



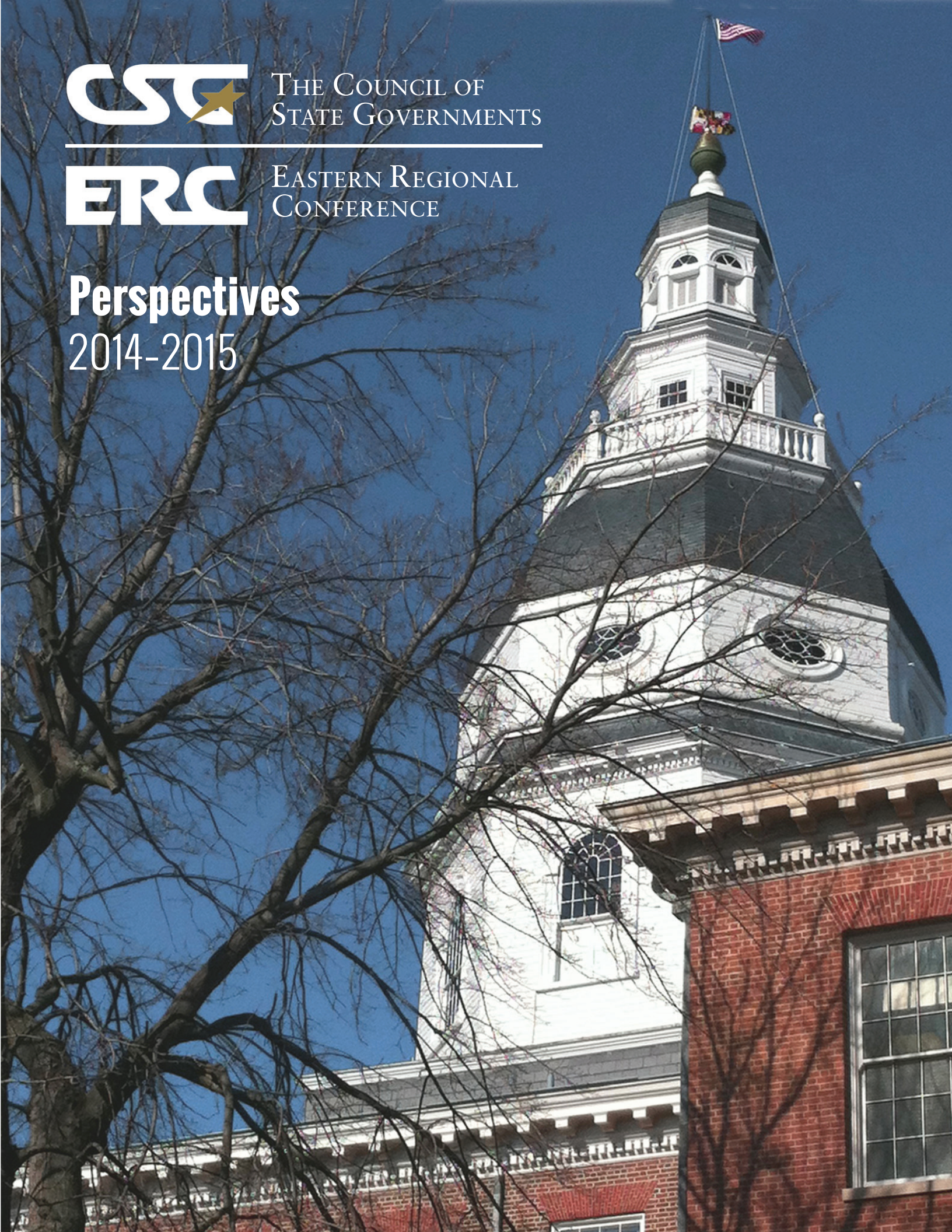
THE COUNCIL OF
STATE GOVERNMENTS



EASTERN REGIONAL
CONFERENCE

Perspectives

2014-2015



From the Director

In the nearly two years since Superstorm Sandy slammed into the East Coast, causing more than \$70 billion in damages, officials at all levels of government have been working to ensure that the region's infrastructure, and communities, will be better prepared for the next big storm.

"Resiliency means getting in front of the curve to lessen the impact of these conditions rather than rushing to play catch-up after disasters happen," said Josh Sawislak, a senior advisor to the Secretary for Infrastructure Resilience at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, speaking at a conference held by ERC in March, which convened key public officials, representatives from the private sector, and members of the academic community.

Sandy followed a spate of severe-weather events affecting ERC jurisdictions, and the recovery effort has led to innovative partnerships and creative strategies for strengthening regional resiliency. For states in the Northeast still recovering from the Great Recession, the need to get "ahead of the curve" is critically important, not only in disaster planning, but in other policy areas as well.

