When the Western Legislative Academy (WLA) Class of 2009 convened on August 5, former CSG-WEST Chair Rep. Jose Campos (NM) invited legislators to:

• Reach across state and party lines,
• Network with each other,
• Make a commitment to their legislative institutions, and
• Improve their personal legislative skills.

Lawmakers from the 13 Western states spent the next three days doing just that.

Selected in a highly competitive process by the bipartisan CSG-WEST Executive Committee, 38 “students” from Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming gathered in Colorado Springs for intensive training. WLA is the premier professional development event for Western lawmakers in their first four years of service.

Legislative scholar Gary Moncrief kicked off the WLA with an overview of how legislatures have changed over the past 50 years. State legislatures, he said, have become more professional, more representative and more diverse.

However, lawmakers face longer sessions, greater media scrutiny, more constituent demands, more ideological conflict and more time and money spent on campaigns. Moncrief and other WLA faculty urged legislators to protect their legislative institutions—one of the least glamorous and most important aspects of the job.

Class members worked hard with national experts in communications, ethics, negotiations and time management. The half day spent at the U.S. Air Force Academy working on personality assessments and team building was a highlight of the week.

The 2009 WLA marked the 10th anniversary of the academy. Since it was created in 2000, 373 Western state legislators have graduated. Many Academy alumni have gone on to leadership positions in their chambers and in state government. Two now serve as U.S. senators and three serve in the U.S. House.

The 2010 Western Legislative Academy will take place July 12-15. Applications are due February 10th and may be found at www.csgwest.org. Call 916-553-4423 for more information.
Meet John Sapien. He rode into Colorado Springs last August on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, wearing a leather jacket, biker helmet and boots. The 39-year-old New Mexico senator tackled the Western Legislative Academy just like he did the road—with a fierce determination to get the most out of the ride. His classmates responded enthusiastically and elected him president of the Class of 2009.

When asked why he ran for the legislature in the first place, Sapien pointed to the sense of public service imparted by his parents. He grew up in Bernalillo near Albuquerque, and his dad served as a county commissioner. While he was busy establishing a successful State Farm Insurance business and growing a young family, friends and clients asked Sapien to run for the legislature. Eventually he agreed, saying it was time to give back.

When he asked a couple of House members to estimate the time he would need to spend as a citizen legislator in a state with short sessions, they told him to expect to spend 30-35 percent of his time on the legislative job. Sapien now spends almost 70 percent of his time on legislative business, thanks in part to key assignments on budget matters. Those House buddies now have some plainin’ to do, he said laughingly.

Sapien credited his team at State Farm for taking care of thousands of clients while he’s engaged in legislative business. Although the senator devotes as much time as possible to his wife Veronica and two children Alejandro and Alicia (another is on the way), like many legislative families, the Sapiens didn’t realize just how busy the legislative job would be.

Once in Santa Fe, Sapien began to understand that he needed to be on the top of his game every day. You can’t understand the legislature, he said, until you’re in the mix of it. Working and watching as the legislature sought to bring policy consensus to 112 confident personalities was a surprising intellectual experience. He said the “process” is sometimes messy, but sound public policy outcomes make it worthwhile.

Sapien’s advice for newer lawmakers: try not to take issues personally. Taking care of relationships with other lawmakers and with constituents even when you disagree is a top priority. One of the WLA takeaways for Sapien was the importance of focusing on other people—knowing their names and also knowing their concerns.

When he’s not at the state capitol, Sapien and his wife enjoy travel, and he is an ardent sports fan. Last year as home plate umpire at the Little League World Series regional championship televised by ESPN, the freshman legislator finally got to call the plays as he saw them—no debate required.

Other lawmakers who have been elected by their WLA class members to serve as presidents are: Arizona Rep. Steve Farley (08), New Mexico Rep. Thomas Garcia (07), Idaho Rep. Rich Wills (06), Nevada Asmbr. Heidi Gansert (05), New Mexico Rep. Jose Campos (04), Nevada Asmbr. Kelvin Atkinson (03), Montana Sen. Jim Keane (02), Alaska Sen. Lesil McGuire (01) and Nevada Sen. Barbara Cegavske (00.)

Special appreciation to the El Pomar Foundation and Penrose House who play a large role in the success of the CSG-WEST Western Legislative Academy. The Foundation’s ongoing investment in the WLA helps newer 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 evaluators of the WLA and are an unbiased resource for course corrections in the curriculum.
WLA Class of 2009

August 5-8 in Colorado Springs, Colorado

Photo courtesy of Lynn Boutte Photography

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Intermountain Rural Electric Association
Kelly Services • McLane Company, Inc. • Shell Oil Company

Front row (l to r): Jan Angel (Rep WA), Sherrie Sprenger (Rep OR), Shirley Breeden (Sen NV), Linda Newell (Sen CO), Bill Beck (Rep MT), Karen Awana (Rep HI), Su Ryden (Rep CO), Martha Schrader (Sen OR), Rae Waters (Rep AZ)

