



NATIONAL CONFERENCE of STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas

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TO: Dennis Prouty, Director, Legislative Fiscal Bureau

FROM: Rich Jones, NCSL

DATE: June 19, 2001

RE: Proposal to Conduct a Review of the Iowa Legislature and Its Staff Agencies

The National Conference of State Legislatures is pleased to submit two proposals that describe the approach, timeline and costs for the National Conference of State Legislatures to conduct a review of the Iowa Legislature and its staff agencies. These are submitted in response to the request from Representative Jenkins and Representative Millage.

One proposal entitled, A Review of the Iowa Legislature and Its Staff Agencies, describes a project that would assess the legislature's organization, committee system and the operation of its staff agencies. It is the broader of the two projects and would begin in July 2001 and conclude with a final report submitted in February 2002. If the General Assembly needs to have the report completed by December 2001, we can revise the schedule and budget to meet that deadline.

The other proposal entitled, A Review of the Iowa Legislative Staff Agencies, describes a project that would assess the organization, operation and legislator satisfaction with the products and services provided by the legislative staff agencies. This project contains two options. One option has the project beginning in July 2001 with a final report submitted in December 2001. The other option has the project beginning in July 2001 with a final report submitted in February 2002. The advantage of the second option is that it allows the NCSL study team to observe the staff agencies during the session thus providing a more complete picture of their operations. However, we feel that a complete report can be produced by the December deadline if that is what the General Assembly needs.

Brian Weberg who will lead the study team and I will attend the meeting of the Legislative Oversight and Legislative Fiscal Committees on Monday June 25, 2001. If you have any questions or need further information please call me at 303.830.2200 ext. 122. I can also be reached via email at rich.jones@ncsl.org

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NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

A REVIEW OF THE IOWA LEGISLATURE AND ITS STAFF AGENCIES

A STUDY PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE
IOWA LEGISLATURE

June 2001

A Review of the Iowa Legislature and its Staff Agencies

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The National Conference of State Legislatures submits this proposal to the Legislative Oversight Committee and the Legislative Fiscal Committee to conduct a review of the Iowa General Assembly and the operation of its legislative staff agencies. As proposed, this review has six goals:

1. To assess the committee structure used by the General Assembly and determine if the number and scope of the committees is appropriate, if the topics assigned to committees match the needs of Iowa and are properly aligned with Executive Branch functions.
2. To assess the quantity and quality of space available to the General Assembly and compare it to space available to other comparable legislatures.
3. To assess the extent to which the General Assembly is using electronic means to conduct its business such as making its meetings available to the public via public television and Internet broadcasts and how this compares with what other comparable legislatures are doing.
4. To assess the role of the Legislative Council to determine whether it provides effective governance for the General Assembly during the interim and whether the committees that report to it are appropriate.
5. To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislative staff agencies. This will include a review of the organizational structure, staffing levels, products and services and assigned workspace for each agency. Specific emphasis will be placed on distinguishing between the workload and the products and services provided during the session and the interim. In addition, the NCSL study team will identify those functions that could be privatized and those that should be performed by legislative employees. The staff agencies to be assessed include:

Legislative Service Bureau

Secretary of the Senate's Office

Legislative Fiscal Bureau

Clerk of the House's Office

Legislative Computer Support Bureau

Caucus Staff in each Chamber

Office of Citizens Aide/Ombudsman

6. To compare Iowa's legislative operations with legislatures in comparable states and assess the progress the Iowa General Assembly is making in using information technology to conduct its business and communicate with the public.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) has considerable experience and expertise in evaluating the operations of legislative staff agencies. NCSL has conducted similar reviews of the

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Arkansas General Assembly and the Kansas Legislature. In addition, NCSL has conducted reviews of legislative staff operations in ten states including performance reviews of staff operations in Arizona, Delaware, Michigan and Wisconsin. The NCSL staff assigned to this project have experience in working with state legislatures and are knowledgeable about legislative processes and the operation of staff agencies within state legislatures. NCSL proposes to supplement the expertise of its staff by using a review group comprised of current and/or former legislative staff to provide feedback on the information and recommendations developed by the NCSL project team. During the course of the project, the NCSL study team will submit interim reports to the Legislative Oversight Committee and Legislative Fiscal Committee or other committees designated by the General Assembly to keep them abreast of the status of the review and its preliminary findings.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND TIMELINE

The General Assembly has expressed the desire to have the report completed before the start of the 2002 legislative session. However, given the scope of the project and the value of observing the General Assembly in session, the NCSL study team recommends that the timeline for this project be extended to February. Under this scenario the NCSL study team will observe the General Assembly in January and submit the final report on the project in February. If it is necessary to present a final report to the General Assembly in December, the NCSL study team could revise the proposed timeline and budget to meet that deadline.