Health care costs, for example, now consume nearly a quarter of state budgets, and that share is rising at a rate that policymakers agree is unsustainable. Evidence shows that increased spending is not resulting in improved quality. The good news is that states are working proactively to transform how we pay for health care, with potentially far-reaching impacts. These innovations are documented in *Value Over Volume 2.0*, a new report from the ERC Health Policy Committee, which offers concrete policy options being used successfully by states and other payers to control rising health costs while enhancing the effectiveness of care.

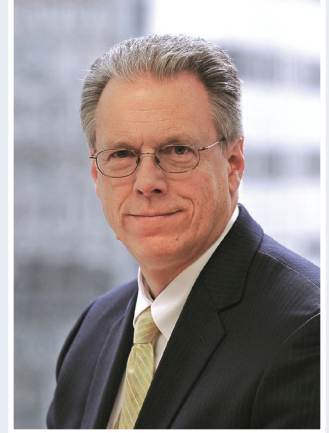
There is a similar need for forward-looking approaches on the economic front. The recovery from the Great Recession that began in December 2007 has been slow and painful. Five years after the recession officially ended, the national economy is

still not creating enough jobs to bring people back to work.

In response, state officials have been considering new ways to spur innovation and support entrepreneurship, the focus of ERC's 2014 Annual Meeting in Baltimore, Maryland. State policies and programs that support the unique needs of entrepreneurs can foster the formation of new companies essential to job growth.

The importance of being proactive is nowhere more apparent than in the transportation policy arena. As Americans drive fewer miles, in more fuel-efficient cars, declining revenues from gas taxes have put the Highway Trust Fund on a path toward insolvency in 2015. CSG's Transportation Policy Academy, held in Portland, Oregon, helped state officials examine long-term solutions to funding construction and maintenance of our highways, such as mileage-based user fees. By bringing legislators and experts together from across the country, one academy participant noted, CSG helped us "get past the politics" and focus on policies that will move us forward.

Natural disasters like Superstorm Sandy teach us that government's role goes beyond responding to or recovering from a disaster. Implicit in any disaster or crisis is the opportunity state officials have to learn from that experience and reshape our collective future. CSG's Eastern Regional Conference has long played an important role in helping state officials evaluate and learn from the experiences of other states, explore cutting-edge ideas, and get in front of the curve. Given the environmental, economic, and other public policy challenges looming on the horizon, this role has never been more important.



Wendell Hannaford

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendell Hannaford".

Director

Creating Policy Solutions



Since 1933, state officials have turned to The Council of State Governments (CSG) as an impartial source of research and information to help them meet the challenge of governing. Headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky, CSG has four regional offices in the East, Midwest, South, and West.

CSG's Eastern Regional Conference (CSG/ERC) has been located in New York City since 1937. Our team of experienced policy staff support legislative-, judicial-, and executive-branch officials from our 18 member jurisdictions in areas relating to agriculture, criminal justice, U.S.– Canadian relations, education, energy and the environment, fiscal affairs, health, international trade, and transportation.

CSG/ERC facilitates the exchange of ideas among its regional policy committees, promotes networking among members, and provides fact-based research and analysis to help shape effective public policy. We also conduct leadership training programs and advocate at the federal level for programs and policies beneficial to our region.

CSG/ERC is here for you. Call, email, or visit us online at www.csgeast.org.

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Rona J. Cohen

Cover photo: Maryland State House.
Back Cover: Legislative Hall, Delaware.
Photographer: Rona J. Cohen.

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CSG on the Road

Transportation Policy Academies Explore Funding Options

Americans' driving habits are changing, and policymakers are faced with a conundrum.

Drivers are logging fewer miles behind the wheel than they used to, and when they do hit the road they are climbing into more fuel-efficient cars that go farther on a gallon of fuel than their older gas-guzzling models. The shift in driving habits is good for consumers' wallets and the environment but is a drag on gas tax revenues, which are the main source of funding for the nation's ailing highway infrastructure. Nationwide, state gas taxes average 30 cents per gallon, and added to that is an 18.4 cents per gallon federal tax, which provides more than 90 percent of gross revenues for the federal Highway Trust Fund. As gas consumption drops, so does critical revenue needed to upgrade the nation's aging state and federal roadways.

The ERC region's transportation network is among the oldest in the nation, and it will take significantly greater financial investment than is currently allocated to make the critical repairs needed to ensure the safety and durability of our infrastructure.

