Convened in Colorado Springs this December, the 16th Western Legislative Academy (WLA) hosted forty-four promising western legislators. Participants were selected by their state’s leadership to participate in a three and a half day program of extensive skill-building provided by national experts. The course agenda included training in the history of legislative institutions, the art of public decision making, ethics, time management, consensus building, communications, and leadership styles.

The sessions provided great opportunities to learn from both trainers and each other. A review of legislative institutions from past to present by Thad Kousser kicked-off the Academy. Phil Boyle focused attention on the delicate balance of managing competing priorities, which provided a great foundation for the simulated negotiations hosted by David Landis allowing legislators to practice their skills at consensus building.

The benefits of focusing attention and prioritizing tasks were illustrated by Pam Vaccaro, while Bill Graham offered tools to promote better communication. The class also had the opportunity to engage in team building and personality profiling exercises at the United States Air Force Academy with Danny Miller, and learn time-tested lessons in leadership which were delivered by none other than President George Washington.

The WLA is a program of the Council of State Governments West (CSG West). Since the inaugural Academy in 2000, 608 Western legislators have graduated from the program, with over 350 still serving in Western legislatures and numerous serving in other branches of government.

The 2016 WLA will take place November 30–December 3 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Admission is competitive and limited to legislators in their first four years of service. Applications are available online and due to CSG West by April 29. For more information, visit www.csgwest.org or call (916) 553-4423.

2015 WLA CLASS MEMBERS

» Representative Matt Claman, AK
» Representative Dave Talerico, AK
» Representative Geran Tarr, AK
» Representative Cathy Tilton, AK
» Representative Regina Cobb, AZ
» Representative Anthony Kern, AZ
» Representative Vince Leach, AZ
» Senator Ben Allen, CA
» Assemblymember Ken Cooley, CA
» Assemblymember Jose Medina, CA
» Representative Perry Buck, CO
» Senator Larry Crowder, CO
» Representative Catherine “Kit” Roupe, CO
» Representative Nicole Lowen, HI
» Representative Takashi Ohno, HI
» Senator Russell Ruderman, HI
» Senator Laura Thielen, HI
» Representative Clark Kauffman, ID
» Senator Fred Martin, ID
» Representative Rick Youngblood, ID
» Representative Geraldine Custer, MT
» Representative Moffie Funk, MT
» Representative Forrest Mandeville, MT
» Assemblyman Nelson Araujo, NV
» Senator Patricia Farley, NV
» Senator Becky Harris, NV
» Assemblyman Erven Nelson, NV
» Representative David Gallegos, NM
» Representative Tomas Salazar, NM
» Senator Benny Shendo, Jr., NM
» Representative Jodi Hack, OR
» Representative Carla Piluso, OR
» Representative Dan Rayfield, OR
» Representative Barbara Smith Warner, OR
» Representative Sandra Hollins, UT
» Senator Jani Iwamoto, UT
» Senator Ann Millner, UT
» Senator Todd Weiler, UT
» Senator Annette Cleveland, WA
» Representative Christine Kilduff, WA
» Representative Gina McCabe, WA
» Senator Stephan Pappas, WY
» Representative Andy Schwartz, WY
» Representative Tom Walters, WY
Elected as the 2015 WLA Class President, Representative Geran Tarr arrived in Alaska during the summer of 1998 and after falling in love with the state, committed herself to living the state motto of heading “North to the Future”. After seventeen years in the last frontier, she still enjoys seeing a moose, viewing the Northern Lights, playing in the snow, and exploring the immense beauty of the state.

Representative Tarr has been a long time community volunteer always seeking ways to work with others to improve the state. This personal passion has provided her an extensive background in advocacy and policy including running issue campaigns for non-profit organizations and writing bills. These early endeavors led her to a Chief of Staff position for the Democratic Leader in the Alaska Senate, which she held for five years. Departing this position for graduate school, she remained connected to the policy and legislative world and when encouraged, ran for her current seat in 2012.

