State and Federal Relations Committee
Session Summary
Friday, August 18, 2017

Hawaii Representative Cindy Evans, Chair
Wyoming Representative Eric Barlow, Vice Chair

This year’s State and Federal Relations Committee meeting focused on state consultation and cybersecurity.

State Consultation
The meeting opened with presentations from three speakers offering different perspectives on state consultation. Jim Ogsbury, Executive Director of the Western Governors’ Association (WGA), discussed his organization’s efforts to improve state-federal relations, which have included developing common principles of federalism with other partners like CSG West and holding meetings with Congress, the White House, and federal agencies to share the recommendations.

Pete Obermueller, Executive Director of the Wyoming County Commissioners Association, gave a presentation on the impact of federal decision-making at the local level. Mr. Obermueller spoke of the numerous ways that federal law requires local governments to coordinate and cooperate with federal agencies. He outlined a program in Wyoming that helps local governments be even more effective in the consultation process.

Congressman Dan Heck from Washington’s 10th Congressional District spoke to the committee about the many issues that arise in the congressional committees on which he serves that involve state and federal relations. He spoke of issues that have come up with his work on the House Financial Services Committee, such as the federalism issues surrounding the legalization of marijuana.

After hearing from the above speakers, committee members and others in attendance broke into work groups to discuss specific questions involving state consultation. The questions were designed to generate five specific recommendations on improving state-federal consultation. The work groups reported back to the larger group the results of their group discussions. All those who participated voted to reach a final recommendation for each question. The recommendations were forwarded for the consideration of the CSG West Executive Committee as a policy directive. The Executive Committee adopted the policy directive and the directive will be shared with the western state organizations working collectively on the federalism issues.

Cybersecurity
Tim Blute, Program Director of the National Governors Association’s Center for Best Practices, Homeland Security & Public Safety Division, talked to the Committee about the trends the NGA sees among states with respect to cybersecurity. Mr. Blute explained that there is an acute shortage of qualified workers in this field. He explained the need for security consolidation and a centralized authority in charge of cybersecurity policy and enforcement, and that fragmented efforts by affected agencies will not work.

On the other hand, according to Mr. Blute, there has been a trend toward open integration between the public and private sectors in planning, and increasing activity surrounding response planning, particularly physical response planning and the execution of plans. He noted that
states that develop comprehensive statewide strategies tend to have more engaged governors and legislatures. Mr. Blute emphasized numerous times that cybersecurity is a comprehensive problem that is becoming more complex, requiring more collaboration, comprehensive strategies, and strong leadership.

Agnes Kirk, Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) for the State of Washington, gave her perspective on cybersecurity at the state level. She explained that the risks of security breaches are increasing because of advancing technology with attacks on critical infrastructure happening every year. She emphasized the need for more cooperation among all sectors. It is important to develop relationships with a broad group of players like the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and other state CISOs. Ms. Kirk explained that development of a cybersecurity workforce is critical and that programs should be developed in schools to raise students’ awareness of cybersecurity career paths. She explained that the public needs to be educated on cybersecurity threats. She said that because of advances in technology, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet these challenges with current funding.

Antonio Scurlock with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security spoke to the committee about the federal government’s cybersecurity efforts. Mr. Scurlock echoed the remarks made by the speakers that people must come together early and often to address the problem, especially the states and the federal government. He talked about the need for more qualified individuals in the field, and described federal efforts to help states develop and recruit talent. His advice to states when developing legislation and strategic plans on cybersecurity was to mandate that people exercise and train to achieve the directives of the plan and legislation. He explained that IT and cybersecurity personnel must constantly go through the operations with test cases to be best prepared for an actual crisis. He suggested that these activities must be shared with state leaders, such as governors, to keep them educated and that multiple parties must be at the table, including those who prepare and manage budgets.

A video recording and all power points from the session can be found at the CSG West website (csgwest.org) under the annual meeting 2017 session materials link.