"These investments in transportation infrastructure are a key to our economic health. But how do we build a case to make them a priority within our states and nationally as well?" asked Massachusetts State Senator Thomas McGee, who traveled to Portland, Oregon, and Washington, D.C., last year to attend two policy academies convened by CSG to help state officials forge creative solutions to shore up flagging transportation revenues.

Little help is expected from the federal government, whose vastly depleted Highway Trust Fund is expected to face insolvency sometime in 2015 if the decline in collections continues. In the last two years, more than half of all U.S. states have introduced legislation to increase financing for transportation projects, including several in the Northeast. Proposals have ranged from simple tax increases — many states have not raised their gas taxes in more than two decades — to alternative financing mechanisms that could be applied to electric vehicles and other models powered by alternative fuels.

During his stay in Portland, McGee and 10 other state legislators from around the country learned about Oregon's decision to implement a mileage-based road user fee as a replacement for the state's gas tax. Just two weeks earlier, the Oregon legislature had approved Senate Bill 810, authorizing a program under which up to 5,000 vehicle owners



"I appreciated the dialogue with legislators from other parts of the country, and finding out about the commonality of the issues we're all dealing with. It was eye opening."

— Maryland State Senator
Catherine Pugh



"These legislative forums offer a chance to get past the politics and just focus on the policy and ask, 'How do we move it forward?'"

— Massachusetts State Senator
Thomas McGee, Chair, Massachusetts
Joint Committee on Transportation

will pay a 1.5 cents per mile road-use charge and receive a refund of the state gas tax. The legislators were briefed on the program by officials with the Oregon Department of Transportation and a team of consultants.

Shared Challenges

Oregon's measure was a response to the decline in vehicle miles traveled, a changing vehicle marketplace for electrics and hybrids, and an increase in fuel efficiency. Nationwide, automakers' fleets of cars and light-duty trucks must meet a corporate average fuel economy standard of 35.5 miles per gallon (mpg) by 2016, rising to 54.5 mpg in 2025.

"I really appreciated being in Portland because they're doing some creative things while protecting the environment. I also appreciated the dialogue with legislators from other parts of the country, and finding out about the commonality of the issues we're all dealing with. It was eye opening," said Maryland State Senator Catherine Pugh, former chair of the Maryland Senate Public Safety, Transportation, and Environment Subcommittee.

Last year, Pugh and her colleagues in the Maryland General Assembly approved a measure that will raise hundreds of millions of dollars annually for new roads and mass transit projects. The Transportation Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013 indexes the state gas tax to inflation, phases in a 3.5 percent sales tax on fuel, and increases toll rates. The sales tax would rise to 5 percent if the U.S. Congress fails to pass a bill allowing states to tax Internet sales.

Lawmakers also passed a bill that revises state guidelines for public-private partnerships for infrastructure projects, and aims to provide the private sector with a more predictable and streamlined process for those investments.

As in numerous other states nationwide, Maryland's roads and bridges are in desperate need of upgrading. Pugh recalled that last spring a street collapsed in Baltimore, sending several parked cars tumbling onto a railroad track. "People were out of their homes for a month. We have a crumbling infrastructure, and if we don't get in front of it, it's going to create



Above: Participants in CSG's Transportation Policy Academy in Portland (Courtesy of First Stop Portland).

even bigger problems in the future," she said.

A second policy academy in Washington, D.C., explored Maryland's legislation and a funding package approved in Virginia. Participants also met with congressional representatives.

"It was exciting to be able to sit with leaders from many other states and talk together on these issues," said McGee, who chairs the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Transportation. "It's really good to have a broader vision of what's happening elsewhere and realize we're all in this together. This isn't just a Massachusetts problem — it's a national problem that every state is facing. These legislative forums offer a chance to get past the politics and just focus on the policy and ask, 'How do we move it forward?'"

Last summer, Massachusetts enacted a transportation finance bill that is expected to raise \$500 million in revenue by increasing the tax on sales of gasoline and cigarettes and levying a new tax on computer services.

Looking ahead, the CSG/ERC Transportation Committee is monitoring Congress' efforts to reauthorize current federal surface transportation law, known as MAP-21, which will expire on September 30, 2014. The committee is paying careful attention to the impending Highway Trust Fund shortfall, and is working to inform members about the negative impacts that underinvestment will have on the region's mobility, safety, and economic well-being. The committee will also emphasize to Congress the need to find long-term policy and funding solutions to ensure that adequate investments are made to maintain and improve the region's — and the nation's — aging and overburdened transportation system.



