

Wisconsin Legislative Council

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Wisconsin Legislator Briefing Book 2011-12

Interstate Legislative Organizations

Since states face many of the same issues, Wisconsin legislators frequently ask for information about how issues have been addressed in other states. Several national legislative organizations address either the broad range of issues that confront all legislatures or focus on specific issues, or both. These organizations provide assistance to legislators and legislative staff on a variety of levels.

Much of the effort of these organizations relates to the collection and provision of information. The organizations provide issue-based summaries of state legislation and background information on these issues. The organizations provide timely and useful information to aid in state policy development.

Many of the organizations hold meetings for legislators and legislative staff. These meetings often include informative presentations by key state, federal, or private sector individuals. The meetings also provide an opportunity for legislators and staff to interact with representatives of nonlegislative governmental institutions and private sector organizations, as well as their counterparts in other states.

These organizations also promote and work toward state cooperation and consistency in legislation where uniformity is desirable. The national legislative organizations are often involved in development of state policy statements and positions on federal issues, and the conveyance of those viewpoints to the federal government. The broad-based membership of these organizations gives special weight to these viewpoints.

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

Purpose

The purposes and objectives of the NCSL, as stated in its bylaws, are to: (1) advance the effectiveness, independence, and integrity of the legislatures as equal coordinate branches of government in the states and territories of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; (2) seek to foster interstate cooperation; (3) vigorously represent the states and their legislatures in the American federal system of government; and (4) work for the improvement of the organization, processes, and operations of the state legislatures; the knowledge and effectiveness of individual legislators and staffs; and the encouragement of the practice of high standards of personal and professional conduct by legislators and staffs.

The NCSL bylaws prohibit the organization from, at any time, directly or indirectly participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Year Founded

1975 -- NCSL resulted from the merger of three large legislative groups: the National Legislative Conference, the National Conference of State Legislative Leaders, and the National Society of State Legislators.

Membership

NCSL's membership consists of the legislatures of each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, each of the territories of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Governance

The NCSL Executive Committee is the governing body of this conference. The executive committee and conference officers have supervision, control, and direction of the affairs of the conference, its committees, and publications; it implements the policies and supervises the disbursement of its funds. The executive committee meets at least three times a year at such time and place as the committee decides.

Financial Support

The NCSL is financed by appropriations from member legislatures, as determined by the 60-member executive committee and support from the NCSL Foundation for State Legislatures. Each state is assessed a flat-rate charge, plus an amount per thousand population.

Selected Publications

State Legislatures, a national magazine of state government and politics published 10 times a year featuring articles on significant state and federal public policy issues from all 50 states.

LegisBrief, concise two-page reports summarizing issues facing state legislatures, including analyses, successful approaches taken, multi-state data, alternative courses of action, and resources for more information.

Capitol to Capitol, a weekly one-page fax publication updating legislators and staff on events in Washington, D.C.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Denver Headquarters
(303) 364-7700

Washington, D.C. Office
(202) 624-5400

<http://www.ncsl.org>

STAFF CONTACT FOR WISCONSIN:

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(Denver office)

Selected Resource **Bill Information Service (BIS)**, a 50-state search engine to search the full-text of bills, bill status, and other bill information, as well as featured searches for selected current issues.

Meetings The annual meeting is held in July or August.

The 12 standing committees of NCSL meet three times a year--a meeting at the NCSL Legislative Summit (annual meeting), a Spring Forum in Washington, D.C., and a Fall Forum outside of Washington, D.C.

NCSL also conducts in-depth legislative training programs and seminars for legislators and staff on particular issues of importance to state legislatures.

