

WHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!
ELITCH GARDENS



SUMMER | 2022



NCSL

STATE LEGISLATURES MAGAZINE

ROCKIES
COORS FIELD



EMPOWER FIELD



SUMMIT 2022

Denver International Airport



Union Station



**PLACES
POLITICAL
PEOPLE**

PG. 10



LOCK TOWER



CONVENTION CENTER

NEXT STOP: MIDTERMS

PG. 28

16TH STREET MALL



CAPITOL BUILDING

**RED ROCKS
AMPHITHEATRE**



**DENVER
ART
MUSEUM**

pluribus news

**50 states.
One source.**

COMING SOON

Pluribus News, the nation's only independent media outlet dedicated to covering state legislatures.

Where your next great conversation begins.

Where your next great idea starts.



Sign up today for our **free newsletter** and get the **latest news and information** on state policy debates before they happen.

pluribusnews.com

The right treatment at the right time.



Biomarkers are often used to help determine the best treatment for a patient, but not all communities are benefitting from the latest advancements in biomarker testing and precision medicine.

Progress in improving cancer outcomes increasingly involves the use of precision medicine. Biomarker testing is an important step for accessing precision medicine including targeted therapies that can lead to improved survivorship and better quality of life for cancer patients. But without action to expand coverage of and access to biomarker testing, advances in precision medicine could increase existing disparities in cancer outcomes by race, ethnicity, income, and geography.

Timely access to appropriate biomarker testing can help achieve better health outcomes, improve quality of life and reduce costs by connecting patients to the most effective treatment for their cancer.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT



fightcancer.org

Insurance coverage for biomarker testing is failing to keep pace with innovations and advancements in treatment.

Learn more at fightcancer.org/biomarkers

Inside

STATE LEGISLATURES MAGAZINE | SUMMER 2022

SUMMIT 2022

10 | Places Political People Love

Colorado lawmakers, staffers and public policy leaders share their top tips for enjoying your time in the Mile High City.

20 | Embracing the Arts

States are recognizing that arts and culture bolster their economies over the long haul.

ELECTIONS AND REDISTRICTING

28 | Election Accuracy

12 steps officials can take to minimize errors and maximize confidence—with negligible partisan impact.

- Redistricting lines have been drawn, but one very large step remains: lawsuits. | **36**
- This fall, we'll see the results of the latest redistricting. | **38**



Chief Executive Officer
Tim Storey

Denver Office
7700 East First Place
Denver, Colorado 80230
(303) 364-7700

Washington, D.C.
444 N. Capitol St. N.W.,
Suite 515
Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 624-5400

**Director of Publications
and Digital Content**
Lesley Kennedy

**Associate Director of
Communications**
Lisa Ryckman

Senior Editor
Kevin Frazzini

**Associate Director,
Design**
Stephen Miller

Advertising Sales
sales@ncsl.org

NCSL President
Scott Saiki,
Speaker of the House
of Representatives, Hawaii

NCSL Staff Chair
J.J. Gentry,
Senate Ethics Counsel,
South Carolina

State Legislatures (ISSN 0147-0641) is published by the National Conference of State Legislatures. ©2022, All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Requests for permission to reprint may be emailed to Lisa Ryckman at: lisa.ryckman@ncsl.org. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect NCSL policy. State Legislatures is indexed in the PAIS Bulletin and Expanded Academic Index.

Annual subscription rates: U.S.—\$20; foreign—\$40; teachers—\$25 (promo code SLMTEA). Single copy: \$10.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: State Legislatures magazine, 7700 East First Place, Denver, CO 80230.

LAWMAKERS AND STAFF



45 | Texas Stars

Republican Tom Craddick and Democrat Senfronia Thompson—two of the longest-serving legislators in the country—may not always be allies but they are definitely friends.

58 | Ready for the World

These eight young lawmakers, all moved by different issues, couldn't wait till 'someday' to run for office.

64 | Service Before Self



After 32 years mentoring staff and counseling lawmakers, NCSL Staff Chair Martha Wigton is set to retire.

66 | Climbing High for Harmony

A summit of Mount Kilimanjaro by Nebraska senators provided lessons in perseverance, working across party lines and being open to the inspiration of unusual possibilities.



ON THE COVER

NCSL thanks Vicarel Studios for their work on the cover and inside illustrations in this magazine. VicarelStudios.com

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to Denver!

Communication. Connection. Community.

The NCSL Legislative Summit is about all of these—and more. Consider it an opportunity to learn at more than 75 policy, professional development and legislative institution sessions. Consider it an opportunity to connect at networking events, happy hours and in the exhibit hall.



And whether it's your first Summit or your 45th, consider it an opportunity to revel in a community of legislators, staffers, families and friends from across the nation and around the world.

With so many great sessions packed into three days, it's going to be tough to choose which ones to attend. Rookies—or anyone who wants a refresher—can join CEO Tim Storey for an orientation session that will explore all things Summit and give

some initial guidance.

Most of the Summit sessions delve deep into the important policy issues facing the states—cybersecurity, budgeting, health care, energy and elections, to name just a few.

Others are designed to inspire. Among those are the legislative staff luncheon featuring Olympic swimming gold medalist Missy Franklin and addresses from astronaut Matthew Dominick and former Colorado Rockies manager Clint Hurdle.

Still others aim to enhance the skill that legislators and their staff value more than any other: communication.

When it comes to governing, the ability to connect with colleagues and constituents is key to getting things done. Reaching across the aisle and the ideological spectrum require both the right words and the right tone. Sure, you're talking—but are you being heard and understood?

Body language and communications expert Mark Bowden offers techniques to help you stand out every time you open your mouth.

NCSL's Curt Stedron talks about building trust, setting aside differences and reaching bipartisan agreement to get something important done. Kurt McDonald and Terry Rubin of The Professional Communicators have tools to help you gain confidence and give clear, compelling presentations. Bring a speech with you and get personal coaching to make it better.

As important as the sessions are, Summit offers something even more valuable: the chance to engage with others who share your commitment to public service and good governance from across the nation and around the globe. The casual conversations shared outside a Summit session—much like those outside legislative chambers—can be the beginning of something bigger and more meaningful.

Yes, this gathering is about policy. But mostly, it's about people: communicating, connecting and coming together as a legislative community to learn and grow.

Welcome to Summit!

Lisa Ryckman is an associate director in NCSL's Communications Division.

Why I Love the First Branch

After the revered “We the People” preamble, the writers of the U.S. Constitution very intentionally made the legislative function of the self-government experiment the *first branch*. The first words in Article I, Section 1 designate all legislative powers to a Congress consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives, the latter, according to Section 2, to be chosen by the “People of the several States”—the people’s branch. The U.S. Constitution



drew heavily from the several existing state constitutions that established legislatures in their opening words. I take pride in the fact that the legislature is the first and, in my opinion, pre-

eminent branch of our checks-and-balances form of democracy.

The George Washington-chaired convention that drafted the Constitution had many goals and concerns in trying to design a new form of government. Chief among those: distributing power to avoid the tyranny the Founding Fathers saw in England’s King George III. The drafters sought to establish a form of self-governance where the people had the ultimate voice through elected legislators. It’s not a perfect system, yet the legislative institution has endured for over 400 years in North America. As legislators or the staff dedicated to making legislatures function smoothly, we are today’s keepers of the institution. We should strive to be worthy stewards and pass along to the next generation an institution in better shape than we found it.

THE DRAFTERS SOUGHT TO
ESTABLISH A FORM OF SELF-
GOVERNANCE WHERE THE
PEOPLE HAD THE ULTIMATE
VOICE THROUGH ELECTED
LEGISLATORS. IT’S NOT
A PERFECT SYSTEM,
YET THE LEGISLATIVE
INSTITUTION HAS ENDURED
FOR OVER 400 YEARS.

That leads me to why I love the first branch: the people. During my 30-plus years at NCSL, I estimate that I have met thousands of legislators and staff and worked closely with hundreds. I’m pleased to say that hardly any were flat-out jerks—I could count those rare encounters on one hand. The vast majority of people working in the first branch are exemplary, honest public servants—indeed, the best among us.

Sadly, that is not what many Americans think. Mention the words “elected official,” and too many conjure up a corrupt politician like Mayor Quimby from “The Simpsons.” Too often, legislatures only get broad media attention when there is an episode of corruption, further reinforcing the false impression that elected officials are all self-dealing.

It’s an extremely misleading narrative that has deep roots in the American con-

sciousness. And it’s why polls show that faith in government has steadily declined in the last 30 years. The Pew Research Center released a poll in early June showing that only 54% of Americans had a favorable view of their state government, down from 59% in 2019. When asked to name an issue their state was addressing well, 55% could not think of a single one.

It is no surprise that most Americans don’t understand the role of legislatures. And while legislative work brings great satisfaction to those who do it, it also often requires significant sacrifices. There are currently 7,572 people serving as legislators in the states, territories and Washington, D.C. There are about 25,000 full-time legislative staff. That means that fewer than 0.02% of America’s 165 million or so workers serve in legislatures.

I think most people who have spent time working in legislatures would agree that they are wonderful places filled with dedicated professionals addressing the core issues of our times/states/nation/you choose. When asked what they love about legislatures, they almost all reply, “It’s the people.” That’s the same as saying they love the institution. The legislative institution is not the massive and beautiful capitol buildings. The institution is the people who make those places come alive.

Thank you for what you do.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Storey".

Tim Storey is the chief executive officer of NCSL.



Your trusted partner in cannabis

Our policy priorities

Protecting and expanding access

Fostering social equity and an inclusive industry

Advancing state-of-the-art lab testing

Demonstrating a commitment to safety

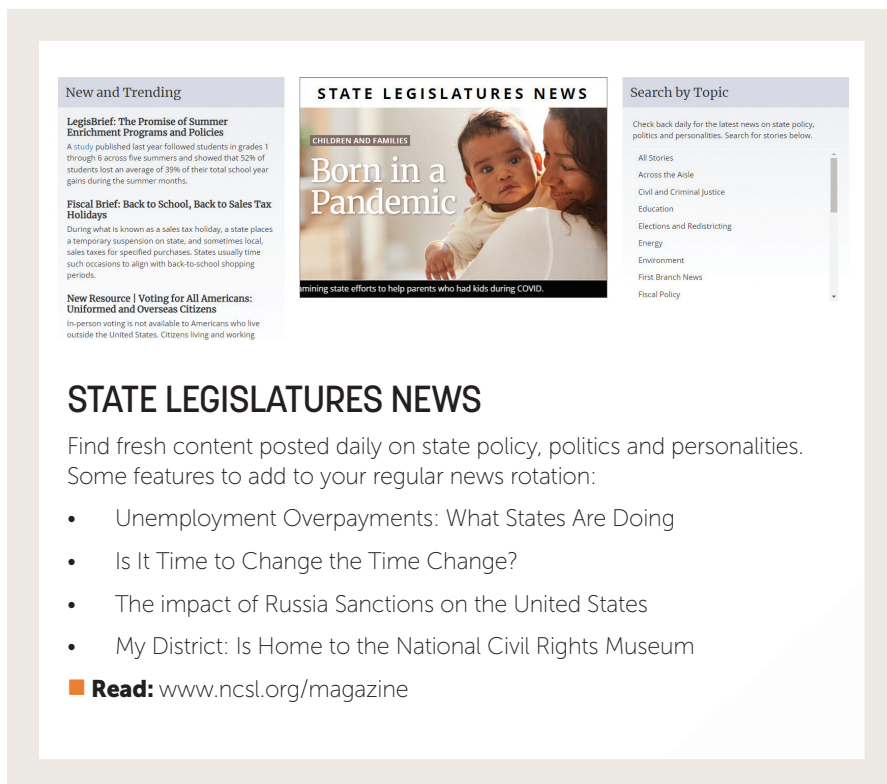
Establishing reasonable taxation

Creating and growing efficient markets

Visit **wmpolicy.com** to learn more

ncsl.org

Visit us online for the latest in legislative news, resources, reports and more.



NCSL PODCASTS

"Legislatures: The Inside Storey With Tim Storey" is the newest addition to NCSL's suite of podcasts, which also includes "Our American States" and "Building Democracy." Storey hosts guests who share fresh perspectives on the world of legislatures. Recent episodes to catch up on:

- Keith Allred on Keeping Our Democracy
- Amy Walter on Politics, Money and the Midterms
- A Lesson From Ireland: Negotiating the Peace

■ **Listen:** www.ncsl.org/our-american-states

NCSL LIVING ROOM TOWN HALL

Join NCSL policy experts and other guests for an inside look at today's top issues. Recent videos to catch up on now:

- Communicating Election Accuracy
- Energy Sector Cybersecurity
- A State Health Care Update
- State of the State Budgets
- 2022 State Policy Trends

■ **Watch:** facebook.com/NCslorg

     #ncslorg



■ 2022 State Legislative Session Calendar and NCSL State Liaison Contacts

As of June 24. Updated regularly at ncsl.org. ► Legislature meets throughout the year. ■ No regular session in 2022.

State	Convene	Adjourn
Alabama	Jan. 11	April 7
Alaska	Jan. 18	May 18
Arizona	Jan. 10	June 30
Arkansas	Feb. 14	March 15
California	Jan. 3	Aug. 31
Colorado	Jan. 12	May 11
Connecticut	Feb. 9	May 4
Delaware	Jan. 11	June 30
Florida	Jan. 11	March 14
Georgia	Jan. 10	April 4
Hawaii	Jan. 19	May 5
Idaho	Jan. 10	March 31
Illinois	Jan. 4	►
Indiana	Jan. 4	March 8
Iowa	Jan. 10	May 25
Kansas	Jan. 10	May 23
Kentucky	Jan. 4	April 14
Louisiana	March 14	June 6
Maine	Jan. 5	May 9
Maryland	Jan. 12	April 11

State	Convene	Adjourn
Massachusetts	Jan. 5	►
Michigan	Jan. 12	►
Minnesota	Jan. 31	May 23
Mississippi	Jan. 4	April 10
Missouri	Jan. 5	May 30
Montana	■	
Nebraska	Jan. 5	April 20
Nevada	■	
New Hampshire	Jan. 5	July 1
New Jersey	Jan. 11	►
New Mexico	Jan. 18	Feb. 17
New York	Jan. 5	►
North Carolina	May 18	July 8
North Dakota	■	
Ohio	Jan. 3	►
Oklahoma	Feb. 7	May 27
Oregon	Feb. 1	March 4
Pennsylvania	Jan. 4	►
Rhode Island	Jan. 4	►
South Carolina	Jan. 11	►

State	Convene	Adjourn
South Dakota	Jan. 11	March 28
Tennessee	Jan. 11	April 28
Texas	■	
Utah	Jan. 18	March 4
Vermont	Jan. 4	May 12
Virginia	Jan. 12	March 12
Washington	Jan. 10	March 10
West Virginia	Jan. 12	March 12
Wisconsin	Jan. 11	►
Wyoming	Feb. 14	March 11
American Samoa	TBD	TBD
District of Columbia	Jan. 2	►
Guam	Jan. 3	Dec. 31
No. Mariana Is.	TBD	TBD
Puerto Rico	Jan. 10	Nov. 15
U.S. Virgin Islands	Jan. 10	►

■ Contact your state liaison, the NCSL staff member designated to help you find answers

All staff can be reached by email at firstname.lastname@ncsl.org or visit www.ncsl.org/stateliasons.

Alabama	Mick Bullock
Alaska	Sydne Enlund
Arizona	Heather Morton
Arkansas	Suzanne Hultin
California	Angela Andrews, Arturo Pérez
Colorado	Mari Henderson, Natalie Wood
Connecticut	Caroline Carlson, Alison May
Delaware	Jennifer Schultz
Florida	Arturo Pérez
Georgia	Linnette Vasquez
Hawaii	Martha Saenz
Idaho	Sydne Enlund
Illinois	Irene Kawanabe
Indiana	Martha Saenz
Iowa	Kristine Goodwin, Lesley Kennedy
Kansas	Anne Teigen
Kentucky	Mick Bullock
Louisiana	Mandy Rafool

Maine	Kae Warnock
Maryland	Molly Ramsdell
Massachusetts	Mark Quiner, Colleen Becker
Michigan	Katie Ziegler, Patrick Lyons
Minnesota	Alison Lawrence
Mississippi	Mick Bullock
Missouri	Brooke Oleen, Michael Hartman
Montana	Amber Widgery
Nebraska	Katie Ziegler
Nevada	Gene Rose
New Hampshire	Heather Morton
New Jersey	Austin Reid
New Mexico	Marilyn Villalobos
New York	Erlinda Doherty
North Carolina	Ben Husch
North Dakota	Karmen Hanson
Ohio	Amanda Essex, Taylor Huhn
Oklahoma	Samantha Scotti

Oregon	Sunny Deye
Pennsylvania	Emily Maher
Rhode Island	Sarah Brown
South Carolina	Emily Ronco
South Dakota	Mark Quiner
Tennessee	Ben Williams
Texas	Arturo Pérez
Utah	Stacy Householder
Vermont	Erica MacKellar
Virginia	Jon Jukuri
Washington	Holly South
West Virginia	Ben Williams
Wisconsin	Katie Ziegler
Wyoming	Amy Skinner
American Samoa	Arturo Pérez
District of Columbia	Molly Ramsdell
Guam	Arturo Pérez
Puerto Rico	Arturo Pérez
U.S. Virgin Islands	Arturo Pérez

**More than half of every dollar
spent on medicines goes to
someone who doesn't make them.**





There's a long line of middlemen collecting a significant portion of what you pay for medicine.

Health insurers, pharmacy benefit managers, the government and others got 50% of what was spent on brand medicines in 2020, up 33% from seven years earlier.

Learn more
Phrma.org/MoreThanHalf

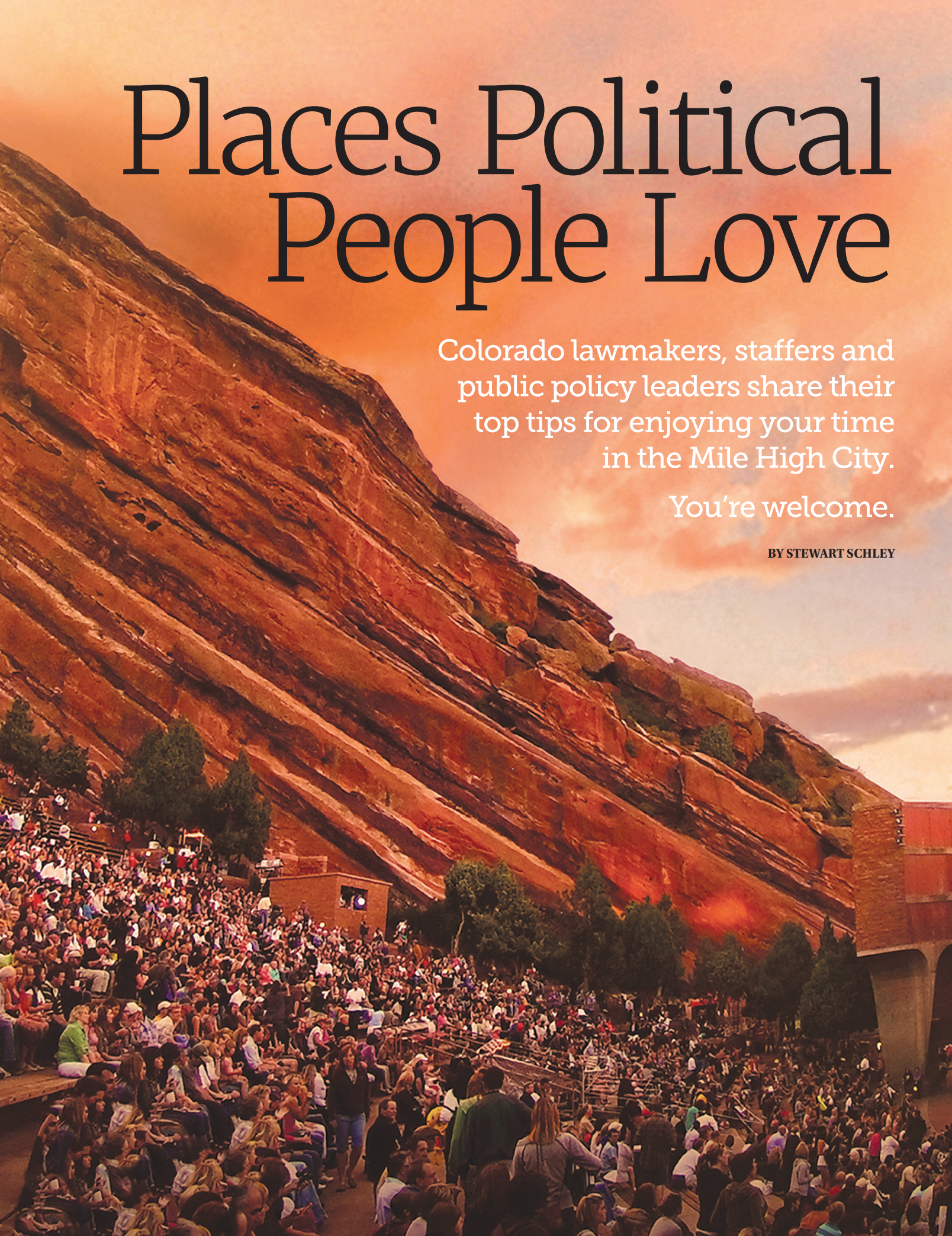
PhRMA
RESEARCH • PROGRESS • HOPE

Places Political People Love

Colorado lawmakers, staffers and
public policy leaders share their
top tips for enjoying your time
in the Mile High City.

You're welcome.

BY STEWART SCHLEY





Colorado Senate President Pro Tem Kerry Donovan doesn't really want to divulge where Denver's best bar is—but in the spirit of NCSL camaraderie, she will. Ditto for U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet, who knows where you can find the greatest Mexican food in town (subject to some respectful disagreement). If you're angling for a day hike, we've got just the ticket, courtesy of Colorado legislative research analyst Alexa Kelly. And House Minority Leader Hugh McKean is here to tell you where to rub shoulders with lawmakers and lobbyists over a beverage.

From sunny hiking trails to memorable meals to the trippy but irresistible attraction known as Meow Wolf (read on), there's no shortage of fun and festive places to visit during your stay in the Mile High City.

But don't take our word for it. We've asked a kaboodle of Colorado legislators, staffers and public policy leaders for tips, hints and ideas about how to get the most from your visit. If you've got a few hours to spare during your Summit experience, try out one of these can't-miss ideas for exploring and enjoying, all within reach of downtown Denver. Fire up your smartphone, hitch a ride and enjoy!

Pro tip: "Travel time" below reflects about how long it takes to get to each destination from the Colorado Convention Center by car in moderate traffic. Many locations also are walkable. All addresses are in Denver unless indicated otherwise.

EATS/DRINKS/MERRIMENT

■ Anise

- 865 N. Lincoln St.
- anisedenver.com
- Travel time: 5 to 10 minutes
- Recommended by: Drew Naismith, legislative aide



This modern Vietnamese eatery, nestled just a few blocks from the Colorado Capitol, is a popular hangout for legislators, lobbyists and foodies. Summer hours run until 10 p.m. for you late-nighters. Don't leave Denver without trying the Anise Deluxe Bánh Mì, billed as "the best sandwich in the world."

■ Bread Bar

- 1010 Main St., Silver Plume
- Travel time: 60 to 75 minutes
- breadbarsp.com
- Recommended by: Senate President Stephen Fenberg



This one's a bit of a drive—but it's a lovely one, straight west on Interstate 70 to a small mountain town that was once a mining epicenter and still drips with local, rustic character. It happens to be Fenberg's favorite bar for a reason: He owns it. ("I'm kind of biased," he admits.) Converted from an 1800s bakery, it's guaranteed to make for interesting conversation, colorful local characters, and a memorable drive into Colorado's Rocky Mountain splendor.

Use your phone's camera to scan the QR codes in these stories for directions from wherever you are!



■ Buckhorn Exchange

- 1000 Osage St.
- buckhorn.com
- Travel time: 5 to 10 minutes
- Recommended by: Amanda Clapham, information specialist, Legislative Council Staff



This rustic, only-in-Colorado haunt is just steps from Denver's 10th and Osage light rail station and boasts two claims to fame. First, it was issued Colorado Liquor License No. 1, the city's first, after Prohibition. Second, you'll find an impressive collection of wall-mounted deer and elk heads admiring your meal and drinks from above. Clapham lauds the Buck for its "super-kookie Old West decor with lots of game on the walls and a steak-heavy menu." That plus a killer happy hour make it an easy recommend.



■ The Capital Grille

- 1450 Larimer St.
- Travel time: 5 to 10 minutes
- thecapitalgrille.com
- Recommended by: Colorado Senate Minority Leader Hugh McKean



Wanna become an instant Colorado legislative insider? Go no farther than this iconic watering hole and steakhouse for politicians, lobbyists, staffers and various hangers-on. As McKean points out, it's "where to be if you want to see people that you ought to know." The Grille rivals Charlie Brown's (right) for bragging rights as the epicenter of Colorado politics (aside from, you know, the Capitol itself). Plus, you'll get to hang out in Denver's historic Larimer Square neighborhood, where outdoor string lights bring a charming ambience to the streets at night. For Summit foodies, McKean also suggests a visit to Steuben's (523 E. 17th St.) with a simple directive: "Order the fries."

■ Charlie Brown's Bar and Grill

- 989 Grant St.
- Travel time: 5 to 10 minutes
- charliebrownsbarandgrill.com
- Recommended by: Anybody who's anybody in Colorado politics



For decades, it has been a go-to for Colorado lawmakers. Tucked into the first floor of the Colburn Hotel, Charlie Brown's has probably spawned as many bills and compromises and seen as much political wheeling and dealing as any conference room over at the Capitol itself. Sidle up to the bar and order a red beer (half suds, half tomato juice) for the authentic Colorado political experience.



■ DiFranco's

- 955 Lincoln St.
- Travel time: 5 to 10 minutes
- difrancos.com
- Recommended by: Colorado House Majority Leader Daneya Esgar



Esgar describes this Capitol Hill Italian eatery as “amazing, delicious, small and quiet,” and says it’s her favorite Denver place. That’s good enough for us. Alternatively, if you’re noodling around for noodles, Esgar recommends Uncle Ramen (www.uncleramen.com) at 95 S. Pennsylvania St. It’s an unassuming spot to which she applies a one-word description: “Amazing.”



WALLY GOBETZ/FLICKR

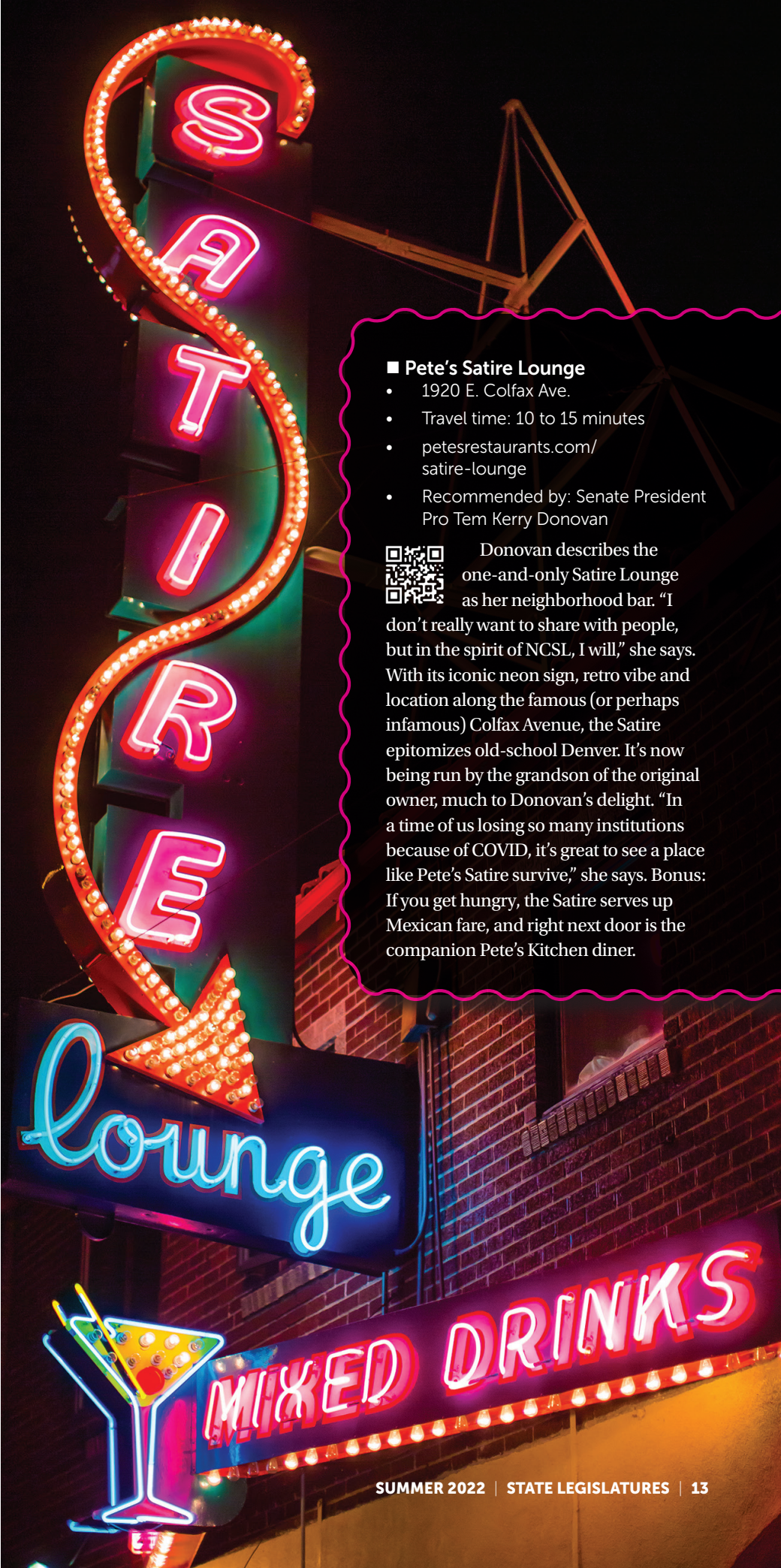
■ El Taco de México

- 714 Santa Fe Drive
- Travel time: 10 to 15 minutes
- el-taco-de-mexico.business.site
- Recommended by: U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet



Colorado’s senior senator has a reputation for pursuing and achieving bipartisan consensus, so you’ll have to forgive him if this recommendation generates pushback from some other Colorado policy leaders (see Los Dos Potrillos below). Still, Bennet wasted no time in casting his vote for best Denver Mexican restaurant, and really, who are we to argue?