Photo by Rona Cohen

Focusing on Resiliency

Preparing Infrastructure for the Effects of Severe Weather

Last spring, state and provincial officials from CSG's eastern region, grappling with the aftermath of a succession of unusually severe weather events, came together with a range of experts to consider strategies to fortify their communities and infrastructure against the impacts of future storms. Over the course of a day and half, panelists consistently stressed the importance of being proactive and creating a strategy for long-term resiliency before a natural disaster hits. Forward planning, they advised, can be carried out incrementally, as funds become available. It can also save lives, property, and money when disaster strikes, and enable communities to enjoy the benefits of an enhanced local economy and quality of life.

"The question is not whether we need to act," said Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, in a video address that kicked off the conference in Boston.

"The overwhelming judgment of science and some 97 percent of scientists has put that question to rest. The world's climate is changing and human activity is contributing to it. It ought to be clear to everyone by now that we must invest the ideas, the time, and the money now to create a better Commonwealth for tomorrow."

The meeting comprised one component of an ongoing effort by CSG/ERC's Energy & Environment Program to assist states with the challenging task of recovering from and better preparing for extreme weather. Since Tropical Storm Irene's devastating impact on inland communities in 2011, ERC staff has provided information about the predicted impacts of a changing climate, testified at legislative hearings, reported on recovery efforts under way in New England and the Mid-Atlantic states, organized workshops on resilience, and produced multimedia

case studies on lessons learned by officials in our eastern conference.

The Boston meeting, organized with support from CSG's Twenty-First Century Foundation, offered delegates an opportunity to learn about current best practices and cutting-edge proposals for increasing resiliency in a region that has been hit with periods of more frequent and powerful precipitation events, stronger storm surges, less predictable weather patterns, and greater coastal vulnerability from the combination of sea-level rise and land subsidence.

"Resiliency means getting in front of the curve to lessen the impact of these conditions rather than rushing to play catch-up after disasters happen," said Josh Sawislak, a keynote speaker at the conference, who serves as special advisor to the Secretary for Infrastructure Resilience at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Design. "When it comes to preparedness, every dollar spent on the front end saves four dollars on the back end," he said.

plinary experts working on the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency, established by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg after Superstorm Sandy hit.

Equally critical in the process is the cross-fertilization of ideas and resources from experts and stakeholders who may typically operate in separate spheres, they said.

Two of the most creative, and concrete, examples of such collaborations were illustrated by representatives from multidisciplinary design and engineering teams, whose models for regional resilience were among six winning proposals chosen for implementation by the federal government's Rebuild by Design competition following Superstorm Sandy. The final proposals offered approaches that are site-specific, but can be applied to many towns and cities that are subject to similar severe-weather threats.

The Interboro Team came up with solutions that

"The question is not whether we need to act. The overwhelming judgment of science and some 97 percent of scientists has put that question to rest."

— *Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick*

Participants discussed the dilemma of strengthening in place versus relocation for flood-prone communities, heard from private-sector collaborators in resiliency planning, learned about creative and cost-effective approaches to flood protection in the Netherlands, and considered innovative regional proposals for strengthening urban and suburban areas post-Sandy.

Presenters stressed the necessity of developing a strategic and incremental planning process that integrates the needs and goals of local stakeholders with recommendations from experts.

"Planning decisions must be based on scientific studies of risk, analyses of what failed during prior storms, and consultations with communities, so that planners understand what matters most to residents and businesses," said Jamie Springer, who was the deputy director for a team of multidisci-

would reduce the exposure of towns on the South Shore of Long Island, where flooding hit communities from two directions: the storm surge that Sandy brought along the Long Island Sound and the cascading water that flowed toward the Sound from swollen inland creeks. Both converged in South Shore bays, where barrier islands and peninsulas prevented the flood waters from flowing back out into the ocean.

The PennDesign/OLIN Team addressed the vulnerabilities and needs of a mixed community in New York City's Hunts Point neighborhood, where substantial coastal vulnerability puts the major food distribution center for Greater New York City at risk. In addition to protecting a critical piece of urban infrastructure, the site presented further challenges: dealing with the cleanup of considerable contamination from toxic wastes left behind by now-shuttered

industries, and the need to maintain the economic lifeline provided by existing commercial and industrial activities for the low-income Hunts Point neighborhood located upland from those job sources. Resilience there required not only physical but also environmental and economic strengthening.

In both projects, team members met repeatedly with state and local officials, civic organizations, business owners, employees, and residents to hear what mattered to them, discuss possible approaches to resiliency building, and receive stakeholder feedback so that the final plans made economic, social, and environmental sense to those who lived and worked in the communities.

Hearing about these two projects gave conference delegates a sense of innovative possibilities that a thoughtful approach to resiliency can provide — a rich collaboration between technical expertise and community engagement.