JULY

1. Gather and assess background information on the Iowa General Assembly and its various staff agencies. This will include reviewing the constitution, state statutes, rules of procedure, court decisions and other directives that establish the duties, functions, organization and processes of the General Assembly and its staff agencies. In addition, the NCSL study team will gather examples of the products and services produced, annual reports, policy manuals, budgets and other documents that describe the organization and operation of the General Assembly and its staff agencies.
2. Interview members of the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee, Legislative Council, legislative leaders and senior staffers within each of the staff agencies to identify key issues to be addressed during the review and to gather additional information on the General Assembly.

AUGUST

1. Most work on the project will be suspended so that members of the NCSL study team can prepare, attend and staff the NCSL Annual Meeting. It is possible that some members and staff of the Iowa General Assembly could be interviewed at the Annual Meeting.
2. Based on the information gathered at this stage the NCSL study team will review and, if necessary, revise the scope of the project. The first interim report will be sent to the Legislative Oversight Committee and Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees outlining the scope of the project and the activities to be undertaken by the NCSL project team.

REVIEW OF THE IOWA LEGISLATURE

SEPTEMBER

1. Interview a cross section of legislators to gather information on the organization and operation of the General Assembly, its committees and their satisfaction with the products and services provided by the staff agencies.
2. Interview a cross section of staff within each of the staff agencies to gather information on the organization and operations of each agency including issues such as workload, internal management and products and services provided during the session and the interim.
3. Develop and distribute a written questionnaire that will be sent to all legislators. The questionnaire will gather information on their satisfaction with and use of the products and services produced by each of the staff agencies and solicit their opinions on the operation of General Assembly's committees including the Legislative Council. The questionnaires will also solicit information about other aspects of the legislature's organization and operation.
4. Develop and distribute a written questionnaire that will be sent to all staff within the General Assembly to gather information on the organization and operation of the General Assembly and each staff agency.
5. Begin to gather data on legislative operations in comparable states.

OCTOBER

1. Follow-up on the written surveys to increase the response rate.
2. Compile and analyze the results of the written surveys.
3. Conduct follow-up interviews with legislators, legislative staff, other state officials and other legislative observers as needed based on issues identified in previous interviews, on the written surveys or through the course of research on the project.
4. Submit the second interim report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees that summarizes the work completed to date and outlines the NCSL study team's preliminary findings.

NOVEMBER

1. Complete the research on issues raised during the interviews with legislators, legislative staff, other state officials and other legislative observers
2. Convene a meeting of the group of outside reviewers to assess the information gathered to date and to provide feedback and guidance to the NCSL study team.
3. Complete the research and data gathering activities on comparable legislatures in other states.

DECEMBER

1. Submit the third interim report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees that describes the results of the review group meeting and presents the NCSL study team's findings.
2. Prepare for a site visit to observe the legislative session.

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JANUARY

1. The NCSL study team will observe the General Assembly and the legislative staff agencies during the legislative session.
2. Based on comments, feedback and its observation, the NCSL study team will prepare a draft final report.

FEBRUARY

1. Submit the draft of the final report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees. Drafts will also be sent to the directors of each staff agency and members of the outside review group for their review and comment.
2. Based on comments and feedback, the NCSL study team will prepare the final report on the project and submit it to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees.
3. Make a formal presentation of the report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees.

PROJECT STAFF

NCSL proposes to assign seven staff to this project:

Brian Weberg, director of NCSL's Legislative Management Program will serve as the project leader. He is an 19-year veteran at NCSL and has worked with numerous state legislatures on projects designed to improve their effectiveness. Brian has led projects that assessed the operation of staff agencies in Arizona, the District of Columbia, Michigan, Wisconsin and Wyoming. He also participated in the assessment of the Arkansas General Assembly and led a study of the operations of the Arkansas Senate. He also has consulted on parliamentary improvement projects in several African nations and in Costa Rica. Brian specializes in the areas of legislative organization, management, communication and staffing.

Jeff Dale is policy specialist in NCSL's Fiscal Affairs Program. He is the NCSL staff liaison to the Iowa General Assembly and handles a variety of fiscal issues for NCSL.

Corina Eckl is the director of NCSL's Fiscal Affairs Program. She has considerable knowledge of the organization, duties and operation of legislative fiscal agencies throughout the United States. She led a project assessing legislative staff agencies in North Carolina and participated in studies of staff agencies in Louisiana, Maryland and Tennessee.

