Lawmakers Work Hard to Become Better Legislators

From the opening reception on the veranda of the Colorado Springs historic Penrose House to the closing dinner with Mark Twain, 39 state legislators from throughout the West joined together for the 2006 Western Legislative Academy. Offered by the Council of State Governments-WEST, the Academy was held June 12-15.

Participants came from both political parties, from urban and rural communities and from a dazzling array of professional backgrounds. In the short three and a half days spent in intensive training, this year’s WLA participants took home new skills, polished old ones and developed valuable friendships with colleagues in sister states of the West.

Members of the Class of 2006 brought a high level of commitment to becoming better legislators, and it showed. For overall value, they rated the 2006 WLA 4.97 out of a possible 5, the best rating in the history of the program.

Participant satisfaction likely reflects how much of themselves class members invested in the WLA.

Each day the Academy began with sessions designed to build support for legislative institutions. Afterwards, lawmakers worked with experts in time management, negotiations, ethics, leadership and communications. Legislators also spent a half day at the U.S. Air Force Academy where they developed personality profiles and engaged in team building exercises.

WLA enjoys strong bipartisan support from legislative leaders in the region. In 2006, leaders and WLA alumni made 35 potential applicant suggestions. Seventy legislators eventually applied for the 39 slots available each year at the Academy. Because class size is limited, many qualified applicants could not be admitted.

Since its creation in 2000, WLA has graduated 263 Western legislators, many of whom have gone on to leadership positions in their states and beyond.

The 2007 Western Legislative Academy will take place November 5-8. Click on the WLA link at www.csgwest.org to download an application. For more information, call CSG-WEST at 916-553-4423.
When Rich Wills retired from the Idaho state police, both parties asked him to run for the legislature—an auspicious beginning for any politician. Wills was elected in 2002 to the Idaho House of Representatives where he serves today.

What makes this policeman-turned-legislator stand out above the crowd? Colleagues call him a team player and a consensus builder. Wills says his career with the state police helped prepare him for his job in the legislature. He learned not to personalize issues, something that comes in very handy as a lawmaker. And he taught communications—a valuable skill in any legislator’s toolbox.

Wills also became a ventriloquist during his career in law enforcement and taught safety education through humor. Asked if there’s a place for humor in the legislature, Wills replied, “Big time—so long as it’s not at someone else’s expense.” When he introduced his first bill on the floor of the Idaho House, he brought along his dummy “Crash” to help him. Wills says that humor can de-escalate a situation in the legislative arena just as it does in law enforcement.

His biggest surprise as a freshman was that making an impact takes time. Now, with two terms under his belt, the Idaho lawmaker offered a bit of advice to the newcomers coming behind him. You have to work with others and learn how to give in order to receive. “It’s all about collaboration,” said Wills. His personal mantra is: “Make promises sparingly, but keep them faithfully.”

What does Idaho lawmaker do when he’s not at the state capitol? Plenty. In fact, Wills could be the poster child for the citizen legislator. Home is Glenns Ferry, Idaho—population 1400 located 70 miles east of Boise. Wills and his wife operate a dinner theater where they serve up melodramas and murder mysteries on summer nights. He does the outside cooking and the directing, his wife Connie handles the finances and family members pitch in wherever needed.

Wills now works as an on-call deputy for two Idaho counties. He also teaches communications and de-escalation techniques to city, county, state and federal officials. In his spare time, Wills is a proud father and grandfather and enjoys fishing and hunting.

In 2006, the Idaho representative was chosen to attend the CSG-WEST Western Legislative Academy, where his classmates elected him president. Wills summarized what the Academy experience meant to him in just a few words. “Nobody knew whether you were a D or R. We became a team with one purpose—to become better legislators,” he said.

Other lawmakers who have served as WLA class presidents are Nevada Assembly Member Heidi Gansert, New Mexico Representative Jose Campos, Nevada Assembly Member Kelvin Atkinson, Montana Representative Jim Keane, Alaska Senator Lesil McGuire and Nevada Senator Barbara Cegavske.

