

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

MONDAY, 13 OCTOBER 2014

### **ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Speaker:

**FEED-BACK REPORT ON THE ATTENDANCE OF THE NATIONAL  
CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES (NCSL) LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT, 18  
to 22 AUGUST 2014.**

### **ATTENDEES**

Speaker Sharna Fernandez and Deputy Speaker Piet Pretorius, accompanied by Tshepiso Nage, Chief Parliamentary Officer, attended the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Legislative Summit in Minnesota, USA. The conference was held at the Minneapolis Convention Centre from 18 to 22 August 2014, drawing attendants and participants from all 52 US states comprising both legislators and legislative staff.

As has been the case in the past, the conference also drew attendants from all over the world, comprising a total of 250 international delegates from countries such as Algeria, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, People's Republic of China, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Portugal, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey and Uganda.

Altogether more than 5000 delegates attended, with the South African delegation among the largest of the international groups. South African delegates from the following provincial legislatures were in attendance: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape.

## **THEME AND PROGRAMME**

The theme of the summit was “CONNECT, DISCOVER, GROW”, and over the 5 days of the actual conference duration, a large number of topics and issues were presented and discussed by delegates. A dedicated programme for international attendees was also developed which provided international delegates with an opportunity to be engaged in customized activities and networking parallel to the main conference programme. Amongst many, these are some of the topics from the main conference programme:

### **1. Education Reform and Oversight Mechanisms**

Participants heard from experts and explored in small group discussions the substantive issues of education reform and the institutional oversight mechanisms within a legislature.

### **2. Women’s Legislative Network Training**

Participants were provided an opportunity to hear from female legislative leaders about their experiences moving up the ladder, and participated in workshops on negotiation and staying true to their individual vision for public service, and were able to network with other women.

### **3. A New Education Revolution (General Session)**

All conference delegates gathered to hear Sir Ken Robinson, international education leader, on creativity, education and the economy. He presented ideas on how to revolutionize - not just reform – education, and to challenge conventional wisdom and inspire a whole new approach to the education system.

### **4. Drafting Durable Constitutional Amendments**

Participants learned about drafting differences between statutory drafting and drafting constitutional amendments, and some legal issues that arise with drafting constitutional amendments -- and tips for avoiding the pitfalls.

### **5. Recruiting and Retaining Tech Talent**

With the growing use and importance of technology in legislatures, this session explored the crucial role of technology staffs in providing efficient and effective operations and services. Panel members shared their experiences in recruiting technology workers with high-level IT skills and the challenges of retention in legislatures, where knowledge of the legislative process and complex procedures is crucial.

### **6. Building a Brand for Legislative Staff**

Participants received presentations from some of the legislative staff that have sought to create a brand identity for their products and services, as is the case with commercial products. Various approaches and experiences were shared on how legislative staff and agencies built brand identities to explain their services and value to legislators and the legislative institution.

## **7. What We Need and Value from Staff**

Faced with ever evolving and changing demands of legislatures, politics and technology, staff services need to also evolve with the times. In this roundtable discussion, legislators gave insights into what they most need and value from the legislative staff.

## **8. Leadership Staff Roundtable**

An interactive roundtable discussion on the role experiences of staff working for leadership legislators in Minnesota, and how these experiences compare with those from other states.

## **9. Reviewing State Employee Compensation Systems**

In this session, participants were exposed to best practice methodologies and approaches to conducting studies of state employee compensation structures and how employee compensation is factored into the budget process.

## **10. State Budget Systems and Software Roundtable**

The session focussed on various state budget systems and software applications, including recent changes and areas for improvement.

## **11. Border-to-Border Broadband: Making Access to High Speed Internet a priority in Minnesota**

Participants were exposed to Minnesota's broadband development efforts, including legislative and policy initiatives to accelerate achieving these goals.

## **12. Ethics Roundtable for Legislative Staff**

In most Legislatures the good work done often goes unreported but the bad stuff is likely to be captured in big headlines. In this session, participants learned about the importance and the nuances of right and wrong in the everyday operation of legislatures. Experiences were shared about common and current ethical dilemmas for legislative staff and how to maintain high ethical standards.

## **13. Protecting the Legislature as an Institution**

Part of legislature legal staff's responsibility is to protect the legislature from intrusion by the executive or the judiciary, and help legislators avoid giving up legislative power, intentionally or unintentionally. In this session, experiences were shared on what legislative attorneys (legal advisers) should do to protect the institution while recognizing the political realities. The concept of separation of powers, particularly as entrenched in state constitutions, was considered to be at risk when the legislature gives the executive more power because it trusts the "current" administration.

#### **14. Ending Human Trafficking (General Session)**

All conference delegates gathered to hear the accounts of two leading figures in the fight against human trafficking, especially as it presents itself in the United States where it is considered to be responsible for the exploitation of tens of thousands of children and vulnerable victims each year. Two women, U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar and humanitarian Cindy McCain, are working with Congress, the various states and through private initiatives to bring national focus on trafficking, ensure that victims are not treated as criminals and to develop policies to end it.