“It was an honor to host CSG/ERC’s Weathering the Storm conference in Massachusetts to exchange ideas about what is being done in our region to deal with the threats we all face from a changing climate,” said Massachusetts Senator Marc Pacheco, who serves as co-chair of the CSG/ERC Energy & Environment Committee. “Attendees gained helpful information from experts who are tackling this issue head-on with innovative policies, technologies, and infrastructure strategies that will not only protect their communities, but strengthen the clean energy economy into the future,” said Pacheco, who chairs the Massachusetts Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change.

Fostering Collaboration

At the request of its members, ERC staff is working to create ongoing opportunities for better communication and collaboration between the states, the federal government, and local communities — through interactive meetings that will enable members to raise issues that are of critical importance to their communities — with federal officials who are working on resiliency planning. Future discussions are being planned



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— Massachusetts State Senator Marc Pacheco, Chair, Senate Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change

to inform members about changes in procedures associated with recommendations from the federal Climate Preparedness and Resilience Task Force that could improve the support offered to states for emergency and long-term recovery, and to review areas in which problems arose as federal agencies interacted with state and local officials following the severe-weather disasters over the past few years.

Members have requested additional research on inland and rural issues and on resources that could help with capacity-building for small communities trying to assess their severe-weather risks and plan steps to increase their resiliency. Staff is also exploring areas for productive regional collaboration — for example, in strengthening infrastructure or protecting natural systems that cross traditional jurisdictional boundaries. ERC staff has created a Web-based portal where members can exchange information about filed or enacted legislation, regulations, reports, and conferences that address resilience. Our newly designed blog, Weathering the Storm, enables members to engage in discussion with one another and policy staff about issues associated with severe weather.

Additional information is available at <http://ercwts.wordpress.com>.

Improving Health Care, Controlling Costs

Value Over Volume 2.0

Practical Tools for Policymakers to Support Health Care Reform

A new report from the CSG/ERC Health Policy Committee

Health care costs consume nearly a quarter of state budgets, and that share is rising at a rate that policymakers agree is unsustainable. Evidence shows that our runaway spending is not driving improved quality, and that lasting reform will require a shift from a volume-based system to one based on value. The good news is that states are on the cutting edge of a transformation in how we pay for health care, with potentially far-reaching impacts at home and in the broader market.

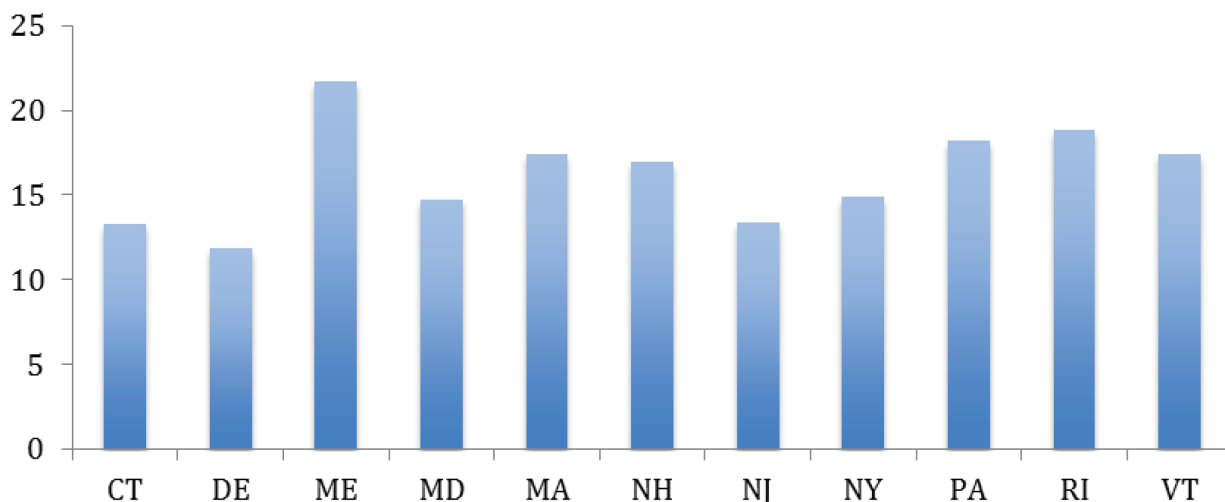
These innovations are documented in *Value Over Volume 2.0*, a new report from the CSG/ERC Health Policy Committee, which provides 23 new tools to help policymakers build on their progress. The tools are concrete policy options being used successfully by states and other payers to control rising health costs while enhancing the effectiveness of care.