Council of State Governments (CSG)

Purpose This nonpartisan organization of the states and U.S. territories champions excellence in state government, works with state leaders across the nation divided into four regions to put the best ideas and solutions into practice. To this end, the CSG: builds leadership skills to improve decision-making; advocates multi-state problem-solving and partnerships; interprets changing national and international conditions to prepare states for the future; and promotes the sovereignty of the states and their role in the American federal system. Founded on the premise that the states are the best sources of insight and innovation, CSG provides a network for identifying and sharing ideas with state leaders. CSG maintains an office in Washington, D.C., to monitor activities in federal government and their impact on state issues and programs.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Lexington, KY
Headquarters
(859) 244-8000

Washington, D.C. Office
(202) 624-5460

Midwestern Office
Lombard, IL
(630) 925-1922

<http://www.csg.org>

STAFF CONTACT:

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Midwestern Office

Year Founded 1933

Membership All 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. territories.

Financial Support CSG is supported in part through direct contributions by the states and other U.S. jurisdictions. Each state's assessment is calculated by a base fee and a population factor for that state. CSG administers federal and private foundation grants that support research and information-gathering projects on topics of interest to state officials. Revenue is also generated from publication sales and by conducting workshops and conferences.

WISCONSIN GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS:

Governor
Senate President
Assembly Speaker

Selected Publications ***The Book of the States***, a biennial reference source containing data on state governments nationwide.

State Leadership Directories, three annual directories listing all the names, telephone numbers, and addresses of state officials across the country. The directories include: *State Elective Officials and the Legislatures*; *State Legislative Leadership, Committees and Staff*; and *State Administrative Officials Classified by Function*.

Suggested State Legislation, a collection consisting of state law drafts on subjects likely to be considered in upcoming state legislative sessions, designed as a tool to aid state legislators who may be interested in legislation on particular topics.

Capitol Ideas, a bi-monthly magazine featuring articles and reports on key state and national public policy issues.

Firstline Midwest, a four-page report published 11 times a year highlighting relevant legislative proposals in the Midwest.

Stateline Midwest, a monthly newsletter featuring interviews and reports focusing on the Midwest.

State News Magazine, a magazine published 10 times a year offering updates and analysis to state programs, policies, and trends in the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of state government.

Meetings

CSG holds an annual meeting of its governing board, national committees, and task forces. Each of the four regions also hold an annual meeting of its executive committee, specialized committees, and task forces. National committees and task forces meet once a year, in addition to the annual meeting.

The Midwestern Legislative Conference meets annually in one of the 11-member states and three Canadian provinces. The meeting is held in either July or August and features nationally known speakers and panelists.

National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL)

Purpose

The objectives of NCCUSL are: (1) promote uniformity in state laws on all subjects where uniformity is deemed desirable and practicable; and (2) draft uniform or model acts on subjects suitable for interstate compacts and subjects as to which uniformity would make more effective the exercise of state powers and promote interstate cooperation.

Year Founded

1892

Membership

There are more than 300 commissioners from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. These are usually appointed by the Governor of each state or, in some cases, by the legislature, or both. Commissioners must be members of the bar, qualified to practice law.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Chicago, IL
(312) 450-6600

<http://www.nccusl.org>

STAFF CONTACT:

John A. Sebert,
Executive Director
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Wisconsin's NCCUSL representatives are selected as specified in s. 13.55, Stats. It states that there are to be eight commissioners: the Director of the Legislative Council staff or a designee (no specified term); the Chief of the Legislative Reference Bureau or a designee (no specified term); two Senators and two Representatives from the two major political parties (two-year term); and two public members appointed by the Governor (four-year term). If a Senator or Representative is unable to serve, former Senators or Representatives may serve instead as long as they are from the respective house and political party and served as a commissioner during his or her term of office.

Wisconsin's commissioners not only represent Wisconsin at NCCUSL meetings, but also comprise a separate commission, Wisconsin's own Commission on Uniform State Laws (WCUSL), created by s. 13.55, Stats. WCUSL meets at least once every two years on their own. WCUSL advises the state legislature on uniform laws and model laws and prepares uniform law legislation to be introduced into the Wisconsin legislature.

Financial Support

The major source of financial support is state appropriations. Assessments are determined on a population-based formula. In addition, NCCUSL has received grants from private foundations and public agencies.

Publications

Handbook of the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, an annual publication containing the proceedings of the annual meeting of the conference and basic statistical data about the various uniform and model acts and the dates when adopted.

