition of oral roll calls with 21st technology to post those recorded votes on the Internet in almost real time for anyone in the state to see.

Many legislatures include voting machines at members’ desks and display boards in their chambers to show the results of recorded votes, but most do not immediately provide the results of that process on the Internet at the same time. Wyoming does not have display boards in its chambers, but instead sends the vote tabulation almost immediately to the Internet for the world to see. You do not need to be physically present in the galleries of the House and Senate to know how your legislator voted on a bill. However, if you are in the galleries and have a laptop computer or a web-enabled mobile phone, the Wyoming Legislature offers free wireless Internet service in the Capitol to access this invaluable information. In addition to real-time Internet display of recorded votes on the floor, the Wyoming Legislature also displays the results of committee votes on the Internet.

This system can be accessed at: [http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2010/SessionVotes/votes.aspx](http://legisweb.state.wy.us/2010/SessionVotes/votes.aspx) and screen shots are provided below. This electronic voting system has been recognized as one of the most transparent and robust systems in the country, providing almost real-time public access to voting information for the residents of Wyoming.
ONLINE HOTLINE AND COMMITTEE COMMENTS

During the 2010 Budget Session, the Wyoming Legislature launched a new service to help Wyoming residents more actively participate in the legislative process. During legislative sessions, the public can recommend support for, or opposition to, a particular piece of legislation by using the new “Online Hotline.” In addition to expressing support for, or opposition to, an identified bill, members of the public can leave a short comment regarding the bill. Comments are limited to 140 characters. A disclaimer page reminds users that their comments are public record and that legislators consider a variety of factors when making decisions on pending legislation. All comments must relate to a specific bill. Staff do not edit or verify the comments.

Legislators access the comments and recommendation tallies electronically using a secure log-in via the Legislature’s Website. There, legislators read the comments from their constituents and are able to measure the support for, or opposition to, a particular bill. Users of the online hotline are required to include their hometown so that legislators know whether the comments are from the communities they represent. Legislators can sort the comments by the counties within their district, by city, and by date. You can View the Online Hotline: http://legisweb.state.wy.us/PostComments/HotlineDisclaimer.aspx and screen shots are provided below.

For those who do not have internet access, the Wyoming Legislature continues to offer its telephone hotline service as it has done for several years. Unlike the Online Hotline, callers who choose to use the telephone hotline do not have the ability to leave comments regarding the bill, but may express support for, or opposition to, the bill.

FIGURE 3: ONLINE HOTLINE (LEGISLATOR VIEW)
This service is only offered during legislative sessions. However a similar system called Committee Comments allows users to send comments regarding topics assigned to various interim committees. The comments must be related to the interim topics assigned to each committee. Users can leave comments up to 4,000 characters long in this system. The Committee Comments system can be viewed here: http://legisweb.state.wy.us/PostComments/Disclaimer.aspx and screen shots are provided below.
REMOTE VIDEO TESTIMONY DURING SESSION

During the 2008 interim, the Wyoming Legislature remodeled the main legislative meeting room in the Capitol to provide enhanced audio-visual capabilities for legislative committee meetings. As part of that remodel, the audio-video system in the room was linked to the State of Wyoming video conferencing systems: the Department of Administration and Information’s Wyoming Video Conferencing System (WVCS) and the Department of Education’s Wyoming Equality Network (WEN). The room contains two 60” flat-panel plasma screens, a state-of-the-art audio system with voice-activated video cameras.

The Wyoming Video Conference System (WVCS) is operated by the Department of Administration and Information. The WVCS system consists primarily of digital T-1 facilities and DSL connections which transmit voice, video, and data, simultaneously. The WVCS currently consists of 35 conference sites located in 23 communities across the state. These rooms include 42” flat-panel LCD color monitors, audio systems, and cameras with zoom, tilt, and pan capabilities. Telecommunications assistants are provided at each site to assist conference participants and to operate the video equipment during a video conference. Their services are included in the price of the video conferencing service. These individuals are trained in the use and operation of the video equipment and are available to oversee, trouble-shoot, and contact appropriate technical personnel during meetings if problems arise.

The Legislature can also access the Wyoming Equality Network (WEN) in the legislative meeting room. The WEN system connects the public schools in the state. The network provides data, voice, and video services to all of the entities it connects. The Wyoming Department of Education does not offer WEN services for general videoconferencing needs for state entities. Rather, the focus is on providing educational content and education-related services over the network. It is however, usually possible for legislative meetings relating to education issues to be scheduled over the WEN.