Brenda Erickson is a program principal in NCSL's Legislative Management Program. She specializes in the areas of rules and procedures, committee systems and legislative record keeping and documentation. Brenda supports the work of the Mason's Manual Revision Commission, a team of state legislative chief clerks and secretaries who are reviewing and revising Mason's Manual, the basic rules reference manual used by most state legislatures. Brenda also worked on the assessment of the Arkansas General Assembly, a study of legislative procedures in Virginia and studies of staff agencies in

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Arizona, the District of Columbia, Michigan and Tennessee. Before joining NCSL, Brenda worked for the Minnesota State Legislature.

Bruce Feustel, senior fellow in NCSL's Legislative Management Program has over 20 years experience as a bill drafter and manager in Wisconsin's Legislative Reference Bureau. He has worked on reviews of legislative staff agencies in Arizona, Arkansas, the District of Columbia, and Ohio as well as an audit of the Kansas Legislature. He has taught legislative drafting at NCSL's Skills Development and Senior Bill Drafting Seminars, and for foreign governments under NCSL's international program. Bruce has considerable expertise on legislative drafting, legislative staffing issues and ethics. He has written extensively and has made numerous presentations on these topics.

Pam Greenberg, program principal in NCSL's Legislative Information Services Program is NCSL's expert on legislatures' use of information technology. She staffs the National Legislative Information Technology staff section which is an association of legislative computer staff and has written several publications describing and analyzing trends in legislative information technology. She worked on the assessment of the Arkansas General Assembly and worked on a needs assessment of the information systems in Macedonia as part of NCSL's International Program.

Kae Warnock is a research analyst in NCSL's Legislative Management Program. She handles a variety of issues relating to capitol buildings, space use by legislatures and capitol restoration. Kae also is the staff liaison to the National Legislative Services and Security Association.

In addition to the NCSL staff assigned to the project NCSL proposes to use a review group composed of current and/or former legislative staff to provide feedback and guidance to the NCSL project team as it conducts this review.

PROJECT BUDGET

NCSL requests that state legislatures pay part of the costs for conducting significant technical assistance projects such as the one described in this proposal. The total cost to the Iowa General Assembly is \$79,247. NCSL will contribute \$50,751 in in-kind support. The attached spreadsheet provides detailed information on the costs associated with conducting this project.

**Proposed Budget for A Review of the Iowa Legislature
and its Staff Agencies With Session Observation**

	NCSL	Iowa	Total
Staff Costs			
NCSL staff salaries (5 staff for 8 months at at 25 percent time)	\$27,445	\$27,445	\$54,890
(2 staff for 8 months at 10 percent time)	\$4,476	\$4,476	\$8,951
NCSL staff benefits at 30% of staff salaries	\$9,576	\$9,576	\$19,152
Subtotal	\$41,497	\$41,497	\$82,993
Staff Travel Costs			
Five site visits	\$0	\$37,750	\$37,750
Subtotal	\$0	\$37,750	\$37,750
Review Group Travel Costs			
Review Group Meeting (4 member review group)	\$0	\$2,520	\$2,520
Subtotal	\$0	\$2,520	\$2,520
Miscellaneous costs			
Supplies	\$250		
Printing	\$100		
Photocopy	\$175		
Freight	\$50		
Telephone	\$380		
Rent (10% of Salaries)	\$8,299		
Subtotal	\$9,254	\$0	\$9,254
Total costs	\$50,751	\$79,247	\$129,998

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A REVIEW OF THE IOWA LEGISLATIVE STAFF AGENCIES

A STUDY PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE
IOWA LEGISLATURE

June 2001

A Review of the Iowa Legislative Staff Agencies

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The National Conference of State Legislatures submits this proposal to the Legislative Oversight Committee and the Legislative Fiscal Committee to conduct a review of the organization and operation of the Iowa legislative staff agencies. As proposed, this review has four goals:

1. To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislative staff agencies. This will include a review of the organizational structure, staffing levels, products and services and assigned workspace for each agency. Specific emphasis will be placed on distinguishing between the workload and the products and services provided during the session and the interim. The staff agencies to be assessed include:

