

Coalition of Western Organizations Visit with Administration Officials & Congress to Further State-Federal Relations

By Edgar Ruiz, CSG West Executive Director
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CSG West's executive director, Edgar Ruiz, and director of policy and international programs, Martha Castañeda, along with staff from other western organizations, visited Washington, D.C. on February 28 and March 1 to conduct meetings with officials of President Trump's administration and Congressional staff. The delegation was comprised of staff from CSG West, the Western Governors' Association (WGA), the Conference of Western Attorneys General (CWAG), the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) and the Western Interstate Region of the National Association of Counties (NACO). CSG's director of federal affairs, Andy Karellas, along with staff from several western governors, also participated in the meetings.

The delegation met with staff of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Office of Vice President Mike Pence, and with the Office of Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke. Meetings were also convened in Capitol Hill with staff of House Speaker Paul Ryan and House Majority Leadership, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Senate Republican Conference Chair John Thune, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

The purpose of the delegation's visit was to share and express a unified front by western, bipartisan organizations to further strong state-federal relations. The delegation presented copies of the [*Principles to Clarify and Strengthen the State-Federal Relationship*](#) that the coalition jointly adopted in December and that were shared with President Trump's Transition Team and Congressional leaders.

Among the points iterated by the delegation in meetings was the desire for meaningful, early, consistent and sustained state consultation by federal agencies when contemplating or implementing regulations. Moreover, the group recommended the establishment of a mechanism, either through Executive Order or federal statute, which coordinates and ensures that the federalism consultation process with state and local governments is executed appropriately. The delegates also offered their organizations as interlocutors to state and local government officials, and as resources to federal representatives and agencies.



The meetings were positive and the delegation was able to make important connections with officials of the new Administration and Congress. Federal officials indicated a desire to work collaboratively with states and local governments, and the participants are looking forward to building on this momentum to further the interests of the West.



The visit to our nation's Capital represents the first time in recent history that a multi-branch, bipartisan group of western state organizations, representing governors, attorneys general, legislators and local officials, have joined efforts to enhance state-federal relations. The objectives of the visit align with previous CSG West policy resolutions and efforts calling for greater state consultation and coordination by federal agencies related to water and energy policy, management of public lands, and environmental regulations, among others. Moreover, these efforts build on the work of CSG's Federalism Task Force, which led to the adoption of CSG's *Statement of Principles on Federalism and Recommendations to Improve Federal-State Regulatory Process*.

Many thanks to the staff of WGA for securing the meetings and for hosting a welcoming breakfast, as well as a reception for the delegation in concert with the Canadian Embassy.

Resources:

- [H.R. 1009 – OIRA, Insight, Reform, and Accountability Act](#)
- [Report from House Oversight and Government Reform on H.R. 1009](#)
- [Presidential Executive Order Enforcing the Regulatory Reform Agenda](#)
- [CSG West Resolution 14-03 on Water-Related Federal Rules, Regulations, Directives, Orders and Policies](#)
- [WGA Policy Resolution 2017-01: Building a Stronger State – Federal Relationship](#)