



NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas

2017 NCSL Officer Study Tour Participant Biographies



The Honorable Dan Blue

NCSL President
Senate Democratic Leader
North Carolina Legislature

A lifelong North Carolinian, Senator Daniel T. Blue, Jr. grew up in his parent's four-room farmhouse in Robeson County, where he learned that the values of hard work, faith and education were the keys to a successful future. After working hard in North Carolina public schools (he was valedictorian of his high school class in Robeson County), he attended North Carolina Central University, where he earned a degree in mathematics. He graduated in 1973 from the Duke University School of Law.

First elected to the North Carolina House of Representative in 1980, Blue has spent his entire career in public life. He has consistently been rated one of the most effective members of the General Assembly. As a member of the House of Representatives, Senator Blue was re-elected 11 times. In 1991, he was elected Speaker of the House. As Speaker, he was responsible for the passage of an unprecedented series of workplace safety initiatives, and for many innovative programs to improve public schools and reform the criminal justice system. In 2002 he left the Legislature to run for the United States Senate. He returned to the House in 2006, and now serves in the North Carolina Senate.

In addition to serving as Speaker of the House, Blue has served as chairman of the Judiciary and Appropriations committees. Blue served as president of the National Conference of State Legislatures for the 1998-1999 conference year and has served on the executive committee of the Southern Legislative Conference. Blue was appointed by the NCSL Executive Committee to fill the vacancy of NCSL Immediate Past President and to serve as the president of the NCSL Foundation for State Legislatures in May of 2016. Blue is a founding partner of Blue, Stephens & Fellers, a law firm in Raleigh. Blue holds nine honorary degrees and currently serves as the chairman of the Board of Trustees at Duke University.



The Honorable Deb Peters

NCSL President-Elect
Senate Assistant Majority Leader
South Dakota Legislature

Senator Deb M. Peters was elected to the South Dakota Senate in 2010 after six years in the state House of Representatives. In November 2014, she was reelected to her third term in the Senate. With more than 18 years of professional experience in the community as a small business owner and dedicated public servant, Senator Deb Peters is a champion of creating more accountability and transparency in government.

Recognized as one of the top 40 political rising stars under 40 years old by the Washington Post, Peters serves as chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee and is also a member on the Government Operations and Audit Committee. Peters is also the President of the Streamline Sales Tax Governing Board, an effort to limit burdens on retailers and streamline legal definitions of sales taxes between states.

Peters is no stranger to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) having been involved since her time in the House. During her tenure, she has been a national leader in ensuring the state role in the federalist system. Specifically, she has been outspoken in her support of urging congress to pass efairness legislation, known as the Remote Transactions Parity Act in the House and the Marketplace Fairness Act in the Senate, which would level the playing field between main street retailers and remote sellers. Peters has also been especially active in the Executive Committee's Task Force on State and Local Taxation; the Budgets and Revenue Committee; and the Communications, Financial Services and Interstate Commerce Committees. Before being elected as NCSL Vice President in August of 2015, Senator Peters concluded a two year term as co-chair of the NCSL Standing Committees.

Peters holds a degree in accounting and business administration with a major in Accounting from the University of South Dakota. She is a Certified Public Accountant and owns her own business consulting company. Peters lives in Hartford, S.D., with her husband Chris and two sons, Derick and Braden. When she is not serving the people of South Dakota, you can find her spending time with her family.



The Honorable Toi Hutchinson

NCSL Vice President
State Senator
Illinois Legislature

Illinois Senator Toi Hutchinson has earned a reputation as a highly effective and well-regarded public servant with a strong commitment to the residents of the 40th District.

Since joining the Senate in 2009, Hutchinson has placed a high importance on working to modernize Illinois' antiquated tax structure, protecting women and children from violence and exploitation and supporting construction projects that create jobs while also maintaining Illinois' position as an international transportation hub.