Second row: Becky Edwards (Rep UT), Fred Finn (Rep WA), Sharon Har (Rep HI), Nathan Cote (Rep NM), Cathy Connolly (Rep WY), Phylis King (Rep ID), Tim Stubson (Rep WY), Rebecca Chavez-Houck (Rep UT)

Third row: Joe Palmer (Rep ID), Melissa Woodbury (Asmbr NV), Don Ipson (Rep UT), John Sapien (Sen NM), Howie Morales (Sen NM), Cheri Gerou (Rep CO), Cecil Ash (Rep AZ), Roland Sagum (Rep HI)

Fourth row: Bob Buch (Rep AK), April Mastroluca (Asmbr NV), Sue Wallis (Rep WY), Bruce Dammeier (Rep WA), Brad Hamlett (Sen MT)

Last row: Paul Bandy (Rep NM), Bill Wielechowski (Sen AK), Curren Price (Sen CA), Mark Ferrandino (Rep CO), Jefferson Smith (Rep OR), Joe Thomas (Sen AK), Cliff Larsen (Sen MT), Jeff Siddoway (Sen ID)
islative “Students”
Alan Rosenthal
An ardent defender of state legislative institutions, Rutgers University Professor Alan Rosenthal urged newer lawmakers to take care of their legislatures.

Thad Kousser
Associate Professor at UC San Diego Thad Kousser worked with a WLA breakout group to discuss the power of leadership.

Jose Campos / Marcus Oshiro

Jack Marshall
Using “tough love” and real-life case studies, ethicist Jack Marshall helped legislators find “Secrets of the Virtuous Lawmaker.”

Danny Miller
Pam Vaccaro
Designs on Time President Pam Vaccaro gave lawmakers both quick tips and real change strategies for balancing the demands of public and private life.

Phil Boyle
Dr. Phil Boyle, president of Leading and Governing Associates, engaged class members in exercises to get from campaigning to governing.

Gary Moncrief
Boise State University Professor and scholar Gary Moncrief spoke about 50 years of legislative change and why “The Old Statehouse Ain’t What It Used to Be.”

Arch Lustberg
Communications trainer Arch Lustberg helped lawmakers understand the power of telling stories rather than reciting endless facts when making speeches.

John Straayer
Colorado State University Professor John Straayer led a discussion group on the erosion of study and deliberation in the legislative process.

David Landis
Master consensus builder and former Nebraska Senator David Landis worked with lawmakers on successful legislative negotiation techniques, which happen when lawmakers focus on interests, not positions.

Pam Vaccaro
Designs on Time President Pam Vaccaro gave lawmakers both quick tips and real change strategies for balancing the demands of public and private life.
ALASKA
Fmr Rep Bob Buch-09
Sen John Coghill, Jr.-02
Fmr Rep Eric Croft-00
Rep Nancy Dahlstrom-04
Rep Nan Sanford-08
Fmr Rep Hugh "Bud" Fate-02
Rep Carl Gatto-06
Fmr Rep Gretchen Guess-01
Rep David Guffey-05
Rep John Harris-00
Rep Jim Holm-03
Rep Lindsey Holmes-08
Sen Charlie Huggins-05
Rep Craig Johnson-08
Rep Mike Kelly-05
Sen Lisl McGuire-01
Sen Kevin Meyer-02
U S Sen Lisa Murkowski-00
Rep Mary Nelson-02
Rep Mark Neuman-07
Rep Kurt Olson-05
Fmr Rep Ralph Samuelus-03
Rep Paul Seaton-04
Fmr Rep Ralph Seekins-04
Sen Bert Stedman-06
Sen Pres. Gary Stevens-01
Sen Joe Tesh 07
William A. Thomas, Jr.-06
Sen Thomas Wagoner-03
Sen Bill Wielechowski-09
Fmr Sen Gary Wilkon-06
Rep Peggy Wilson-01

ARIZONA
Sen Paule Aboud-07
Rep Carol Ash-08
Fmr Sen Pres. Timothy Bee-02
Rep David Bradley-05
Rep Fmr Jennifer Burns-03
Sen Mike Campbell-08
Olivia Cajero Bedford-03
Rep Cloves Campbell, Jr.-08
Rep Sen Robert Cannell-06
Rep Adam Driggs-07
Rep Steve Farley-08
U S Rep Gabrielle Giffords-04
Fmr Sen Herb Guenther-00
Sen Albert Hale-05
Fmr Sen Tom Homan-03
Rep Russ Jones-05
U S Rep Ann Kirkpatrick-06
Rep Bill Konopnicki-05
Rep Phil Lopez-05
Rep John McComish-06
Fmr Nancy McLain-06
U S Rep Harry Mitchell-06
Sen Tom O'Halleran-02
Sen John floppy-07
Sen Thayer Verschoor-03
Sen Jim Waring-04
Rep Rae Waters-09