Reference Book, an annual booklet containing a list of committees, the constitution and bylaws of the NCCUSL, and a record of adoption of uniform and model acts by states.

Guide to Uniform Acts, an on-line list of uniform acts designed to assist legislators, legislative drafting bureaus, commissioners, and others interested in state legislation in understanding acts promulgated by NCCUSL and recommended for enactment.

Annual Report, a year-end publication listing NCCUSL's international efforts, tribal government activities, fiscal report, committee reports, and all uniform acts promulgated by NCCUSL.

ULC Quarterly Report, a report published four times a year highlighting drafting news from the various drafting committees, study committees, and standing and governance committees.

ULC Bulletins, a one-page document published six times a year listing upcoming meetings, new members, and brief legislative updates among the 50 states.

Meetings

An annual meeting is held, usually in July or August. Drafting committees meet at various times throughout the year.

Education Commission of the States (ECS)

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Denver, CO
(303) 299-3600

<http://www.ecs.org>

STAFF CONTACT:

Heidi Normandin
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Purpose

ECS promotes quality education for all students. ECS conducts policy research, surveys, and studies; convenes state, regional, and national forums; maintains an information clearinghouse; provides technical assistance to states; helps states develop education policies; and fosters nationwide leadership and collaboration in education.

The commission's outreach and collaborative efforts serve two major purposes: they bring information into ECS to better understand the issues and problems facing their constituents and provide the ECS with opportunities to assist policymakers with complex education decisions.

Year Founded Membership

1965

All 50 states, four territories, and the District of Columbia have enacted the Interstate Compact on Education and are members of the commission. Each member state or territory has seven commissioners. The seven-member Wisconsin delegation consists of the Governor, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, a member from the Senate and Assembly, and three members appointed by the Governor.

Financial Support

ECS budget of approximately \$5 million per year is provided by a mixture of state fees, state contracts, and foundation and federal grants and contracts.

Publications

E-Clips, published electronically on a daily basis, listing education articles from newspapers around the country.

E-Connections, published weekly providing an update on nationwide education policy issues, ESG news and meetings, and upcoming events for other education organizations.

E-Newsletters, published bimonthly:

- ***Citizenship Matters***, examining efforts to improve citizenship education in our nation's schools;
- ***Governance Notes***, examining school governance across the nation;
- ***Leadership Links***, providing links to key information on education leadership; and
- ***TQ Update***, providing information on improving teaching quality.

ECS StateNotes, compilations, summaries, or comparisons of enacted and pending state policies covering a variety of education topics.

Meetings

ECS holds an annual meeting in mid-summer. In addition, two meetings of the steering committee, which consists of one commissioner from each of the member states, are held, as well as meetings of various networks throughout the year.

Midwest Higher Education Commission (MHEC)

Purpose

MHEC is charged with promoting interstate cooperation and resource sharing in higher education. Its goals are to enhance productivity through reductions in administrative costs; to encourage student access, completion, and affordability; to facilitate public policy analysis and information exchange; to facilitate regional academic cooperation and services; to promote quality educational programs; and to encourage innovation in the delivery of educational services.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Minneapolis, MN
(612) 626-8288

<http://www.mhec@mhec.org>

Year Founded

1991 -- Established as an interstate compact agency.

Membership

Each state appoints five commissioners to a 55-member governing body: the Governor or the Governor's designee, a member of each chamber of the legislature, and two at-large members, one of whom must come from post-secondary education. The member states are: Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Financial Support

The work of the commission is financed largely through member state dues and foundation grants.

Publications

MHEC Annual Report to the States, published annually addressing the commission's policy initiatives, research reports, and financial statements.

Newsletters, monthly e-publications providing information on MHEC programs and policy research and analysis.

Research Reports, published periodically providing information on a variety of higher education issues.

Policy Briefs, periodic reports covering legislation, policy trends, and fiscal issues among Midwestern higher education institutions.

Meetings

The commission meets twice a year, June and November, to establish goals, review programs, and approve a budget.

Wisconsin Legislative Council

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