As chairwoman of the Senate Revenue Committee, Hutchinson introduced legislation to close corporate tax loopholes, which would make corporations pay their fair share and help ensure the state doesn't balance its budget on the backs of middle-class families. Hutchinson also passed a law increasing the earned income tax credit as well as the standard tax exemption, allowing working families to keep more of their hard-earned money.

She has passed many laws that protect women, children, seniors and people with disabilities. Hutchinson passed a law safeguarding pregnant women in the workplace from discrimination. Hutchinson also teamed with Attorney General Lisa Madigan to make Illinois the first state in the nation to pass a law mandating the testing of all rape kits within 10 days of obtaining evidence. Working with the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, Hutchinson passed a law that allows a victim of sex trafficking to apply for relief from judgment when the victim has a prostitution conviction. Hutchinson has also worked to strengthen anti-cyberstalking laws and passed a law to increase the penalty for financially exploiting seniors and people with disabilities.

Hutchinson has been an ardent supporter of transportation development in the 40th District. She passed a law creating the Southeast Commuter Rail Transit District that will eventually construct a new Metra line connecting 11 south suburban communities with downtown Chicago. In 2013, she passed the first public-private financing agreement in Illinois. This growing method of financing public projects is gaining popularity nationwide as costs to expand and develop transportation infrastructure continue to rise.

As a mother of three children who attended public schools, Hutchinson has placed high importance on improving public education in Illinois. Concerned about the increasing number of students, especially African-American boys, who receive severe disciplinary action that keeps them out of the classroom, Hutchinson passed a law to study the problem and work with school districts to reduce expulsions and suspensions.

Hutchinson earned a bachelor of English degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a law degree from Northern Illinois University College of Law. Hutchinson lives with her family in Olympia Fields.



The Honorable Curtis Bramble

NCSL Immediate Past President
Senate President Pro Tempore
Utah Legislature

Curtis S. Bramble was elected to the Utah State Senate in November 2000. Bramble is in his fourth term in the Utah Senate, where he previously served as Senate majority leader and currently serves as Senate president pro tempore.

Bramble, a CPA, is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Utah Association of Certified Public Accountants. Bramble was elected as vice president of the National Conference of State Legislatures in August 2013. He served as co-chair of the NCSL Standing Committees 2012-2013. He is a member of the State and Local Taxation Task Force, a member of the Immigration and the States Task Force, and the International Affairs Task Force. He has participated in forums addressing issues like education, transportation, energy, and taxation.

Bramble began his college career at the University of Notre Dame, and earned his bachelor's and masters degree in accounting from Brigham Young University. Bramble is a fixed wing and hot air balloon pilot and owns Stars & Stripes Inc., a hot air balloon company, with former Utah House Majority Leader Jeff Alexander. He and his family live in Provo and are actively involved in motorcycle touring, mountain climbing, scouting, antique automobiles, skydiving, skiing, backpacking, fishing, hunting, scuba diving, and boating at Lake Powell. He is married to Susan Mackay of Provo, and they are the parents of six children and four wonderful granddaughters and three grandsons.



The Honorable Sally Jameson
NCSL Standing Committees Co-Chair
State Delegate
Maryland Legislature

Sally Young Jameson has served in the Maryland House of Delegates since 2003 representing Charles County, District 28 and she is currently the Chair for the Southern Maryland Delegation. She has chaired the Maryland Rural Caucus 3 different years, and the Charles County Delegation previously for two terms. Sally is a member of the Economic Matters Committee, where she serves as Vice Chair of the Committee. She also chairs the Public Utility Subcommittee on ECM, and is a member of the Property and Casualty and the Workers' Compensation Sub-Committees.

Sally served on the Governor's Workforce Investment Board from 2008 until 2015. She is on the Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund Advisory Board and is a member of the Southern States Energy Board. Sally participates with the State Agriculture and Rural Leaders (SARL).