Legislative Service Bureau	Secretary of the Senate's Office
Legislative Fiscal Bureau	Clerk of the House's Office
Legislative Computer Support Bureau	Caucus Staff in each Chamber
Office of Citizens Aide/Ombudsman	
2. To assess legislative satisfaction with the products and services provided by its staff agencies.
3. To identify those staff functions that could be privatized and those that should be performed by legislative employees.
4. To compare Iowa legislative staff agencies with those found in comparable states.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) has considerable experience and expertise in evaluating the operations of legislative staff agencies. NCSL has conducted similar reviews of the Arkansas General Assembly and the Kansas Legislature. In addition, NCSL has conducted reviews of legislative staff operations in ten states including performance reviews of staff operations in Arizona, Delaware, Michigan and Wisconsin. The NCSL staff assigned to this project have experience in working with state legislatures and are knowledgeable about legislative processes and the operation of staff agencies within state legislatures. NCSL proposes to supplement the expertise of its staff by using a review group comprised of current and/or former legislative staff to provide feedback on the information and recommendations developed by the NCSL project team. During the course of the project, the NCSL study team will submit interim reports to the Legislative Oversight Committee and Legislative Fiscal Committee or other committees designated by the General Assembly to keep them abreast of the status of the review and its preliminary findings.

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PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND TIMELINE

The proposed timeline is based on the desire to have the report completed before the start of the 2002 legislative session. However, it may be advantageous for the NCSL study team to observe the legislative staff agencies during the legislative session. If requested to do so, the NCSL study team will observe the General Assembly in January and submit the final report on the project in February.

JULY

1. Gather and assess background information on the Iowa General Assembly and its various staff agencies. This will include reviewing the constitution, state statutes, rules of procedure, court decisions and other directives that establish the duties, functions, organization and processes of the staff agencies. In addition, the NCSL study team will gather examples of the products and services produced, annual reports, policy manuals, budgets and other documents that describe the organization and operation of the staff agencies.
2. Interview members of the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee, Legislative Council, legislative leaders and senior staffers within each of the staff agencies to identify key issues to be addressed during the review and to gather additional information on the legislative staff agencies.

AUGUST

1. Most work on the project will be suspended so that members of the NCSL study team can prepare, attend and staff the NCSL Annual Meeting. It is possible that some members and staff of the Iowa General Assembly could be interviewed at the Annual Meeting.
2. Based on the information gathered at this stage the NCSL study team will review and, if necessary, revise the scope of the project. The first interim report will be sent to the Legislative Oversight Committee and Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees outlining the scope of the project and the activities to be undertaken by the NCSL project team.

SEPTEMBER

1. Interview a cross section of legislators to gather information on the organization and operation of the staff agencies and their satisfaction with the products and services provided by the staff agencies.
2. Interview a cross section of staff within each of the staff agencies to gather information on the organization and operations of each agency including issues such as workload, internal management and products and services provided during the session and the interim.
3. Develop and distribute a written questionnaire that will be sent to all legislators. The questionnaire will gather information on their satisfaction with and use of the products and services produced by each of the staff agencies.
4. Develop and distribute a written questionnaire that will be sent to all staff within the General Assembly to gather information on the organization, operation and work performed by each staff agency.

REVIEW OF THE IOWA LEGISLATIVE STAFF AGENCIES

5. Begin to gather data on legislative staff agencies in comparable states.

OCTOBER

1. Follow-up on the written surveys to increase the response rate.
2. Compile and analyze the results of the written surveys.
3. Conduct follow-up interviews with legislators, legislative staff, other state officials and other legislative observers as needed based on issues identified in previous interviews, on the written surveys or through the course of research on the project.
4. Submit the second interim report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committee that summarizes the work completed to date and outlines the NCSL study team's preliminary findings.

NOVEMBER

1. Complete the research on issues raised during the interviews with legislators, legislative staff, other state officials and other legislative observers
2. Convene a meeting of the group of outside reviewers to assess the information gathered to date and to provide feedback and guidance to the NCSL study team.
3. Complete the research and data gathering activities on staff agencies in comparable legislatures.
4. Write a draft of the final report.
5. Submit the draft of the final report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees. Drafts will also be sent to the directors of each staff agency and members of the outside review group for their review and comment.
6. If the NCSL study team is requested to observe the 2002 legislative session, it will use the time in November to write the third interim report describing its activities to date and its findings.

DECEMBER

1. Based on the comments and feedback prepare a final report.
2. Submit the final report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee, other designated committees or legislators.
3. Make a formal presentation of the report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees.
4. If the NCSL study team is requested to observe the 2002 legislative session, it will use the time in December to prepare for a site visit in January.

JANUARY (OPTIONAL)

1. The NCSL study team will observe the General Assembly and the legislative staff agencies during the legislative session.

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2. Based on comments, feedback and its observation, the NCSL study team will prepare a final report.