THOMAS HAWK/FLICKR



■ Pete's Satire Lounge

- 1920 E. Colfax Ave.
- Travel time: 10 to 15 minutes
- petesrestaurants.com/satire-lounge
- Recommended by: Senate President Pro Tem Kerry Donovan



Donovan describes the one-and-only Satire Lounge as her neighborhood bar. “I don’t really want to share with people, but in the spirit of NCSL, I will,” she says. With its iconic neon sign, retro vibe and location along the famous (or perhaps infamous) Colfax Avenue, the Satire epitomizes old-school Denver. It’s now being run by the grandson of the original owner, much to Donovan’s delight. “In a time of us losing so many institutions because of COVID, it’s great to see a place like Pete’s Satire survive,” she says. Bonus: If you get hungry, the Satire serves up Mexican fare, and right next door is the companion Pete’s Kitchen diner.

■ Los Dos Potrillos

- 8251 S Holly St., Centennial
- Travel time: 25 to 35 minutes
- los2potrillos.com
- Recommended by: Colorado Senate Minority Leader Chris Holbert



This Los Dos eatery, one of three Denver-area locations, is tucked into a nondescript strip mall in the suburban community of Centennial. But don't let the ordinary setting fool you. Holbert swears by what he calls "the best Mexican food I have ever found anywhere." The high praise stems partly from the eclectic menu, which he says you won't find elsewhere: Mexican seafood stew and the carne adobada pork are among the specialties. The senator also mentioned something about margaritas ...



■ Safta

- 3330 Brighton Blvd.
- Travel time: 10 to 15 minutes
- eatwithsafta.com
- Recommended by: Senate Majority Leader Dominic Moreno



Moreno's district mostly spans Commerce City, north of Denver, where he swears by Mexican spots El Jardine and La Casa del Ray. But among downtown Denver restaurants, this one is his "absolute favorite," spinning up creative interpretations of Israeli food. Find it tucked into The Source Hotel in the city's trendy RiNo (River North Art District) neighborhood.

■ Wynkoop Brewing Co.

- 1634 18th St.
- wynkoop.com
- Travel time: 10 minutes
- Recommended by: U.S. Sen. John Hickenlooper



It's the place that Hick built: Before he became the state's governor, then its junior U.S. senator, Hickenlooper founded Colorado's first brewpub in 1988. The lower-downtown brewery and eatery remains a centerpiece of Colorado's thriving craft beer scene. (Hickenlooper sold his ownership stake in 2007.) Not sure you'll see the senator there, but you never know. In any event, the beer is definitely worthy. (Fair warning: It's strong.)



■ New Terrain Brewing Co.

- 16401 Table Mountain Parkway, Golden
- Travel time: 25 to 30 minutes
- newterrainbrewing.com
- Recommended by: David Hansen, senior economist, Legislative Council Staff



This brewpub boasts an expansive outdoor patio and beer garden with eye-pleasing views of the Colorado foothills. It's adjacent to the Golden Bike Park, a popular cycling destination, and it offers an entryway to the North Table Mountain trail system. That's not all: On the south side of North Table Mountain, there's a popular rock-climbing area that overlooks the Coors Brewery. Hansen singles out New Terrain as a sort of only-in-Colorado mix: "a hike and drink, and taste of the Colorado lifestyle," he says. Cheers!



■ Denver Central Market

- 2669 Larimer St.
- Travel time: 7 to 10 minutes
- denvercentralmarket.com
- Recommended by: Jerard Brown, research analyst, Legislative Council



Eat, drink, shop, gawk and be fabulously hip. This refurbished, 14,000-square-foot space in Denver's RiNo (River North Art District) neighborhood brings together fanciful food-stuffs, street vendors and original artists to create a low-key, good-vibes hangout that'll have you feeling like a local in no time. Brown lists it as a top-notch "sights and sounds" experience.



DIVERSIONS

■ Colorado Chautauqua National Historic Landmark

- 900 Baseline Road, Boulder
- Travel time: 45 to 60 minutes
- chautauqua.com
- Recommended by: Colorado Republican Senate Caucus



The Republican Caucus agreed on this one with minimal deliberation. This historic landmark near Boulder is home to Chautauqua Park and the iconic Flatirons rock formations, along with some of the state's best hiking. It's well worth hitching a ride from downtown Denver. Most of the park's 40 miles of trails are easy to moderate in difficulty, and you'll come back as an honorary Coloradan, we promise. The Chautauqua Dining Hall serves breakfast, lunch and dinner.

■ Denver Adventures

- 26267 Conifer Road, Conifer
- Travel time: 40 to 50 minutes
- denveradventures.com
- Recommended by: Bethanie Pack, IT/business analyst, Legislative Council Staff



Get out, get moving and get Rocky Mountain high with a half-day climbing adventure. Climbing enthusiast Pack recommends a guided instructional session from Denver Adventures as a great, safe introduction to outdoor climbing. You'll shimmy up and around manageable climbs near Conifer, a mountain town southwest of Denver. Or, for those with just a few hours available, the Movement indoor climbing gym in Denver's Baker neighborhood (www.movementgyms.com) can satisfy the yearn to scale something vertical, with walk-ins welcome.

DEN/BOULDER TURNPIKE

CHAUTAUQUA STATE PARK (BOULDER)

(GOLDEN) NEW TERRAIN BREWING

RED ROCKS AMPHITHEATRE (MORRISON)

US HWY 285

DENVER ADVENTURES (ASPEN PARK)

WOO HOO!

DENVER BOULDER TURNPIKE

MOUNTAIN THINGS

I-25

ELITCH GARDENS BALL ARENA

W COLFAX AVE

MEOW WOLF

LOS DOS POTRILLOS

BUCKHORN EXCHANGE

ISALWD!

CENTENNIAL - 19 mi SE OF DENVER

US HWY 285

THE CAPITOL GRILLE

YUM!



WYNKOOP
BREWING



BLVD
WOOD-FIRED PITA

SAFTA

BRIGHTON



DENVER
CENTRAL
MARKET

COLORADO
STATE (CAPITOL)



E COLFAX AVE

MOLLY
BROWN
HOUSE
MUSEUM

RALPH L. CARR



COL. JUDICAP
LEARNING
CENTER



DI FRANCO

ANISE



PHO

CHARLIE BROWN
BAR &
GRILL



PEPE'S
SATIRE
LOUNGE



LATE NIGHT

N DOWNING ST

WASHINGTON
PARK



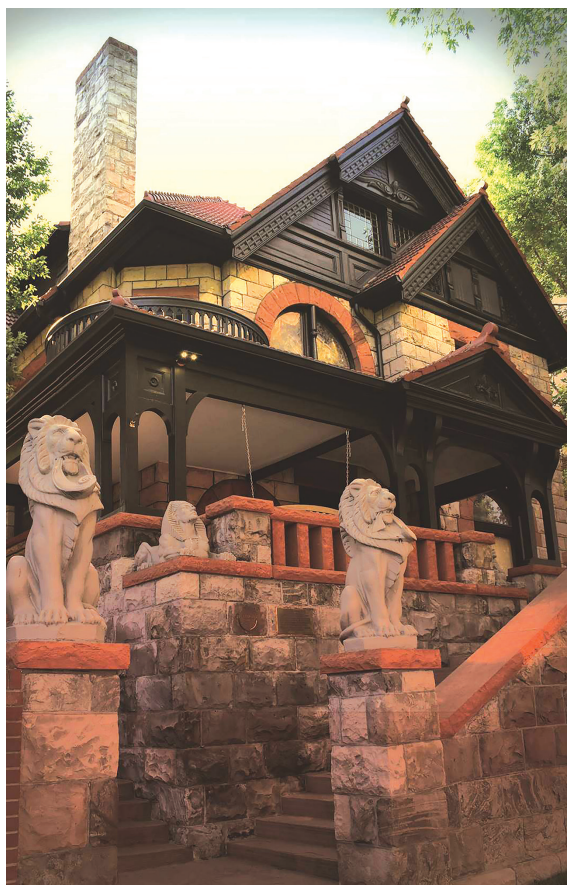
CITY THINGS

SPUR BLVD
EX TACO DE
MEXICO

N BROADWAY

DENVER
ART
MUSEUM

(CIVIC
CENTER
PARK)



■ Meow Wolf Denver

- 1338 First St.
- Travel time: 7 to 10 minutes
- meowwolf.com
- Recommended by: Colorado Republican Senate Caucus



Bedazzled with fluorescent colors, psychedelic geometry, some inexplicable sounds and, basically, a mind-expanding labyrinth of rooms and crevices tailor-made for exploring, it might sound like a spot optimized for the kiddos. Not so: Even “senior” members of the caucus loved it when they visited not long ago, says Joshua Bly, the caucus communications director.

■ Molly Brown House Museum

- 1340 Pennsylvania St.
- Travel time: 5 to 8 minutes
- mollybrown.org
- Recommended by: Colorado Rep. Steven Woodrow



This walk-through house tour celebrates the larger-than-life persona of the Denver-born activist and philanthropist known as the “Unsinkable Molly Brown,” who famously survived the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. Speaking of activism, Woodrow also suggests a Denver twofer: Cap your visit with a stop at The Church Nightclub (www.coclubs.com/church), a reimagined 1865 church that invites you to stroll through multiple rooms, each featuring different live music. From the Molly Brown House, you can zing your way there in about five minutes by car.

■ Museum of Contemporary Art

- 1485 Delgany St.
- Travel time: 5 to 10 minutes
- mcadenver.org
- Recommended by: Colorado Rep. Leslie Herod



An easy walk from the convention center if you've got an hour or two, the museum dazzles this summer with a pair of exhibits showcasing breakthrough "geometric" artists whose paintings draw from Indigenous cultures: "Dyani White Hawk: Speaking to Relatives" and "Eamon Ore-Giron: Competing with Lightning/Rivalizando con el Relámpago." Herod puts it at the top of her gotta-see list.



■ Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Learning Center

- 2 E. 14th Ave.
- Travel time: 5 to 10 minutes
- cjlc.colorado.gov/learning-center
- Recommended by: Don Mares, CEO, The Colorado Trust, former Colorado Legislator



This off-the-path Denver gem makes for an unforgettable experience, especially for the history buffs among us. It's named after the late Ralph Carr, who served as Colorado's governor from 1939-43 and distinguished himself from fellow Western governors by vehemently opposing the internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII. Enjoy interactive exhibits, a trivia game testing your knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, and a chance to preside as an appellate judge over four cases.

■ Washington Park

- South Downing at Louisiana Street
- Travel time: 15 to 20 minutes
- denver.org
- Recommended by: Will Clark, fiscal analyst, Legislative Council Staff



Have an hour or two? Skip on down to one of Denver's signature public parks, replete with two lakes, plenty of geese and (leashed) dogs, a running/walking/biking path, a bocce ball court and, on nice days, lots of sun-worshipping, volleyball-spiking, corn-hole-playing recreationists. A day in the park can do wonders for the soul.



■ Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre

- 18300 W. Alameda Parkway, Morrison
- Travel time: 30 to 40 minutes
- redrocksonline.com
- Recommended by: Alexa Kelly, research analyst, Legislative Council Staff



If you've got the afternoon free (and a ride at the ready), don't miss one of Colorado's most revered destinations. Stunning angular boulders surround a 9,500-seat outdoor theater whose stage has been graced (and loved) by bands and performers including the Beatles, U2, Bonnie Raitt and about a gazillion others. Listen closely and you might still hear echoes of a legendary 1978 Bruce Springsteen show. Don't worry if there's no performance scheduled; Kelly points out that Red Rocks and its companion hiking trails are ideal just for strolling around for a couple of hours.

Stewart Schley is a Denver-based freelancer.

Embracing the Arts

States are recognizing that arts and culture enhance the quality of life, attracting tourists and workers and bolstering their economies over the long haul.

BY KELLEY GRIFFIN

The Denver Art Museum near the Capitol and Civic Center Park. Vibrant arts districts in small towns and big cities can draw tourists and locals alike, making communities more attractive to companies and the young professionals they often need in their workforces.

The 1972 movie “Deliverance,” about a backwoods river trip gone terribly wrong, changed Georgia’s economy forever.

It proved such a tourist draw and moneymaker for local communities that then-Gov. Jimmy Carter created a film commission to entice other moviemakers to the state.

Fast forward 40 years and the production of films, music videos, video games and all related businesses reigns as one of Georgia’s biggest industries. The state has been the site of Spider-Man’s New York, Black Panther’s Wakanda, a zombie-infested America in “The Walking Dead” and a small Indiana town for “Stranger Things.”

Welcome to what some have dubbed “Y’allywood.”

Peach State an Early Leader

Georgia’s film industry even managed to nearly double its revenue during the pandemic to \$4.4 million in fiscal 2021

“WHEN WE LOST THE ARTS, WE FELT IT, I THINK, IN OUR HEARTS AND OUR SOULS, HONESTLY.

AND THEN WHEN YOU COUPLE THAT WITH A STRONG ECONOMIC ARGUMENT, IT WASN’T REALLY A QUESTION OF IF WE WERE GOING TO SUPPORT THE SECTOR. IT WAS MORE ABOUT HOW.”

Colorado Rep. Leslie Herod

compared with the year before. And that was when the rest of the arts and culture sector was reeling from bigger losses than

most other parts of the economy.

“In the early ’70s, we created an entire industry, whitewater rafting, on the back of a little movie called ‘Deliverance,’” recalls Rep. Ron Stephens, a Savannah Republican. “Then we had the folks in little Covington, Ga., (who) came and testified that 75% of all the tourism dollars that come through Covington was from folks wanting to come see where ‘The Dukes of Hazzard’ was made, where ‘In the Heat of the Night’ was made. And same story goes on and on.”

Stephens recognized the industry’s potential in 2008 by sponsoring the state’s first entertainment-sector tax incentives.

Georgia lawmakers have supported generous incentives ever since, even during economic downturns. Filmmakers flocked to Georgia as its incentives outstripped those in every other state, and support services have sprung up, helping to create some 75,000 jobs. Stephens notes actor and filmmaker Tyler Perry has built an \$800 million studio complex in



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGIA FILM OFFICE

Georgia lawmakers have supported generous incentives for the movie industry—including Marvel’s upcoming “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever.” Filmmakers have flocked to the state and support services have sprung up, helping to create some 75,000 jobs.

Atlanta, and one area where studios are concentrated has its own Home Depot store, open only to film projects.

Georgia is famous for not limiting how much it will set aside for the industry. In fact, a bill to cap the total available tax incentives at \$900 million annually was offered in March this year—and killed the very next day.

“Why would you cap prosperity?” Stephens asks.

Arts Sector Outpaces Others

Not all arts are the juggernaut filmmaking has proven to be for Georgia. But more and more, states are recognizing that creative industries have an outsize economic impact. The National Endowment for the Arts says the arts and culture sector in 2019 contributed 4.3% directly to the nation’s GDP, for a total of nearly \$1 trillion—more than industries including construction, transportation, mining and agriculture. Creative sectors had 5.2 million people on an annual payroll of \$447 billion, not including self-employed artists and performers.

And unlike other industries, when people buy a ticket to a performance, they are most likely going to spend in other ways in the community—food and drink, parking, lodging, a babysitter. Americans for the Arts, a Washington-based nonprofit, estimates that “event-related” spending averages \$31 for every performance ticket sold.

Vibrant arts districts in small towns and big cities can attract tourism and enhance quality of life, which makes communities more attractive to companies and the young professionals they often need in their workforces.

And a 2021 study showed that the arts sector recovers from economic downturns more strongly than others. After the Great Recession, which started in 2007, the arts sector grew 3.4% annually, compared with the average economic growth of 3%—and that pace continued for three years.



The Clyfford Still Museum in Denver. The National Endowment for the Arts says the arts and culture sector in 2019 contributed 4.3% to the nation’s GDP, for a total of nearly \$1 trillion—more than construction, transportation, mining and agriculture.



MONTBELLO ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

An artist’s rendering of Denver’s FreshLo project, which will include artist spaces, affordable housing and a grocery store that emphasizes culturally relevant options for the neighborhood’s diverse community.

Colorado Taps ARPA Funds

All these factors were wrapped up in the thinking behind Colorado’s bipartisan \$85 million Colorado Community Revitalization Grant fund, passed by the Legislature in 2021 and extended in 2022. The money specifically targets projects that combine arts and community development, especially in underserved rural and urban core communities.

It’s also about jobs.

“This was established to put people to work for economic recovery,” especially after the arts sector was so hard hit by the pandemic, says Margaret Hunt, the executive director of Colorado Creative Industries, a division of the state’s Office of Economic Development and International Trade.

The FreshLo project (“Fresh and Lo-



"Mustang" by Luis Jiménez.

The Denver Blues

Denver has two famous towering blue pieces of public art: one is beloved—and one bedevils.

First, the beloved: a 40-foot-tall blue bear peering in through the windows of the Colorado Convention Center. The artist, the late Lawrence Argent, said he wanted to acknowledge Colorado wildlife and reflect curiosity about all the ideas circulating and conversations taking place inside the center. The blue color was a happy accident when a small prototype from a 3D printer came back in blue, and the artist went with it.

The playful sculpture, called "I See What You Mean," is a popular backdrop for photos, and small replicas of it are sold in the gift shops at the convention center and the nearby Denver Art Museum.

The other icon is the 32-foot-tall brilliant blue muscular mustang with red-lit eyes, rearing on its hind legs at the entrance to Denver International Airport. The sculpture, by the late Luis Jiménez, is officially titled "Mustang."

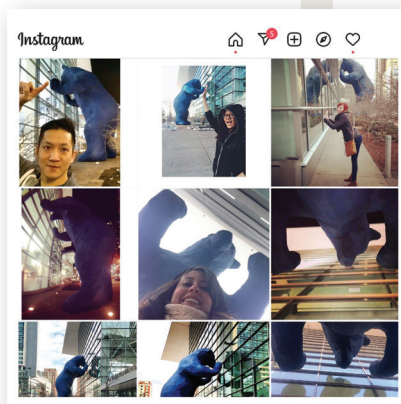
Locals call it "Blucifer."

It's those demonic eyes—and the fact that part of the sculpture fell on the artist and killed him. His wife, Susan Jiménez, told Colorado Public Radio her husband had no intention of evoking evil with the work; rather, the lighted eyes were in part to honor his father, who owned a neon-sign shop where Jiménez apprenticed as a teen.

Since the work was installed at DIA in 2008, two years after the artist's death, people have called for its removal; there was even a Facebook page titled "DIA's Heinous Blue Mustang Has Got to Go." But plenty of people use the name "Blucifer" with pride and like that Denver greets visitors with a dramatic piece of art that reflects power and wildness.

DIA officials have said it's not going anywhere.

—Kelley Griffin



cal") in northeast Denver's Montbello neighborhood, for example, includes affordable housing for artists and others, a performance and teaching space, artist studios and retail space for local businesses, all of it anchored by a grocery store. The Montbello Organizing Committee obtained grants aimed at different aspects of the project: affordable housing, energy efficiency and community health, among others. Construction was about ready to start when the pandemic hit, and with supply chain problems and other issues, the costs of the project soared by as much as 40%.

That's where the Community Revitalization Grant came in. The project was awarded \$2.5 million, making it eligible for \$5 million in ARPA funding from the state to fill the rest of the gap.

Donna Garnett, executive director of the Montbello Organizing Committee, says FreshLo's emphasis on food, arts and culture reflects the needs and interests of the mostly Black and Latino community, making it a "platform for better health and economic stability."

State Rep. Leslie Herod, a Denver Democrat, agrees.

"Those are the kind of projects we want to see developed. And it really is exciting to imagine where we can go when we think outside the box," Herod says.

Emulating Colorado's Success


Hunt says she's hearing from other states interested in this approach, and Vermont has already passed a revitalization program nearly identical to Colorado's.

The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies says most states have boosted their arts and culture funding this year to help the sector recover


Continued on page 26

Denver Art Venues


■ American Museum of Western Art

- **What:** Permanent home of The Anschutz Collection, a formerly private collection of paintings of the American West from the early 19th century to the present. 
- **When:** Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- **Where:** 1727 Tremont Place, anschutzcollection.org
- **How much:** \$5; guided tours available at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., \$10.

■ Clyfford Still Museum


- **What:** Minimalist showcase for the stunning large-scale paintings and archives of the most famous abstract expressionist you've never heard of. 
- **When:** Wednesday-Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Where:** 1250 Bannock St., clyffordstillmuseum.org
- **How much:** \$10; 17 and under free; discounts for 65+, teachers, military, students.

■ Denver Art Museum


- **What:** With over 70,000 works from across the centuries and around the world, the DAM is one of the largest art museums between the West Coast and Chicago. 
- **When:** Daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Tuesdays, to 9 p.m.
- **Where:** 100 W. 14th Ave. Parkway, denverartmuseum.org

- **How much:** Nonresident adults \$18; under 18 free; discounts for 65+, students, active military.


■ Museum of Contemporary Art Denver

- **What:** The name says it all. 
- **When:** Tuesday-Friday, noon to 7 p.m.; weekends, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Where:** 1485 Delgany St., mcadenver.org
- **How much:** \$10; under 18 free; discounts for 65+, teachers, military and others.

■ The Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art

- **What:** A collection of 30,000-plus works by more than 1,500 artists and designers, with about 4,400 works on view. 
- **When:** Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.
- **Where:** 1201 Bannock St., kirklandmuseum.org
- **How much:** \$10 (visitors must be at least 13); discounts for 65+, teachers, students, active military.


■ First Friday Art Walk

- **What:** View the work of hundreds of artists in galleries, studios, co-ops, upstairs, downstairs, in alleys, on the street—everywhere! 
- **When:** First Friday of the month, 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.

- **Where:** Santa Fe Avenue from 13th Avenue to Alameda Avenue and Kalamath Street to Inca Street. Most of the galleries are between Fifth and 11th avenues; denversartdistrict.org/first-friday.

- **How much:** Free

■ History Colorado Center

- **What:** Current exhibit "Building Denver: Visions of the Capital City" shares the many visions for and stories of the growth, urban development and architecture of Denver, from 1860 to today. 
- **When:** Daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Where:** 1200 N. Broadway, historycolorado.org
- **How Much:** \$14; seniors (65+) \$12; students (16-22) \$10; children (5-15) \$8; children 4 and under free.

Denver Public Art

- **"I See What You Mean,"** aka "The Big Blue Bear," on 14th Street between Stout and California streets.

- **"Dancers,"** a 60-foot-tall sculpture of two Gumby-like characters in the Performing Arts Sculpture Park at 1245 Champa St., right around the corner from the convention center.

- **"Big Sweep,"** a 35-foot-tall metal broom and dustpan, outside the Denver Art Museum on 13th Avenue.

- **"The Yearling,"** a 21-foot-tall red chair topped by a 6-foot-tall horse, outside the main Denver Public Library at 10 W. 14th Ave. near the Denver Art Museum.

- **"Mustang,"** aka "Blucifer," the 32-foot-tall blue horse with red eyes on the road to (and from) Denver International Airport.

Use your phone's camera to scan the QR codes in this list for directions from wherever you are!



MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

DENVER CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS

BLUE MUSTANG
(25 mi. NE OF DENVER)
(“BLUJIFER”)



SPEER BLVD

THE DANCERS

HA HA HA HA HA



(SCULPTURE PARK)



CHAMPA ST

THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART



N BROADWAY

“I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN” (CENTER)
(LOCATED DENVER CONVENTION CENTER)



W COLFAX AVE

THE BIG SWEEP

(LOCATED ON 13TH STREET ENTRANCE OF)



(CIVIC CENTER PARK)

DENVER ART MUSEUM

THE YEARLING



11TH AVE

SANTA FE DRIVE

SPEER BLVD

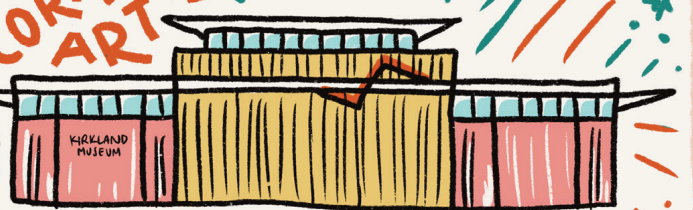
FIRST FRIDAY ART WALK
FREE!

KIRKLAND MUSEUM OF FINE AND DECORATIVE ART

CLIFFORD STILL MUSEUM



5TH AVE



from the millions of dollars in revenue lost when the pandemic shut things down. The group says legislative appropriations to arts agencies more than doubled from \$408.2 million in fiscal year 2021 to \$820.8 million in 2022.

Kelly Barsdate, chief program and planning officer of the group, says the funding aims both to help arts and culture organizations get their feet under them and to help the larger community. For example, South Carolina is funding arts education to help students who lost ground with remote learning during the pandemic. Several states, including Ohio, Iowa and Tennessee, are funding arts and culture to provide an economic boost to rural communities. And in Nebraska, the Legislature included funding to complete capital projects for arts and non-profit groups that got delayed during the pandemic.

SEVERAL STATES, INCLUDING OHIO, IOWA AND TENNESSEE, ARE FUNDING ARTS AND CULTURE TO PROVIDE AN ECONOMIC BOOST TO RURAL COMMUNITIES.

Barsdate acknowledges states were able to expand their arts spending in large part due to the short-term influx of federal money for pandemic relief. But she says it's a sign that state leaders "want to make sure that the creative industries, which were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, have the opportunity to come

back strong. Because a strong arts and creativity economy will bolster the state's overall economy over the long haul."

Herod says she thinks the loss of so much of the arts during the pandemic underscored the sector's importance.

"I think we maybe took for granted how much we do value the arts, how much we do value going to see a concert in our local park or (that) our kids are going to after-school programs or summer programs that have arts enrichment," she says. "When we lost the arts, we felt it, I think, in our hearts and our souls, honestly. And then when you couple that with a strong economic argument, it wasn't really a question of if we were going to support the sector. It was more about how."

Kelley Griffin is a writer and editor at NCSL.



Fighting for Family Caregivers Across the States

About 48 million Americans help older parents, spouses, and other loved ones live independently, providing approximately \$470 billion in unpaid care annually. They assist with bathing and dressing, prepare meals, handle finances, perform complex medical tasks and much more—many do it all while also working full- or part-time.

That's why AARP state offices around the country are working with state legislators and state legislative staff to enact laws that support family caregivers—from expanding home care and respite care to paid leave and tax incentives to provide financial relief.

Learn more:

aarp.org/caregivingmap

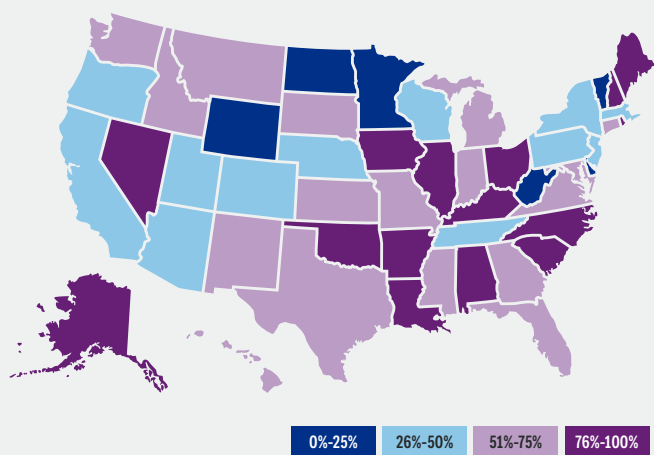
Paid for by AARP

BIOMARKER TESTING DISPARITIES IMPEDE ACCESS TO PRECISION MEDICINE IMPACTING PATIENT OUTCOMES

As our healthcare system continues to move towards personalized healthcare, biomarker testing is a critical first step in directing a patient's treatment journey. Increased use of biomarker testing has led patients to more precision medicines, also known as targeted therapies, that have been associated with fewer side effects and overall improved quality of life.