Interim committees have used the new video conferencing capabilities in a variety of ways. Occasionally, committee meetings are held via videoconference allowing legislators to remain in their home districts rather than traveling to Cheyenne for a committee meeting. The system has also been used when one or two committee members cannot attend a meeting in Cheyenne, but are able to join at one of the WVCS sites around the state. Finally, interim committees have used the system to obtain testimony from designated presenters approved by the committee chairman.

During the 2010 Budget Session, the Wyoming Legislature reserved the WVCS system for a block of time one day each week to allow committees to hold remote public hearings through the system on bills under consideration by different committees. Legislative staff sent out news releases alerting the media and public about the remote public hearings, bills under consideration, and locations around that state where the public could testify. This feature was very popular with committees and the public and we anticipate more use of the system for this purpose during the 2011 General Session of the Wyoming Legislature.
How did you learn about the legislative process when you were young? Did someone go through the old “how a bill becomes a law” speech? Yawn. Did you learn about separation of powers? Check and balances? Were you intrigued or turned-off? For students to truly understand the negotiation, debate, and compromise involved in making public policy, nothing works like putting the students in the shoes of a legislator. Students learn best by doing. When legislators visit classrooms to talk about the legislative process, we have found that students are much more interested when legislators engage them in interactive activities in the classroom instead of standing in front of the class and giving a speech.

Wyoming participated in a study examining the impact of these efforts to improve the understanding and appreciation of representative democracy by Wyoming students. Evaluators tested middle school students in Louisiana and Wyoming and found that in both states, students who participated in the program scored significantly higher than control groups on concepts such as appreciation of the right of every citizen to be heard by his or her representatives; the procedures a state legislature uses to resolve differences about public policy; and an understanding that representative democracy is a system in which individuals elect legislators to represent the people.

Engaging students is easier said then done and teaching is not the primary vocation of most legislators. To encourage and support legislators in these efforts, legislative staff have developed lesson plans that members can take into the classroom that are easy to follow and complete in a class period. The lesson plans and key messages legislators should keep in mind when teaching students about the legislative process, are described below.

**KEY MESSAGES TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS**

Often when students learn about the Legislature, they learn procedural issues, such as how a bill becomes a law, rather than learning to embrace the core values of our representative democracy. Teaching students the rules of the game is futile if they aren’t sure they want to play in the first place. First, we need to convince young people that the game is worth playing. The primary focus of the lesson plans is not to teach students about the three branches of government or how a bill becomes a law, but rather to help students understand the pressures, conflicts and difficulties that legislators deal with in trying to solve public policy problems. Below is a summary of key message staff provide to legislators with lesson plans.

**Politics is Messy**

Politics is as messy as ice cream and just as good. Although appearance means a lot these days, to judge the merits of legislative institutions on appearance alone is misleading. The process is slow, it’s contentious, and boy, does it get frustrating. But, do you know what? That’s how it’s supposed to work. We need to embrace the messiness of politics. That reality doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t continually strive to improve our legislative institutions, but to assume that the system is not working because it is messy misses the point. It is a beautiful
process, not only in the abstract or in textbooks, but how it plays out in real life in our communities and capitols all over the country. Democracy is not always easy to appreciate. Nor should it be. It is extremely human and it is filled with conflict. Conflict is normal – and even desirable – in our political system. It’s not easy to settle differences in a diverse country, such as ours. As a result, you will not get 100 percent of what you want and you may walk away empty-handed. Sometimes form wins out over function, but our legislative institutions are remarkably functional ways to find common ground and win out over appearance any day.

You Can’t Win ’Em All
Winning and competition are very important in America and winning certainly has its place. We all want to do well in our society. However, somewhere along the line, we have gotten to a point where we believe that we need to win for our political system to work. Just because we don’t win all of the time in politics, doesn’t mean the system is broken. In baseball, “batting 300” is considered a remarkable batting average, even though it means failing 70 percent of the time. We can’t – and shouldn’t – win everything we want all of the time. The winner-takes-all attitude is simply not workable if we want to make sound public policy. Our founding fathers purposefully and painstakingly crafted our system of government to ensure that one group doesn’t get everything they want and leave everyone else empty-handed. It’s time to redefine what winning means in our representative democracy. True winning in our political system is achieved through compromise. The framers designed the system to implement the will of the majority, while protecting the rights of the minority. Compromise ensures the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