#### **15. The Presidential Commission on Election Administration: Three Legislative Take-Aways**

Attendants received a presentation on the report of the US Presidential Commission on Election Administration, released just a few months ago. Of its many recommendations, three are aimed squarely at state lawmakers. In this session, participants heard about what the commission had to say about early voting, voting technology and voter registration modernization, and got to hear the real-world perspectives from lawmakers and election officials experienced in each area.

#### **16. The Changing Communications Landscape**

Participants learned about new technologies and the transition to Internet based communications and the potential impact on consumers, public safety, and regulatory frameworks.

#### **17. Managing Legislative Staff: Best Practices**

Participants were exposed to the diverse staff management practices in many State legislatures. They heard about performance management innovations in state legislatures and discussed common performance challenges faced by both staff and institutions today.

#### **18. Infrastructure Intersections: Transportation's Impact on the Whole Economy**

In the US, the transportation infrastructure system is increasingly converging with the other sectors of the economy including energy, agriculture and the environment. In this session, participants heard how a well-functioning transportation infrastructure system impacts these intersecting issues including energy exports, agricultural product shipments, vehicle emissions and more.

#### **19. Continuous Improvement: Enhancing Government Performance in Minnesota**

The State of Minnesota has dramatically improved efficiency and delivered exceptional savings through its Continuous Improvement program. Minnesota is recognized as a leader for these efforts that create a culture of efficiency. Participants were presented with and got to examine elements of the program and learn how other states are following Minnesota in "running lean."

## **20. Polls, Politics and What Americans Really Think (General Session)**

All conference delegates gathered to hear Neil Newhouse and Geoffrey Garin, two of the most respected political pollsters in the US. Their different political allegiances made for a lively discourse of what Americans think about their country, which party is likely to win in the upcoming election, and what that will mean for the nation.

## **21. Becoming a Transformational Legislative Leader**

Becoming an effective legislative leader takes hard work, lots of thought, great colleagues and a dash of luck. Participants heard from some current legislative leaders about how they made it to the top and what it takes to be extraordinary.

## **22. The Ethical Challenges of Dark Money**

The term "dark money" is increasingly used to describe campaign funds that come from unknown sources. In the US, states have attempted to crystallize ethical values of transparency and openness into law through disclosure and reporting requirements. In the light of recent campaign finance rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, this session explored what options exist for states to retain and strengthen disclosure laws? What are the ethical challenges presented by dark money? What impact do independent expenditures have on the outcome of state elections?

## **22. Reviewing Program Implementation and Forecasting Costs**

This session explore how states were reviewing the implementation of Affordable Care Act (OBAMA Care), including health benefit exchanges, and the impact on forecasting future costs. Presentations were made on the latest information on how fiscal and program evaluation offices are examining Medicaid.

## **SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS**

The conference drew most of the speakers and presenters from amongst the current and previous leading legislators and legislative staff.

## **NETWORKING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**

The conference provided a range of opportunities and platforms for delegates to network and establish relationships across all kinds of divides around the world. The following platforms can be noted:

### **International Roundtable Discussions**

International delegates engaged in small group discussions with U.S. state legislators and legislative staff on education and institutional issues of concern. It was also possible for to network and exchange ideas by connecting with counterparts from around the world to gather diverse perspectives and solutions to common issues.

### NCSL –International Women’s Network

One aspect of the program which I enjoyed was the round tables hosted by senior Politicians in the USA. I forged relationships with women from all spheres of Government across the USA and the world. I had the pleasure of meeting the Speaker of the New Hampshire House of Representatives in the United States, and immediate past president of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), the Hon Terie Norelli, as well as Ms Kathy Brennan-Wiggins, Director of International Programmes at the NCSL.

I was interviewed by VoteRunLead in collaboration with the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota for an advertorial video clip in their campaign to recruit women to Parliament.

I have also been invited by Pearl Calahasen MLA for the Lesser Slave Lake Constituency, Canada to visit the Canadian parliament to better understand how they operate and to implement “best practices” where appropriate.

I am currently engaging with the Washington Office of Public Policy regarding an exchange program which is co-ordinated by the United Methodist Women to host a South African Delegation.

### **VISITORS’ AND SOCIAL PROGRAMME**

Alongside the main content programme, all visitors to the city of Minneapolis were treated to full social programme to experience the sights, sounds and delicacies offered by the city. One that stands out was the St Paul City Tour – visiting landmarks such as the State Capitol, the Minnesota History Centre, and the Cathedral of St Paul – ending with a scenic Riverboat Cruise along the Mississippi River.

### **CONCLUSION**

The 2014 Legislative Summit has proven an invaluable learning experience on a range of different topics and issues which the South African delegation in attendance will hopefully bring to bear on the efforts and endeavours of the legislative sector in South Africa, under the leadership of the Speakers Forum and the Legislative Sector Support. The experience also highlighted the importance of Legislative administration support to members in a more focussed way. As a learning institution that prides itself on best practices, I would recommend that the Provincial Parliament continue nurturing the relationship with the NCSL, and use the legislative summits as a platform for such learning. The next legislative summit will be held from 3 to 6 August 2015 in Seattle, USA.