Coverage of biomarker testing by Medicaid and commercial payers varies, and coverage also differs depending on geographic location. A recent study reviewed commercial payer coverage for consistency with National Comprehensive Cancer Network Guidelines for melanoma, lung, breast and prostate cancers and found that coverage by **most fully-funded health plans were more restrictive than the guidelines.**¹

Percent of Fully Insured Health Plan Lives Under a More Restrictive than Guidelines Coverage Policy*



* <60% of fully insured lives represented for CA, DE, MN, NV, WI, WY

A total of **34 states** had 50 percent or more fully insured commercial lives covered by a plan classified as more restrictive than the clinical guidelines and **13 states** have 80 percent or more enrollees in plans that are more restrictive than clinical guidelines.

State policy makers must take action to reduce disparities in access and ensure commercial payer and Medicaid coverage of biomarker testing is consistent with clinical and scientific evidence, such as clinical guidelines.

VAST RACIAL DISPARITIES EXIST WITHIN BIOMARKER TESTING

Research has confirmed that there are inequalities in our healthcare system for disadvantaged patients who have poorer health outcomes as a result. Access to biomarker testing can help to 'level the playing field' for all people regardless of race, age, and socioeconomic status and ensures more patients can access precision medicine.

For melanoma, lung, breast and prostate cancers, four percent fewer African American and 23 percent fewer Hispanic patients received comprehensive biomarker testing compared to White patients.²

Both The National Black Caucus of State Legislators and the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators have also adopted resolutions noting these grave racial disparities and the need for drastic improvement.³

"Unfortunately, patients across this country do not have the same equitable access to health-care. But we can change that. One small step is biomarker testing and working with policy makers to make that a reality."

Joy Russell, Vice President, External Affairs

Genentech is committed to personalized healthcare - to improving the lives of every type of patient - and delivering solutions that benefit patients and the healthcare system as a whole.

For more information visit:

<https://www.gene.com/about-us/policy-advocacy/biomarker-testing>

¹ Wong WV, Anina D, Lin C, Adams, D. (2022, Feb 04). *Alignment of health plan coverage policies for somatic multigene panel testing with clinical guidelines in select solid tumors*. Future Medicine. <https://www.futuremedicine.com/doi/10.2217/pme-2021-0174>

² Sheinson DM, Wong WB, Meyer CS, et al. (2021, Dec 9). *Trends in use of next-generation sequencing in patients with solid tumors by race and ethnicity after implementation of the Medicare National Coverage Determination*. JAMA Network Open. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2786987>

³ National Black Caucus of State Legislators. (2021, Dec. 2). *Resolution HHS-22-42 The Importance of Biomarker Testing in Precision Medicine*. NBCSL. <https://nbcsl.org/public-policy/docs/file/330-resolution-hhs-22-42.html> and National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators. (2022, Mar 26). *Resolution 2021-21 Recognizing the Importance of Precision Medicine and Biomarker Testing*. NHCSL. <https://nhcsl.org/resources/resolutions/2021/2021-21/>




ELECTIONS AND REDISTRICTING

ELECTION ACCURACY

The Sum of Many Choices

12 steps officials can take to minimize errors and maximize confidence—
with negligible partisan impact.

BY WENDY UNDERHILL



A voter leaves a polling place in Framingham, Mass., on Nov. 3, 2020. Election accuracy is the outcome of many policies starting well before Election Day.

LANE TURNER/THE BOSTON GLOBE
VIA GETTY IMAGES

“(VOTER ASSIGNMENT IS) A THANKLESS TASK,
BUT IT’S GOT TO BE PERFECT. IT’S A PROBLEM WHEN A
STATE SENATOR GOES TO THE POLLS AND CAN’T VOTE
FOR THEMSELVES BECAUSE OF AN ERROR IN ASSIGNMENT.”

Clay Helms, Alabama state election director

Yet as any election official will acknowledge, elections can always be improved. Legislators can help by continuing to make policy and procedural choices that favor accuracy. The key word there is “choices,” plural. Election accuracy is the outcome of many policies starting well before Election Day and running through vote certification, all aimed at minimizing errors and maximizing confidence, transparency and, well, accuracy.

Here are 12 common (though not universal) steps to take to maintain and increase election accuracy—with negligible partisan impact.

1 Ensure Precise Voter Assignment

Election officials assign new voters to precincts based on where they live. This assignment determines which districts voters are in (from congressional and legislative districts right down to the much smaller school board and special districts), and that determines which races voters see on their ballots. “(Voter assignment is) a thankless task, but it’s got to be perfect,” says Clay Helms, Alabama’s state election director. “It’s a problem when a state senator goes to the polls and can’t vote for themselves because of an error in assignment.”

Right after redistricting, when district boundaries change, voter assignment is harder than ever. Experts say that as many as 12% of voters may be assigned inaccurately, and occasionally those errors affect election results. Using geographic information systems can take some of

the labor out of the process and increase accuracy. North Carolina, for example, conducts GIS “audits” of its voter rolls so counties can make fixes if needed.

2 Keep Voter Registration Lists Current

Current, clean voter rolls are the foundation of a strong election, and each state has a well-defined process for removing voter records from its registration database, in accordance with federal and state laws. States can check voter registration lists against other in-state data sources (prison records, death records, DMV records) and national sources (national change of address records, secure interstate data exchanges). If there’s doubt about the rolls, “you can eyeball the removals based on your state’s births, deaths and moves,” says Charles Stewart III, director of the Election Data and Science Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “Removals should be within range” for these never-static lists. In the last 18 months, 19 states have enacted laws to improve their voter list maintenance processes.

3 Minimize Errors in Voter Data

Voter data accuracy improves when citizens enter their own information through electronic processes, such as an online voter registration portal or an electronic data exchange between the bureau of motor vehicles and the state’s election office. Human errors that

“**E**very aviator knows that if mechanics are inaccurate, aircraft crash,” Charles Lindbergh said.

This might be a corollary: If elections are inaccurate, democracy crashes.

Fortunately, just as airplane mechanics have procedures and checklists, so do election officials. “We can’t afford to fail on Election Day because we can’t come back on Wednesday,” says J.C. Love III, the probate judge and chief election official in Montgomery County, Ala.

are common when deciphering or keying in handwritten information decline. Maine is the latest state to adopt an on-line voter registration system; 41 other states and Washington, D.C., have already done so.

4 Provide Correct Voting Information

Voters need to know where they can vote, when the polls close, how to request an absentee ballot and who to call if they have questions. Lots of nongovernmental organizations aim to provide the what, where and how for elections—but the best (and most accurate) sources are state or local election officials. Providing that information might be easier for midsize or larger jurisdictions, which may have communications directors. Small jurisdictions might operate with only a single part-time employee—and no website at all. Resource allocation is the issue, and states can sometimes lend a hand.

5 Train Poll Workers (and Perhaps Poll Watchers)

Poll workers are essential to an efficient election—they greet voters, check them in, verify identification if required, answer questions about voting machines and more. But poll workers need effective training to accurately guide voters through the election process. Most states require poll workers to complete training, though the length, format and depth may vary by state or even local jurisdiction. In some states, the chief election official may establish a uniform curriculum; in others, local election officials may develop training tailored to their operations and communities. States may also consider training requirements for poll watchers or challengers, so they understand both the election process and their observational role within it.



GABRIELLE LURIE/THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE VIA GETTY IMAGES

An election worker sorts ballots ahead of Election Day at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium in San Francisco. Poll workers need effective training to accurately guide voters through the election process.

6 Certify and Protect Voting Technology

States set certification standards for voting technology but almost all adhere in some way to the Voluntary Voting System Guidelines produced by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission. Voting system manufacturers also follow these guidelines and ensure that commission-certified private testing labs review every inch of code and assess the equipment itself for wear, tear and occasional abuse. State laws may have additional requirements, such as certifying only equipment that uses paper ballots, and making tampering with equipment and ballots a crime.

7 Conduct Logic and Accuracy Testing

Before an election takes place, sample ballot sets are run through every tabulation device to ensure that all machines are counting accurately. Often, testing is repeated after the polls close to guarantee that the machines are still giving good results. These events are open to the public on the theory that “show me” is better than “trust me.”

8 Know Where All Ballots Are

Do your election officials always know where their ballots are? Does your state have strong “chain of custody” laws and procedures? It’s likely

Election Bill Rubric

11 questions to ask as you craft and assess legislation

Election legislation is nuanced and complex—a seemingly small change can have ripple effects that extend throughout the voting process, be it before, during or after an election.

With straightforward questions in five key areas, NCSL's Election Bill Rubric can help you craft and assess effective legislation.



VOTERS

- Would this bill have disparate effects on particular groups of voters?
- Would it affect turnout?
- How might it affect voter confidence?



ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS

- How might election officials feel about this bill?
- How might this bill change their timelines, workload or other responsibilities?



COSTS AND FUNDING

- How much would implementation cost?
- Who will pay for it?



SECURITY

- How might this bill affect cybersecurity?
- How might it affect physical security?



POLITICS

- Does this bill benefit one party over another?
- Is it an opportunity for bipartisanship?

—Saige Draeger is a policy associate in NCSL's Elections Program.



America's Credit Unions Advance Our Communities

YOU ARE INVITED TO STOP BY

America's Credit Unions' booth 1037

in the Colorado Convention Center during NCSL's Legislative Summit to learn how credit unions in your state improve people's financial well-being and advance the communities they serve.

Learn more at AdvancingCommunity.com

**VISIT US
IN BOOTH
1037**



AMERICA'S
CREDIT UNIONS®

America's Credit Unions 
ADVANCING COMMUNITIES
ONE PERSON AT A TIME

© Credit Union National Association 2022

that at every step in the process—from the minute blank ballots are received from the printer to the time that all ballots are stored for 22 months, per federal law—they are only touched by bipartisan teams who log their names and date every time any action takes place. Election officials are by nature and necessity detailed record-keepers.

9 Maintain Strong Cybersecurity Protocols
 “Because of the geopolitical environment in 2022, we’re in a greater threat environment than ever,” says Lindsey Forson, director of cybersecurity programs for the National Association of Secretaries of State. Some cyberattacks are meant to sow doubt by providing false information or fake election results on websites that look official but are not, or by temporarily shutting down an office through a denial-of-service

or ransomware attack. While election results themselves are not an easy target (and paper ballots provide a backup in worst-case scenarios), attacks on anything election-related can undermine confidence. “Everything is stacked in the bad actors’ favor; think of this as your smallest districts are fighting against Russia,” says Kim Wyman, former Republican secretary of state in Washington and current senior election security advisor at the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

10 Share Accurate, Complete Results
 The push from the media, candidates and the public to get election results posted is understandable, but the results aren’t final until all the ballots have been canvassed and all the certification requirements have been met—

sometimes weeks after Election Day. “We want results fast, but we also want them to be accurate,” says Blake Evans, the Georgia state election director. In fact, Evans says, accuracy comes first. Unofficial results, like those shared by The Associated Press, can have value—but they can be confusing without context, such as how many ballots are outstanding. Georgia, therefore, requires counties to report to the state office both unofficial results and the number of ballots yet to be counted.

11 Use Compliance Reviews
 Compliance reviews (also known as procedural audits) are common, even when not mandated. Think Santa Claus: Did someone make procedural lists, and were they all checked twice? There’s nothing like a compliance review to encourage accuracy at every step of the way—and to catch the rare times when a box of ballots is inadvertently misplaced.

12 Audit Results
 The vote count itself can be audited, too. Two-thirds of the states have a statutory requirement for “postelection tabulation audits,” in which a sample of ballots is audited after each election. The processes might differ, but the goal is the same: to provide confidence that the vote tally accurately determined the winner. This is a hot legislative topic, with four states enacting some form of audit since January 2021.

A boring election (from the administrative perspective) is a good one, just like a boring flight is the best kind. How to maximize boring? By focusing ahead of time on accuracy, every step of the way.

Wendy Underhill directs NCSL’s Elections and Redistricting Program.

Recycling provides the resources needed for a sustainable future.



Explore the World of Recycling

Visit ISRI.org/state to Learn More

NCSL Legislative Summit Activities

Booth # 847
 Exhibit Hall Lunch: Tuesday, August 2






ELECTIONS AND REDISTRICTING

TECH IN THE TIME OF REDISTRICTING

Over the years, technology has made redistricting easier and more precise.

BY WILLIAM ADLER

Redistricting in the 1980s was laborious, imprecise and—viewed from a 2022 perspective—stunningly low-tech. And judging from a description by mapping consultant Kimball Brace, it was not a suitable activity for anyone afraid of heights.

While redistricting Illinois in the 1981 round, Brace hung maps on the two-story walls of the minority leader's office, overlaid them with long rolls of acetate, and climbed up on ladders to draw district lines with magic markers. Each night, staffers would code the map onto thousands of punch cards and run the cards through a computer mainframe. The next day, they would pick up the computer-generated reports and tweak the map

as necessary. At that time, however, most states did not incorporate computers into the redistricting process at all.

Over the next 40 years, redistricting became entirely computerized. Legislators and their staffs have reaped the benefits, saving time and money, and drawing maps that better achieve their goals. Technology has also enabled greater transparency, as journalists and members of the public can now easily analyze maps and even draw their own with free software.

Public participation infrastructure, such as freely available software and data, allows meaningful public input, says Micah Altman, co-founder of the Public Mapping Project. "When the public is allowed to draw plans, they look a lot differ-

ent than partisan plans."

Redistricting commissions have been the main way the public can have a voice in the process, Altman says. "Where commissions have been designed to be effective—and haven't been disabled through lawsuits or extreme politics—we definitely see differences in their plans."

But despite the availability of excellent free online tools, most states have a long way to go in incorporating public input into maps. Some independent redistricting commissions appear to have mostly ignored public comment—and some legislatures appear to have ignored the input of redistricting commissions. "There are a lot of ways to make a commission ineffective, either by design or after the fact," Altman says.



In the early 1970s, Georgia's electoral districts predated the American Revolution. Nationwide in the 1970s and '80s, computers were mostly used as tabulating machines and maps were still drawn by hand.



Redistricting Timeline

1960-1971

A series of watershed Supreme Court decisions created the first numerical constraint on district maps: the requirement that districts have equal population. Despite this new requirement, though, only a few states used computers in the 1971 round of redistricting.

Linda Meggers, then a graduate student offering technical expertise to the Georgia Legislature, described a major obstacle to drawing equal population districts: crude and difficult-to-use data. The small geographies provided by the U.S. Census Bureau were not particularly useful, especially in rural areas, where the boundaries crisscrossed rivers and streets. The electoral data was even worse; in Georgia, election results were aggregated into "Georgia militia districts," which predated the American Revolution.

1975-1981

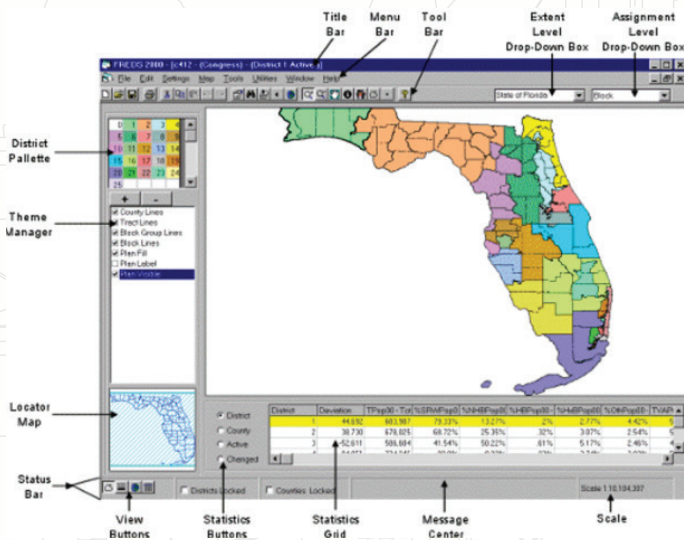
At NCSL's urging, Congress passed a law enabling the Census Bureau to collaborate with states to collect improved local geographic data. Thanks to the new program, legislators in the 1981 round for the first time could draw district boundaries that meant something to locals—for instance, by running along main streets. But states needed computers to use all this data. Research by Micah Altman and co-authors indicates that in the 1970s and '80s, computers were mostly used as tabulating machines; for the most part, maps were still drawn by hand.

1991

This cycle marked a major inflection point in redistricting technology. Thanks to the PC revolution, computer workstations became relatively affordable and gained intuitive graphical user interfaces. Accordingly, nearly every state used computers to draw district maps. But there were no off-the-shelf software packages capable of redistricting. Instead, states worked with mapping consultants to develop custom software systems at great expense.

1993

In *Shaw v. Reno*, the Supreme Court created racial gerrymandering doctrine, establishing computational constraints for redistricters and increasing the need for precise maps built with high-quality geographic and demographic data.



JOHN GUTHRIE

Above: In 2001, the Florida Legislature became the first to enable the public to draw and submit maps with its FREDSD 2000 software. Right: Congressional redistricting was the focus of a 2021 special session in the Maryland House.



MICHAEL ROBINSON CHAVEZ/THE WASHINGTON POST VIA GETTY IMAGES

2001

Affordable off-the-shelf hardware and software enabled states to draw precise maps. Accessibility increased for counties and cities that wanted to redistrict, as well as for independent organizations that wanted to have a say in the process. But most states neither released data about their plans nor provided tools for citizens to draw maps. Some states allowed members of the public to reserve time at workstations in state capitol buildings; few appear to have taken advantage.

In 2001, the Florida Legislature became the first to enable the public to draw and submit maps, with its FREDSD (Florida Redistricting System) 2000 software. Members of the public could buy the software for \$20 or check out a CD-ROM with the software from their public library.

2009

Dave's Redistricting App launched, enabling anyone with a computer and an internet connection to draw legal maps for any state.

2010-2020

With most U.S. adults having a broadband connection at home, the internet age was in full swing, enabling new forms of public engagement with redistricting. The Public Mapping Project, in partnership with groups in several states, held mapping competitions with its free online DistrictBuilder software.

A surge of interest in redistricting spurred groups such as the Princeton Gerrymandering Project and the MGGG Redistricting Lab to create a slew of open software tools for the public.

2021

The first real test of how public-facing tools can open the process to citizens and enable fairer maps. The Oklahoma Legislature held dozens of public redistricting hearings, partnering with Dave's Redistricting App to collect map submissions. Independent redistricting commissions in some states are required by law to solicit public input, including in the form of full district maps or communities of interest drawn with online software such as Representable. The Utah Independent Redistricting Commission, for example, collected and considered hundreds of communities of interest.

—William Adler is the senior technologist in Elections and Democracy at the Center for Democracy and Technology.

Redistricting

It's All Over but the Suing

Many states' maps will be challenged in court, but political change is likely to be minimal at the state level. At the federal level, it might be another story.

BY BEN WILLIAMS

Lines have been drawn, but that doesn't mean redistricting is over. One very large step remains: lawsuits.

Redistricting is at least a three-step process. First, states prepare for action by supporting U.S. Census Bureau efforts to ensure a complete count, gathering and scrubbing all relevant and legal data, soliciting public input and learning how to use their line-drawing software. Next, states do the line-drawing itself for the U.S. House and state legislative districts that will be in place for the next 10 years. Finally, the maps are challenged and lawsuits kick in. And that's where states are now.

No matter how those suits go, how-

ever, the likeliest outcome is minimal if any political change on the state level. At the federal level, it might be another story.

Paving the Road: State Redistricting Systems

Any analysis of redistricting must address two questions: Who draws the lines? And what rules, or criteria, govern how those lines are drawn? The U.S. Supreme Court's one-person, one-vote principle requires states to redraw their legislative and congressional districts after each decennial census. Typically, state lawmakers draw the lines, but

some states—15 for legislative districts, 10 for congressional districts—give that power to a commission or board outside the legislature.

The criteria governing redistricting fall into two broad categories: traditional and emerging. Traditional criteria, such as how compact a district's shape must be or that all parts of a district must be connected to other parts, have been on the books for decades. Emerging criteria are aimed at regulating partisanship in redistricting. Typical examples include requiring districts to be competitive or prohibiting districts from favoring or disfavoring political parties or candidates.

Taken together, who draws the lines and how they're drawn constitute a state's redistricting system. No two systems are exactly alike. And with changes enacted between 2010 and 2020, the systems are more varied than ever.

Changes to State Laws Since 2010

State legislatures are the tried-and-true redistricting entity. Given the power to redistrict by the U.S. Constitution, legislatures have held this responsibility since the nation's founding. Redistricting commissions didn't even exist until 1956, when



Arkansas created its Reapportionment Board. Since then, about two states per decade have shifted redistricting power from the legislature to a commission.

The 2010s were no exception. Colorado and Virginia voters ratified constitutional amendments referred to them by legislators creating redistricting commissions in their respective states; Michigan voters approved a citizen initiative to do the same. New Mexico's Legislature created a nonbinding commission of citizens to advise in redistricting, though lawmakers retained the final say. Utah voters created a similar advisory commission. The Ohio General Assembly created (and voters approved) new redistricting systems preserving lawmakers' role while adding new criteria on how lines must be drawn.

Each of these states also adopted new criteria, including regulations on partisan gerrymandering and, in some cases, requirements that districts pay closer heed to so-called communities of interest, a term that eludes firm definition but refers to anything that could bind people together. Some examples of communities of interest include residents of factory towns or fishing villages who share economic interests, or rural residents concerned with health care or broadband access.

Changes to Federal Law Since 2010

Two major changes since the last redistricting cycle have shaken up federal redistricting law: Supreme Court decisions that effectively ended enforcement of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act and federal oversight in partisan gerrymandering cases.

No change has been larger than the striking down of Section 5 in 2013. In that case, *Shelby County v. Holder*, the court held that the sections of the Voting Rights Act requiring certain counties and states to receive preclearance for redistricting and election policy changes could no longer be enforced because they violated principles of federalism. In 2020, for the first time in over 50 years, the mostly, but not entirely, Southern states and jurisdictions previously under preclearance could put new maps into action without receiving approval from the U.S. Justice Department or the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. This cycle, all jurisdictions are treated equally under federal law.

Partisan gerrymandering cases dominated in federal courts in the 2010s. With funding from outside groups, a flood of lawsuits were filed in states including Wisconsin, Michigan, Maryland and North Carolina arguing that districts were so skewed toward one party they violated either the Equal Protection Clause or the First Amendment, or both. In 2019 in

Rucho v. Common Cause, the Supreme Court held that partisan gerrymandering claims couldn't be decided in federal courts, shutting down one avenue plaintiffs used to challenge states' redistricting plans.

You Are Here: Litigation

Litigation in redistricting is so pervasive that most legislators and staffers expect it. In fact, it's a point of pride in the handful of states that don't get sued. According to RedistrictingOnline, a nonpartisan informational website on redistricting law and policy, over 100 redistricting lawsuits in have been filed so far this cycle, with a handful of states bearing the brunt of the legal onslaught. Some states have fared well. Tennessee's General Assembly successfully appealed an adverse ruling to the state Supreme Court, ensuring its legislative maps will be in effect for the 2022 elections. Other states, including Ohio, North Carolina and New York, haven't been as lucky, with maps drawn by legislatures struck down and replaced with judicially selected maps. More litigation awaits, with appeals of lower court rulings ongoing in Kansas and New Hampshire. And that's just existing litigation. As the 2010 cycle showed, litigation can continue throughout the decade.

Ben Williams is a program principal in NCSL's Elections and Redistricting Program.





ALEJANDRA VILLA LOARCA/NEWSDAY RM VIA GETTY IMAGE

Jennifer DeSena, supervisor of North Hempstead, N.Y., in her office in June with maps proposed by the town's redistricting commission. Analysts say that much of the redistricting for this decade will simply reinforce the political status quo.

ELECTIONS AND REDISTRICTING

2022 The Decennial Reset

This fall, as we see the results of the latest redistricting, Republicans have a leg up in legislative and gubernatorial races. Meanwhile, Democrats are picking their battles wisely.

BY BEN WILLIAMS

Thousands of people will be elected to state legislatures across the country this fall. As this issue of State Legislatures magazine went to press, primary elections for 3,391 seats

(54%) had already occurred, with 2,888 (46%) still to come. Partisan control in legislatures did not change much in the elections of 2018 and 2020, and going into November, Republicans maintain commanding majorities in chamber control.

But this year, voters confront issues not seen in decades—a land war in Europe, persistent inflation and several controversial U.S. Supreme Court decisions.

After November, Republican-controlled chambers in Michigan and New Hampshire could change hands, along with the Democratic-controlled Colorado Senate, Minnesota House and Nevada House and Senate.

Here's a look at what's in store as voters head to the polls.

■ In legislative races, Republicans have a leg up.

Of the nation's 7,383 legislators, 3,978 (54%) are Republicans, 3,266 (45%) are Democrats, and 91 (including Nebraska's 49 senators) are nonpartisan, independent or from a third party. Currently, 48 seats are vacant. Democrats controlled a majority of seats nationwide until the 2010 election, when a Republican "tsunami" ended a 40-year run of Democratic dominance.

The national aggregate of individual legislators' party affiliation doesn't matter

nearly as much as the number of chambers controlled by each party. Forty-nine states, each with two chambers, make up the nation's 98 partisan chambers, of which 62% (61) are held by Republicans and 38% (38) by Democrats. The unicameral Nebraska Legislature is considered nonpartisan and is not included in the count.

That 61-38 chamber split gives Republicans a huge lead in this year's midterm elections for legislative control. The GOP has been ahead in the chamber count since 2010, when control shifted from Democratic to Republican in 23 chambers, and from Democratic to tied in the Oregon Senate. The exact numbers of chambers held by each party have fluctuated since, but Republican dominance remains unchanged. The 2016 election was the high-water mark for Republican control, when the party held the majority in a whopping 66 chambers. In 2018, the Dems took back seven; in 2020 and 2021, the GOP regained three.

On average, 12 chambers change party in each general election cycle.

Democrats need to net 11 chambers to reach parity this year, or 12 to pass Republicans in chamber control. But with a Democrat in the White House, the party's prospects for gains of that magnitude are slim to none. Only twice since 1900 has the president's party gained legislative seats in a midterm election. (The first time was in 1934 during the Great Depression; the other was in 2002, shortly after 9/11.) Heading into the fall, Republicans are expected to retain their edge—the question is by how much. Democrats hope to make up some of their deficit and are picking their battles wisely.

■ The Republican edge extends to governors.

Republicans hold a 28-22 edge over Democrats in gubernatorial seats. Nearly three-quarters of those seats—37—are up for election this cycle. With the GOP's edge going into the fall, our friends at "The Cook Political Report with Amy Walter" think the Dems will be on defense. The online newsletter says the races for

By the Numbers

■ **The number of legislators is increasing.** There are currently 7,383 legislators elected from the 50 states. (The number is marginally higher when Washington, D.C., and the territories are included.) Next January, Wyoming's legislature will expand from 30 to 31 senators and from 60 to 62 representatives, increasing the national total to 7,386. Such changes occur in almost every decade.

■ **Leadership retirements are near historical averages.** In a typical year, between 30 and 40 legislative leaders retire, resign or are term-limited. This year is no exception. As of May, 30 legislative leaders had announced they won't be returning to their chambers in the fall.

■ **The number of ballot measures continues to climb.** Voters this fall will weigh in on at least 110 ballot measures on topics ranging from taxes and education to gambling and tobacco. But that doesn't include the citizen initiatives still in the signature-gathering stage. With several weeks to go, expect this number to increase, though we're far off the recent high of 240 measures in 1996.

five Democratic-held seats, in Kansas, Michigan, Nevada and Wisconsin and for the open seat in Pennsylvania, are toss-ups. Only two races for Republican-held seats, in Georgia and for the open seat in Arizona, get the same rating. With so few competitive gubernatorial races, it's likely that state-level changes, if there are any, will occur in legislatures.

■ We'll finally see the results of redistricting.

The U.S. Constitution mandates that

states redraw legislative districts every 10 years to ensure they have roughly equal populations, a principle known as one person, one vote. For decades, this requirement increasingly has led to political power being concentrated in urban and suburban areas. That trend continued in the 2010s, meaning next year's legislatures will contain more urban and suburban members than at any point in the nation's history. On a larger scale, redistricting is forcing many incumbents to run for reelection on unfamiliar turf and in general adding to political uncertainty this cycle—as it did in 2012, 2002 and 1992.

Combining redistricting changes with normal legislative retirements, this fall's legislative election could be the most significant since 2014. That's true even though most outside analysts are saying that much of the redistricting for this decade simply reinforces the status quo rather than changing states' political tilt.

If you joined the legislature after 2012, redistricting to you is mostly about court cases and depositions. Redistricting is perhaps the most litigious area of election law, and it's common for legislatures to defend their plans in court well into a decade—up to and including the year prior to the next redistricting. This cycle is no exception. State courts have struck down redistricting plans in Florida, Kansas, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Tennessee, though some decisions have been reversed on appeal. Federal courts have taken a more cautious approach, balancing constitutional rights against the needs and concerns of candidates and campaigns.

Over 140 lawsuits have been filed against legislative or congressional redistricting plans in courts across the country during this cycle. That number will increase in the months and years to come. If any maps are redrawn, it could tilt the national landscape further in favor of one party or the other.

Ben Williams is a program principal in NCSL's Elections and Redistricting Program.

Don't Miss the Annual Business Meeting in Denver

BY MOLLY RAMSDELL

What is the Annual Business Meeting? NCSL's Annual Business Meeting, held on the final day of the Legislative Summit—this year on Aug. 3—allows each state to weigh in on what's happening at NCSL. That includes the opportunity to vote on NCSL's budget and audit; the conference's positions on state-federal issues (i.e., policy directives and resolutions—more on that later); and the reports of the legislator and legislative staff nominating committees on the coming year's slate of officers and Executive Committee members.