Special appreciation to the El Pomar Foundation and Penrose House that have become integral and invaluable to the CSG-WEST Western Legislative Academy. The Foundation’s continued investment in the WLA helps newer western legislators acquire the skills and networks to be more effective in public policy decisions. The campus environment created by the Penrose House and grounds contributes enormously to the overall success of the program. El Pomar Fellows serve as observers and analysts of the WLA evaluation process and are an unbiased resource for course corrections in the curriculum.
The 2007 Western Legislative Academy will convene November 5-8. For information about sponsorship opportunities, please contact Cheryl Lee Duvauchelle at 415-330-0312 or cduvauch@csg.org.
6 “Students”
Western Legislative Academy Faculty

Nevada Assembly Member Heidi Gansert, 2005 WLA class president, returned to Colorado Springs to welcome the Class of 2006.

Communications expert Arch Lustberg used humor and on-camera video taping to help lawmakers deliver better speeches and media interviews.

Colorado Senator (and 2006 CSG-WEST chair) Ron Teck kept WLA'ers on time and on target throughout their Academy experience.

FranklinCovey trainer Laurie Julian worked with lawmakers on the “7 Habits of Highly Effective People.”

Former New Mexico Speaker Raymond Sanchez (top) and former Oregon Speaker Larry Campbell spoke to lawmakers about the do’s and don’ts of effective legislators.

Rutgers University Professor Alan Rosenthal, a national authority on state legislatures, discussed what makes a good legislature.
Boise State University Professor Gary Moncrief reviewed changes in legislative institutions over the last 50 years.

Former Oregon legislator and mediation expert Bryan Johnston taught legislators the keys to successful and principled negotiations.

Denver NBC commentator and former Denver Post bureau chief Fred Brown offered practical tips for working with statehouse journalists.

Ethicist Jack Marshall used real-life case studies to review the “secrets of virtuous lawmakers.”


Time management trainer Pam Vaccaro helped lawmakers understand how to focus their attention on what really matters.
ALASKA
Class of 2000
Fmr. Rep. Eric Croft
Rep. John Harris
U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski
Sen. Gary Wilkens
Class of 2001
Fmr. Sen. Gretchen Guess
Sen. Lesil McGuire
Sen. Gary Stevens
Rep. Peggy Wilson
Class of 2002
Fmr. Rep. Hugh Fate
Rep. Mary Kapsner
Rep. Kevin Meyer
Class of 2003
Fmr. Sen. Ralph Seedorf
Sen. Tom Wagoner
Class of 2004
Rep. Nancy Dahlstrom
Rep. David Guttenberg
Rep. Paul Seaton
Sen. Ralph Seneddum
Class of 2005
Sen. Charlie Hughes
Rep. Mike Kelly
Rep. Kurt Olson
Class of 2006
Rep. Carl Gatto
Sen. Bert Stedman

ARIZONA
Class of 2000
Fmr. Sen. Herb Guenther
Class of 2001
Sen. Meg Burton Cahill
Fmr. Sen. Robert Candelaria
Class of 2002
Rep. Timothy Bee
Fmr. Sen. Toni Holon
Sen. Tom O’Halleran
Class of 2003
Rep. Jennifer Burns
Rep. Olivia Cajero Bedford
Rep. Phil Lopez
Rep. Karen Scully
Class of 2004
Rep. Bill Kononiuki
Sen. James Waring
Class of 2005
Rep. David Bradley
Sen. Albert Hale
Fmr. Rep. Russ Jones
Class of 2006
Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick
Rep. John McComish
Rep. Nancy McAnlon

