

PARLIAMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF THE WESTERN CAPE

ANNOUNCEMENTS, TABLINGS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

WEDNESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2015

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Speaker:

- 1. FEEDBACK REPORT ON THE ATTENDANCE OF THE 2015 LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES (NCSL), 2 TO 6 AUGUST 2015**

ATTENDEES

The Speaker, Sharna Fernandez, accompanied by James Retief, Manager: Communication and Information, attended the 2015 Legislative Summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures in Seattle, USA. The conference was held in the Washington State Convention Centre from 2 to 6 August 2015 and attracted approximately 5 500 legislators and legislative staff from the 52 US states.

A contingent of approximately 300 international attendees also attended the summit, representing subnational legislatures from countries including, but not limited to, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, Turkey and Uganda.

The South African delegation was the second largest after Kenya (60 attendees) with 41 attendees representing all nine provinces. Gauteng had the largest delegation with 10 attendees. The Western Cape was represented by the smallest delegation.

THEME AND PROGRAMME

The theme of this year's summit was "Strong States, Strong Nation". This theme was reflected in the many sessions making up the main conference as well as some of those that formed part of the international attendees programme. The sessions included:

1. **Managing your online image: social media platforms in the legislatures**
Following a briefing on social media and online platform techniques, attendees were encouraged to explore the challenges, obstacles, value and strengths of social media platforms in individual legislators and in legislative institutions.
2. **Trade and infrastructure**
A panel discussion, led by the President of the Seattle Trade Development Alliance, considered the role of trade and infrastructure in Washington State, a major US port, and Western Australia.
3. **Data visualisation**
This session heard from two US states experimenting with data visualisation tools as a way to bring information, particularly financial data, to life for legislators and the public.
4. **Better approaches to the mentally ill in the criminal justice system**
This session explored the issue of the exacerbation of the health needs of people with mental illness who come into contact with the criminal justice system – addressing their particular health needs and equipping personnel to manage and respond to these needs in an appropriate manner.
5. **Seattle port**
The Seattle Port Authority, a publicly elected body, hosted a select group of international and US delegates on a tour of the Seattle port. The presentation focused on the effect that the complex relationships between the various levels of government have on the operations of the port, as well as on relations with other ports and the impact thereof on trade in the state and region.
6. **Visit to Washington State Capitol**
International delegates were transported to the city of Olympia, approximately 100 km from Seattle, to visit the State Capitol. This bicameral legislature consists of a House of Representatives with 98 Members, and a Senate with 49 Members representing the 49 legislative districts in the state. Washington was the 42nd territory to become a US state.
7. **Marketing the citizen legislator**
This session dealt with the fact that, due to the constant communications cycle, legislators need to get their messages out using both traditional and new media platforms. Marketing professionals presented the latest and best communication strategies and tools for effective outreach and promotion and advised legislators on the best way to build their brands and maintain exposure.
8. **The future of everything**
Three futurists lead this session providing a glimpse into the future – what's in store for people, jobs and commerce – how to take advantage of where society is headed by being innovative and nimble with new technology, what the jobs of the future are and what this means for legislators and their constituents.
9. **The power of stories**
This session provided attendees with the insight to be able to identify and craft messages in a manner to ensure they stick and achieve the required results, realising the value and human connection of stories on communication.
10. **Corrections reflections: a conversation with Piper Kerman**
Author of the best-selling book *Orange is the New Black*, Piper Kerman, shared her experience as a convicted drug offender and her ideas about rehabilitation, re-entry services and other corrections and sentencing policies.
11. **Beating the odds: tapping brain potential**
Scientific and economic research indicates that directing funds into the health and education of very young children can solve some of a society and economy's most intractable problems. Panel discussions covered how brain science works, the

economics and pay-off of early childhood investment, as well as the evidence: lower crime, better health and higher graduation rates. Specific examples from long-term pilot studies in Washington State were presented.

12. The power of photos

This session focused on the proliferation of smartphones, the prevalence of social media and the importance and power of photos, techniques to take better photos with these simple devices and the value of illustrating communications.

SPEAKERS AND PRESENTERS

While most of the presentations during the various sessions were made by serving legislators or legislative staff, notable presenters included:

- Robert Gates, 22nd Secretary of Defence and the only Secretary of Defence in US history to be asked to remain in that office by a newly elected president. Gates is the author of *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*;
- Jon Meacham, author of the number one *New York Times* best-selling biography, *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*;
- Sheryl Connelly, Manager of Global Trends and Futuring for the Ford Motor Company, tracks shifts and trends in topics as far reaching as the environment, politics and millennials and analysing these shifts to predict consumer preferences;
- Piper Kerman, author of *Orange is the New Black*, the number one *New York Times* best-seller and Emmy-award winning Netflix series;
- Ken Jennings, the biggest winner ever on US TV game show *Jeopardy*, who won 74 games and \$2,52 million and became a TV folk hero; and
- Brian Baird, a former six-term congressman and a clinical psychologist, is an avid proponent of ethical conduct in the legal and legislative professions.

NETWORKING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The summit provided many opportunities for networking and relationship building, both in formal and informal environments. These included roundtable discussions, breakaway sessions and organised social occasions.

CONCLUSION

While the programme of the 2015 Legislative Summit was one day shorter than previous summits, it was as full of opportunities to learn and share. Besides the Western Cape Provincial Parliament having benefitted from NCSL-sponsored activities and interactions in the past, the benefits from attendance of the summit are legion. The opportunity to learn, share experiences, network and establish new relationships is invaluable and a core outcome of attending such conferences. The 2016 Legislative Summit of the NCSL will be held in Chicago from 8 to 11 August 2016.