Delegate Jameson is a member of the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) which represents over 7300 Legislators nationally. She is the current Co-Chair of its Standing Committees for a two year term thru 2018. Since 2010 she has chaired their Nuclear Legislative Workgroup, and has been a member of this group since 2004. In 2010 she served as Chair of NCSL's Agriculture & Energy Committee and in 2015-2016 as the Chair of Natural Resources and Infrastructure Committee. Sally also serves on NCSL's Executive Committee and on their Foundation Board.

She has testified before the President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Nuclear Energy, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Congress. She works with the U.S. Department of Energy on environmental concerns relating to the clean-up of Federal Facilities. Sally currently serves on the American Nuclear Society's Special Committee on Nuclear in the States. Delegate Jameson has received numerous awards related to her work in the Maryland House of Delegates and across the Nation. She has been recognized by the Solar Industry, the Nuclear Energy Industry, and received several awards for working in the field of Renewable Energy. She has been recognized nationally for her work on Military issues by the Pentagon. Sally has been recognized by both the Maryland Municipal League and the Maryland Association of Counties.

Delegate Jameson is a former Executive Director for the Charles County Chamber of Commerce. She serves on the Tri County Council for Southern Maryland, the Southern Maryland Agricultural Commission, and the SagePoint Senior Living Services Boards of Trustees. Sally was the first female to chair the Charles County Board of Zoning Appeals and the Greater Waldorf Jaycees.

She and her husband Gene have been married for forty-seven years. Sally is the mother of two children and is a grandmother of four. She resides in Bryantown, Maryland.



Mr. Raul Burciaga
NCSL Staff Chair
Director, New Mexico Legislative Council Service
New Mexico Legislature

Raúl E. Burciaga worked for 15 years in the administration of federal health care programs, including Medicare and the Indian Health Service, and also served as a Medicare consultant for several companies. Opting for a new career, he attended the University of New Mexico School of Law and, upon graduation, joined the New Mexico Legislative Council Service (LCS) as a staff attorney in July 2000. From 2000 to 2007, he served as the lead staff attorney for legislative health committees and as the primary bill drafter of health care legislation, as well as staff attorney to numerous legislative committees, task forces and work groups. He served as the assistant director for drafting services from 2004 until 2010, when he became director of the LCS.

As LCS director, Burciaga has primary responsibility for administration of the LCS, the nonpartisan drafting, legal and research agency of the New Mexico Legislature. Additionally, he is responsible for the control, care, custody and maintenance of the State Capitol, Capitol North, Capitol Parking Structure and grounds. He is an ex-officio member of the state's Public School Capital Outlay Council, the New Mexico Compilation Commission and the national Uniform Law Commission.

Burciaga has been active with NCSL since 2001, attending numerous Summits, Forums and issue-specific meetings, including serving as an at-large member of the Executive Committee, staff chair of the Standing Committee on Health, overall staff vice chair of the Standing Committees, director of Legal Services Staff Section and member of the Task Force On Federal Health Reform Implementation. He completed the NCSL's Legislative Staff Management Institute at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in 2004 and the Council of State Government's Henry Toll Fellowship Program in Lexington, Ky., in 2012. In 2014, through NCSL, he assisted in the training of parliamentary staff in Mozambique on new member orientation.



Mr. Chuck Truesdell
Staff Vice Chair
Legislative Fiscal Analyst
Kentucky General Assembly

Chuck Truesdell joined Kentucky's non-partisan Legislative Research Commission in 2003 after a brief award-winning career in journalism. His work in the Public Information Office focused on speechwriting, opinion pieces, and media relations. In 2011, he joined the agency's Office of Budget Review as a fiscal analyst focusing on transportation funding and the state's highway and bridge construction. He is currently responsible for oversight of P-12 school finance, school construction, and the teachers' retirement system.

Truesdell has been actively involved with NCSL since 2005, when he became involved with the Legislative Information and Communications Staff Section. He served as LINCS chair in 2010-2011 and has been honored with the group's Staff Achievement Award. He has served on the Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee since 2009, including stints as chair of both the Information Technology and Legislative Institution subcommittees. He was appointed to serve as Overall Staff Co-Chair of the NCSL Standing

Committees in 2011-2012, and has served on the NCSL Executive Committee since 2014. He has served on numerous panels and in a number of speaking roles with NCSL over the last decade.