FEBRUARY (OPTIONAL)

1. Submit the draft of the final report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees. Drafts will also be sent to the directors of each staff agency and members of the outside review group for their review and comment.
2. Based on comments and feedback, the NCSL study team will prepare the final report on the project and submit it to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees.
3. Make a formal presentation of the report to the Legislative Oversight Committee, Legislative Fiscal Committee or other designated committees.

PROJECT STAFF

NCSL proposes to assign six staff to this project:

Brian Weberg, director of NCSL's Legislative Management Program will serve as the project leader. He is an 19-year veteran at NCSL and has worked with numerous state legislatures on projects designed to improve their effectiveness. He served as project leader on projects that assessed the operation of staff agencies in Arizona, the District of Columbia, Michigan, Wisconsin and Wyoming. He also participated in the assessment of the Arkansas General Assembly and led a study of the operations of the Arkansas Senate. He also has consulted on parliamentary improvement projects in several African nations and in Costa Rica. Brian specializes in the areas of legislative organization, management, communication and staffing.

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Bruce Feustel, senior fellow in NCSL's Legislative Management Program has over 20 years experience as a bill drafter and manager in Wisconsin's Legislative Reference Bureau. He has worked

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on reviews of legislative staff agencies in Arizona, Arkansas, the District of Columbia, and Ohio as well as an audit of the Kansas Legislature. He has taught legislative drafting at NCSL's Skills Development and Senior Bill Drafting Seminars, and for foreign governments under NCSL's international program. Bruce has considerable expertise on legislative drafting, legislative staffing issues and ethics. He has written extensively and has made numerous presentations on these topics.

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In addition to the NCSL staff assigned to the project NCSL proposes to use a review group composed of current and/or former legislative staff to provide feedback and guidance to the NCSL project team as it conducts this review.

PROJECT BUDGET

NCSL requests that state legislatures pay part of the costs for conducting significant technical assistance projects such as the one described in this proposal. The total cost to the Iowa General Assembly is \$52,384. NCSL will contribute \$29,963 in in-kind support. The attached spreadsheet provides detailed information on the costs associated with conducting this project.

The NCSL study team could observe the staff agencies during the legislative session and produce a final report in February 2002. The additional cost of extending the project to include these activities is \$15,018 for a total cost to Iowa of \$67,402. Under this scenario NCSL will contribute \$39,826 in in-kind support. The attached spreadsheet provides detailed information on the costs associated with extending this project to February.

**Proposed Budget for A Review of the Iowa Legislative
Staff Agencies**

	NCSL	Iowa	Total
Staff Costs			
NCSL staff salaries (5 staff for 6 months at at 20 percent time)	\$16,385	\$16,385	\$32,770
(1 staff for 6 months at 10 percent time)	\$2,210	\$2,210	\$4,420
NCSL staff benefits at 30% of staff salaries	\$5,579	\$5,579	\$11,157
Subtotal	\$24,174	\$24,174	\$48,347
Staff Travel Costs			
Four site visits	\$0	\$28,210	\$28,210
Subtotal	\$0	\$28,210	\$28,210
Review Group Travel Costs			
Review Group Meeting (4 member review group)	\$0	\$2,520	\$2,520
Subtotal	\$0	\$2,520	\$2,520
Miscellaneous costs			
Supplies	\$250		
Printing	\$100		
Photocopy	\$175		
Freight	\$50		
Telephone	\$380		
Rent (10% of Salaries)	\$4,835		
Subtotal	\$5,790	\$0	\$5,790
Total costs	\$29,963	\$52,384	\$82,347

**Proposed Budget for A Review of the Iowa Legislative
Staff Agencies with Session Observation**

	NCSL	Iowa	Total
Staff Costs			
NCSL staff salaries (5 staff for 8 months at at 20 percent time)	\$21,956	\$21,956	\$43,912
(1 staff for 8 months at 10 percent time)	\$2,961	\$2,961	\$5,923
NCSL staff benefits at 30% of staff salaries	\$7,475	\$7,475	\$14,950
Subtotal	\$32,392	\$32,392	\$64,785
Staff Travel Costs			
Five site visits	\$0	\$35,010	\$35,010
Subtotal	\$0	\$35,010	\$35,010
Review Group Travel Costs			
Review Group Meeting (4 member review group)	\$0	\$2,520	\$2,520
Subtotal	\$0	\$2,520	\$2,520
Miscellaneous costs			
Supplies	\$250		
Printing	\$100		
Photocopy	\$175		
Freight	\$50		
Telephone	\$380		
Rent (10% of Salaries)	\$6,478		
Subtotal	\$7,433	\$0	\$7,433
Total costs	\$39,826	\$67,402	\$107,228