■ What are policy directives and resolutions?

Policy directives and resolutions are NCSL's positions on various state-federal issues. They define NCSL's advocacy efforts as the voice of state legislatures in Washington, D.C. Policy directives, which are reviewed every four years, are broad statements on specific issues. They are consistent with preserving state sovereignty and state flexibility and protection from unfunded federal mandates and unwarranted federal preemption. Resolutions are more targeted and bolster NCSL's positions on specific federal bills, regulations

or actions. All policy directives and resolutions for consideration at the Annual Business Meeting have been approved by one of NCSL's eight standing committees with the required three-quarters supermajority.

If a policy directive or resolution passes out of a standing committee unanimously, it is placed on the consent calendar. If it receives at least one "no" vote, it is added to the debate calendar. All items on the consent calendar are considered en masse at the Annual Business Meeting. Items on the debate calendar are considered individually.

■ Who are the members of the standing committees?

The standing committees are made up of legislators and legislative staff. Legislators are appointed by their respective presiding officers and legislative staff by their directors. All committee members are encouraged to participate in the discussions of policy directives and resolutions, but only legislators can vote.

■ How does voting work at the Annual Business Meeting?

After a roll call of all member jurisdictions (the 50 states, the territories and Washington, D.C.) establishes the required quorum (20 states), each juris-

diction can then cast one vote regardless of the number of members present from that state. In most years, more than 45 of NCSL's 56 member jurisdictions are present. For the budget, audit and nominating committee reports, a simple majority of the most recent quorum is required for passage. For the policy directives and res-





NCSL

olutions, approval by three-fourths of the member jurisdictions responding to the most recent quorum is required for adoption. Again, only legislators can vote on policy directives and resolutions.

■ **Are there other rules governing the Annual Business Meeting?**

NCSL has official bylaws and rules of procedure that govern the standing committee meetings and the Annual Business Meeting. On any issue not covered by those rules or procedures, Mason's Manual of Parliamentary Procedure shall be the standard authority, when applicable.

■ **Where can I access the documents to be voted on at the Annual Business Meeting?**

All items will be made available on the NCSL app and webpage at nctl.org.

Molly Ramsdell directs NCSL's State-Federal Relations Program.



Capitol Circle Sponsors

\$50,000+

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| ★ Amazon | ★ Cisco Systems, Inc. | ★ Google | ★ Nuclear Energy Institute |
| ★ American Kratom Association | ★ CSL Behring | ★ Intuit | ★ TIAA |
| ★ AT&T | ★ Esri | ★ MAXIMUS | ★ Walmart |
| ★ Avangrid | ★ Everytown for Gun Safety | ★ National Beer Wholesalers Association | |

Platinum Sponsors

\$30,000

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| ★ 1-800 CONTACTS, Inc. | ★ Consumer Healthcare Products Association | ★ Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc. | ★ Security Finance |
| ★ Amazon Web Services | ★ Cruise, LLC | ★ JPMorgan Chase | ★ ServiceNow |
| ★ America's Credit Unions | ★ Curriculum Associates | ★ Juul Labs | ★ Smile Direct Club |
| ★ American Academy of Physician Assistants (AAPA) | ★ CVS Health | ★ Live Nation | ★ State & Federal Communications, Inc. |
| ★ American Hotel & Lodging Association | ★ Diageo | ★ NCTA—The Internet & Television Association | ★ State Government Affairs Council |
| ★ Ancestry | ★ DoorDash | ★ Novartis | ★ Stride |
| ★ Apple | ★ Entertainment Software Association | ★ Online Lenders Alliance | ★ StubHub |
| ★ Biogen | ★ Genentech | ★ OpenRoad Foundation | ★ Supernal |
| ★ Canopy Growth Corporation | ★ Gilead Sciences | ★ Otsuka | ★ Turo |
| ★ The Carpet and Rug Institute | ★ GlaxoSmithKline | ★ PepsiCo | ★ Verizon |
| ★ Charter Communications | ★ GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare | ★ PhRMA | ★ Vertex Pharmaceuticals |
| ★ The Coca-Cola Company | ★ HCA Healthcare | ★ Qualtrics | ★ Viatris |
| ★ Comcast Cable Communications | ★ Heartland Forward | ★ RELX Inc. | ★ Visa |
| | ★ HP Inc. | ★ Reynolds American Inc. | ★ Vistra Corp. |
| | ★ Humana | ★ Roche Diagnostics | ★ Western Governors University |
| | | ★ Rocket Companies | |
| | | ★ Sazerac | |

Gold Sponsors

\$15,000

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| ★ AARP | ★ American Dental Association | ★ American Public Power Association | ★ Coalition of State Rheumatology Organizations |
| ★ AbbVie | ★ American Express | ★ American Society of Civil Engineers | ★ Community Oncology Alliance |
| ★ ADM | ★ American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees | ★ Amgen | ★ Consumer Data Industry Association |
| ★ Advanced Energy Economy | ★ American Federation of Teachers | ★ Amplify Education | ★ Consumer Technology Association |
| ★ The Advocacy Group (TAG)/FOCUS, a Leonine Business | ★ American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers | ★ Aristocrat | ★ Cox Communications, Inc. |
| ★ Allergy and Asthma Network | ★ American Gas Association | ★ Associated Builders and Contractors | ★ CTIA-The Wireless Association |
| ★ Alzheimer's Association | ★ American Institute of CPAs | ★ Axon | ★ Deloitte |
| ★ American Airlines | ★ American Optometric Association | ★ Bank of America | ★ Design-Build Institute of America |
| ★ American Association for Justice | ★ American Physical Therapy Association | ★ Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals | ★ EdChoice |
| ★ American Association of Nurse Practitioners | ★ American Property Casualty Insurance Association | ★ Best Buy | ★ Edison Electric Institute |
| ★ American Bankers Association | | ★ Biotechnology Innovation Organization | ★ Enterprise Holdings |
| ★ American College of Cardiology | | ★ Block | ★ Expedia Group |
| ★ American Council of Life Insurers | | ★ Boehringer Ingelheim | ★ Foundation for Individual Rights in Expression |
| | | ★ Bombardier | |
| | | ★ Catalyst | |
| | | ★ Clear Spring Life and Annuity Company, A Group 1001 Company | |

Gold Sponsors *(continued)*

\$15,000

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| ★ Fox Corporation | ★ Metrc | ★ The Pew Charitable Trusts | ★ Sourcewell |
| ★ goPuff | ★ Microsoft | ★ Pharmaceutical Care Management Association | ★ State Farm Insurance Companies |
| ★ HIMSS | ★ MultiState Associates | ★ Project Lead The Way | ★ Stateside |
| ★ IBM | ★ NAF | ★ Rare Access Action Project | ★ T-Mobile |
| ★ International Paper | ★ National Association of State Procurement Officials | ★ Reason Foundation | ★ Target |
| ★ ITC Holding | ★ National Rural Electric Cooperative Association | ★ Red Bull | ★ TikTok, Inc. |
| ★ Johnson & Johnson | ★ NEC Corporation of America | ★ SAIM Coalition | ★ Ultragenyx |
| ★ The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society | ★ Netflix | ★ Salesforce | ★ UPS |
| ★ LexisNexis State Net | ★ Notarize | ★ Salt River Project | ★ Waste Management |
| ★ Lincoln Institute of Land Policy | ★ NRG Energy | ★ Sanofi | ★ Waymo |
| ★ Lyft | ★ NWEA | ★ SAS Institute | ★ Weedmaps |
| ★ Mallinckrodt Pharmaceuticals | ★ OppFi | ★ Share Our Strength | ★ Wells Fargo |
| ★ MasterCard Worldwide | ★ Path to Reform | ★ Siemens | ★ West, A Thomson Reuters Business |
| ★ McKesson Specialty Health | ★ PayPal | ★ Society for Human Resource Management | ★ Wine and Spirits Wholesalers of America |
| ★ Merck | ★ Pearson | ★ Sodexo | ★ Zillow Group |
| ★ Meta | | | |

Silver Sponsors

\$10,000

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| ★ AAA | ★ Campaign for Transformative Therapies | ★ McGuireWoods Consulting | ★ Schneider Electric |
| ★ ACT The App Association | ★ CEDIA | ★ McLane Company, Inc | ★ Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association |
| ★ Affirm, Inc. | ★ Chamber of Progress | ★ Medical Imaging and Technology Alliance | ★ Service Employees International Union |
| ★ AFL-CIO | ★ Change Healthcare | ★ Molina Healthcare | ★ Shipt |
| ★ America's Health Insurance Plans | ★ Citi | ★ Motorola Solutions | ★ Tax Foundation |
| ★ American Chemistry Council | ★ Corteva | ★ National Association of Chain Drug Stores | ★ TC Energy |
| ★ American Clean Power Association | ★ Council on State Taxation (COST) | ★ National Association of Home Builders | ★ Tucson Electric Power |
| ★ American College of Rheumatology | ★ CropLife America | ★ National Association of State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements | ★ University of Phoenix |
| ★ American Electric Power | ★ Cummins | ★ National Marine Manufacturers Association | ★ U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association |
| ★ American Financial Services Association | ★ Dexcom | ★ National Retail Federation | ★ Williams |
| ★ American Fintech Council | ★ Dominon Energy, Inc. | ★ New York Life Insurance Company | |
| ★ American Heart Association | ★ eBay Inc. | ★ Nextera Energy Resource | |
| ★ American Hospital Association | ★ Educational Testing Service | ★ Nike | |
| ★ American Traffic Safety Services Association | ★ Equifax, Inc. | ★ Northrop Grumman | |
| ★ Americans for the Arts | ★ Ernst & Young | ★ Novo Nordisk | |
| ★ AmeriHealth Caritas | ★ Eversheds Sutherland | ★ Nutrien | |
| ★ AmerisourceBergen | ★ Gener8tor | ★ Philips Healthcare | |
| ★ Association of American Railroads | ★ Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation | ★ Responsibility.org | |
| ★ BOMA International | ★ H&R Block | ★ Sandoz | |
| ★ Boston Scientific | ★ Hallmark Cards | ★ Satellite Broadcasting and Communications Association | |
| ★ BSA The Software Alliance | ★ Helicopter Association International | | |
| | ★ The Humane Society of the United States | | |
| | ★ Johnson Controls | | |
| | ★ Lexmark | | |
| | ★ LPL Financial LLC | | |
| | ★ MAGNA International | | |

Learn how to get involved.

Caroline Carlson
Director of Foundation Programs
caroline.carlson@ncsl.org
720.938.6472

Emily Peterson
Development Specialist
emily.peterson@ncsl.org
720.831.0459

Thank you
for your support.



Expanding opportunity for everyone.

Grow with Google works with more than 8,000 local partners to help people develop digital skills.

Learn more at google.com/grow

Grow with **Google**



LEGISLATOR PROFILES

Texas Stars

Look to the Lone Star State for the nation's longest-serving legislators. Tom Craddick, a Republican from Midland, was first elected in 1968. Senfronia Thompson, a Houston Democrat, was elected six years later. Polar opposites on most big political issues, they say they've worked well together over the years, in part because both know what it's like to languish in the minority party for decades. And if not always allies, they are definitely friends.

Read on as they reflect on their legislative longevity.



Texas Rep. Tom Craddick talks with his granddaughter. "There have been many opportunities to serve in other roles," he says, "but this is where I could have a family life, a business and a political career."

TEXAS HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY

LEGISLATOR PROFILE

Tom Craddick: Lone Star Dealmaker

How the nation's longest-serving legislator
got where he is—and why he stays.

BY KELLEY GRIFFIN

At 25, Tom Craddick knew exactly what he wanted to be: a U.S. congressman.

So after serving in student government in high school in Midland, Texas, and at Texas Tech University, his next step seemed clear.

"The perfect training ground for Congress is the Texas House of Representatives," Craddick says. "In 1968, I chose this as my first campaign experience."

His father thought it was a crazy idea. Democrats controlled both chambers and the governor's mansion, and they had since Reconstruction. "You'll never get elected," he said.

But Craddick did—not that winning a seat gave him much power. At the time, Republicans were greatly outnumbered,

with only nine of the 150 House seats. Democrats wouldn't even let a Republican put forward a bill. So Craddick got to know his way around, made friends with his roommates in Austin—fellow lawmakers, all Democrats—and socialized at the movies and at the Broken Spoke, a local honky-tonk.

Because these friends were willing to co-sponsor a bill of his—to support his local district court, where cases were piling up due to a shortage of clerical help—it passed with his name on it. He says a copy of the bill still hangs in his office.

With a Little Help From His Friends

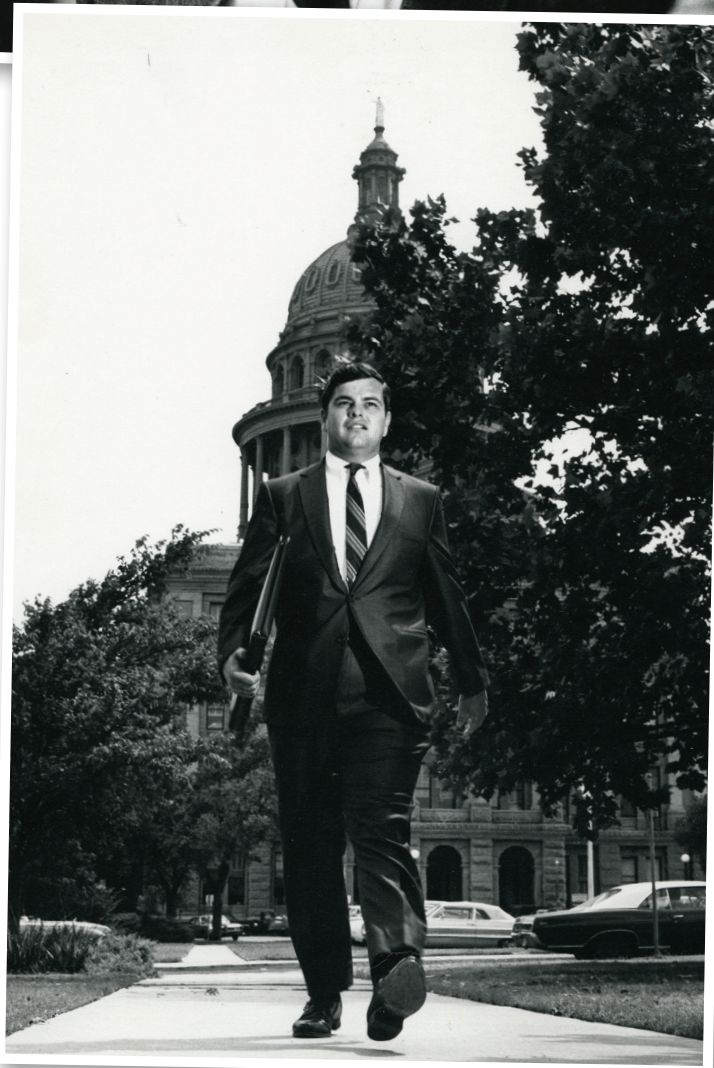
Those friendships came in handy that first session, and Craddick says they have served him well in all 52 of his years in the Legislature. That's the longest tenure of any state lawmaker in the country, and at 78, he's running unopposed this fall for another term.

"Filing that bill was an important lesson I carry with me today," Craddick says. "You have to get to know your constituents and their needs, but you also have to work across the aisle and get to know your fellow members. (They) can help or hurt you during your service."

And that bid for Congress? The opportunity came 11 years after he was first elected to the Statehouse. He and his wife gave it serious consideration before deciding to stay put.

"Ultimately, Nadine and I decided a life in Washington, D.C., while raising a family in Midland, was not the life for us," Craddick says. "There have been many opportunities to serve in other roles, but this is where I could have a family life, a business and a political career."

He was still in the minority party, but he had made inroads, being named by Democratic speakers in 1975 to lead the Natural Resources Committee—the first Republican to lead a committee since Reconstruction—and in 1993 to head the powerful Ways and Means Committee.



When Craddick was first elected, Republicans were greatly outnumbered in the Texas Statehouse. So he got to know his way around, made friends with his roommates in Austin—fellow lawmakers, all Democrats—and socialized at the movies and at a local honky-tonk.

TOM CRADDICK
CAMPAIGN

Solving Problems, Making Deals

"I stayed because I love the House," Craddick says. "Just like in my business life, I love to make a deal, and it is all about the art of deal in the House. I like solving problems and making things better for my district and for the entire state."

Craddick's business life started at an early age. He got a job at a Midland grocery store and by 13 had made a deal with the owner to sell watermelons for a better price and split the profits, according to a profile in Texas Monthly magazine. He went on to work in many sectors: selling a kind of mud used in oil drilling, then investing in oil leasing and drilling, real estate and commercial businesses such as a Dr. Pepper bottling plant and a small chain of car wash/gas stations, among other operations.

Craddick made his fortune mostly on his own, without even a secretary. He kept handwritten notes and even today is proud that he does not use a computer and that his cellphone is only for incoming calls.

Thirty-four years after Craddick was first elected, Republicans became the majority in the Texas House. And Craddick became the speaker.

He helped set it in motion throughout the 1990s, recruiting Republican candidates, helping them raise money and advising on campaigning, right down to the number of yard signs and phone calls. He secured pledges from those candidates early on to support him for speaker, and he won with votes from most of the Republicans and some Democrats.

Steep Learning Curve

The excitement of the party gaining control was quickly followed by a sobering reality.

"It was hard—really hard," Craddick says. "We worked harder than we had ever worked. So few Republicans had been chairmen or even carried large pieces of legislation under the Democratic majority, there was a massive learning curve."

"YOU HAVE TO GET TO KNOW
YOUR CONSTITUENTS AND
THEIR NEEDS, BUT YOU ALSO
HAVE TO WORK ACROSS THE
AISLE AND GET TO KNOW YOUR
FELLOW MEMBERS.
(THEY) CAN HELP OR HURT
YOU DURING YOUR SERVICE."

Rep. Tom Craddick

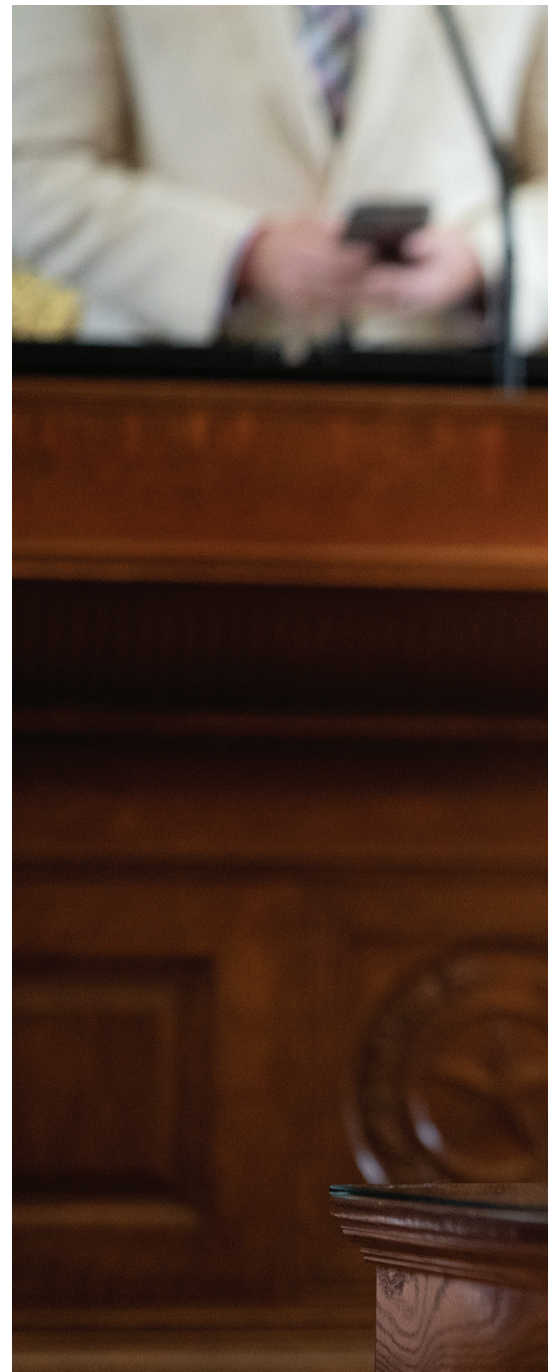
He had some measures he promised to achieve in his campaign for office, and he committed to them in his bid for speaker, including tort reform, tuition deregulation for higher education so each university could set its own rates, property tax relief and overcoming a budget shortfall of \$10 billion without any new taxes.

Craddick says he needed support from Democrats on bills requiring a two-thirds vote, such as the Republicans' plan for tort reform, which required amending the state constitution.

He spent long days, nights and weekends on it.

"While it took a lot of work, it was time well spent. I got to know the members better working this issue," Craddick says. "I learned about their priorities for their districts and how major legislation, like tort reform, would impact the lives of their constituents."

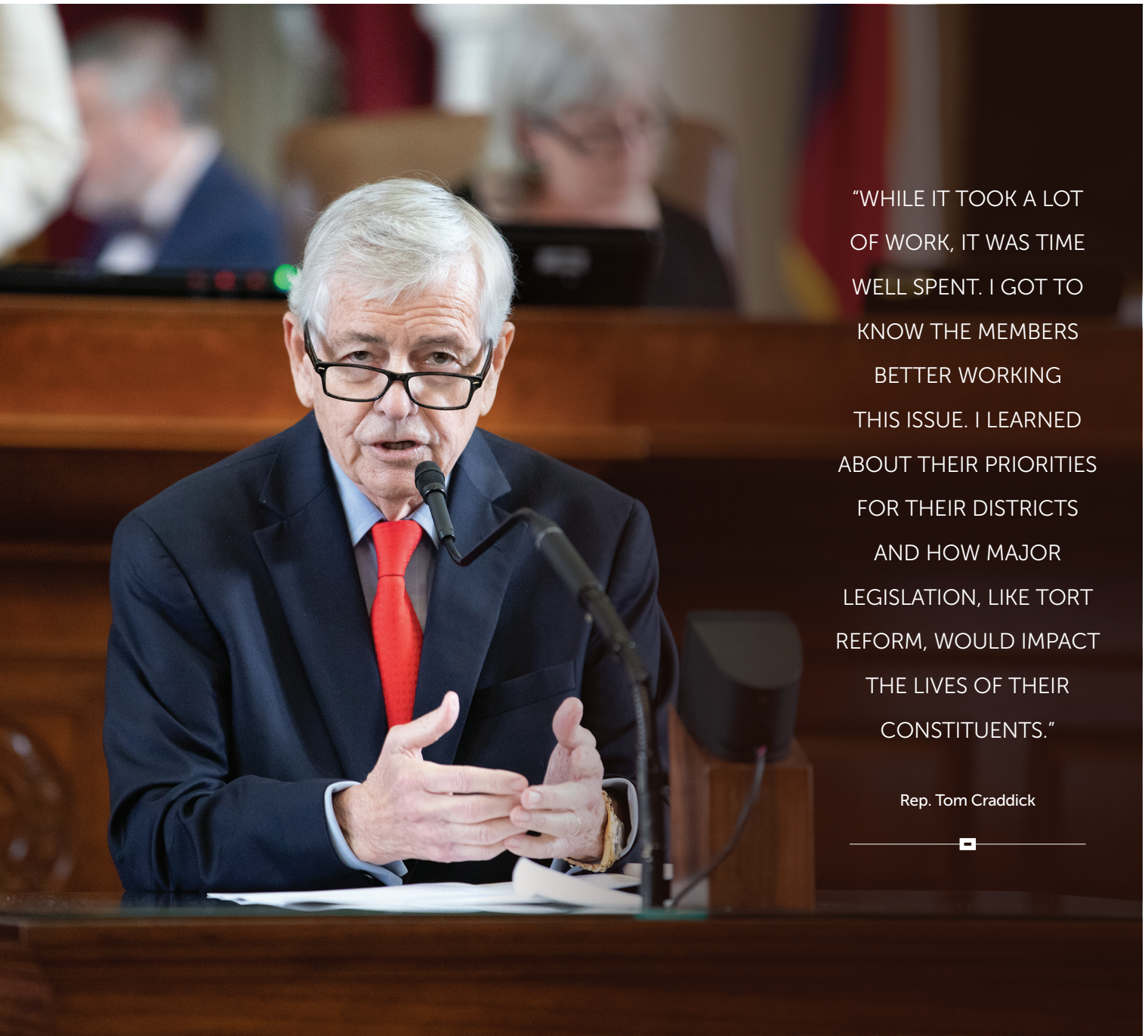
The tort measure passed in 2003, and Craddick was reported to be the most powerful speaker in Texas history at the time. He also appointed a record number of women and minorities—including 12 Democrats—as committee chairs. He knew when he had to work across the aisle, but when he could win with a simple majority, he would simply lock out the Democrats by ending debate on bills or refusing consideration of their



Craddick was once reported to be the

amendments.

As the 2008 session came to a close, a group of Republicans calling themselves "ABC"—Anybody but Craddick—joined with Democrats to try to vote him out. In a controversial move, Craddick wouldn't allow it; he says it was more important



“WHILE IT TOOK A LOT OF WORK, IT WAS TIME WELL SPENT. I GOT TO KNOW THE MEMBERS BETTER WORKING THIS ISSUE. I LEARNED ABOUT THEIR PRIORITIES FOR THEIR DISTRICTS AND HOW MAJOR LEGISLATION, LIKE TORT REFORM, WOULD IMPACT THE LIVES OF THEIR CONSTITUENTS.”

Rep. Tom Craddick

TEXAS HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY

most powerful speaker in Texas history, naming a record number of women and minorities—including Democrats—as committee chairs.

to finish the business of the session, especially since the speaker is typically determined at the beginning. In the fall election, Democrats greatly narrowed the gap with Republicans. When the new session started in 2009, Craddick realized he didn’t have the votes and withdrew

from the race for speaker.

He has continued to work hard to strengthen the GOP but says he never loses sight of the importance of working with Democrats, too. He urges new members to get to know everyone and to go to the members’ lounge before session

every morning.

“Have a cup of coffee. Sit at a new table every day. Build relationships!” Craddick says. “Not everything is partisan.”

Kelley Griffin is a writer and editor at NCSL.

Senfronia Thompson: The Power of Persistence

Making progress on issues that matter deeply to her has required both time and patience.

BY KELLEY GRIFFIN

Texas Rep. Senfronia Thompson's first guiding light was her great-grandmother, a mother of 16 who ran a thriving boarding house in Houston. She was her own boss, and that's what Thompson wanted for herself.

So this daughter of a maid and granddaughter of a sharecropper set her sights on college and dental school. But that would have meant relocating to Tennessee, since no Texas college of dentistry would admit a Black student then. Thompson was married at that point, and she and her husband decided to stay in Houston. So she switched to teaching special education, and they began a family.

Then an unexpected opportunity arose: The neighborhood where Thompson grew up was featured in a newly drawn Texas House district. So she decided to run.

"I had worked in some campaigns for people, you know, licking stamps, mailing envelopes, knocking on doors. And I saw how things were going. And I said, 'Oh,

I could do this,'" Thompson recalls. "So I talked to my husband. I said, 'I want go into politics.' He said, 'OK, go ahead.' And I don't think he really thought I was going to win."

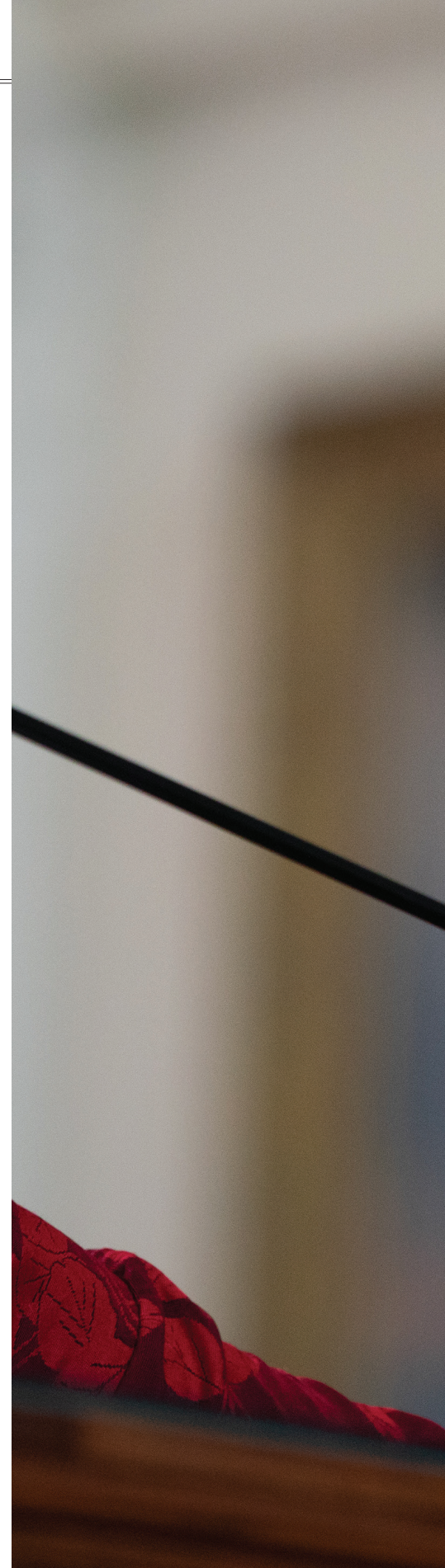
But she did. It was 1972, and Thompson had big plans.

