

Progress Report on Legislative Council Strategic Planning Initiatives

Prepared for the Legislative Council

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1. Initiative: To develop inter-divisional staff teams (related to Interim Committee Improvement) - The Council discussed the need to identify inter-divisional staff policy teams to better provide policy and fiscal support to legislators. These teams would support the administrative and interim committees during the interim and standing committees and subcommittees during the session.

Ideas include providing examples of how current staff have worked together, researching other states for potential models, reorganizing the staff guide to provide information by policy area and related staff and other resources, and providing a process to maximize bringing each division's expertise to legislators and legislative committees.

Progress and time line: This topic will be on the March agenda. Prior to that time, the Executive Director will meet with the Legislative Fiscal Analyst and the Legislative Auditor, will conduct a meeting of the managers in the three divisions and develop a draft proposal for the Council to consider and develop in March. Attorneys, research analysts, fiscal analysts, and audit managers will be involved in the development of the proposals.

2. Initiative: To provide Leadership and Legislator training before and during session. The Council discussed the need to provide more training to newly-elected legislative leadership post election.

Ideas: Some of the ideas discussed were a leadership transition meeting between former leaders and newly-elected leaders, improving the leadership notebook, providing specific training on developing communication skills, conflict resolution, leadership, negotiation, and positive partisanship. Topics related to bills include assignment of bills, priority of bills, and bill flow.

The Council also discussed the need to improve legislator training and to build relationships between legislators and staff. Some of the ideas for this include assigning caucus and staff mentors to legislators in small groups, providing training and other opportunities to bring permanent and session staff together, providing new, different, more legislator training during caucus week and early in session, using standing committees for training in early session, providing specific training in web tools and the paperless legislature options, improve the law school for legislators, provide lunch and dinner opportunities, and surveying all legislators at the end of session.

Progress and time line: This topic will be on the March agenda. Prior to that time staff will find training resources for legislators to consider. Staff will provide copies of the leadership notebook to the leaders on the Council for review and suggestions for improvement to present to Council in March. The Council will discuss and tentatively adopt caucus, training, and social

schedules and provide ideas for additional training. Staff will develop the training resources for the Council to review at the June meeting. Staff legislator orientation committee will have had its first meeting.

3. Initiative: To review and improve Legislative Rules. The Council discussed improving the rules and creating tools for easier reference.

Ideas include creating searchable rules, linking to the vote system, cross referencing or reorganizing rules for ease of use, creating a working manual for the floor process, improving the confirmation process in Senate rules, and exploring options to institutionalize rules knowledge in staff, legislators, i.e. parliamentarian.

Progress and time line: The Council appointed a Rules Subcommittee that will meet at the December meeting for the first time. Proposed changes to rules are expected to be presented at the June meeting.

Rules Subcommittee members: Sen. Story, Sen. Williams, Rep. Phillips, and Rep. Himmelberger.

4. Initiative: Interim Committee Improvement and Interim Training for Legislators - The Council discussed ways to better utilize interim committees, to expand opportunities for more legislators to attend, to bring legislators together during the interims outside of committee meetings for training and for informal time to develop better working relationships.

Ideas include adding nonvoting members to interim committees, reimbursing a certain number of meetings for nonmembers to be able to attend interim meetings, using standing committees to compose interim committees memberships. Committee membership changes may require changes in statutes, voting, numbers, compensation. There was a suggestion that we consider going to specified legislative days each or every other month for committees to meet, including training or issue seminars to be scheduled, and holding mini-caucuses and social events. Training topics include: nuts and bolts, budgeting, communication skills, conflict management; general topical and educational leadership development, bringing in NCSL, covering broad topics and emerging issues (health care), basics of leadership, theories; using on-line courses, regular seminars like Wheeler Center; encouraging leadership promotion within caucuses; and provide continuing education. Social events could include committee dinners at the beginning of an interim and during the interim week.

Areas to research and find solutions: statutory prohibition, membership needs to include app. subcommittee members. Need to relate to interdisciplinary staff teams. Council should consider committee membership chairmanship rotation statutory change.

Progress and time line: This will also be an agenda item in March. Staff will find training resources for legislators to consider. Staff will also develop cost estimates for the various ideas on membership and reimbursement that have been proposed to elicit more ideas and direction.

5. Initiative: To review Legislative space in the Capitol Building. The Council discussed concerns regarding legislator and staff space in terms of quality, quantity, current and future needs, legislative control, and related tenancy concerns.

Ideas included: understanding statutory authority and reviewing need for changes and potential oversight, learning more about the state's process and the Capitol Complex Master Plan, and reviewing the Legislature's long-term needs and those of the Governor and Secretary of State.

Progress and time line: This is a December meeting agenda item. A presentation by the Department of Administration will provide background and history on authority in law, Capitol Complex Master Planning Process, space needs in Helena, Capitol restoration, and options. Staff will provide information on legislative authority, staff space, and tenancy issues. Roundtable discussion with Secretary of the Senate, Chief Clerk of the House, and the Sergeants-at-Arms. The Council can provide direction and the Legislative Space Subcommittee will decide its next steps.

Legislative Space Subcommittee Members: Sen. Wanzenried, Sen. Brueggeman, Rep. McGillvray, and Rep. Phillips.

6. Legislative Council Management and Succession Planning Subcommittee Members: Rep. Bergren, Rep. O'Hara, Sen. Essmann, and Sen. Laslovich.

Progress and time line: This subcommittee will meet at the December meeting to discuss succession planning and review potential staff retirements.

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