We Don’t All Agree
We all know that disagreements are a natural part of life, both at home and in the legislature. Nevertheless, because we tend to spend time with people who think like we do, it’s easy to forget that we don’t all think alike. Sometimes it’s hard to remember that most Americans disagree on issues and have different values, interests, and priorities. It’s easy to agree when we speak in generalities. We all want good schools, low crime, and first-rate health care, but as the old saying goes, “the devil is in the details.” Agreement is harder to maintain when we work on specific solutions to our problems. The more detailed the potential solution, the more we will differ on the best way to go about achieving general goals. Naturally, legislators cannot represent everyone’s interests all of the time. As a result, some people will not be happy with some policy decisions and some will not agree with other decisions. It’s the job of the legislature to help find common ground between these different ideas and to pass laws that work well and benefit the largest number of people possible. Compromise is necessary and beneficial in our society.
Change Takes Time

We have become an instant gratification society. Fast food isn’t fast enough. Our Internet connections get faster and faster and yet we are more and more impatient with the time it takes to surf the Web. It’s no wonder that people think the legislative process is too slow. But, we need to remember that the framers designed the system with specific “speed bumps” along the way. Our founders ensured that any changes to our laws would be carefully crafted and not subject to the passing whims and passions of the people. Although the checks and balances critical to our way of life may appear to be unnecessarily inefficient, they exist to protect all of us. People often say that they want action and not talk. However, patience and careful deliberation are the hallmarks of sound public policy. The process is designed to provide ample opportunity for debate, as legislators try to find common ground and areas of agreement to respond to the needs of different values and interest of the voters they represent. Like anything precious and lasting, finding that common ground takes time, but it’s time well spent.

DUDE, CHECK OUT MY WHEELS LESSON PLAN

“The Dude, Check Out My Wheels” lesson plan is geared towards students in elementary school and this lesson requires pencil and paper. The purpose of the lesson plan is to suggest to students that in a diverse society such as ours, people have different and conflicting values, interests and priorities. The lesson plan also helps to develop students’ familiarity with how legislatures try and settle conflicts over values, interests and priorities by means of deliberation, debate, negotiation, compromise, and majority votes. Lastly, it gets across the idea that the work of the legislature in trying to resolve differences of opinion in society is a difficult, but important task.

The legislator leading the lesson plan divides the students into four groups (or you can have each student do this exercise on their own and take majority votes). The students are given handouts and are asked to discuss and decide on a position to be reported back to the class about how they would classify each picture. Included in the handout are pictures of an in-line skate, non-motorized scooter, pocket bike, motorized scooter and a motorized skateboard. Students are asked to classify the pictures into the following three categories of similarity: bicycle, skateboard, or motorcycle. The purpose of this exercise is to develop classifications to then establish rules for each of the categories.

After about ten minutes, the legislator asks the students to present their lists and compiles all ideas about how the machines are similar to, or different from, each other. Once several students have shared their opinions the legislator calls for a vote. The students are asked, through a vote, to classify each of the five machines as most similar to a bicycle, skateboard or motorcycle. Then, the students decide how to regulate each category.

The goal of the lesson plan is for students to start to think about the level to which government should or should not regulate the activities of its citizens, the level of agreement and disagreement in society and the role of legislature to try and settle conflicts. The lesson plan should also get students asking questions like why we need government, why we have rules in our society, what role government should play, if any, in keeping people safe and the level to which society agrees on what government should do for its citizens.
MANDATORY DRESS CODE LESSON PLAN

This lesson plan turns the old “how a bill becomes a law” speech on its head and really gets students, and their teacher, involved in the process. Before the classroom visit, staff mails the participating legislator a box of props, which includes belts, hats, scarves, jewelry, slippers, sunglasses, ties, gloves, etc. No paper is needed for this activity. Legislators may also show up with their own “outfit.” For example, some legislators may want to come dressed as their non-legislative profession (e.g. nurse, rancher, etc.) The props are used by the students to create a mandatory dress code “bill.” The “bill” in question is the teacher dressed up in some of the props available, such as silly hats, ties, and scarves. The students get to amend the “bill” by adding, removing, or including different props to demonstrate how a bill can change over time and the importance of debate, negotiation and compromise along the way.

The goal of the lesson is for students to learn the legislative process by simulating the lifecycle of a bill, specifically debating the merits of a “mandatory dress code” using fun props in an interactive exercise. More importantly, the lesson demonstrates that in a diverse society such as ours, people have different and conflicting values, interests and priorities. Third, the lesson plan develops familiarity with how legislatures try to settle conflicts over values, interests and priorities by means of deliberation, debate, negotiation, compromise, and majority votes. Lastly, it gets across the idea that the work of the Legislature in trying to resolve differences of opinion in society is a difficult, but important task. This lesson plan is most appropriate for elementary and middle-school students.
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