CALIFORNIA
Class of 2000
The late Asmbr. Marco Firebaugh
Class of 2001
Sen. Jenny Oropeza
Class of 2004
Sen. Jeff Denham
COLORADO
Class of 2000
Fmr. Sen. Jim Dyer
Fmr. Rep. Carl Miller
Fmr. Spe. Lola Spradley
Fmr. Sen. Ron Teck
COLORADO continued
Class of 2001
Class of 2002
Rep. Alice Borodkin
Rep. Mary Hodge
Rep. Debbie Stafford
Sen. Sam Calagione
Class of 2003
Fmr. Rep. Ramey Johnson
Rep. Raymond Rose
Sen. Paula Sandoval
Class of 2004
Sen. Jim Johnson
Rep. Cheri Jahn
Class of 2005
Rep. Debbie Benfield
Rep. Jim Riesberg
Class of 2006
Fmr. Rep. Dale Hall
Sen. Jim Kerr
Rep. Judy Solano
Rep. Nancy Todd
HAWAII
Class of 2000
Fmr. Rep. Emily Auwae
Sen. Lorraine Inouye
Rep. Sol Ka‘ahuluihalaha
Rep. Hermina Morita
Class of 2001
Sen. J. Kalani English
Fmr. Rep. Helene Hale
Rep. Mindy Jaffe
Class of 2002
Sen. Donna Mercado Kim
Sen. Russell Kokubun
Fmr. Rep. David Pendleton
Class of 2003
Fmr. Sen. Melodie Adua
Fmr. Rep. Cindy Evans
Rep. Jon Karamatsu
Class of 2004
Sen. Lynn Finnegan
Rep. Scott Nishimoto
Rep. Glenn Wakai
Class of 2005
Rep. Lalei Cheng
Sen. Shan Tsutsui
Class of 2006
Class of 2007
Sen. Ron Kouchi
Rep. Dian Antu
Rep. Mike Amico
Rep. Don Young
Rep. Rachel Stump
Rep. Masako Kubota
Rep. Derek Gama
Rep. Sheldon Inouye
Rep. Dante jars
Rep. tulip Williams
IDaho
Class of 2000
Sen. Don Burtenshaw
Rep. Steve Smylie
Sen. Joe Steiger
Class of 2001
Rep. Darrell Bolz
Sen. John Goedde
Sen. Patti Anne Lodge
Rep. Gary Young
Class of 2002
Fmr. Sen. Skip Brandt
Rep. R.J. “Dick” Harwood
Sen. Brent Hill
Rep. Dell Raybould
Class of 2003
Rep. Sharon Block
Sen. Curt McKenzie
Rep. Elaine Smith
Class of 2004
Rep. Joseph Cannon
Sen. Dick Compton
Rep. Robert Ring
Rep. Mack Shirley
IDAHO continued
Class of 2005
Rep. Clifford Bayer
Sen. Tim Corder
Rep. John Rusche
Class of 2006
Rep. Eric Anderson
Rep. Frank Henderson
Sen. John McGee
Rep. Richard Wills
MONTANA
Class of 2000
Lt. Gov. John Bolinger
Sen. Kim Gillian
Fmr. Rep. George Golie
Fmr. Rep. Monica Lindeen
Class of 2001
Fmr. Rep. Linda Holden
Rep. Joe Jayne
Fmr. Rep. Mark Noennig
Sen. Don Ryan
Class of 2002
Rep. Jim Keene
Sen. Frank Smith
Class of 2003
Sen. Rick Laibe
Rep. Michael Lange
Sen. Trudi Schmidt
Class of 2004
Sen. Ken Hansen
Rep. Scott Mandenhall
Class of 2005
Fmr. Rep. Elsie Amten
Rep. Dennis Himmelberger
Sen. Lane Larson
Class of 2006
Rep. Robyn Driscoll
Rep. Gary MacLaren
Rep. Jeanne Windham
NEVADA
Class of 2000
Sen. Mark Amodei
Sen. Barbara Cegavske
Amsbr. Jerry Claborn
Amsbr. Ellen Kovalov
Class of 2001
Fmr. Asmbr. Don Gustavson
Amsbr. John Oceguera
Amsbr. Debbie Smith
Class of 2002
Amsbr. Marcus Conklin
Amsbr. Kelvin Atkinson
Amsbr. William Horne
Class of 2003
Fmr. Asmbr. Rod Sherer
Amsbr. Valerie Weber
Class of 2004
Fmr. Asmbr. Moises Denis
Amsbr. Heidi Gansert
Amsbr. Marilyn Kirkpatrick
Sen. John Jay Lee
Class of 2005
Amsbr. Susan Gerhardt
Fmr. Asmbr. Brooks Holcomb
Sen. Steven Horsford
NEW MEXICO
Class of 2000
Rep. Mary Helen Garcia
Fmr. Rep. Ron Godby