Long To-Do List

"I thought that I would be able to go and just turn the world upside down and solve all the problems," she says. She had a long list of improvements, including at least half a dozen to help teachers and improve classrooms. She also wanted to end disparities in primarily Black schools and communities, expand workers' rights to include collective bargaining and address shortcomings in nursing home care.

Thompson laughs when she thinks of her audacity at a time when she didn't really understand the first thing about the role of a state lawmaker, or the rules and processes.

But she learned. Now 83, Thompson has served for nearly 50 years, making





TEXAS HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY

her both the longest-serving woman and the longest-serving African American in a state legislature. She has stayed so long because there's so much to be done.

"Every session that I've been there, there's always some legislation that you feel so positive about and there's such a driving force within you that you know it's something that really needs to be done," Thompson says. "Then something gets added to your list. Try to get this done, try to get that done, do this, do that, you know? And when you look around, time has passed."

As eager as she was in those early years, she soon learned that much of the change she wanted would require both time and patience in a challenging environment.

"It's difficult. The only thing I can tell you is that I just have to hold onto God's unchanging hand in everything I do," Thompson says. "You just have to keep trying to find ways and means in which to get your point over."

Thoroughly Prepared

Until 2003, Thompson, a Democrat, seemingly had the advantage of working in a state where the three branches were controlled by her party. And she had prepared herself thoroughly: She has a bachelor's degree in biology from Texas Southern University; a master's in education from Prairie View A&M University; a law degree from TSU's Thurgood Marshall School of Law; and a master's in international law from the University of Houston. But as a Black woman, it was hard to make headway in an era when all women were prohibited from getting mortgages or credit cards on their own.

Still, Thompson consistently found ways to gain support from her Democratic colleagues and from Republicans after they gained control in 2003.

She has succeeded in passing bills establishing alimony, increasing the minimum wage, recognizing hate crimes, addressing human trafficking, extending protection for domestic violence victims,



TEXAS HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY

Thompson in the Texas House in 1975. "Persistence is one of the things that always gives you an opportunity to get some of a goal, and then increase that goal, then increase that goal," Thompson says.

"WATER CANNOT CUT A ROCK,
BUT IF IT JUST PERSISTENTLY
HITS AGAINST THAT ROCK,
IT'LL GET A HOLE IN IT.
AND THAT HOLE WILL GET
BIGGER AND BIGGER."

Rep. Senfronia Thompson



creating drug courts and expanding insurance coverage for women's health. She went to Washington, D.C., on her own dime in 1978 to convince the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division to address disparities in public university funding.

In testimony before Congress last summer on the federal voting rights bill, Thompson told the committee how she had voted at a time when she had to pay a poll tax; it wasn't eliminated in Texas until 1966, two years after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional.

Equal Treatment

Time and again Thompson has made impassioned pleas with her colleagues



TEXAS HOUSE PHOTOGRAPHY

"Every session that I've been there, there's always some legislation that you feel so positive about and there's such a driving force within you that you know it's something that really needs to be done," Thompson says. "You just have to keep trying to find ways and means in which to get your point over."

that she is fighting to simply have the same treatment they expect for themselves. Like in her first days in the Legislature when she called out a colleague on the floor because he had told her he called her his "Black mistress."

"And I was just determined to set the record straight that I was a duly elected member of that body, and even though I was female, I was entitled to the same respect that everyone else had in that body," Thompson recalls.

Or recently when she made the case for her proposal to ban police chokeholds in the wake of George Floyd's murder.

"I just made the plea," she said. "I said, 'Every night at 10 o'clock I'm calling to

see where my sons are. I'm calling to see if they have not been the victim of police brutality or something like that.' I said, 'I would just like to have the privilege of going to bed at night, like you do, without having to worry about that for my children,'" Thompson said. The measure became law in 2021.

Looking back to when she was newly elected and thought she could set things right, and quickly, she says she had a lot of anger. It often didn't serve her, she says, though sometimes it made sense to show how fired up she was. She recalls with a chuckle how she approached one opponent on her equal pay bill, shoe in hand, and said, "Do you want to meet your maker?"

Thompson says she has made progress on the issues that matter deeply to her, but what remains can feel like mountains.

"I tell you what I always remind myself of: persistence. Water cannot cut a rock, but if it just persistently hits against that rock, it'll get a hole in it. And that hole will get bigger and bigger," she says. "Persistence is one of the things that always gives you an opportunity to get some of a goal, and then increase that goal, then increase that goal."

Thompson is running for reelection—unopposed—to keep after it.

Kelley Griffin is a writer and editor at NCSL.



LEADER PROFILES

Leaders Roundtable: Colorado's Top Legislative Officers

In a wide-ranging discussion, the state's chamber bosses share thoughts on leadership, the pros and cons of term limits and the value of coaching successors.

BY TAYLOR HUHN

In Colorado's term-limited General Assembly, a leader's time in office ends after eight short years.

Some, including House Majority Leader Daneya Esgar, Senate President Pro Tempore Kerry Donovan and Senate Minority Leader Chris Holbert, have wrapped up their final regular session as leaders. Others, like Senate President Steve Fenberg, Senate Majority Leader Dominick Moreno and House Minority Leader Hugh McKean, still have a couple years left. NCSL recently caught up with the Legislature's top brass as they finish their time in office—or contemplate doing so—to find out what makes them tick and how they view their roles as leaders.

Why did you pursue a leadership role?

■ **Senate President Pro Tempore Kerry Donovan:** As the only lawmaker in the Democratic caucus with agricultural experience, as well as representing a largely rural district, I felt it was important that I made sure that those issues were being elevated on the leadership level.

■ **House Majority Leader Daneya Esgar:** I really wanted to make sure that voices



"I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE'RE RUNNING THE SENATE IN A WAY THAT RESPECTS THE MINORITY AND THEIR VOICE, BECAUSE THAT'S IMPORTANT IN A DEMOCRACY."

Kerry Donovan



from southern Colorado and from smaller areas were heard on leadership as well, so I decided to step up and run.

■ **Senate President Steve Fenberg:** I worked very hard on helping my caucus get into the majority in 2018, and it felt like I could either kind of go along for the ride, or I could be a part of shaping and bringing to reality what voters elected us to do. So, I ran for majority leader, and I was the majority leader for several years. And then, a few months ago, the question was whether I should step up and run for the presidency. It was another opportunity where it felt like I could help shape the caucus during this moment of transition. And it felt like the right thing to do.

■ **Senate Minority Leader Chris Holbert:** I spent a couple years as vice chair and then chair of our Senate Business Committee and was then elected in my third year as the Senate majority leader. (Holbert was majority leader in 2017-18.) That was the one position in legislative leadership that I really had an interest in, due to the unique characteristics of the power structure in the Colorado Senate.

■ **House Minority Leader Hugh McKean:**

A lot of my members call me an institution-
alist because some of the deepest relation-
ships I had coming into this position were
with staff who'd been here for 30 or 35
years. I understood from a really early point
the value of this institution as a whole. And I
think that view takes you out of the partisan
side of things and makes you look at how
to lead an institution. I thought institutions
like this deserve to be led well.

■ **Senate Majority Leader Dominick**

Moreno: The caucus kind of asked me to
consider doing it. So that was a big driving
factor. But the other was the fact that
many states are in a really unique fiscal
environment right now. There is so much
federal funding that's coming through, and
a lot of states have one-time funding that
they're working with. I felt that, by moving
into leadership, I could have an effect and
influence with my fiscal expertise.

What makes you a good leader?

■ **Donovan:** My independence. Often-
times, it can be important to provide
contrasting opinion and create conversa-
tion, because conversation and respectful
debate often results in better policy and a
better process. I also find myself, after be-
ing in the minority for four years, remem-
bering what that experience was like, and
I want to make sure that we're running the
Senate in a way that respects the minority
and their voice, because that's important in
a democracy.

■ **Esgar:** One thing is my ability to listen to
my members, to really hear where they're
coming from and help them navigate situ-
ations where we may have to sit back and
have more conversations or bring more
people into the room together.

■ **Fenberg:** What matters is that everyone
feels like they've been respected and they've
been heard. So there are plenty of times
where I do something that my colleagues
disagree with, and I'm moving the conver-
sation or the policy in a direction that some-
body doesn't like. I think the question is: No
matter what the outcome is, was it done
with integrity? And I always try to approach
it in that way, making sure that everyone
knows that they have a seat at the table,
they have a voice that can be heard.

■ **Holbert:** I was a lobbyist at the Colorado
Capitol for seven years before I ran. I have



"I THINK THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT: BEING ABLE TO LEAVE OUR CAUCUS IN A STRONGER, MORE DYNAMIC AND FORWARD-LOOKING POSITION THAN I INHERITED IT."

Chris Holbert



an aptitude for persuading, talking with
people of different perspectives, and find-
ing ways to get them to agree on policy.

■ **McKean:** I think there are really just two.
One: You listen to everyone. Everyone has
a chance to make the case for what they
want to do. Everybody has an equal op-
portunity to bend your ear. And then you
consider what's best for the state. Two:
I don't make deals. If it has merit, then it
should have merit, and if it doesn't have
merit, then you shouldn't follow it.

■ **Moreno:** I think it's important that I
didn't really seek out this post. It was other
folks who encouraged me. And I think that
that's an important quality of leadership:
when other people recognize leadership
qualities or potential in others. And it's im-
portant that folks in positions of leadership
be calm and very measured. I think those
are qualities that have been ingrained in
me through the budget-making process.
Being able to bring that more analytical,
more patient perspective to a lot of issues
has been helpful.



"I AM HERE BECAUSE I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WE'RE BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR COLORADO. AND I WANT TO MAKE SURE I'M SETTING UP THE NEXT LEADERSHIP TEAM ON THE BEST FOOT FORWARD TO CONTINUE THAT PROGRESS."

Daneya Esgar

What lessons from your past influence how you lead today?

■ **Donovan:** Everything in my past I've carried into this building, because I grew up in my district. But I'm also open and committed to learning new things, like the Senate rules. Because knowing the rules is power—full stop.

■ **Esgar:** I've been in charge of high school students where we've had to really help them navigate and refocus and move forward. Anytime you've got a bunch of folks in a building for 120 days, trying to really make things better for the people of Colorado, sometimes you need to help them refocus.

■ **Fenberg:** One of my first memories of being involved in politics was going door to door, canvassing for a candidate when I was 7. As a kid, I was putting myself out

there and talking to complete strangers about something that I cared about. At the end of the day, that is the essence of the democratic process: engaging with your neighbors and talking about things that matter to your life. And I started an organization that engages young people in the political process, like a month out of college, with some of my best friends. Making sure that young people had a seat at the table was something that shaped my path to be where I am today.

■ **Holbert:** I've been blessed to learn from superior managers and leaders throughout my career. I'm grateful for the officers and board of the trade association that I managed in that they trusted me to run the association as if it were a for-profit organization. I had the opportunity to learn from those officers and board members, and to learn the differences between management and leadership.

■ **McKean:** I grew up on a farm, and we were really poor. Part of being really poor is having to figure things out and having to fix things that you would otherwise go buy. I remember when I was about 9 or 10, we were replacing the hydraulic pump on a John Deere tractor. And I remember thinking, "Why couldn't you just take this to the mechanic?" But that costs a lot of money, so my dad said we were going to do it ourselves. And that ability to figure things out is something that I think is really interesting in the interplay between the minority and the majority. I've been in the minority for six years, and that means you can't force anything. You have to find a way.

■ **Moreno:** I'm actually really fortunate that I was born and raised in the community that I now represent. I live one block away from the house I grew up in. I think bringing that kind of life experience and intimate knowledge of a community that really can't be replicated in any way has been a key piece of my legislative career.

How do term limits impact your approach to your leadership role?

■ **Donovan:** I think term limits do have the very unintended consequences of concentrating power with lobbyists and special interest groups because they have the experience and the luxury of time. I think some level of term limits is very appropriate. But I think eight years is too

short to build respect, learn the system, understand strategy and then still have time to write good policy, advocate for policy, et cetera.

■ **Esgar:** I've thought about this before: Would I be leading differently had I started leadership earlier or didn't have a term limit? I don't really think I would. I am here because I want to make sure that we're building a sustainable future for Colorado. And I want to make sure I'm setting up the next leadership team on the best foot forward to continue that progress.

■ **Fenberg:** In some ways it's good, because it brings new faces, new voices, new blood into the system. But on the other hand, it's challenging because I think it takes a long time to get good at anything, and in this line of work, that's no different.

■ **Holbert:** In states that have term limits, it's really important to find people who understand those roles and to get them into leadership positions earlier. I think that



"WE WERE REALLY POOR. PART OF BEING REALLY POOR IS HAVING TO FIGURE THINGS OUT ... I'VE BEEN IN THE MINORITY FOR SIX YEARS, AND THAT MEANS YOU CAN'T FORCE ANYTHING. YOU HAVE TO FIND A WAY."

Hugh McKean

that's benefited our caucus long term. We have a succession plan, which is unusual given our required turnover due to term limits. We have a fairly deep bench, and I'm excited to be leaving the Legislature in good hands.

■ **McKean:** It's tough because you kind of cut your teeth and then you have to decide, do you want to run for leadership? And I'll tell you, it's not a painless decision. My very favorite part of being a legislator is digging into policy, and that's done in committee. In leadership you're rarely, if ever, on committees.

■ **Moreno:** I always knew that my time in elected office would end at some point and I would then have to figure out what I want to be when I grow up. But I do think term limits aren't always the best. We should figure out what that right amount of time is for people to be in elected office. Because institutional knowledge is super important—especially in leadership positions.



"THIS INSTITUTION HAS BEEN STRONG FOR MANY, MANY YEARS, BECAUSE OF THAT TRADITION OF LEADERSHIP RESPECTING THE INSTITUTION SO MUCH THAT THEY ENSURE THAT THE NEXT GENERATION ALSO RESPECTS IT."

Steve Fenberg

How do you view the development of the next generation of legislative leaders?

■ **Donovan:** I think Colorado is quite far behind in advancing women into the highest positions of leadership. Even though we have majority-women caucuses at times, we don't have women in the top levels of leadership even within the caucus. So I try to use my current platform to say, "Yes, we should have women as president pro tem, but also as president." There should be a woman speaker, and you make that happen by having more women run for office. So just run. Don't wait to be asked. Just run.

■ **Esgar:** One of the reasons I moved over into this position was that I realized it was my last two years. I wanted to really focus on lifting up other folks and helping them see their potential. I want to inspire them to stand up and run for leadership, push to be a chair of a committee, or really fight for their legislation. I feel like that's been one of the most rewarding parts of being in leadership.

■ **Fenberg:** I think any president's role is to shape and influence the folks who are coming in behind you. I think that is how the institution stays stable and can thrive. If you don't do that, I think it can be too volatile, and there could be too much change too quickly. This institution has been strong for many, many years because of that tradition of leadership respecting the institution so much that they ensure that the next generation also respects it.

■ **Holbert:** I think that's the difference between leadership and management: being able to leave our caucus in a stronger, more dynamic and forward-looking position than I inherited it. In Colorado, every member is allowed to introduce up to five bills. Legislators tend to hold their cards very close to the vest and not tell anyone about their five bills. I tried to turn that around in my first year as majority leader. I didn't have a great deal of success. This year, with help from the assistant leader and our whip, that strategic perspective has really taken root. Now we're doing a much better job of laying out an agenda and showing the voters of Colorado that we're running bills that they care about.




"IT'S IMPORTANT THAT FOLKS IN POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP BE CALM AND VERY MEASURED. I THINK THOSE ARE QUALITIES THAT HAVE BEEN INGRAINED IN ME THROUGH THE BUDGET-MAKING PROCESS."

Dominick Moreno

■ **McKean:** With legislators coming and going, the institutional knowledge is retained by the staff and the lobbyists. That means as a freshman legislator, you're often at sea about how things go and what you need to do and who you need to know. So that first year or two is just picking up what the relationships are. Those are the relationships that need to be handed off. That's the development of leadership in the people coming behind me, because they're going to have to figure out where to get good information.

■ **Moreno:** That has always been really important to me, and I have never moved on to another office without having identified someone who could fill those roles. I regularly train people on legislative procedure. And as part of that, I have been able to really see who the up-and-coming leaders are.

Taylor Huhn is a senior program specialist in NCSL's Leaders and International Program. The responses have been edited for length and clarity.



"What ultimately made my decision to run was the support I was receiving from a lot of friends and fellow community activists," says David Morales, the nation's youngest Latino legislator.

LEGISLATOR PROFILES

Ready for the World

These eight young lawmakers, all moved by different issues, couldn't wait till 'someday' to run for office.

BY KELLEY GRIFFIN

The nation's youngest state legislators set their sights early. One was volunteering for U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley at age 11; another campaigned for U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders at 13. None of them were even out of college when they got elected. Each is motivated by different issues: health care, education, economic equality, gun rights, taxes, the environment.

Surrounded by colleagues old enough to be their parents, even grandparents, they've heard many comments about their youth—mostly skeptical.

"I affectionately joke that if I had a nickel for every time someone makes a comment about my age, everyone in my district would be comfortably retired," Montana Rep. Braxton Mitchell says.

New Hampshire Rep. Tony Labranche says people decided his youth

disqualified him without even knowing him. He turned 19 just after he was elected in 2020. "One of my opponents even said on Election Day that in her eyes, I was a 9-year-old boy," Labranche says.

Rhode Island Rep. David Morales, who at 21 is the nation's youngest Latino state legislator, says when he campaigned, people assumed he was a volunteer. But he had already completed his

undergraduate studies and his master's in public policy from Brown University by the time he ran. The knowledge he brought to his conversations with voters convinced people he was serious. He says the skeptics can be won over.

"You can quickly change that perception by feeling passionate about your ideas and presenting them unapologetically with the facts and with the evidence," Morales says.

Youth Can Be a Plus

Sen. Will Haskell of Connecticut—the youngest senator in a U.S. legislature—ran at age 22 and replaced a representative who had been in office since before Haskell was born. He wanted to see new policies and heeded the call when he heard President Barack Obama say, “If you’re disappointed in your elected officials, grab a clipboard, get some signatures, and run for office yourself.”

Haskell says he knew he lacked life experience but adds, “No legislator can know everything about every issue, so it’s on all of us to listen and learn.”

A couple of legislators consider their youth a plus.

Iowa Rep. Carter Nordman admits there was some concern about his age: He was 22 when he ran. “But by far, while I was (knocking on) doors around my district, I heard, ‘I love seeing young people running and getting involved,’” he says.

And Rep. Kalen Haywood of Wisconsin, who was elected at 19 in 2018, says every age group brings something to the table.

“We need to take the energy and innovativeness of young people and marry that with wisdom of our elders,” she says.

Like many young legislators, North Dakota Rep. Claire Cory wants to see more of her peers joining the ranks. So she’s working with a group offering support to hundreds who say they want to run, including personally mentoring an 18-year-old Montana woman.

The nation’s youngest Black state legislator, West Virginia Del. Caleb Hanna, was elected three years ago at age 19. He was inspired by Obama, but with a father who got laid off from a coal mine a few years back, Hanna decided he aligns with Republicans. He’s never been daunted by seeking office at a young age.

“A lot of people say that young people are the future,” Hanna says. “But in reality, we’re the now.”

Read on to learn more about these legislative up-and-comers.



CLAIRE CORY/FACEBOOK

North Dakota’s Claire Cory graduated in May from the University of North Dakota with degrees in public administration and political science.

Rep. Claire Cory

Youngest woman ever elected to her state’s legislature

- R-North Dakota
- Born: Sept. 11, 1998
- Elected: November 2020; appointed in October 2019 to fill out a term

Was it a hard decision to run at such a young age?

It was not. The district I represent and grew up in encompasses the University of North Dakota, where I go to school. I knew it would be a perfect fit. Legislating is something I am passionate about, so I knew it was the right time in my life.

How does being a legislator shape what you see for your future?

I hadn’t been thinking about my career past graduation when I was first appointed at 21. It’s inspiring to be exposed to all of the different career paths my colleagues have chosen. Some jobs will fit better with being in the Legislature by having more freedom to leave every other year for four months. I would love to be a business owner and entrepreneur.

What advice do you have for other young people?

Run for office! Young people are watching what is happening to their country, and they are worried. I’m part of an organization called Run GenZ, which mentors young conservative candidates to run for public office. They have more than 300 people who have applied for help. I am currently mentoring an 18-year-old woman seeking a state House seat in Montana.

Del. Caleb Hanna

Youngest Black state legislator in U.S. history

- R-West Virginia
- Born: Oct. 29, 1999
- Elected: November 2018

What got you interested in serving in an elective office?

I didn't come from a political family at all. I remember being in third grade and seeing Barack Obama running for president, and thinking, "If he can do it, I can do it!" So he initially sparked my interest in politics and policy. However, coming from a coal state, it didn't take me long to see that President Obama and I didn't see eye to eye on many issues. My dad was a coal miner and got laid off when I was 13 years old, due to some harsh energy policies. I knew at that point I wanted to run and be involved one day.

What has surprised you about being a state legislator?

It's hard to explain what expectations I had when realizing I won my first election, but it was definitely much different when I stepped into the Capitol. Every single day is a new experience, and as soon as you think you've got a grasp on something, you get thrown a curveball. While some people look at some legislatures and certain issues as being complete chaos, it's just them being deliberative. We don't all get our way, but we make compromise and effective policy. Looking at the grand scheme of things, it's not particularly bad that we debate and bicker so much.

How does being a legislator shape what you see for your future?

Politics definitely has changed my plans and opened my eyes to new areas of interest. From middle school all the way to my first year of college, I thought I wanted to attend law school and study some type of corporate law. The Legislature showed me that there were other things that I was more passionate about, examples being education and health care.

Sen. Will Haskell

Youngest senator in a U.S. legislature

- D-Connecticut
- Born: June 28, 1996
- Elected: November 2018



PERRY BENNETT/WW LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY



Caleb Hanna of West Virginia, top, says, "While some people look at some legislatures and certain issues as being complete chaos, it's just them being deliberative. We don't all get our way, but we make compromise and effective policy." Connecticut's Will Haskell, above, wrote about his experience campaigning for the state Senate in the book "100,000 First Bosses: My Unlikely Path as a 22-Year-Old Lawmaker," published this year.

What got you interested in serving in elective office?

In 2007, my dad brought me to New Hampshire to watch the presidential primary process. Seeing democracy up close sparked my interest in politics, and I hoped that I might have the chance to run for office one day in the distant future. After President Trump's victory, I decided to bump up my timeline. I was frustrated that my state senator had been serving for longer than I had been alive and was concerned that no one was running against her. I felt the problems that my community faced were urgent, but I wasn't sure exactly what to do about it. Then I heard President Obama's farewell address, in which he said, "If you're disappointed in your elected officials, grab a clipboard, get some signatures, and run for office yourself." I took him up on it, and a few months later, he endorsed my campaign.

What advice do you live by?

The best advice I received came from my friend state Rep. Jonathan Steinberg: First, politicians need to stand for something, not just against something. It's easy for candidates to motivate their base by opposing various policies. The harder—but more valuable—responsibility of a candidate is to articulate what they support. I think the best politicians also offer solutions to those problems, leaving voters feeling inspired instead of angry. Second, the right decision and the popular decision are not always one and the same. Sometimes, elected officials need to make unpopular decisions.

What has surprised you about being a state legislator?

As I came to better understand my job as a state senator, I realized how accessible state and local policymakers really are. My constituents can typically reach me on my cellphone, and conversations with constituents can make all the difference in getting a bill across the finish line.

Rep. Kalen Haywood

- D-Wisconsin
- Born: June 5, 1999
- Elected: November 2018



"I HAVE ALWAYS FELT THAT MY AGE HAS BEEN MY BIGGEST ASSET. WE NEED TO TAKE THE ENERGY AND INNOVATIVENESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND MARRY THAT WITH THE WISDOM OF OUR ELDERS."

Kalen Haywood

Why did you decide to run for office at such a young age?

When it comes to tackling community issues, I believe it has to be an all-hands-on-deck effort. Also, as a young person, the laws that are being voted on and passed in the Legislature today will be laws that my peers and I will have to live with for decades to come. It is important that we have diverse voices at the table when discussing legislative change to ensure the policy has the greatest impact.

How do you respond when people question whether you could do the job at your age?

I have always felt that my age has been my biggest asset. We need to take the energy and innovativeness of young people and marry that with the wisdom of our elders.

How does being a legislator shape what you see for your future?

Serving as a legislator has allowed me to see firsthand the positive impact government can have. I look forward to continuing to play an active role in bettering the world around me.

Rep. Tony Labranche

Nation's youngest LGBTQ+ state legislator

- I-New Hampshire
- Born: Nov. 11, 2001
- Elected: November 2020

What got you interested in serving in elective office?

At the age of 10, I was diagnosed with stage three colon cancer. To see the ways this cost my family was shocking. I think that my total care has racked up to well over \$1 million. My family and I were charged over \$1,000 in Tylenol alone during my stay, when a bottle of Tylenol across the street at CVS was \$6.99. Dealing with cancer was already hard enough, but knowing someone was profiting off my suffering only made it more painful. Ever since then, I have made it my life mission to make the world we live in a better and more equitable place for all.

Did people question whether you could do the job because you were young?



Labranche

Many people questioned my ability and competence at being an elected official, many of them not knowing anything other than I was 18 and a Democrat.

(Labranche changed his party affiliation in January.)

How does being a legislator shape what you see for your future?

To be honest, serving as a legislator has depressed my outlook for the future. We seem to be more caught up in petty partisan and personal fights than in caring about genuine policy debates. I initially went into politics thinking I would be able to effect change and make the world a better place. But now it seems that nothing will change. That is why I have decided to finish my degree and further my education before pursuing elected office again. I will continue to be a civic-minded person, but seeing the underbelly of the political machine up close has forced me

to rethink where I can create true change in this system.

Rep. Braxton Mitchell

- R-Montana
- Born: May 20, 2000
- Elected: November 2020

When did you first get involved in politics?



Mitchell

I grew up in a very conservative household in rural Montana. Since a young age, I had always followed politics. I first got involved after the 2018 Parkland school

shooting when nationwide high school walkouts were occurring. I realized it had turned into an anti-Second Amendment walkout, and decided to get a large (separate) group of students together to show our support for the students who lost their lives but also stand in support of the Second Amendment.

How do you respond to people who questioned whether you could do the job at your age?

My simple response to this was to engage them and prove myself worthy—as any legislator should do.

What's some advice you live by?

One of my colleagues told me to never be afraid to be the only person who votes no.

Rep. David Morales

Nation's youngest Latino legislator

- D-Rhode Island
- Born: Sept. 16, 1998
- Elected: November 2021

What got you interested in serving in elective office?

Growing up, I was raised in a small rural community alongside my older sister and my single mother. And at a very young age, I quickly saw how much my mother had to work multiple jobs just to make ends meet. In my early adolescence I started to put the points together and I realized



"BY FAR WHILE I WAS
(KNOCKING ON) DOORS
AROUND MY DISTRICT, I HEARD,
"I LOVE SEEING YOUNG PEOPLE
RUNNING AND GETTING
INVOLVED."

Carter Nordman



that government and public policy could be designed in a way that would further support families like mine coming from a lower-income background, coming from a single mother. And that's when I realized that I wanted to pursue a life focused on public service.

Was it a hard decision to run at such a young age?



Morales

I would definitely say it was because I am a first-generation American. I don't come from generational wealth and I was the first person in my

family to go to college, much less being the first person in my family to ever think about running for office. What ultimately made my decision to run was the support I was receiving from a lot of friends and fellow community activists.

What advice do you live by?

I always cite my mom. One thing we say in Spanish is "vale la pena": "it's worth

the struggle." If you believe in something passionately enough, you are inevitably going to run into obstacles. However, it is those obstacles and your ability to overcome them that allow you to achieve your goal.

My advice to other young legislators who will face similar struggles is to be prepared to do the work, because initially, not much will be expected of you. But you can quickly change that perception by feeling passionate about your ideas and presenting them unapologetically with the facts and with the evidence.

Rep. Carter Nordman

- R-Iowa
- Born: May 27, 1998
- Elected: November 2020

When did you first get involved in politics?

The first campaign I was involved in was Sen. (Chuck) Grassley's campaign in 2010. My grandmother recognized my interest and passion for government and politics. She called up the senator's campaign office asking if she could bring her 11-year-old grandson in to volunteer. They immediately said yes. We ended up returning to the office at least once a week the entire summer and into the fall, making thousands of yard signs and dialing hundreds of voters' phones.

Did people question whether you could do the job at such a young age?

Yes, people did ask. But by far while I was (knocking on) doors around my district, I heard, "I love seeing young people running and getting involved."

What has surprised you about being a state legislator?

Some of my best friends and colleagues are two to three times my age. One of my first days at the Capitol, the House majority leader, Matt Windschitl, gave me some great advice: "No matter your age, gender, race, religion or position, your constituents sent you here just as much as anyone else in this building. Your vote counts just as much as the most senior member of this body."

Read more from these interviews on State Legislatures News at nsl.org.

Bursting Your Bias Bubble

We need our biases, but we also need to recognize when they are holding us back.

BY CURT STEDRON

Let's begin with a short bias quiz:

1. What day comes after Saturday?
2. What is the first month of the year?
3. How many fingers do you have on one hand?
4. Name a vegetable.