CALIFORNIA
Asmbr Anthony Adams-07
Sen Jeff Denham-04
The late Asmbr Marco Firebaugh-04
Asmbr Tony Mendoza-07
Sen Jenny Oropeza-01
Sen Curren Price-09

COLORADO
Rep Debbie Benefield-05
Rep Fmr Alice Borodkin-02
Rep Ed Casado-08
Rep Don Coram-00
Rep Mark Fardellino-09
Rep Cheri Gerou-09
Rep Fmr Dale Hall-06
Sen Mary Hagedo-03
Rep Jm Legg-04

Idaho continued ...
Fmr Rep Cheri Jahn-04
Fmr Rep Ramey Johnson-03
Rep James J. Kerr-06
Rep Claire Levy-07
Fmr Sen Chuck Marohn-00
Sen Linda Newell-09
Rep Jim Riesberg-05
Rep Ellen Roberts-07
Fmr Rep Raymond Rose-03
Rep Su Ryden-09
Sen Paula Sandoval-03
Sen Gail Schwartz-08
Rep Fmr Jim Snook-01
Rep Fmr Robo Moore-03
Rep Spkr. Lola Spradley-04
Rep Fmr Debbie Stafford-02
Rep Amy Stephens-08
Sen Abel Tapia-01
Sen Fmr Ron Teck-00
Rep Nancy Todd-06

HAWAII
Fmr Rep Sen Melodie Ada-03
Sen Rep Emily Auwau-00
Rep Karen Leinani Awana-09
Rep Rida T. Cabanilla-06
Rep Mel Conner-07
Rep Pono Chong-05
Sen J. Kaliani English-01
Rep Cindy Evans-03
Sen Fmr Hp Mitchell-03
Sen Mike Gabbard-08
Fmr Rep Helene Hale-01
Rep Sharon Har-09
Fmr Sen Lorraine Iouye-00
Rep Fmr Patrick Jaffe-01
Rep Fmr Sol Kaho'ohanala-00
Rep Fmr Ron Kari Karamatsu-03
Sen Steve Kari-02
Rep Russell Kubonu-02
Rep John Mizuno-08
Sen Herb Morita-00
Sen Clarence Nishihara-07
Rep Fmr Patrick Nishimoto-04
Fmr Rep David Pendleton-02
Rep Roland Sagum, III-09
Sen Jill Tokuda-07
Sen Fmr Tom Tokuda-05
Sen Glenn Wakai-04
Rep Kay Yamashita-05

IDAH0
Rep Eric Anderson-06
Rep Clifford Bayer-05
Rep Carlos Bilbao-08
Rep Sharon Block-03
Rep Fmr John Blundell-00
Sen Fmr Skip Brandt-02
Sen Joyce Broadword-07
Sen Fmr Don Burschew-00
Rep Fmr Joseph Cannon-04
Rep Fmr Joe Chardonn-08
Rep Susan Chew-08
Rep Fmr Dick Compton-04
Sen Tom Corder-09
Sen Tom Cook-07
Sen John Goedde-01
Sen Marsha Hammond-08
Rep R.J. "Dick" Harwood-02
Rep Frank Choate-05
Sen Brent Hill-02
Rep Fmr Bill Kellen-07
Rep Fmr Phyllis King-09
Sen Fmr Gene Lardigé-01
Sen John McFer 06
Sen Curt McKenzie-03
Rep Joe Palmer-09
Rep Dell Raybould-02
Rep Fmr Robert Ring-02

OREGON
Sen Mark Amodei-00
Asmbr Kevin Atkinson-03
Asmbr David Bobzien-07
Sen Shirley Breeden-09
Sen Bonie Coraggio-04
Asmbr Jerry Claborn-00
Asmbr Marcus Conklin-03
Asmbr Fmr Jo Mosedt-05
Asmbr Heidi Gansert-05
Asmbr Fmr Steve Gerhardt-06
Asmbr Don Gustavson-01
Fmr Asmbr Brooks Holcomb-06
Asmbr Fmr John Goo-03
Sen Steven Horsford-06
Asmbr Marilyn Kirkpatrick-00
Sen Fmr Ellen Koivisto-00
Sen John Jay Lee-05
Asmbr Fmr Steve Martulica-09
Asmbr Fmr Oceguera-01
Asmbr Fmr James Ohrenschall-08
Asmbr Fmr Siegerbloom-08
Asmbr Fmr Ja 03
Asmbr Fmr Rod Sherer-04
Asmbr Debbie Smith-01
Fmr Asmbr Valerie Weber-04
Asmbr Melissa Woodbury-09
NEW MEXICO
Fmr Rep Janice Arnold-Jones-04
Sen Vernon Asbill-06
NM Asmbr Dave Balders-06
Rep Paul Bandy-09
Rep Fmr Andrew Barreras-08
Rep Fmr Richard Berry-08
Rep Fmr Jose Campos-04
Rep Nancy Cate-09

NEVADA
Sen Mark Amodei-00
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