

NEVADA'S ORIENTATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR NEW LEGISLATORS

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CSG-West
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and Research Directors Committee
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New Member Orientation—Background

Nevada's Legislative Counsel Bureau has provided for new member orientations since at least 1977. The program has evolved and expanded over the years. When term limits in Nevada began following the 2009 Legislative Session, the program was enhanced to accommodate a larger group of freshman lawmakers, many of whom were from a younger demographic.

Program Growth from 1-2 days...

In the early years, the typical program included:

- A tour of the capital city
- A tour of the legislative building
- A mock floor session

Assembly Bill 260 (2011 Session)

- Requires newly elected legislators attend a mandatory training program prior to taking part in their first legislative session
- The training must include: (1) legislative procedure and protocol; (2) discussion of major policy issues; (3) overviews of the state budget and the budget process; and (4) other matters deemed appropriate by legislative leadership.
- Conducted between the general election and the start of the next legislative session
- Program cannot exceed 10 days
- Recorded electronically, if feasible, and made available to any legislator who is unable to attend the training session. Such a legislator shall submit a form attesting completion of the training to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.
- Leadership may excuse members for reasons of illness, emergency, employment, or other good cause.

Now a Multiple Phase Process

Now a six-phase process, which includes:

- Initial meetings with staff, a review of building safety, and a discussion of various administrative matters
 - A community orientation (schools, living accommodations, restaurants)
 - Practical information (offices, pay, attire, making travel arrangements, official portraits, etc.)
 - A Policy Analyst is assigned as the primary liaison to each new member
 - This initial phase is typically conducted shortly after the General Election
- Subject matter briefings (December following election)
- A “Legislator Academy” (January [session starts February 2, 2015])
- Mid-session orientation
- End-of-session orientation
- Interim orientation

Subject Matter Briefings

(early to mid-December)

Topics are proposed by staff and approved by leadership

Since the 1990s:

- Education (P-20)
- Health and Human Services

Most recently added:

- Energy and Economic Development
- Judiciary Issues
- Mining
- Public Employee Benefits, Retirement, and Collective Bargaining
- Reapportionment and Redistricting
- Transportation
- Taxation
- Transportation

Academy (mid-January)

Topics:

- General Government – Structure and Roles of Branches
- Public Policy and Policy Development
- Protecting the Legislature as an Institution
- Being an Effective Legislator and Practical Advice from Past Members
- Mock Committee Meetings and Mock Floor Sessions
- How a Bill Becomes a Law – Process and Bill Content
- Understanding the Budget Process, Forecasts, and Fiscal Notes
- Negotiation and Consensus
- Time Management
- Working with Constituents, Lobbyists, and the Media
- Ethics in the Legislative Environment

Also included is a program for spouses and partners of new legislators

Mid-Session Orientation

(late March/early April)

Topics:

- First House Deadlines and Bills in the Second House
- Understanding Exempt Bills and the Importance of Bill Referrals to the “Money” Committees
- Working Your Bill in the Other House
- Review of and Questions and Answers Regarding the Legislative Session up to this Point
- Discussion of Future Training

End-of-Session Orientation

(early May)

Topics:

- Working with the Executive Branch
- Conference Committees
- Governor Vetoes and Special Sessions
- Brief Update on What to Expect During the Upcoming Legislative Interim
- Review of Post-Session Research Division Publications

Interim Committee Orientation

(Fall 2011 only; not provided in Fall 2013)

Topics:

- Introduction to the Interim Period
 - Purpose and Types of Interim Committees
 - Role of Legislator As a Member of an Interim Committee
 - Open Meeting Law
- Legislative Staff Services
- Developing Legislation—from Concept to Bill Draft
- Working with Constituents During the Interim

Also included was a training for interim committee chairs and vice chairs. Topics included:

- Organization of Interim Committees and Working with Staff
- Scope of Interim Studies and Tips on Scheduling
- Open Meeting Law
- Process for Developing Recommendations for Legislation

Key Strategies and “Takeaways” for Legislator Orientation

Strategy

- Keep staff in forefront – Make sure legislators see you FIRST
- Stagger training to fit immediate needs and be flexible
- The concept of “the freshman class of . . .” seems to work well, so build in group activities, social time, and networking functions
- Solicit feedback
 - Survey
 - Do evaluations at the end of each segment

Important Takeaways

- Make sure the legislators understand the process and where they “fit in” as well as their responsibilities as a lawmaker
- The “Institution” – Understand, Protect & Preserve, Take Ownership
- Open meeting law and how to participate in the process
- Urge understanding of the Constitution and its relationship to the process (how legislators balance “their” branch of government)

More information on the Internet:

[http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/
LegInfo/Orientation/2014-15/](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/LegInfo/Orientation/2014-15/)

Thank you.