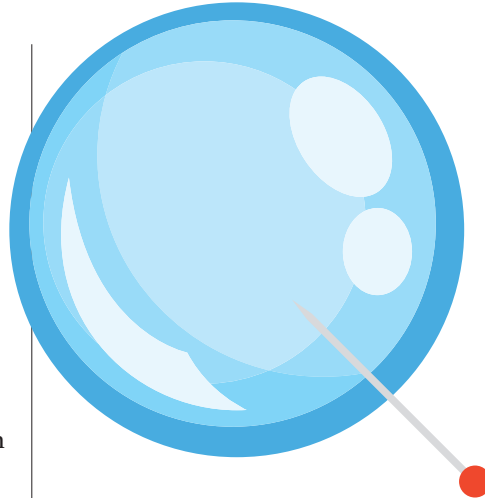
If, like most people, your answer to No. 4 was "carrot," then behold the power of our biases—our automatic judgments—to lock in on a truth without even thinking.

In recent years, individuals and organizations alike have focused on the ways cognitive biases can impact decision-making. This investigation is particularly useful for the legislature, a complex institution where individual and collective biases shape policies and procedures in often unseen ways.

Bias is a predisposition toward a particular truth or belief, like an invisible thumb tilting a scale in one direction. But it's important to note that bias is a tendency, not a certainty. Biases might cause us to lean one way, but that inclination can be reversed. So while you may have a bias toward action films, that doesn't mean you can't sit sobbing through the end of "Marley & Me." It's a tendency, not a life sentence.

Helpful Shortcuts

But why do we have biases in the first place? A better question might be, why do we need biases? Because biases are a feature, not a bug, of our brains. Here's why:



The brain processes 11 million bits of information per second, but we are consciously aware of only 40 bits at any time. To help us deal with that much unconscious information, our brains look for shortcuts, the easiest being to sort data into categories: This is good, this is bad; this is safe, this is unsafe.

Imagine primitive man hearing a rustle in the tall grass. By the time all the possibilities were processed—maybe it's a bird; maybe it's the wind; maybe it's a rodent—a lion could have had a nice snack. Biases allow our brains to make quick decisions. Apply that idea to a legislative setting and the benefits of biases become clear. There is simply not enough time to process all the issues, facts, data, perspectives and personalities that constantly bombard us. Biases let us quickly make sense of things and facilitate decision-making. The problem comes when we simplify our cognitive load so much that we eliminate real thinking altogether. How can we escape from our bias

bubble—even briefly—to reengage the kind of thinking necessary to solve the most pressing problems? Let's examine two techniques:

1 Employ Red Teaming. This practice involves adopting an adversarial perspective, forcing us to step into the shoes of those who have a radically different view of the playing field than we do—different values, assumptions, objectives—and to think like them as we assess our plans. It's like the offensive coordinator of a football team inviting the defensive coordinator to review the plays before the action starts.

2 Perform a Premortem. Imagine the plan has already failed before it begins, requiring us to work backward to determine why. We ask, "What went wrong?" and correct that error before we take the first step forward.

Biases are unthinking judgments, and both of these exercises require that missing component: They force us to think. So while biases are necessary to help us sift through the vast amount of information that bombards us every second, they carry a distinct risk in a complex setting like the legislature. We came into this profession to improve the lives of our constituents, to make progress in areas that will truly help people. But as the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw put it: "Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

Curt Stedron is the director of NCSL's Legislative Training Institute.

Putting Service Before Self

After 32 years mentoring staff and counseling lawmakers, NCSL Staff Chair Martha Wigton is set to retire.

BY HOLLY SOUTH

Martha Wigton remembers the days in her career when she was the only woman in the room. Now, after 32 years of legislative service, and with retirement set for year's end, Wigton recalls that era with pride. "Thankfully, times are changing," she says. "It's slow, but we're making progress."

Wigton has worked for the Georgia General Assembly since 1991, first in the lieutenant governor's office as executive assistant for policy and budget, and later as chief of staff. (In Georgia, the lieutenant governor serves as president of the Senate and presides over debate in the chamber.) For the past 11 years, Wigton has served as director of the House Budget and Research Office, where she provides policy and fiscal analysis to 180 House members as well as the professional staff of all 38 legislative standing committees. For the last two years, she has served as NCSL's staff chair.

Wigton has only praise for her staff's perseverance and dedication to the legislative institution and its work. "They're not in it for the limelight—but they are in it to win it," she says. "Our office has been implementing great innovations. We're pioneering the legislature of the future by teaching and engaging with the public in new ways."

Anne Sappenfield, director of the Wisconsin Legislative Council and NCSL's current staff vice chair, says Wigton's leadership style has generated enthusiasm and innovation among staffers nationwide. "I have really appreciated how open she is to different approaches. She listens well, and her decisions reflect how carefully she listens to and considers a variety of viewpoints."

"I'M AWED BY THE TALENT, STAYING POWER AND FIERCE DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY AT THE STATE LEVEL. WORKING BESIDE THEM—IT'S INFECTIOUS."



Making a Difference

Throughout her career, Wigton has relished working on issues “where you’re making a difference in the everyday lives of your neighbors, the people who teach your kids, the guy who serves you waffles.” She’s especially proud of her work on a law requiring all children under 8 to be in a booster seat when riding in a car, a health care program for uninsured kids and the creation of the Georgia Lottery.

“These are some big and sweeping issues,” Wigton says. “I can tell myself I’ve done some good.”

Following a House resolution this session honoring Wigton, Rep. Terry England, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, described Wigton as a “rock, not just for me but every one of you sitting out there as well. There’s no bigger fan and no bigger advocate for state employees, and no bigger advocate, quite frankly, for the citizens of Georgia, than Martha Wigton.”

Her Budget and Research Office colleagues say the same. “Martha’s passion for the legislative institution and its ability to positively impact the people of this state through budget and policy is inspiring,” says Christine Murdock, the office’s deputy director.

Speaker David Ralston says Wigton exemplifies what it means to put service before self. “She has not only provided wise counsel to legislators on critical public policy, but she has also trained and mentored an impressive roster of legislative staffers who have followed in her footsteps,” he says. “Georgia is better because of Martha’s exemplary service and her love for all those who call our state home.”

Love of Staff, Institution

Because of her love for the institution and her colleagues, Wigton acknowledges her frustration with the public’s lack of understanding of the Legislature and the people who work there, citing a “knee-jerk response to my career from people not involved in the process. They boil down

“I WELCOMED THE
OPPORTUNITY TO SPREAD
THE WORD, WITH THE GOAL
OF FOSTERING GREATER
KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WE DO
AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE
LEGISLATIVE PROCESS.”



Register now and join
legislative staff colleagues in
Atlanta Oct. 7-9 to connect,
create and collaborate.



SCAN ME

the complex, rich, polished, deliberate work we do into a soundbite.” She points to her colleagues in Georgia and those she knows through NCSL. “I’m awed by the talent, staying power and fierce defense of democracy at the state level. Working beside them—it’s infectious. So I’ll rigorously defend what we do for a living to anyone who will listen.”

Murdock has observed this quality firsthand. Wigton, she says, is “our cheerleader-in-chief. Martha constantly encourages staff to stretch and grow professionally, to take on additional responsibilities and to reach new goals.”

Involved in NCSL since the beginning of her legislative career, Wigton became staff chair in 2019 and served through two years of the pandemic. From the start, NCSL offered her “another way to continue my career, to build on what I know,” she says. “It kept me moving and put a spotlight on my state. And (it allowed me) to be a voice at the table for decisions regarding the legislative institution.”

Wigton has led two major NCSL initiatives to the finish line: the Legislative Staff Certificate Program and the Staff Hub ATL

2022. Wigton describes these as “really positive programming” and credits her staff chair predecessors for doing much of the work. Both initiatives fit into her goal of breaking down silos and providing staff with a bigger picture of how they fit into the legislative process.

It’s critical for staff directors and legislators to recognize the importance of investing in legislative staff, she says, through training, recognition, compensation—and saying thank you.

Wigton has led the charge herself, as the inspiration for the Legislative Staff Week shoutouts—posts that let staffers acknowledge colleagues on the NCSL website—and in her efforts to raise the profile of the Legislative Staff Achievement Awards and award recipients. Retaining institutional knowledge and building public confidence requires a deliberate, thoughtful investment in staff, she says.

“I go back to the fact that the public does not fully understand what legislative staff do,” she says. “NCSL provides a platform to build the professionalism of our staff, to make us smarter, quicker. As chair, I welcomed the opportunity to spread the word, with the goal of fostering greater knowledge of what we do and contributing to the legislative process.”

Says Sappenfield, “I’m sad for us that Martha is retiring, but I’m excited to see what she does next. She has so many interests, I know she will be as good at retirement as she has been during her career and as staff chair.”

Retirement means Wigton’s first winter vacation in 32 years—and exploring options for work that offers the same kind of variety she’s used to. “The challenges year to year and day to day certainly keep you engaged and require you as a professional to constantly grow and reevaluate,” Wigton says of her life in the Legislature. “It’s never static, always moving.”

“You can’t ask for much more than that in a career.”

Holly South is a senior policy specialist with the Legislative Staff Services Program and a huge fan of Martha Wigton’s.





ACROSS THE AISLE

Nebraska Senators Climb High for Harmony

A group summit of Mount Kilimanjaro provided lessons in perseverance, working across party lines and being open to the inspiration of unusual possibilities.

BY STEWART SCHLEY



COURTESY MICHAEL FERGUSON, LEGISLATIVE AIDE TO SEN. TOM BREWER

From left: Dave Murman, Justin Wayne, Anna Wishart, Tom Brewer and Ben Hansen on the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The lawmakers—three Republicans and two Democrats—found common ground, trust and even some legislation along the way.

Six days of climbing. Steep hillside trails. One badly swollen knee. Shared toilets. A final ascent in the dark in a below-zero windchill. Oh, and a ringleader who was recovering from leukemia.

It was no easy adventure. But as the sun rose to light the frosty morning on Day Six, five Nebraska state senators had finally done it: Wound their way up the challenging 37-mile Machame Route to the top of Africa's tallest peak, Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The lawmakers representing diverse districts and dual



Brewer



Hansen



Murman



Wayne



Wishart

political parties cheered and high-fived and yanked cameras from backpacks to memorialize the moment. They were literally on top of the world.

Except they weren't. Turns out they'd made it to Stella Point, one of three Kilimanjaro summit sites, at 18,885 feet. They quickly realized Uhuru Peak, Kilimanjaro's ultimate summit, at 19,340 feet, was still 45 minutes away, up a steep incline. Since 12:40 a.m., they'd been slogging in freezing temperatures, headlamps lighting the dark trail. "My legs," Sen. Dave Murman says, "felt like cement."

Still, nobody was turning back. "The hard work had been done, all that was left was putting one foot in front of the other for a few more feet," recounts Sen. Tom Brewer, a key trip instigator. "We had all come too far to stop short of the summit."

Forty-some minutes later, they were there.

'Pole Pole'

Somewhere in the story of how five legislators summited Kilimanjaro last November is an irresistible analogy to the machinations of public policy; how getting a law enacted is not the stuff of a single brilliant burst, but a slow, unrelenting slog. "Pole pole" (pronounced "pol-ay pol-ay") is what Kilimanjaro's able guides tell their climbers, over and over. It means "slowly slowly" in Swahili. It's the only way to preserve enough energy and will to keep climbing as the trail stretches on and the oxygen supply steadily depletes. It's also a fair encapsulation of the legislative process, where turning ideas into law requires patience. "It's difficult to ac-

"ANYTIME YOU DO THESE
TYPES OF CHALLENGES
TOGETHER, IT BUILDS MORE
TRUST. SO WHEN YOU'RE IN A
CIRCUMSTANCE WHERE YOU
HAVE A CHALLENGING PIECE OF
LEGISLATION, WHERE PEOPLE
COME FROM DIFFERENT
PERSPECTIVES, AT LEAST YOU
TRUST EACH OTHER.
YOU TRUST THAT WHAT
YOU'RE TELLING EACH OTHER
IS THE TRUTH."

Sen. Anna Wishart

complish big things," Murman says. "And that's kind of what the mountain is."

In both settings, getting to the finish line also requires faith in your fellow traveler. On the mountain, political allegiances and geographic divides gave way to personal relationships.

"It's true: Progress really does happen at the speed of trust," says Sen. Anna Wishart, one of two Democrats on the trip and the youngest climber at 37. "Anytime you do these types of challenges together,

it builds more trust. So when you're in a circumstance where you have a challenging piece of legislation, where people come from different perspectives, at least you trust each other. You trust that what you're telling each other is the truth."

The self-funded Kilimanjaro adventure began as a bucket-list quest instigated by Brewer, a man colleagues simply call "the colonel." The 63-year-old represents Nebraska's 43rd District, a wide swath of prairie stretching mostly north of state Highway 2 and encompassing farming towns such as Chadron and Hay Springs. Brewer is a tough guy's tough guy, a two-time Purple Heart recipient, retired U.S. Army colonel and helicopter pilot who led troops in Afghanistan. He was determined to make the Kilimanjaro climb even after undergoing chemotherapy and radiation treatment to battle leukemia doctors detected earlier in the year. (Brewer, who went ahead with the trip despite protests from his physicians, reports he's doing well, health-wise.)

Brewer is a conservative Republican, although in Nebraska, where an unusual unicameral Legislature does not officially recognize political parties, that's not supposed to matter.

It does, of course. Brewer's politics—his recent bill to allow permit-free concealed carry of firearms was indefinitely postponed in April—are a fair stretch apart from those of Kilimanjaro accomplice Sen. Justin Wayne, 42, a Democrat representing an urbanized chunk of Omaha who's more concerned with public housing. "We're on the opposite sides of the political spectrum," Wayne

says. But the two have a deeper connection than politics: In a state where 88% of the population is white, the two hail from outside the mainstream. Wayne is African American; Brewer is a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

Early in their first terms, Wayne says, they “started having conversations about how we got to where we are.” The two men bonded during hunting trips, prowling for turkeys in Brewer’s district. When Brewer mentioned he was planning to hike up Kilimanjaro, Wayne declared himself “in” on the spot, even though he recognized he was venturing onto unfamiliar turf. “I don’t mind hunting and fishing,” Wayne says. “But climbing a mountain is what white people do. We don’t do ice hockey, and we don’t do mountain climbing.”

The two picked up colleagues who couldn’t resist the idea of notching Kilimanjaro on their belts: Wishart, a Democrat who grew up in Lincoln; Ben Hansen, 42, a Republican whose District 16 is tucked toward the state’s northeast corner; and Murman, 68, a Republican representing District 38, edging up against the Kansas border.

Training Advised

Climbing Kilimanjaro is not for the faint of heart or the light of will. Although mountaineering guides vouch that anybody in reasonably good physical condition should be able to make the trek, the combination of some oppressive terrain and thin air, which can cause altitude sickness, sends about 1 in 3 Kilimanjaro climbers heading back down the mountain before reaching the summit.

Not so for this group. They prepped by hiking 22 miles up Wyoming’s Bomber Mountain on a trial outing, and Brewer teamed with Wishart on a demanding cross-training regimen. By the time they took off for Tanzania in early November, they were primed.

When you “pole, pole” your way up a steep hillside, the terrain morphing from lush foliage to sparse, rocky clefts, you’re

WHEN YOU “POLE, POLE” YOUR WAY UP A STEEP
HILLSIDE, THE TERRAIN MORPHING FROM LUSH FOLIAGE
TO SPARSE, ROCKY CLEFTS, YOU’RE BOUND TO FIND
MOMENTS TO ENGAGE WITH FELLOW CLIMBERS.
SOMETIMES, EVEN, LEGISLATION IS CONCEIVED.



“WE ALL HAVE A TENDENCY TO
TALK MAINLY TO THE PEOPLE
WHO AGREE WITH US.
THIS SITUATION FORCES YOU
TO COMMUNICATE MORE
WITH EACH OTHER.”

Sen. Doug Murman

bound to find moments to engage with fellow climbers. Sometimes, even, legislation is conceived. During the descent, Wayne, hobbled by a knee that had swollen to the size of a cantaloupe, fell back by nearly an hour from the main group. Hansen stuck alongside him, providing company for the hike downhill. As they made their way back down the trail, the two discovered common ground around a shared policy concern: efficiency in gov-

ernment. Thus was conceived a bill that would require any Nebraska government agency to prove its worth on a five-year cycle or face an automatic sunset. Hansen, a self-described “individual liberty guy” with a deejay’s deep voice, likes the idea because it demands accountability in government. Ditto for Wayne.

But there was a hurdle. The two would need a nod from the lawmaker who heads the state’s General Affairs Committee. Happily, they found him just down the hill: Tom Brewer. During a water break, the two cornered the second-term senator, nudging him for approval to bring the bill to committee. On a mountainside in Africa, Brewer gave his verbal OK to consider a measure that could affect how Nebraska runs its business back home.

It’s entirely possible the same chain of events might have taken place back at the capitol in Lincoln, around a conference room table or an office desk, not on the hilly trail of a dormant volcano. But it’s not hard to imagine that something about climbing a faraway peak—sharing meals



PHOTOS COURTESY MICHAEL FERGUSON, LEGISLATIVE AIDE TO SEN. TOM BREWER

and morning tea, singing hiking songs taught by guides to keep the spirits high, trudging uphill to the count of thousands of steps every day—inspired unusual possibilities.

A Common Goal

For Brewer, Kilimanjaro lives on as a lesson about perseverance. In an email message, he likens the climb to the hard slog of legislating: “We put in the work in the summers and throughout the session to get bills across the finish line, but it is not uncommon to start to run out of gas

after two rounds of debate that include long discussions with countless amendments. When these moments happen, I’ll remember the drive to reach the peak, to complete the mission, and get the legislation passed.”

There’s also a theme about working across party lines. Murman, a retired dairy farmer, says the trip cultivated relationships that might not have happened otherwise. “We all have a tendency to talk mainly to the people who agree with us,” he says. “This situation forces you to communicate more with each other.”

“I’LL REMEMBER THE DRIVE
TO REACH THE PEAK,
TO COMPLETE THE MISSION,
AND GET THE
LEGISLATION PASSED.”

Sen. Tom Brewer



It also compels the occasional demonstration of humility: Murman came perilously close to bashing his head on a bank of protruding rocks after mistakenly exiting his tent posterior-first and tumbling down a steep hillside.

For Hansen, the trip was instructive in how to operate outside of familiar environments. “You’re getting out of your gerbil cage of being in the capitol,” he says. “You see each other outside of the purview of politics a little bit. That cuts down on animosity.”

All of this lesson-learning isn’t just happy talk about bipartisanship ideals. Wayne, who was awaiting a diagnosis on his injured knee in January, identifies a more tangible takeaway: old-fashioned political capital. Before Kilimanjaro, for instance, Wayne and Murman were relative strangers, set apart both by geography and ideology. “He and I never talked before,” Wayne says. “Now after this trip, I have no problem going up and asking for his vote.”

That’s the sort of thing that happens when you’re sleeping in tents, slogging up trails, getting covered with dirt and, as Wishart recounts, having the adventure of a lifetime. Over six days, climbing toward a common goal, relationships take on a whole new dynamic. “I mean, Ben and I had to share a bathroom,” Wayne says. “There’s not a whole lot he (can’t) say to me now.”

Stewart Schley is a Denver-based freelance writer.

CENTENNIAL STATE OF MIND

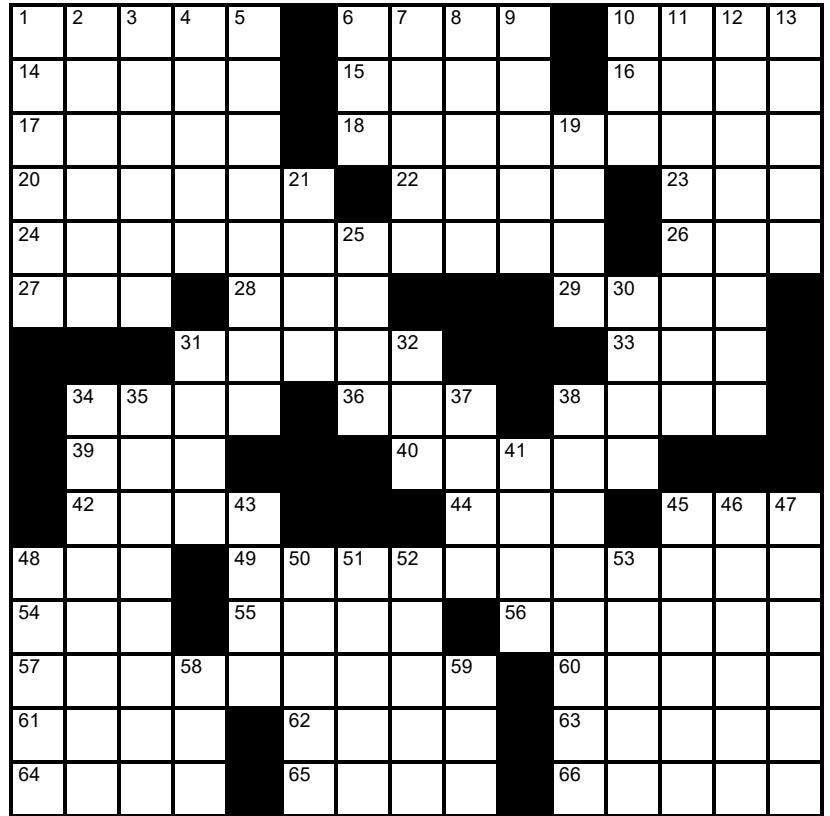
Across

1. Plays a round; like Arnold Palmer famously did at Cherry Hills Country Club in 1960
6. After-bath powder
10. Acronym for new NATO system supporting the planning, tasking and execution of all air and missile defense operations
14. What Mr. Fleischer might do, in shorthand, if he likes a Twitter post
15. A popular island in its namesake _____ Archipelago, located in Indonesia
16. Friend of Christopher Robin's
17. Hungarian for concealing or protecting something, by covering it
18. * Wiggly treat, that on the 4th of July, usually contains red, white and _____
20. Independence Pass and the Million Dollar Highway drives in Colo. are this
22. "____ I" ("Me also")
23. Notation used indicating being away from work
24. * One of Colorado's four national parks, located in Gunnison
26. 4 Monopoly props.
27. Not no
28. Many, many years
29. Crash site?
31. Tamale wraps
33. First name of the Colorado Rockies manager Black
34. What you do after a meal at a fine restaurant
36. Sharing music, but not lyrics, out loud
38. Watch, in Spanish
39. Acronym for the Gardens in North Haven

40. What Jerry Maguire heard, "Show me the ____!"
42. In Hawaii, flowers of the sunflower or aster variety
44. Casting requirement?
45. ____ Khan
48. What Jay-Z might call his wife, in abbreviated form
49. * You might see this color reptile at an annual Denver boat festival
54. "... ____ he drove out of sight"
55. "I love this city and it's palm trees"
56. To the exclusion of all else
57. National song written on Pikes Peak in Colorado, "America the ____"
60. Stars like Samuel L. Jackson and Taylor Swift reportedly live in this type of New York unit
61. Pair at sea
62. Flock of pheasants
63. Prepare to be knighted
64. Acronym for PR specialists in America
65. "They weren't all F's on my report card, I did get ____"
66. A mythological character who was a pathological liar

Down

1. A great character
2. Soothsayer
3. Two words often used in similes
4. Swiss capital
5. Initiate
6. Bar bill
7. Edgar's middle name
8. Really bad
9. Words to live by
10. "King Kong" giant
11. With 12-down and starred clues, a sign travelers see when they enter the Centennial State

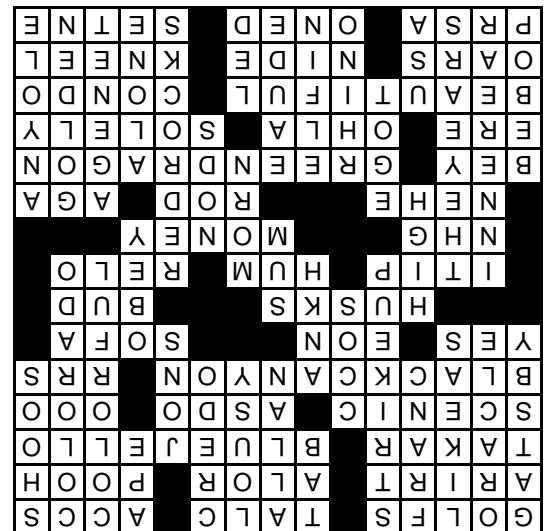


12. With 11-down
13. Drives away
19. Batiste and Bon Jovi, collectively
21. Collection of high executives discussing organizational development and strategy
25. Egyptian cross
30. What you hope your dog will do
31. John Denver song, "Rocky Mountain ____"
32. Bottom line
34. Balance regulator
35. Kenny Rogers 1982 top hit, "Through ____"
37. Poetic time of day
38. * Iconic outdoor arena outside Denver
41. Nonverbal OKs
43. Acronym for an awards feat, accomplished by Jennifer Hudson in June 2022

45. A financial review might include salary, __, __ worth and other factors
46. * Home to the Colorado School of Mines
47. "Come back ____ time!"
48. Jazz style

50. Safari sight
51. Spritlike
52. Words proceeding toilette, parfum, cologne
53. Unaccompanied
58. It's a free country
59. Called the shots

—Gene Rose



50-State Rankings

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Total Distribution (millions)

High to Low	State/Territory	Amount
1	California	\$27,017.02
2	Texas	\$15,814.39
3	New York	\$12,744.98
4	Florida	\$8,816.58
5	Illinois	\$8,127.68
6	Pennsylvania	\$7,291.33
7	Michigan	\$6,540.42
8	New Jersey	\$6,244.54
9	North Carolina	\$5,439.31
10	Ohio	\$5,368.39
11	Massachusetts	\$5,286.07
12	Georgia	\$4,853.54
13	Washington	\$4,427.71
14	Virginia	\$4,293.73
15	Arizona	\$4,182.83
16	Colorado	\$3,828.76
17	Tennessee	\$3,725.83
18	Maryland	\$3,717.21
19	Indiana	\$3,071.83
20	Louisiana	\$3,011.14
21	Minnesota	\$2,833.29
22	Connecticut	\$2,812.29
23	Nevada	\$2,738.84
24	Missouri	\$2,685.30
25	Oregon	\$2,648.02
26	Wisconsin	\$2,533.16
27	South Carolina	\$2,499.07
28	Puerto Rico	\$2,470.06
29	Kentucky	\$2,183.24
30	Alabama	\$2,120.28
31	Oklahoma	\$1,870.42
32	Mississippi	\$1,806.37
33	Dist. of Columbia	\$1,802.44
34	New Mexico	\$1,751.54
35	Hawaii	\$1,641.60
36	Kansas	\$1,583.68
37	Arkansas	\$1,573.12
38	Iowa	\$1,480.86
39	Utah	\$1,377.87
40	West Virginia	\$1,355.49
41	Rhode Island	\$1,131.06
42	Idaho	\$1,094.02
43	Wyoming	\$1,068.48
44	Vermont	\$1,049.29
45	Nebraska	\$1,040.16
46	Alaska	\$1,011.79
47	North Dakota	\$1,007.50
48	Maine	\$997.50
49	New Hampshire	\$994.56
50	South Dakota	\$974.48
51	Delaware	\$924.60
52	Montana	\$906.42
53	Guam	\$553.58
54	U.S. Virgin Islands	\$515.34
55	N. Mariana Islands	\$481.88
56	American Samoa	\$479.14

Amount per Capita

High to Low	State/Territory	Amount
1	N. Mariana Islands	\$10,181.42
2	American Samoa	\$9,638.61
3	U.S. Virgin Islands	\$5,913.57
4	Guam	\$3,598.52
5	Dist. of Columbia	\$2,613.96
6	Wyoming	\$1,852.27
7	Vermont	\$1,631.67
8	Alaska	\$1,379.60
9	North Dakota	\$1,293.17
10	Hawaii	\$1,128.04
11	South Dakota	\$1,099.04
12	Rhode Island	\$1,030.69
13	Delaware	\$933.99
14	Nevada	\$882.18
15	Montana	\$836.01
16	New Mexico	\$827.17
17	Connecticut	\$779.90
18	West Virginia	\$755.69
19	Massachusetts	\$751.94
20	Puerto Rico	\$751.72
21	Maine	\$732.18
22	New Hampshire	\$721.99
23	California	\$683.31
24	New Jersey	\$672.25
25	Colorado	\$663.14
26	Michigan	\$649.02
27	Louisiana	\$646.48
28	Illinois	\$634.36
29	New York	\$630.90
30	Oregon	\$624.94
31	Mississippi	\$610.00
32	Maryland	\$601.76
33	Idaho	\$594.86
34	Arizona	\$584.89
35	Washington	\$574.63
36	Pennsylvania	\$560.75
37	Texas	\$542.60
38	Tennessee	\$539.13
39	Kansas	\$539.06
40	Nebraska	\$530.29
41	Arkansas	\$522.37
42	North Carolina	\$521.04
43	Virginia	\$497.45
44	Minnesota	\$496.50
45	South Carolina	\$488.25
46	Kentucky	\$484.54
47	Oklahoma	\$472.40
48	Iowa	\$464.17
49	Ohio	\$454.97
50	Georgia	\$453.10
51	Indiana	\$452.70
52	Missouri	\$436.28
53	Wisconsin	\$429.81
54	Alabama	\$422.01
55	Utah	\$421.16
56	Florida	\$409.35

As Percentage of FY 2020 Total Spending

High to Low	State/Territory	Percent
1	Wyoming	22.70%
2	South Dakota	20.10%
3	Nevada	18.20%
4	Vermont	17.00%
5	New Hampshire	14.40%
6	North Dakota	14.30%
7	Texas	11.60%
8	Montana	10.90%
9	Colorado	10.70%
10	Michigan	10.50%
11	Illinois	10.40%
12	Arizona	10.30%
13	Tennessee	10.30%
14	Florida	10.30%
15	Rhode Island	9.90%
16	Missouri	9.80%
17	Louisiana	9.70%
18	Maine	9.50%
19	New Jersey	9.40%
20	Idaho	9.30%
21	South Carolina	9.30%
22	Hawaii	9.10%
23	Mississippi	9.10%
24	North Carolina	8.80%
25	Alaska	8.50%
26	Massachusetts	8.40%
27	Connecticut	8.30%
28	Washington	8.20%
29	Kansas	8.20%
30	Indiana	8.20%
31	Nebraska	8.10%
32	Georgia	8.00%
33	Delaware	7.80%
34	New Mexico	7.80%
35	Maryland	7.70%
36	California	7.60%
37	Pennsylvania	7.60%
38	Utah	7.60%
39	Oklahoma	7.50%
40	New York	7.40%
41	West Virginia	7.30%
42	Ohio	7.20%
43	Virginia	6.70%
44	Alabama	6.70%
45	Minnesota	6.60%
46	Arkansas	5.70%
47	Kentucky	5.70%
48	Iowa	5.70%
49	Oregon	5.40%
50	Wisconsin	4.90%
51	American Samoa	Info. n/a
52	Dist. of Columbia	Info. n/a
53	Guam	Info. n/a
54	N. Mariana Islands	Info. n/a
55	Puerto Rico	Info. n/a
56	U.S. Virgin Islands	Info. n/a

Source: U.S. Department of Treasury, The Pew Charitable Trusts, The U.S. Census Bureau

StateStats

Raising the Flag

So what makes a great flag?