“This is a must-read for anyone working in health care policy today. Each topic discussed is a road map to where we need to go after federal reform,” said Connecticut State Senator Terry Gerratana, co-chair of the legislature’s Public Health Committee, and co-chair of CSG/ERC’s Health Policy Committee.

As the leading payers and regulators of health care, states have unique levers to reform health payments for both state spending and the larger market. *Value Over Volume 2.0* follows up on CSG/ERC research released four years ago that introduced state policymakers to payment reforms.

“Policymakers want to move to a payment system that rewards quality care and better outcomes, but they need the tools to make that happen responsibly,” said CSG/ERC Health Policy Consultant Ellen Andrews, the report’s author. “*Value Over Volume 2.0* is CSG/ERC’s response to that need.”

Health Care Spending as % GDP, 2009



From *Value Over Volume 2.0*

PREPARING LEADERS FOR 21ST CENTURY CHALLENGES

Eastern Leadership Academy

The Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy (ELA) offers officials and staff from all three branches of state and provincial government a unique opportunity to hone their leadership and communication skills and network with colleagues from the eastern region.

Located in the heart of Philadelphia, and working in cooperation with the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government, the unique, five-day program includes workshops and hands-on training with experts from academia, as well as the public and private sectors. ELA offers strategies tailored to the challenges facing public officials every day, in areas including conflict resolution, fostering civil discourse, and mastering social media and branding, in a focused setting that promotes experiential learning.

ELA is designed to help you:

Develop leadership skills:

Through a series of hands-on, group workshops ranging from consensus-building to media relations, ELA provides training to sharpen and develop the skills you need to become an effective leader.

Improve your understanding of key regional issues:

ELA is the only leadership academy designed exclusively for eastern regional officials from all three branches. Scholars from the Fels Institute of Government and outside experts provide a context for you to effectively evaluate information, communicate your message successfully with constituents and colleagues, and develop strategies for relating to the media and the public.

Network with the best and brightest:

ELA convenes some of the most promising state officials from across the region to share knowledge and to learn from one another's experiences.



"The ELA experience was revelatory. It offered real, tangible lessons that I was able to bring to bear in my legislative work."

— Delaware State Representative Paul Baumbach, ELA 2013 Class President



"ELA was an invaluable career-development opportunity. High-caliber experts engage the class in a wide range of thoughtful and informative sessions, providing real-world

case studies. I use the skills I learned at ELA on a daily basis."

— David Máthé, Export Trade Director, Delaware; ELA 2012 Class President



"ELA offered an enriching opportunity to learn from academics and professionals at the top of their fields, and meet with colleagues from the States and compare our governing systems. I continue to

draw on the insights I learned and the friendships I made. It's an inspirational program."

— The Honorable Andrew Younger, Nova Scotia Member of the Legislative Assembly, Minister of Energy, Minister of Communications; ELA 2011 Class President



EASTRAIN: Enhancing Skills Through Teamwork

If you ask Dr. Daniel Miller (right) about the key to effective leadership, don't be alarmed if he hands you a bundle of rope, a hula hoop, and some nails. These are some of the time-tested tools that Miller, a retired member of the U.S. Air Force and a veteran leadership-training consultant, employs in his seminars dedicated to helping public-sector officials and staff enhance their communication skills and work as a team.

Last December, CSG/ERC brought Miller's unique toolbox to Dover, Delaware, during the first-ever leadership-training program offered under the auspices of CSG's 21st Century Foundation's Capitol Initiative. ERC organized the event in collaboration with Delaware Senate caucus leaders and their chiefs of staff, who saw the program as an opportunity to improve staff morale and enhance communication and cooperation among Senate staffers from both parties.

Over the course of several hours, Miller, who has more than 25 years' experience in leadership training, led 21 Delaware Senate staff members through a variety of brain teasers and physical challenges. Operating in small groups, participants were directed to work collaboratively to drop a hula hoop, precariously balanced on their fingertips, without losing contact with the hoop. In pairs, they were tasked with extricating themselves from rope "handcuffs" while under strict orders not to slide the loops over their hands or talk to other pairs. The class was even presented with the logic-defying task of balancing seven nails on the head of one single nail.

The training was divided into two sessions, one focusing on behavioral tendencies and their impact on leadership style, and the other aimed at providing participants with a plan to understand themselves and others better. Through personality testing, the class gained insight about the way they interact with others. Later, they tackled real-world policy stressors,



such as allocating resources equally within a rapidly shrinking budget.

"Outstanding session," said one participant. "Really changes the way you think of yourself and others."

Attendees said Miller's seminar gave them a better understanding of how to develop and sustain cooperative working relationships and motivate others to achieve their goals. More important, they left the training as friends and as a team more able to solve problems creatively and cooperatively.