Truesdell earned a B.A. in Political Science and an M.P.A. in Public Financial Management from the University of Kentucky. His research on public pension funding has been recognized with the Daniel Reedy Award from the University of Kentucky and the Robert Kline Award from the Southeastern Conference for Public Administration. He is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa and Pi Alpha Alpha honor societies.



Mr. Jon Heining
NCSL Vice Chair Elect
General Counsel, Texas Legislative Council
Texas Legislature

Jon Heining believes that strong states and strong state legislatures are critical to the success of our great American experiment in self-government. Accordingly, he serves the legislature of his state as general counsel to the Texas Legislative Council. As general counsel, Heining provides legal support to the council for administrative, contractual, and personnel issues. In addition, he drafts or reviews several categories of legislative documents. Occasionally, he is asked to speak on legal ethics, Texas legislative process, and the use of social media by government employees. Heining was elected to the leadership team of the National Conference of State Legislatures in August 2017.

Heining holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Auburn University in Alabama, a master of laws from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, and a juris doctorate from The University of Texas School of Law in Austin, Texas.

In his spare time, Heining enjoys scuba diving, preparing and eating smoked meats, and gardening poorly. Jon lives and plays in Austin, Texas, with his beloved wife, children, and dog.



Ms. Nancy Cyr
NCSL Immediate Past Staff Chair
Director, Legislative Research Office
Nebraska Legislature

Nancy Cyr has been active in the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) for nearly two decades. She has held several leadership positions, including NCSL Staff Chair, Staff Chair of NCSL's Standing Committees, chair of the Legal Services Staff Section, and staff vice chair of the Redistricting and Elections Committee. She has also served on NCSL's Executive Committee and Legislative Staff Coordinating Committee and was a recipient of the Legislative Staff Achievement Award from the Legal Services Staff Section.

Cyr has served the Nebraska Legislature since 1981, first as a bill drafter and then as Assistant Revisor of Statutes, before joining the Legislative Research Office in 1992. Currently, she is the Director of Research, a position she has held since 2010. Prior to her appointment, she was the office's legal counsel. She also served as legal counsel to the Legislature's Redistricting Committee in 2001 and 2011. Cyr received her BA and JD from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



Mr. William Pound

NCSL Executive Director

William Pound has been the executive director of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) since 1987. Mr. Pound has been with NCSL since its founding in 1975 and has been instrumental in the development of many of its innovative programs and services designed for legislators, legislative leaders, and legislative staff.

Mr. Pound has researched and written extensively on legislatures, the legislative process, and fiscal and public finance issues. He speaks to both national and international audiences on topics of state government fiscal conditions, public policy issues, and on the activities of state legislatures and federalism. He also taught political science at the University of Colorado, the University of Denver, and Colorado State University.

He received his BA in political science from the University of Denver; completed a U.S. Department of Interior fellowship with Special Program, Water Resources Management, University of Wisconsin; and was a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Colorado.



Ms. Kathy Brennan Wiggins

Director, International Programs

NCSL

Kathleen Brennan Wiggins is the Director of the International Programs department at the National Conference of State Legislatures. In this capacity, she directs and manages the Conference's international activities. She is responsible for organizing and managing numerous study tours, supervising technical assistance projects involving legislatures in various countries, coordinating conferences on public policy issues with international officials, among other activities. Ms. Brennan Wiggins has been with NCSL for more than twenty years and has held numerous positions with NCSL. Prior to working for NCSL, Ms. Brennan Wiggins worked as a legislative assistant in a Congressional Member's office on Capitol Hill and as a committee staff member in a state legislature. She obtained an undergraduate degree from Manhattanville College and a Masters degree from the George Washington University School of Business and Public Administration.