Currently the Minority Floor Leader, Representative Tarr enjoys participating in the dynamic environment of the Alaska legislature. She is committed to finding policy and community based solutions promoting the health and prosperity of the citizenship. In addition to her legislative duties, she is a Professor in the Biology Department at the University of Alaska Anchorage. During her time at the WLA, Representative Tarr made every effort to introduce herself to her fellow classmates. This effort clearly paid off during her election speech as she acknowledged each of the forty-four class members by name. When asked what her favorite WLA experience was, she succinctly replied, “Learning from so many amazing people!”

**PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE WESTERN LEGISLATIVE ACADEMY**

- Idaho Representative Kelley Packer (2014)
- Wyoming Senator Ogden Driskill (2012)
- Nevada Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson (2011)
- New Mexico Senator John Sapien (2009)
- New Mexico Representative Thomas Garcia (2007)
- Nevada Assemblywoman Heidi Gansert (2005)
- New Mexico Representative Jose Campos (2004)
- Alaska Senator Lesil McGuire (2001)
- Nevada Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske (2000)

**APPLICATIONS ARE NOW BEING ACCEPTED**

**2016 WESTERN LEGISLATIVE ACADEMY**

November 30–December 3, 2016 | Colorado Springs

» Apply online at [www.csgwest.org/WLA](http://www.csgwest.org/WLA)  
» Applications due April 29, 2016
Enlisting a non-traditional classroom environment at the United States Air Force Academy, professional trainer and retired U.S. Air Force Colonel, Danny Miller, led participants through a variety of exercises designed to illustrate the impact of personality styles on leadership and problem solving. Laying the groundwork for this interactive session, each class member took an assessment to identify their core personality characteristics. With this information in hand, participants engaged in a variety of activities designed to challenge their problem solving skills at both the individual and team level.

Miller led the 2015 class through a series of team building activities designed to teach participants about their own leadership styles and how to more effectively interact with others. Blending mental and physical challenges with a dose of good humor, class members departed the session with a better understanding of how to answer the question, “why isn’t everybody more like me?”

With more than 25-years of leadership and management experience with the U.S. Air Force, Danny Miller brings an array of experience to his WLA session. During his time with the United States Air Force Academy, Danny developed curricula focused on team, leadership and character development that impacted more than 700,000 Air Force personnel. Currently he serves as a contractor to the Headquarters Air Force staff in the Pentagon providing leadership development training for the most senior leaders of the Air Force.

Lending his expertise in the area of ethics and civility, Scott Raecker facilitated a thought provoking session with the 2015 WLA Class. Currently serving as the Director of The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University, Scott also served 14-years as a member of the Iowa House of Representatives from 1999 through 2012. Combining his experience and expertise, he led the class in a discussion on how to shape a culture of excellence and ethics within the state legislative environment.

A complex topic requiring much discussion, Scott led class members through the key markers of excellence and ethics. One key illustration was a video of famed photographer, Dewitt Jones, discussing the importance of using the right lens when attempting to capture the perspective of a situation. Participants also engaged in a self-assessment exercise to identify areas of strength and weakness on the essentials of integrity in action. After reflecting on their own assessment, class members paired up to engage in an organizational audit to identify best practices and areas of improvement within their legislative institutions. Class discussions of each pair’s findings led to some useful idea sharing allowing participants to take home practical suggestions to better their legislative experience.

In addition to his civic leadership and current Director role, Scott is a certified character development specialist and corporate ethics trainer through the Josephson Institute on Ethics. Through this institute, he has recently been featured as a keynote speaker on ethics and civility to state legislatures throughout the United States.
Special appreciation goes to the El Pomar Foundation and Penrose House which play a large role in the success of the CSG West Western Legislative Academy. The Foundation’s ongoing investment in the WLA helps new Western legislators acquire the skills and networks to be more effective policy makers. The campus environment created by the Penrose House provides a place where participants can step away from their busy lives and immerse themselves in intensive skill building classes. El Pomar fellows serve as independent evaluators of the WLA and are an unbiased resource for curriculum evaluation.

Altria Client Services • Astellas • Bayer • GlaxoSmithKline
Johnson & Johnson • NV Energy • Pfizer
Allergan • McLane
PhRMA • Salt River Project
Colorado Rural Electric Association