"This is the best leadership training I have had in forty years of government work," said Beverly Flanagan, legislative assistant to the Senate's majority caucus, whose earlier experience included stints as an aide to three U.S. senators. "It clarified in a way I have not seen before the differences in personalities and the impact the diversity brings to the table when trying to solve problems and establish goals. I listen to people somewhat differently now—I consider not just their 'message,' but what drives that message from their own experience."

For more information on CSG/ERC's leadership training programs, contact Véronique Cavaillier, director of professional development training, at vcavaillier@csg.org.





Supporting Local Foods, and Growing Rural Economies

The Northeast States Association for Agriculture Stewardship Serves as a Unified Voice on Regional Issues

On a late-summer day, more than two dozen legislators from CSG's Eastern Regional Conference trod through bogs of maturing cranberries, which spread across thousands of acres in central New Jersey's Pine Barrens, the third-largest cranberry-producing region in the United States and an important engine of the local economy. The bogs — soft, marshy ground with acidic peat soil that is ideal for cranberries — are cultivated by producers that make up Ocean Spray, one of the nation's biggest food cooperatives, in which growers work together as a community to help one another prosper and thrive.

CSG/ERC members had come to see firsthand the success of Ocean Spray, whose members collaborate on processing and marketing their products. The cooperative has been around for decades, but its business model is part of a growing trend to reduce the route from farmer

to consumer. Producers are increasingly selling their wares at farmers markets and farm stands, and through farm-to-school programs, sales to hospitals and other commercial establishments, and agritourism. These direct sales are examples of community-focused agriculture, a locally based economic model of food production and distribution in which farmers, in an effort to increase their profit margins and keep more money at home, bypass the middleman in the food marketing chain and forge relationships with end users.

In recent years, CSG/ERC's agriculture and rural policy committee has worked at the federal and state levels to promote programs that deepen community-supported agriculture and help the region's rural population prosper. Although these practices have proven critical for helping farmers in the Northeast stay financially afloat, research shows that significant opportunities to grow direct sales and enhance rural

economies remain untapped across New England and the Mid-Atlantic states.

Through the Northeast States Association for Agriculture Stewardship (NSAAS), CSG/ERC members have worked with congressional representatives over the last three years to ensure that the 2014 farm bill contained programs beneficial to community-focused food systems. Thanks in part to their efforts, the final measure contains \$20 million for doubling the value of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps) and creating a program to provide seniors with vouchers for purchases from farmers markets. It also makes available research funding for farmers seeking to add value to their products, and for communities that want to develop community food projects.

NSAAS has been working with state officials and local farm groups throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic region to compile a toolbox of best practices to help farmers identify and seize new channels for marketing their vegetables, fruit, dairy, and other locally grown products.

There is evidence that such projects yield benefits that extend to the entire farm sector in a state. Research from Pennsylvania State University shows that for every dollar of increased direct farm sales in the six New England states, an associated \$5 of growth is seen in total farm sales, and an even greater \$9 is generated farther south, in Delaware, Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania. The boost in total revenue associated with direct farm sales is not seen in other parts of the United States, and has prompted interest among state legislators across the region to collaborate on policies that will facilitate the practice among local producers.

“NSAAS helps us network and learn what other states and provinces are doing about the local food movement, farm-to-school, dairy and water issues, and even emergency management,” said Vermont State Representative Carolyn Partridge, who chairs the Vermont House Committee on Agriculture and Forest Products and serves as co-chair of NSAAS.

Vermont leads the nation in the availability and consumption of locally produced food. Partridge credits Vermont’s investment in its Working Lands Enterprise and Farm to Plate initiatives, two state-based programs aimed at boosting economic development, job creation, and access to local foods for Vermonters. “These investments have not only kept farms producing, they have resulted in an increase of more than 2,200 jobs in the last four years,” she said.

NSAAS has hosted meetings that offer members an opportunity to showcase these and other model approaches and to brainstorm new strategies to help rural communities prosper.

Supporting Communities

Other workshops have highlighted efforts among states to put their money where their residents’ mouths are through enabling legislation for farm-to-school, farm-to-hospital, farm-to-institution, and farm-to-prison programs.

NSAAS’s mission over time has encompassed a wide range of issues affecting rural communities.

New Hampshire State Representative Tara Sad noted that in recent years, agricultural communities across the country have faced a variety of challenges, from loss of dairy farms and lack of profitability in the animal agriculture sector to zoonotic diseases. Sad frequently calls on NSAAS’ policy director, Dr. Carolyn Orr, for research and analysis, and to make sense of complex federal rules, including the new FDA Food Safety Modernization Act and state-introduced legislation calling for mandatory labeling of products made with genetically modified ingredients.