Rep. Thomas Taylor
Class of 2001
Rep. Brian Moore
Sen. Mary Kay Papen
Rep. Al Park
Class of 2002
Rep. Patricia Lundstrom
Sen. Richard Martinez
Sen. Lidio Raimundi
The late Rep. Raymond Ruiz
Class of 2003
Rep. Irvin Harrison
Sen. Gay Kerner
Rep. Jane Powdrell-Culbert
Class of 2004
Janice Arnold-Jones
Sen. Jose Campos
Rep. Andy Nuñez
Rep. Teresa Zanetti
Class of 2005
Fmr. Rep. Jon Grijalva
Rep. Kathy McCoy
Sen. Gerald Ortiz y Pino
Class of 2006
Sen. Vernon Asbell
NM Auditor Hector Balderas
Rep. Keith Gardner
Rep. Peter Wirth
OREGON
Class of 2000
Rep. Bob Bohn
Sen. Vicki Walker
Class of 2001
Fmr. Rep. Rick Blum
Rep. Diane Hertner
Sen. Trudi Schmidt
Class of 2002
Rep. Robyn Driscoll
Rep. Gary McLaren
Rep. Jeanne Windham
Class of 2003
Rep. Elsie Amten
Rep. Dennis Himmelberger
Sen. Lane Larson
Class of 2004
Rep. Robyn Driscoll
Rep. Gary MacLaren
Rep. Jeanne Windham
UTAH
Class of 2000
Rep. Kim Williams
Sen. Robert Bennett
Sen. Lisa Forster
Class of 2001
Rep. Joe Gloc
Sen. Billard Hinkson
Sen. John Jay Lee
Class of 2002
Rep. Jim Hargan
Rep. Steve Whallon
Rep. Michael Bishop
Rep. Mike Shadler
Class of 2003
Rep. Kevin Cameron
Rep. Sara Geiser
Rep. Mac Sumner
Rep. Doug Whitsett
WASHINGrTON
Class of 2000
Rep. Bob Bohn
Sen. Vicki Walker
Class of 2001
Fmr. Rep. Rick Blum
Rep. Diane Hertner
Sen. Trudi Schmidt
Class of 2002
Rep. Robyn Driscoll
Rep. Gary MacLaren
Rep. Jeanne Windham
Class of 2003
Rep. Elsie Amten
Rep. Dennis Himmelberger
Sen. Lane Larson
Class of 2004
Rep. Robyn Driscoll
Rep. Gary MacLaren
Rep. Jeanne Windham
WYOMING
Class of 2000
Rep. Pete Illoway
Rep. Colin Simpson
Class of 2001
Fmr. Rep. Brian Briggs
Rep. Tony Lofaro
Rep. Ronda Rudd Menlove
Rep. Lorie Fowlke
Rep. Ronda Rudd Menlove
Rep. Julie Fisher
Rep. Ronda Rudd Menlove
Rep. Abel Tardia
Rep. Patricia Painter
Rep. Mark Wheatley
GUAM
Class of 2000
Sen. Austin “Kit” Jennings
Sen. John Hastert
Sen. Charles Townsend
Sen. John Jay Lee
Class of 2001
Rep. Hilda Solizio
Rep. Betty Komp
Rep. Andy Olson
Rep. Kevin Cameron
Rep. Sara Geiser
Rep. Mac Sumner
Rep. Doug Whitsett
UTAH continued
Class of 2005
Rep. Tim Coagrove
Rep. Lorie Fowlke
Rep. Ronda Rudd Menlove
Class of 2006
Rep. Julie Fisher
Rep. Ronda Rudd Menlove
Rep. Abel Tardia
Rep. Patricia Painter
Rep. Mark Wheatley
WASHINGrrton
Class of 2000
Rep. Carolynn Edmonds
Sen. Jim Honeyford
Sen. Linda Evans Parlette
Class of 2001
Rep. Glenn Anderson
Rep. Bruce Chandler
Rep. Mark Moscila
Class of 2002
Rep. Mike Armstrong
Rep. Sam Hunt
Rep. with Kirk Pearson
Class of 2003
Sen. Dale Brandland
Sen. Mike Hewitt
Rep. with Dawn Morrell
Rep. with Beverly Woods
Class of 2004
Rep. Dan Newhouse
Rep. Ed Orcutt
Class of 2005
Rep. Sergey Babayabar
Rep. Mark Miller
Rep. Robert Bishop
Rep. B. Hasegawa
Sen. Derek Kilmer
Class of 2006
Rep. David Buri
Rep. Larry Halter
Rep. Tim O’Mara
Class of 2007
Rep. Larry Halter
Rep. Tim O’Mara
Class of 2008
Rep. Larry Halter
Rep. Tim O’Mara

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