A vexillologist—somebody who conducts scholarly studies of flags—will identify five principles:

- **Keep it simple.** A child should be able to draw it from memory.
- **Use meaningful symbolism.**
- **Use two or three contrasting colors** (no more) from a standard color set.
- **No lettering or seals.** Never use writing of any kind or an organization's seal.
- **Be distinctive—or be related.** Avoid duplicating other flags but use similarities to show connections.

Based on those criteria, outlined in the flag-design bible, "'Good' Flag, 'Bad' Flag," compiled by Ted Kaye of the North American Vexillological Association, there are some really great state flags.

But if you can't differentiate your state's flag from all the others at a distance, you might want to come up with a new design—and some states are.

"I'm part of the world that wants states to consider the opportunity they are missing by having boring flags," Kaye says.

Read on to find out everything you ever wanted to know about the flags that fly above the U.S. states and territories.

BY NORA CALEY



Alabama

- **Year adopted:** 1895
- **Designed by:** Rep. John W.A. Sanford Jr.
- **What's on it:** Crimson cross of Saint Andrew on a field of white.
- **What it means:** According to the Acts of Alabama 1895, the bars forming the X-shaped cross are to be not less than 6 inches broad and extend diagonally across the flag from side to side. The act did not specify whether the flag should be square or rectangular.
- **Did you know?** Around 1915, Thomas Owen, director of the Department of Archives and History, determined the flag should be square to preserve certain features of the Confederate battle flag. In 1987, the attorney general's office issued an official opinion that the flag should be rectangular.



Alaska

- **Year adopted:** 1927
- **Designed by:** Benny Benson
- **What's on it:** Eight five-pointed gold stars on a dark blue field. Seven stars are arranged as the Big Dipper; one larger star is positioned in the upper right corner.
- **What it means:** Blue represents the sky and the forget-me-not, the state flower. The lone star in the upper right symbolizes the North Star and the future of the most northerly state. The Big Dipper is part of the Ursa Major, or Great Bear, constellation, which symbolizes strength.
- **Did you know?** Benson was an Alaska Native seventh grader who won a flag-design contest open to school-age kids four years after Native Alaskans received citizenship. During the flag introduction ceremony in Seward, he was awarded a watch bearing the flag emblem and a \$1,000 scholarship.



Arizona

■ **Year adopted:** 1917

■ **Designed by:** Col. Charles W. Harris

■ **What's on it:** Two horizontal halves, the top half consisting of 13 alternating red and yellow rays, the bottom half a solid blue field. A large copper-colored star is superimposed in the center.

■ **What it means:** The rays represent both America's 13 original colonies and the Western sunset. The red and yellow refer to the flags carried by Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado on his expedition to the area in 1540. The blue is the same as that in the U.S. flag. The color of the star identifies Arizona as the nation's largest producer of copper.

■ **Did you know?** Harris designed the flag for the Arizona National Guard Rifle Team, because it was the only state team without a flag at the National Trophy Rifle Matches.



Arkansas

■ **Year adopted:** 1913

■ **Designed by:** Willie Hocker

■ **What's on it:** A large white diamond on a red background is bordered by 25 white stars on a blue band. Inside the diamond is the state name with one blue star above it and three blue stars below it.

■ **What it means:** The stars signify that Arkansas was the nation's 25th state, and the diamond refers to its status as the first diamond-producing state. The four stars symbolize that Arkansas has been part of France, Spain, the United States and the Confederate States of America.

■ **Did you know?** Hocker won a design contest sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution, which wanted a flag to present when the battleship USS Arkansas was commissioned. Hocker's design had three stars; the fourth, for the Confederacy, was added in 1923.



California

■ **Year adopted:** 1911

■ **Designed by:** William Todd

■ **What's on it:** A white background with a grizzly bear centered above the words "California Republic" and a red stripe. In the upper left corner is a five-pointed red star.

■ **What it means:** The California grizzly is a symbol of great strength. The red of the star and bar symbolizes courage, with the star itself representing sovereignty.

■ **Did you know?** The flag was hastily drawn during an 1846 uprising, when a small band of rebels marched on the Mexican garrison at Sonoma, took the commandant prisoner and issued a proclamation declaring California to be a republic independent of Mexico. Todd, one of the men who remained to hold Sonoma, was the nephew of Mary Todd Lincoln.



Colorado

■ **Year adopted:** 1911

■ **Designed by:** Andrew Carlisle Carson

■ **What's on it:** Three horizontal stripes of equal width, one white stripe between two blue ones. Sitting atop the stripes is a red letter "C" filled with a golden disk.

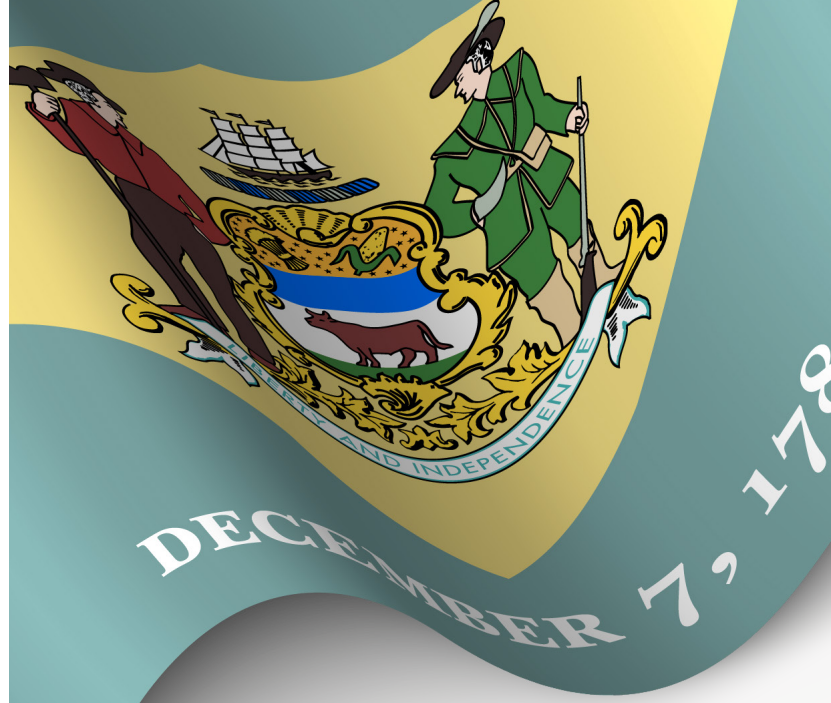
■ **What it means:** Gold stands for the state's abundant sunshine, white for its snowcapped mountains and blue for its clear blue skies. The red represents the ruddy color of much of Colorado's soil.

■ **Did you know?** In 1929, the Legislature passed a bill specifying that the red and white stripes be the same shades used in the U.S. flag. In 1964, lawmakers specified the size of each element, including the "C," resulting in today's flag.



Connecticut

- **Year adopted:** 1897
- **Designed by:** Inspired by a memorial from a local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution
- **What's on it:** The state coat of arms in white, centered on an azure blue field. The arms includes a shield bordered in gold and silver and depicting three grapevines bearing fruit. Below the shield is a white streamer with the motto "Qui transtulit sustinet."
- **What it means:** The design is based on the 1711 seal of the colony of Connecticut. The motto translates to "He who transplanted still sustains."
- **Did you know?** Gov. O. Vincent Coffin introduced to the General Assembly the first proposal for the adoption of a state flag in 1895.



Delaware

- **Year adopted:** 1913
- **Designed by:** Commission
- **What's on it:** A buff-colored diamond on a background of colonial blue. In the center of the diamond is the state coat of arms; below it are the words "December 7, 1787."
- **What it means:** The buff and colonial blue represent the colors of Gen. George Washington's uniform. The date is when Delaware ratified the federal Constitution, inspiring its official nickname, "The First State."
- **Did you know?** The coat of arms includes a wheat sheaf, corn and farmer to represent agriculture, an ox to represent animal husbandry, a ship for the state's shipbuilding industry, a militiaman with a musket, water for the Delaware River, and the motto "Liberty and independence."



Florida

- **Year adopted:** 1868
- **Designed by:** Various
- **What's on it:** A red Saint Andrew's cross on a white field. In the center is the state seal depicting a Seminole woman scattering flowers, a shining sun, a steamboat and a cabbage palmetto tree.
- **What it means:** Florida's flag represents the state as a land of sunshine, flowers, palm trees, rivers and lakes.
- **Did you know?** The state adopted a version of the flag in 1868 and modified it in 1900. During the late 1890s, Gov. Francis P. Fleming suggested adding the red saltire (diagonal cross) to ensure the flag didn't look like a white flag of surrender when hanging on a pole.



Georgia

- **Year adopted:** 2004
- **Designed by:** Cecil Alexander and Gov. Roy Barnes
- **What's on it:** A field of three horizontal bars in red, white and red. In the upper left in a smaller blue field, or canton, is the state coat of arms in gold, surrounded by a circle of 13 white stars. Beneath the arms and within the canton is the motto "In God we trust."
- **What it means:** The stars represent the 13 original U.S. states, not the Confederate states. That detail was clarified in a 2003 bill.
- **Did you know?** The most recent version is an update to the 2001 flag, itself an update to the 1956 flag in which the three horizontal stripes had been replaced by the Confederate Stars and Bars to signal state lawmakers' opposition to the 1954 and '55 *Brown v. Board of Education* decisions and federally mandated school integration.



Hawaii

- **Year adopted:** 1845
- **Designed by:** Various
- **What's on it:** Eight horizontal stripes, alternating white, red and blue, from the top. The canton, or top quarter closest to the mast, contains the red, white and blue Union Jack of the United Kingdom.
- **What it means:** The eight stripes represent the eight major Hawaiian islands. The inclusion of the Union Jack represents the friendship between Britain and the Hawaiian Kingdom.
- **Did you know?** Hawaii's is the only U.S. state flag to include the flag of another country.



Idaho

- **Year adopted:** 1957
- **Designed by:** Emma Edwards (seal)
- **What's on it:** The Idaho state seal is centered on a blue field with the words "State of Idaho" beneath. The seal depicts a woman, a miner, a pine tree, grain, a cornucopia and a river.
- **What it means:** The woman is holding scales and symbolizes justice, and the miner represents one of Idaho's top industries. The pine tree stands for the state's timber interests, and the grain and cornucopia for its agricultural and horticultural resources. The river is the Shoshone or the Snake.
- **Did you know?** Edwards' design won a competition held in 1890, the year Idaho became a state. The seal was revised in 1957. Idaho is the only state with a seal designed by a woman.



Illinois

■ **Year adopted:** 1970

■ **Designed by:** Florence Hutchison

■ **What's on it:** Centered on a white background, the state seal depicts a bald eagle holding in its beak a banner with the state motto, "State Sovereignty, National Union." Behind the eagle, the sun is shown over Lake Michigan.

■ **What it means:** The eagle represents the United States. The motto means that Illinois governs itself under the U.S. government. The seal also includes the date 1818, when the Illinois Constitution was signed.

■ **Did you know?** An earlier flag, adopted in 1915, was created by Lucy Derwent. In 1969, a soldier serving in Vietnam initiated a movement to add the state name to the flag because its identity wasn't clear among the state flags in the mess hall where he ate. Gov. Richard B. Ogilvie appointed a committee, and Hutchison submitted a design including the state seal and name.



Indiana

■ **Year adopted:** 1917

■ **Designed by:** Paul Hadley

■ **What's on it:** On a blue background, a gold torch is surrounded by an outer circle of 13 stars, with rays radiating from the top of the torch to the upper stars. Five stars are arranged in a half circle below the torch and inside the outer circle; a larger 19th star is positioned above the torch, with the state name above it.

■ **What it means:** The 13 stars stand for the original U.S. states; the five in the half circle for the states admitted just prior to Indiana, and the larger one for Indiana's admission as the 19th state. The torch represents liberty and enlightenment, their far-reaching influence symbolized by the rays.

■ **Did you know?** The flag, which won a Daughters of the American Revolution competition, was adopted by the 1917 General Assembly as part of the 1916 Indiana centennial celebration.



Iowa

- **Year adopted:** 1921
- **Designed by:** Dixie Cornell Gebhardt
- **What's on it:** Three vertical stripes of blue, white and red. In the central white stripe, an eagle carries in its beak streamers with the state motto, "Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain." The state name is in red below the streamers.
- **What it means:** The blue stands for loyalty, justice and truth; the white for purity; and the red for courage.
- **Did you know?** Iowa did not have a flag until World War I, when Iowa National Guard troops stationed along the Mexican border suggested a banner was needed. Gebhardt, a member of the state chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, designed the banner in 1917.



Kansas

- **Year adopted:** 1927
- **Designed by:** Albert T. Reid and others
- **What's on it:** A blue field with the state seal in the center. Above the seal is a sunflower with a bar beneath it. The seal depicts a rising sun, agricultural scene, wagon train and the motto "Ad astra per aspera." The Legislature added the state name in 1961.
- **What it means:** The bar between the seal and the sunflower symbolizes the Louisiana Purchase. The motto means "To the stars through difficulties."
- **Did you know?** The design was the result of years of disagreements over whether the state should have a flag or a banner, whether the sunflower was a worthwhile symbol, and changes to the seal.



Kentucky

■ **Year adopted:** 1962

■ **Designed by:** Jesse Cox Burgess

■ **What's on it:** The state seal centered in a navy blue field. The seal shows a man wearing buckskin clasp the shoulder and shaking the hand of a man in a frock coat, and includes the motto "United we stand, divided we fall." Above the seal are the words "Commonwealth of Kentucky."

■ **What it means:** The two men are symbolic, although a rumor claimed the man in buckskin was frontiersman Daniel Boone and the man in the coat was the statesman Henry Clay.

■ **Did you know?** Flag design began in 1920, when a committee sent a design to the governor, but nothing happened for a few years. Later, when the state needed a flag for a military ceremony, the Kentucky Historical Society commissioned Burgess, an art teacher in the Frankfort city school system, to create a design.



Louisiana

■ **Year adopted:** 1912

■ **Designed by:** Various

■ **What's on it:** A crest centered in a blue field. The crest consists of a nest bearing three chicks, a mother pelican feeding the chicks with her own blood, depicted as three drops on the pelican's breast. Beneath the nest is a white banner with the state motto, "Union, justice, confidence."

■ **What it means:** The pelican has long been a symbol of Louisiana, and the blood symbolizes self-sacrifice. However, the idea that pelicans mutilate themselves to feed their young has since been dispelled as inaccurate.

■ **Did you know?** There were various versions of the flag, with different punctuation and different numbers of drops of blood, until a 2005 bill called for the current design.



Maine

- **Year adopted:** 1909
- **Designed by:** Benjamin Vaughan (seal)
- **What's on it:** The state seal centered in a blue field. The seal shows a farmer with a scythe and a mariner with an anchor, a pine tree, a moose, grass, sky and water. Above the seal is a ribbon bearing the word "Dirigo," Latin for "I direct," and above that is a yellow star. Below the seal is a ribbon with the state name.
- **What it means:** The farmer and mariner represent the agriculture and maritime industries. The pine is the state tree, and the moose is the state animal. The star represents the North Star.
- **Did you know?** Vaughan took the lead in designing the seal when Maine separated from Massachusetts and became a state in 1820.



Maryland

- **Year adopted:** 1904
- **Designed by:** Uncertain
- **What's on it:** Four quadrants showing two shields that make up two coats of arms of the Calvert family, the colonial proprietors of Maryland. The first and fourth quadrants are yellow and black, and the second and third are red and white with cross bottony, or crosses with rounded ends.
- **What it means:** George Calvert, first Lord Baltimore, adopted a coat of arms that included the yellow-and-black colors of his paternal family and the red-and-white colors of his maternal family, the Crosslands.
- **Did you know?** The designer is not known, but banners including the motif appear in sketches published in 1880 by Frank B. Mayer depicting the parade held in Baltimore to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the city's founding.



Massachusetts

- **Year adopted:** 1780
- **Designed by:** Uncertain
- **What's on it:** A coat of arms centered on a white background. In the center of the design is a shield depicting an Algonquian man holding a bow and arrow; in the upper left corner of the shield is a white five-pointed star. Above the shield is a right hand holding a broadsword, and surrounding the shield is a blue ribbon with the motto, in Latin, "Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem."
- **What it means:** The star's five points symbolize Massachusetts' admission as the sixth U.S. state. The Algonquian peoples were the Native American inhabitants of what is now Massachusetts. The motto translates to, "By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty."
- **Did you know?** Before 1780, the obverse side depicted a green pine tree. A commission has reviewed whether to update the flag's controversial imagery of the sword over the Native American's head.



Michigan

- **Year adopted:** 1811
- **Designed by:** Lewis Cass (coat of arms)
- **What's on it:** The state coat of arms centered on a blue field. The design includes a shield supported by an elk on the left, a moose on the right. The shield depicts a man with a gun in one hand, the other hand raised in peace. Above the shield is an eagle holding three arrows and an olive branch with 13 olives. At the top is the U.S. motto, "E pluribus unum." Other Latin words include "Tuebor" and the motto "Si quaeris peninsulam amoenam, circumspice."
- **What it means:** The eagle symbolizes U.S. authority, with the arrows showing the nation's readiness to defend its principles. The olives stand for the 13 original states. "Tuebor" ("I will defend") refers to the state's frontier position, and the motto means "If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you."
- **Did you know?** The design was recommended by Adjutant Gen. John Robertson.



Minnesota

- **Year adopted:** 1957
- **Designed by:** Legislative commission
- **What's on it:** Centered on a blue field is a version of the state seal depicting a white settler tilling soil and a Native American riding away on horseback. There are depictions of a waterfall, a setting sun, a border of lady's slipper flowers, and the dates 1819, 1858 and 1893. Above the scene is the motto "L'Étoile du nord." Around the seal is a white border with the state name and 19 five-pointed stars arranged symmetrically in four groups of four and one group of three.
- **What it means:** The largest, uppermost star represents the North Star. The years refer to the establishment of the state's first European settlement, statehood and the adoption of the first flag, respectively. The lady's slipper is the state flower, and the motto translates to "Star of the North."
- **Did you know?** Recent legislation would change the imagery of the settler displacing the Indigenous person.



Mississippi

- **Year adopted:** 2021
- **Designed by:** Commission
- **What's on it:** Unequal vertical stripes of red, gold, blue, gold, red. In the blue field, a white magnolia blossom is encircled by 20 white stars and one gold star, with the motto "In God we trust" underneath.
- **What it means:** The magnolia is the state flower. The white stars reflect Mississippi's admission as the 20th U.S. state, and the gold star represents the Indigenous people who originally inhabited the land.
- **Did you know?** Mississippi replaced its former flag, which contained the Confederate battle emblem, amid the racial justice protests of 2020. A commission designed the magnolia flag, and 73% of voters approved it in the November 2020 election.



Missouri

■ **Year adopted:** 1913

■ **Designed by:** Marie Watkins Oliver

■ **What's on it:** Three horizontal stripes of red, white and blue with the coat of arms in the center. The arms is divided vertically with a crescent and bear on one side and the U.S. crest on the other. The image is encircled by a belt with the motto "United we stand, divided we fall" and is supported by two bears. Below is the motto "Salus populi suprema lex esto" ("Let the welfare of the people be the supreme law") and the date 1820 in Roman numerals. Atop the arms is a knight's helmet, and surrounding the whole design are 24 stars.

■ **What it means:** The bears signify strength and courage. The stars indicate Missouri was the 24th state, adopting its constitution in 1820. The helmet symbolizes the power of the people.

■ **Did you know?** A flag proposed by Dr. N.R. Holcomb was rejected for being too similar to the U.S. flag and having no Missouri symbols.

NTANA



Montana

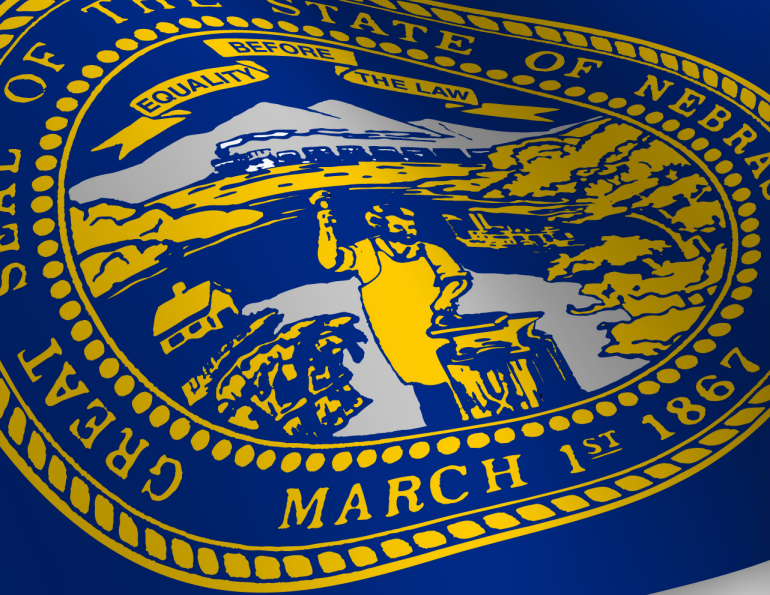
■ **Year adopted:** 1905

■ **Designed by:** Col. Harry Kessler

■ **What's on it:** Centered on a blue field is the state seal, featuring a sunrise over snowy mountains, waterfalls, the Missouri River, hills, trees, cliffs and three tools. At the bottom of the seal is a ribbon with the state motto, "Oro y plata" (Spanish for "gold and silver"); above it in gold letters is the state name.

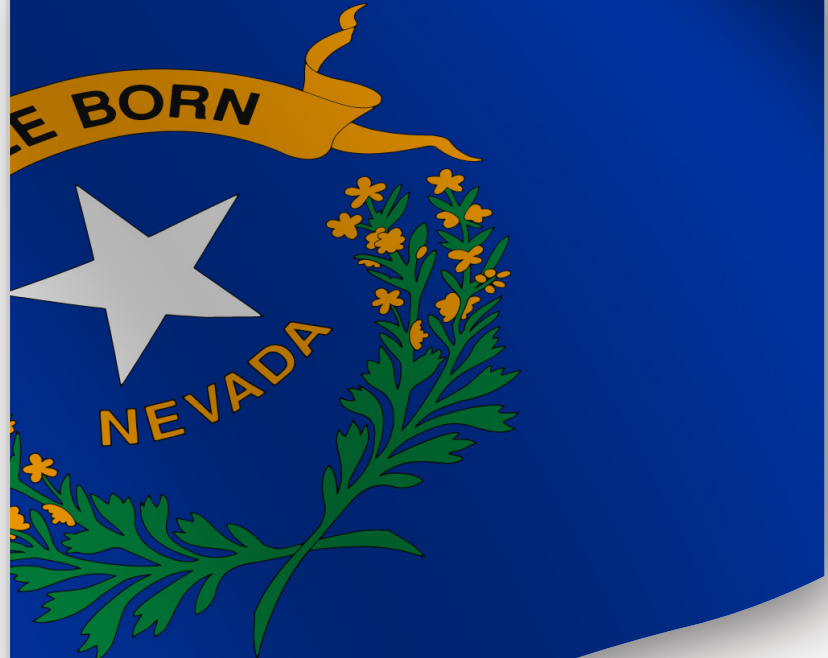
■ **What it means:** The scenery depicts the state's beauty. The tools are a pick, a shovel and a plow to symbolize Montana's mining and farming history. The state name was added in 1981 in a Roman type font that was changed to Helvetica in 1985.

■ **Did you know?** Kessler headed the 1st Montana Infantry in the war with Spain. He wanted a flag that would distinguish Montana Volunteers from other units.



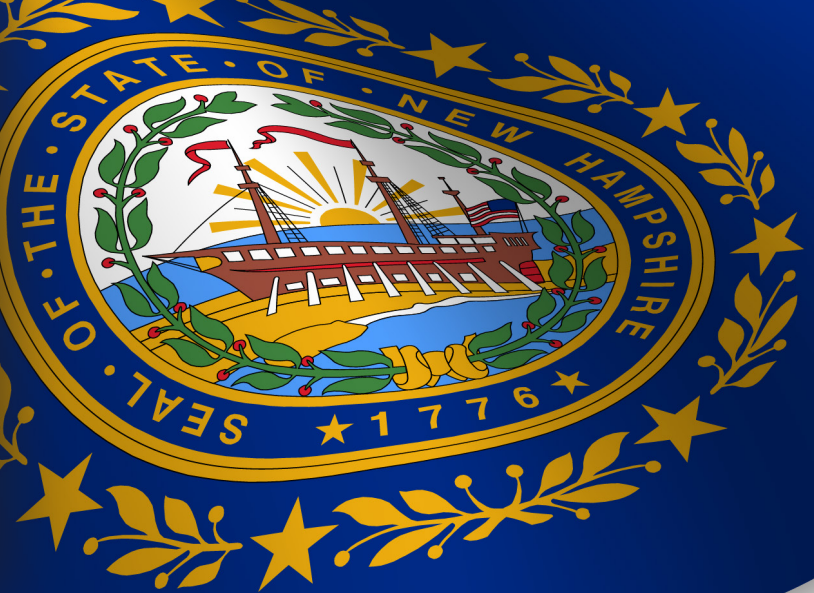
Nebraska

- **Year adopted:** 1925
- **Designed by:** Florence Hazen Miller
- **What's on it:** A blue field with the state seal in the center. The seal features a steamboat on the Missouri River, a smith with a hammer and anvil, a settler's cabin with wheat and corn, a train headed toward the Rocky Mountains, the motto "Equality before the law," and the words "Great Seal of the State of Nebraska, March 1st, 1867."
- **What it means:** The smith represents the industrial arts, and the wheat and corn represent agriculture. Nebraska became a state in 1867.
- **Did you know?** Miller advocated for a banner that would include the seal designed by architect Bertram Goodhue. The 1925 bill designating the state banner also established penalties for insulting it. In 1963, the Legislature designated the state banner as the state flag.



Nevada

- **Year adopted:** 1991
- **Designed by:** Verne R. Horton
- **What's on it:** Two sprays of sagebrush cross to form a wreath in the upper left corner of a blue field. Centered in the wreath is a five-pointed white star with the state name spelled out between its bottom points. Above the star is a yellow scroll with the motto "Battle born."
- **What it means:** Sagebrush is the state flower, and the motto signifies that Nevada was granted statehood during the Civil War.
- **Did you know?** This is Nevada's fourth flag. A 1991 bill specified that the state name be printed below the star instead of in a circle around it.



New Hampshire

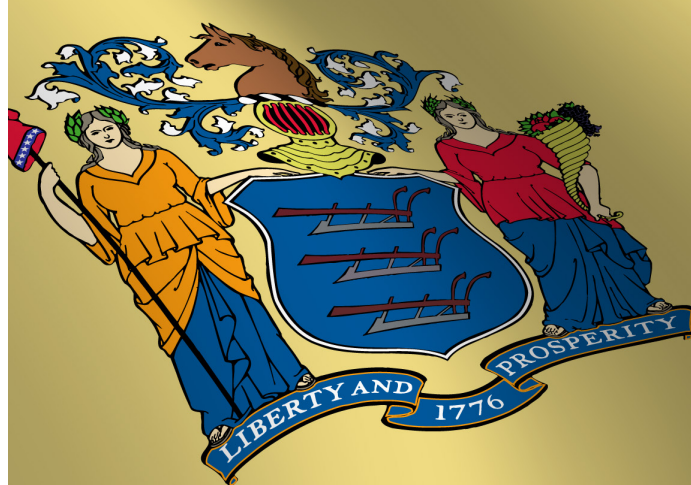
■ **Year adopted:** 1931

■ **Designed by:** Otis G. Hammond (seal)

■ **What's on it:** The state seal, centered on a blue field, depicts the sea, a rising sun and a warship on the stocks flying the U.S. flag. In the foreground to the left of the ship is a granite boulder. Surrounding the image is a laurel wreath, the words "Seal of the state of New Hampshire" and the date 1776.

■ **What it means:** The ship is the USS Raleigh, built in Portsmouth in 1776; it represents the city's status as a shipbuilding center during the Revolutionary War. The boulder represents the Granite State's rugged terrain and the character of its residents.

■ **Did you know?** The flag was adopted in 1909 and changed in 1931 when Gov. John G. Winant named a committee to work with Hammond, of the New Hampshire Historical Society, to modify the seal.



New Jersey

■ **Year adopted:** 1896

■ **Designed by:** Pierre Eugène du Simitière (seal)

■ **What's on it:** The state coat of arms, centered on a buff-colored field and featuring two female figures: Liberty, on the left, holds a staff with a liberty cap on it; Ceres, on the right, is the Roman goddess of grain. Between them is a shield with three plows. Above the shield are a knight's helmet and horse head, and below it on a scroll is the motto "Liberty and prosperity" with the date 1776.

■ **What it means:** The helmet and horse represent New Jersey's independence, Liberty stands for freedom and Ceres for fertile soils. The plows highlight the state's agricultural tradition, and 1776 is when the Legislature adopted the flag.

■ **Did you know?** A 1965 law defined the flag's colors using Color Association of the United States shades.



New Mexico

■ **Year adopted:** 1925

■ **Designed by:** Reba Mera

■ **What's on it:** Centered on a field of yellow is a red Zia, or sun symbol, with four points at right angles, each point having four rays, the two inner rays being one-fifth longer than the outer ones.

■ **What it means:** Yellow and red are the colors of the flag of Spain, which ruled New Mexico until the early 19th century. Four is a number sacred to the Zia people, representing four directions, four seasons, four times of day (sunrise, noon, evening, night), four stages of life (childhood, youth, adulthood, old age) and more.

■ **Did you know?** Dr. Harry Mera won the flag design competition with a design by his wife, Reba; the symbol is a modern interpretation of a pattern seen on a 19th-century water jar from Zia Pueblo.



New York

■ **Year adopted:** 1901

■ **Designed by:** Commission, with Gov. Alonzo B. Cornell, Secretary of State Joseph B. Carr and State Comptroller James W. Wadsworth (coat of arms)

■ **What's on it:** The state coat of arms, centered on a blue field, includes a shield showing a ship, river, grassy shore and mountain range with the sun rising behind it. Supporting the shield on either side are ladies Liberty and Justice. Above the shield is an eagle, and on a scroll below it are the Latin word "Excelsior" ("Ever upward") and the U.S. motto, "E pluribus unum" ("Out of many one").

■ **What it means:** Liberty, with her staff and gold Phrygian cap, stands for freedom; the crown at her feet illustrates the diminished power of the English monarchy. Justice, who is blindfolded and holding a sword and set of scales, represents impartiality and fairness.

■ **Did you know?** The U.S. motto was added as part of the fiscal year 2021 enacted budget.



North Carolina

■ **Year adopted:** 1885

■ **Designed by:** William G. Browne

■ **What's on it:** On the staff side is a vertical blue stripe with a five-pointed white star in the center and the state initials "N" and "C" on either side of it. A scroll above the star reads "May 20th 1775"; one below reads "April 12th 1776." On the outer end are two equally proportioned horizontal bars, red on top and white on the bottom.

■ **What it means:** The two dates reference state history: In 1775, residents of Mecklenburg County allegedly created the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, declaring themselves "free and independent people." In 1776, at a meeting known as the Halifax Resolves, state delegates to the Continental Congress voted for independence.

■ **Did you know?** Browne designed the 1861 version of the flag, which was modified by a committee in 1885.



North Dakota

■ **Year adopted:** 1911

■ **Designed by:** Rep. John H. Fraine

■ **What's on it:** A dark blue field with the state coat of arms in the center. The arms includes a bald eagle with an olive branch and a bundle of arrows in its claws. On the eagle's breast is a shield, and in its open beak is a scroll with the motto "E pluribus unum." Above the eagle are 13 stars and a sunburst; below it is a scroll with the words "North Dakota."

■ **What it means:** Fraine introduced a bill designating that the flag conform to the design of the regimental flag carried by the North Dakota Infantry in the Spanish-American War in 1898 and Philippine Island Insurrection in 1899. The bill added the state name to the flag.

■ **Did you know?** In 1951, an unsuccessful Senate bill proposed changes to the flag, which doesn't feature anything symbolic of North Dakota.



Ohio

■ **Year adopted:** 1902

■ **Designed by:** John Eisenmann

■ **What's on it:** A burgee, or swallow-tailed, shape with three red and two white horizontal stripes. At the staff end is the base of a blue triangular field, with the apex at the center of the middle red stripe. In the blue field are 17 white, five-pointed stars grouped around a red disc superimposed on a white circle.

■ **What it means:** The triangles represent the state's hills and valleys, the stripes its roads and waterways. The stars are for the 13 original states, with the four additional stars indicating Ohio was the 17th U.S. state. The white circle with its red center suggests both the "O" in "Ohio" and the seed of the buckeye, the state tree.

■ **Did you know?** Ohio's is the only non-rectangular U.S. state flag.



Oklahoma

■ **Year adopted:** 1925

■ **Designed by:** Louise Funk Fluke

■ **What's on it:** Centered on a blue background is an Osage buffalo-skin shield decorated with seven eagle feathers and six brown crosses. Covering the shield are an olive branch and a calumet, or ceremonial pipe.

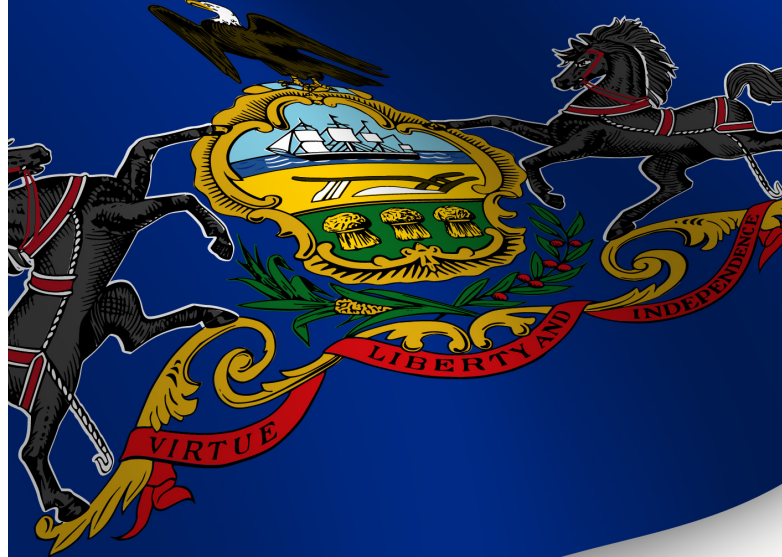
■ **What it means:** The design honors the 60 different Native American groups living in Oklahoma. The blue field comes from a flag carried by Choctaw soldiers during the Civil War. The olive branch and calumet represent peace, and the crosses are Native American symbols for stars.

■ **Did you know?** This is Oklahoma's 14th flag. The Legislature added the state's name in 1941.



Oregon

- **Year adopted:** 1925
- **Designed by:** Legislature
- **What's on it:** Centered on a navy blue field is a portion of the state seal with "State of Oregon" above and the date 1859 below. Supporting the seal are 33 five-pointed stars. On the reverse is a beaver perched on a log and facing toward the staff. All elements are in gold.
- **What it means:** The stars represent Oregon's admission as the 33rd state, and 1859 is the year of statehood. The beaver is the state animal, and gold and blue are the state's colors.
- **Did you know?** Oregon is the only state with a two-sided flag. The design of the front side, with the seal, was based on Oregon's 19th-century military flag and was developed after Portland's postmaster asked for a flag.



Pennsylvania

- **Year adopted:** 1907
- **Designed by:** Caleb Lownes (coat of arms)
- **What's on it:** The state coat of arms centered on a blue field. The arms features a shield supported by two horses, one on each side, with a bald eagle at the top. On the shield are a ship, a plow, sheaves of wheat, an olive branch and a cornstalk. On a ribbon below is the motto "Virtue, liberty and independence." The blue matches that of the U.S. flag.
- **What it means:** The ship, plow and wheat come from the colonial-era crests of three Pennsylvania counties. The ship represents commerce, the plow natural resources and the wheat fertile fields. The olive branch and corn symbolize peace and prosperity.
- **Did you know?** The original design first appeared on paper money issued in 1777 and has been revised over the years.



Rhode Island

- **Year adopted:** 1877
- **Designed by:** Unknown
- **What's on it:** A gold anchor centered on a white field. Underneath the anchor is a blue ribbon with the motto "Hope" in gold letters. The design is encircled by 13 gold stars.
- **What it means:** The stars represent the 13 original colonies. According to the Rhode Island Historical Society, the motto was probably inspired by the biblical phrase "Hope we have as an anchor of the soul" (Hebrews 6:18-19).
- **Did you know?** State legislation calls for the flag to be edged with yellow fringe.



South Carolina

- **Year adopted:** 1861
- **Designed by:** Col. William Moultrie
- **What's on it:** A white palmetto centered on a dark blue field, with a white crescent in the upper left corner.
- **What it means:** Moultrie's 1775 design used the blue of the uniforms worn by South Carolina's militia in the Revolutionary War; the crescent was inspired by the silver emblem worn on the front of their caps.
- **Did you know?** The tree was added in 1861 to symbolize Moultrie's heroic defense of the palmetto-log fort on Sullivan's Island in Charleston against an attacking British fleet on June 28, 1776.



South Dakota

■ **Year adopted:** 1992

■ **Designed by:** Ida M. Anding

■ **What's on it:** The state seal, centered on a sky-blue field, is shown in blue with a white background. It's outlined by a serrated sun and includes a smelting furnace, a farmer, a herd of cattle, a field of corn, a river with a steamboat, and a banner with the motto "Under God the people rule." In an arc of gold letters above the seal is the state name; below it is the nickname, "The Mount Rushmore State."

■ **What it means:** The furnace and other elements represent the state's important industries, and the stylized sun symbolizes the sunny weather.

■ **Did you know?** The nickname was updated in 1992; before then it was "The Sunshine State."



Tennessee

■ **Year adopted:** 1905

■ **Designed by:** LeRoy Reeves

■ **What's on it:** A white-bordered blue circle with three five-pointed white stars on a crimson field. At the fly end are unequal vertical bars of white and blue.

■ **What it means:** The stars represent state's the three divisions—East, Middle, West. The circle represents the three being bound in unity. The blue stripe "prevents the flag from showing too much crimson when hanging limp," Reeves said.

■ **Did you know?** Reeves was an officer with the Tennessee Infantry.



Texas

- **Year adopted:** 1839
- **Designed by:** Unknown
- **What's on it:** A vertical blue stripe at the staff end with a large, five-pointed white star; the outer end is divided equally by two horizontal stripes, the upper one white and the lower one red.
- **What it means:** Red stands for bravery, white for purity, and blue for loyalty. The red and white match the colors of the U.S. flag.
- **Did you know?** Six sovereign countries have flown their flags over the state: Spain, France, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederate States of America and the United States of America.



Utah

- **Year adopted:** 1913
- **Designed by:** Daughters of the American Revolution
- **What's on it:** The state seal in a gold circle centered on a blue field. The seal consists of an eagle clutching a shield that displays arrows, a beehive and sego lilies, with U.S. flags on either side. Above the beehive is the motto "Industry"; below it are the state name and the dates 1847 and 1896.
- **What it means:** The beehive represents progress and hard work. The eagle symbolizes protection in peace and war. The sego lily is the state flower; 1847 is the year the Latter-day Saints arrived in the area; and 1896 is the year of statehood.
- **Did you know?** The flag was created in 1904 for the St. Louis World's Fair. This year, the state invited residents to submit designs for a new flag.



Vermont

■ **Year adopted:** 1923

■ **Designed by:** Ira Allen (seal)

■ **What's on it:** A dark blue field with the state coat of arms in the center. The arms includes a shield showing a green field, a pine tree, wheat sheaves and a cow, with mountains and yellow sky in the background. Supporting the shield are two pine branches crossed at the bottom. Above the shield is a deer head, and on a scroll beneath it are the state name and the motto "Freedom and unity."

■ **What it means:** The deer head and tree represent Vermont's wildlife and forests, respectively; the cow and wheat symbolize its dairy and agricultural industries. The mountains represent the state's Green Mountains.

■ **Did you know?** A previous flag resembled the American flag, so it was changed in 1923 to avoid confusion.



Virginia

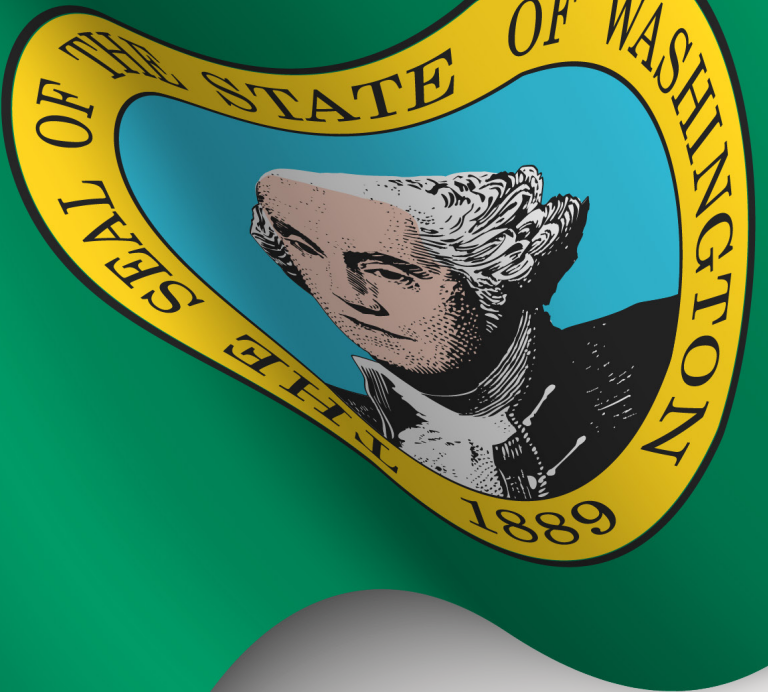
■ **Year adopted:** 1861

■ **Designed by:** Charles Keck

■ **What's on it:** The state seal centered on a blue field. The seal has a white background and shows a female figure dressed as an Amazon, with a spear pointing downward in her right hand and a sheathed sword in her left. She stands over the prostrate body of a man, his fallen crown nearby, a broken chain in his left hand and a scourge in his right. Above them is the state name, and below is the motto "Sic semper tyrannis." A wreath encircles the design.

■ **What it means:** The woman represents Virtus, the Roman deity of bravery and military strength; the fallen figure is Tyranny. The motto means "Thus always to tyrants." The wreath is Virginia creeper, a flowering vine.

■ **Did you know?** The seal has two sides. One side is shown on the flag; the other side depicts the Roman goddesses Libertas and Ceres.



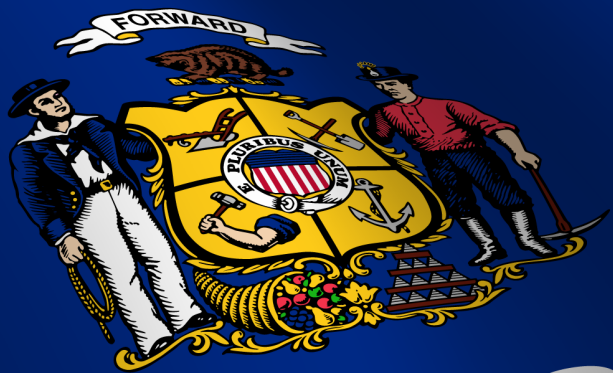
Washington

- **Year adopted:** 1923
- **Designed by:** Charles Talcott (seal)
- **What's on it:** The state seal centered on a dark green field. The seal includes a portrait of George Washington on a blue background and is ringed by a gold band with the words "The Seal of the State of Washington" and the date 1889.
- **What it means:** The design was chosen for its simplicity. Many cities and towns at the time flew flags bearing a profile of the first president. The green refers to the state's nickname, "The Evergreen State." Washington became a state in 1889.
- **Did you know?** There have been various versions of the portrait and the shade of green; the design was standardized in 1967.



West Virginia

- **Year adopted:** 1929
- **Designed by:** Joseph H. Diss Debar (seal)
- **What's on it:** A white field with a blue border and the state coat of arms in the center. The arms consists of a shield depicting a large stone with a farmer on one side, a miner on the other. The rock bears the date "June 20, 1863"; in front of it are two crossed rifles and a liberty cap. The shield includes the motto "Montani semper liberi." Above it is a ribbon with the words "State of West Virginia"; supporting it is a wreath of Rhododendron maximum.
- **What it means:** The motto means "Mountaineers are always free." The stone represents strength, and 1863 is the date of statehood. The farmer stands for agriculture, the miner for industry. The cap symbolizes that liberty was won and will be maintained by the force of arms.
- **Did you know?** The coat of arms is a modified version of the state seal.



1848

Wisconsin

■ **Year adopted:** 1863

■ **Designed by:** Gov. Nelson Dewey and Edward Ryan (seal)

■ **What's on it:** A blue field with a central coat of arms, the state name and the date 1848. The arms depicts a sailor and a miner standing on either side of a shield showing various tools. Above the shield is a badger, and at its base is a cornucopia and a pyramid of 13 lead ingots. Above the badger is a white banner with the motto "Forward."

■ **What it means:** The tools represent agriculture (plow), mining (pick and shovel), manufacturing (arm and hammer) and navigation (anchor). The badger is the state animal and refers to the name given to the miners. The cornucopia stands for prosperity and abundance. The ingots represent mineral wealth and the 13 original states.

■ **Did you know?** Legislation in 1979 added the state name in white letters above the coat of arms and the year of statehood, 1848, below it.



Wyoming

■ **Year adopted:** 1917

■ **Designed by:** Verna Keays

■ **What's on it:** A blue field bordered by white and red stripes, with a white bison and the state seal in the center. The seal includes two dates, 1869 and 1890; a central draped figure holding a staff from which flows a banner with the words "Equal rights"; two male figures; and two pillars topped with lamps from which burn the Light of Knowledge. Scrolls encircling the pillars bear the words "Oil," "Mines," "Livestock" and "Grain," representing major industries.

■ **What it means:** The dates commemorate the organization of the territorial government, 1869, and Wyoming's statehood, 1890. The term "Equal rights" refers to the political status of women. The male figures represent the livestock and mining industries.

■ **Did you know?** Keays, a graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago, won the Sons of the American Revolution design competition and a \$20 prize.



American Samoa

■ **Year adopted:** 1960

■ **Designed by:** Fareti Sotoa

■ **What's on it:** A blue background and a white triangle edged in red with its base on the fly end of the flag and its apex touching the hoist end. A brown-and-white American bald eagle holds a war club and a coconut-fiber fly whisk in its talons.

■ **What it means:** The war club (uatogi) represents the power of the state, and the fly whisk represents the wisdom of the traditional chiefs of Samoa. The red, white and blue colors and the eagle reflect the relationship between the United States and American Samoa.

■ **Did you know?** The American flag was the only official flag from 1900 to 1960. In the 1950s, the Samoan government decided to create a local flag and accepted designs from Samoans.



District of Columbia

■ **Year adopted:** 1938

■ **Designed by:** Charles A.R. Dunn and others

■ **What's on it:** Three five-pointed red stars arranged horizontally above two horizontal red bars on a white background.

■ **What it means:** The design is based on George Washington's coat of arms, first used to identify his family in the 12th century when an ancestor took possession of Washington Old Hall, in County Durham in northeast England. In heraldry, the stars are known as mullets.

■ **Did you know?** Dunn, an artist with the District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce, claimed in his own writings that he designed the flag, but there may have been input from others.



Guam

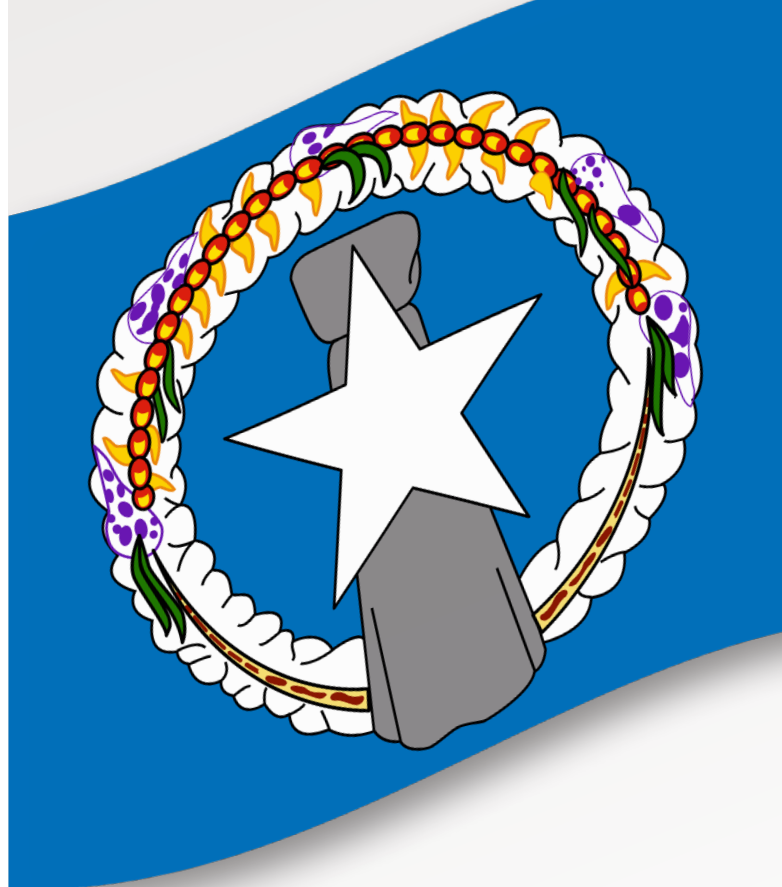
■ **Year adopted:** 1917

■ **Designed by:** Helen Paul

■ **What's on it:** A dark blue background with Guam's seal in the center. The seal depicts a blue sky, a river flowing into a bay, a sailboat, a beach, a palm tree, a cliff in the distance, and the word "Guam" superimposed on the scene. The seal has a narrow red border.

■ **What it means:** The blue represents the ocean. The seal is in the shape of a two-pointed oval, like the slingstones used in ancient weapons. The boat is a traditional outrigger. The red border was added in 1948 to commemorate the hardships suffered by the people of Guam in World War II.

■ **Did you know?** Guam used the Spanish flag until 1898, when the island came under U.S. administration; after that, it used no flag until Paul, whose husband was a U.S. Navy officer stationed in Guam, designed one.



N. Mariana Islands

■ **Year adopted:** 1985

■ **Designed by:** Various

■ **What's on it:** Centered on a blue background are a white, five-pointed star and a gray Chamorro latte stone. Surrounding the design is a flower wreath.

■ **What it means:** Blue symbolizes the Pacific Ocean, and the star represents the commonwealth. Representing the culture of the Chamorros, the indigenous people of the islands, are the latte stone, used in building, and the floral head wreath, or mwáár.

■ **Did you know?** The commonwealth was placed in a trusteeship with the United Nations in 1947, so it flew the U.N. flag. It entered a political union with the United States in 1978.



Puerto Rico

- **Year adopted:** 1952
- **Designed by:** Up for debate
- **What's on it:** Five alternating horizontal stripes, three red and two white; at the staff end is an isosceles triangle with a five-pointed white star in the center.
- **What it means:** The red stripes represent blood, and the white strips represent individual liberty and rights. The star represents the commonwealth, the blue represents the sky and the ocean, and the three sides of the triangle represent the three branches of the commonwealth government.
- **Did you know?** The design is based on the Cuban flag, with the red and blue colors inverted, but it might have been influenced by the flag of the "Grito de Lares," an uprising against Spanish rule on the island in 1868.



U.S. Virgin Islands

- **Year adopted:** 1921
- **Designed by:** Percival Wilson Spark
- **What's on it:** Centered on a white field is a modified U.S. coat of arms with a yellow eagle holding in its talons an olive branch and three arrows. A shield on the eagle's chest has seven red and six white vertical stripes below a blue panel; on either side of the eagle in blue are the islands' initials, "V" and "I."
- **What it means:** The white stands for purity, the olive branch for peace. The three arrows represent the territory's three major islands, St. Croix, St. Thomas and St. John.
- **Did you know?** When the islands were under Danish rule, from 1754 to 1917, the flag featured a blue background with the flag of Denmark in the canton.

Women Find Their Voice in the Legislature

Colorado was the first state to elect women to serve as legislators—three, in fact. The year was 1894, 275 years after the first legislature had convened in Jamestown, Va.

Since then, women in some statehouses have had to fight for restrooms of their own and adhere to dress codes in an institution where “suit and tie” had been sufficient guidance.

Perhaps the biggest question about women as lawmakers has been, what impact will they have on the laws? That first class in Colorado held some clues.

Rep. Clara Cressingham, who also served as secretary of the Republican Caucus—another first for a woman—died in 1906, at 42. An obituary in the *Silverton Standard* said, “Instead of wasting her energies to enter into sentimental legislation as had been anticipated by her male associates, she entered zealously into the promotion of practical affairs.” Cressingham advocated for free schools and a state arbitration system and, with fellow female Reps. Carrie Holly and Frances Klock, promoted a home for “delinquent” girls. Klock chaired the Indian and Military Affairs Committee—another first—and Holly served on the Temperance and Public Health and the Education committees. In 1895, Holly was the first woman to propose a bill that became law—a measure raising the age of consent for women from 16 to 18 in rape cases.

Did You Know?

- Many statehouses were built with no restrooms for women. Others had facilities for male lawmakers to use, but women had to go to public restrooms sometimes outside the building, even missing votes because of it. And this isn't ancient history. The



Cressingham



Illinois Senate installed a women's restroom in 1992; the House followed suit in 2011.

- A study by the National Women's Law Center found that in 2018 and '19, women legislators in states with more female representation introduced and passed more bills than those in states with smaller numbers of women. In fact, male legislators were also more productive in introducing and passing bills in statehouses with more women.



Hughes Cannon



- In 2019, women became the majority in the Nevada Statehouse and the U.S. territory of Guam (where women took up the term “ladieslature” in one proud announcement of the feat). Overall, women held 30.7% of seats in state legislatures nationwide in 2022, according to NCSL.

- In 1896, a Utah woman's lawfully wedded husband became her lawful opponent in a race for the state Senate. Martha Hughes Cannon, a Democrat, became the state's first female senator after she defeated her husband, a Republican.

- Jessie Doe and Mary Farnum of New Hampshire were elected in a rare feat—with write-in votes—in 1920, right after ratification of the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.

But New Hampshire officials said the amendment did not give women the right to hold office and refused to seat them. That led to a March 1921 referendum that showed majority support for elected women—but not the two-thirds needed in a referendum. Nevertheless, the Legislature did seat them.

- In 1975, Nancy Brataas was the second woman elected to the Minnesota Senate; the first was elected in 1927 to fill the seat held by her husband, who died that year, so Senate colleagues considered Brataas the first woman elected “in her own right.” One hitch: In 1975, there was no women's restroom in the chamber. Nor was there recognition of women in the dress code, so Brataas wore a scarf she could fashion as a necktie to gain access to the chamber floor, where neckties were required.

—Kelley Griffin

30.7%
of seats in state legislatures
nationwide were held by
women in 2022.

LEGISLATORS AND STAFF

NCSL'S **NEW PROGRAM** IS A
PERFECT PRELUDE TO YOUR 2023 SESSION

■ **Immerse** yourself in the latest policy research and developments and start session prepared and informed.

■ **Advance** your legislative skills and strengthen your ability to navigate and impact the legislative process.

■ **Interact** with other legislators in a personalized gathering intended to foster collaboration and network building.

JOIN US IN SAN DIEGO!

Dec. 3-5, 2022

[NCSL.org/Forecast23](https://ncsl.org/Forecast23)



NCSL FORECAST '23
PREPARING FOR LEGISLATIVE SESSIONS



Working hand-in-hand with our state leaders to build **strength in our communities.**

At Amazon, we strive to be **Earth's Best Employer**. We provide great pay, benefits, and opportunities for our employees – **all from day one.**

Along with an average **starting pay of \$18 per hour**, more than double the federal minimum wage, we offer **comprehensive healthcare**, up to 20 weeks of paid parental leave, 401(k) company matching, and free skills and career advancement training, including covering **full college tuition** for all frontline employees across the U.S. through our Career Choice program.



We're supporting small businesses to get them back to thriving

Small businesses are the heart of our communities. At Wells Fargo, we're working together with more than 3 million small businesses, helping to propel them to a brighter and more secure future.

With our Open For Business Fund, we're donating roughly \$420MM through nonprofits, to provide small businesses in cities across America with valuable capital and resources.

Learn more at wellsfargo.com/impact