“In the eight years I have been a member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives, I can think of no organization that has helped me perform my job as chair of the Environment and Agriculture Committee as much as NSAAS,” said Sad. “In New Hampshire, House members have no staff. NSAAS is my staff, my consultant, my advisor. Without NSAAS, I would be a much less-effective legislator.”



Photo courtesy of Maine Yankee

Planning for the Safe Transport of Spent Nuclear Fuel

On a quiet field in the small coastal community of Wiscasset, Maine, a large cement pad supports 64 massive concrete canisters filled with highly radioactive waste in need of a permanent home. The waste is a by-product of a quarter century of power production at the decommissioned Maine Yankee nuclear plant, and one of around 80 stockpiles of spent fuel nationwide.

Since the rejection of Nevada's Yucca Mountain as a long-term repository for the spent fuel from U.S. commercial reactors, the future of the waste has been in limbo. Recently, Congress has been considering a proposal to reenergize stalled plans to find a long-term storage site; if implemented, it will rely on a complex network of state and local emergency responders coordinated by CSG/ERC's affiliate organization, the Northeast High-Level Radioactive Waste Transportation Task Force.

For two decades, the task force has collaborated with federal, state, and local emergency responders in 10 northeastern states to develop a plan to smoothly and safely transport spent fuel along the region's roads and railways. The task force participated in the Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future, a group of independent experts formed by President Barack Obama in 2010 to devise a new strategy for permanent storage. The commission

released a report in 2012 that would create a pilot project to begin removing spent nuclear fuel from decommissioned nuclear plants by 2021. The pilot is contained in a bill, currently being considered in the U.S. Senate, that builds on the commission's efforts.

If approved, the program would be welcome news for communities hosting the Northeast's five decommissioned plants, including Maine Yankee — a number that will increase to six at the end of 2014, when the Vermont Yankee plant, located along the Connecticut River in the southeastern corner of the state, is scheduled to shut down. The former plants are housing more than 15,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel. This is in addition to the 24 reactors in operation at 14 sites, whose waste stockpiles continue to grow.

Unintended Consequences

The federal government had never intended for the waste to remain scattered across the country indefinitely; in fact, spent fuel storage pools at commercial nuclear power plants were designed to hold waste for only a few years. The 1954 Atomic Energy Act required that spent fuel from commercial reactors be shipped to a reprocessing plant and recycled into new fuel. But for a variety of reasons, commercial reprocessing never succeeded in the United States.

By 1982, the Nuclear Waste Policy Act ordered the U.S. Department of Energy to investigate a long-term geologic repository, and the federal Nuclear Waste Trust Fund has collected \$37 billion to fund it; but since the rejection of Yucca Mountain in 2009, the future of the waste has been uncertain.

In the 1980s, nuclear plant operators began to store their excess waste in dry casks once they exhausted the space in their spent fuel pools. The casks can securely hold the waste for a century, but storage is expensive. For Maine Yankee, the cost comes to around \$8 million a year, footed by taxpayers, said Uldis Vanags, director of the task force.

In the interim, the piles of waste continue to grow at the 100 nuclear reactors still in operation nationwide, and the question of where to store the material safely becomes more critical. The U.S. General Accounting Office estimates the nation is home to some 75,000 metric tons of radioactive waste, deposited in sites across 35 states. This quantity is expected to double by 2055.

The planning process would provide the critical experience needed to negotiate the movement of massive dry casks, which are typically 20 feet tall and can weigh as much as 360,000 pounds. The casks are composed of concrete or other materials that shield workers and the public against radiation escaping from the spent fuel, which is stored in stainless steel canisters that are welded shut to prevent leaks. Depending on the type of casks used, specific protocols will need to be followed when preparing the waste for transport. For example, the steel canisters at Maine Yankee are specially designed to be removed from their dry casks and fitted into a special transportation cask for movement on trucks or by rail. The discarded dry casks will then be disposed of as low-level waste.

“States can look at what kind of emergency response capability they need just to go to the railhead,” said Vanags. “So there is quite a bit of planning that we can do, even though there’s no final destination for the waste yet.”

“This planning builds cooperation,” said Vanags. “It makes sure states have what they need for emergency response capability, so their citizens and leaders can be comfortable with all of these materials being transported on their highways, railways, and waterways.”

— Uldis Vanags, Director, Northeast High-Level Radioactive Waste Transportation Project

The Importance of Preparation

The U.S. Senate bill, if approved, would not immediately solve the problem of spent fuel storage, given that the siting process for a centralized repository could take years, if not decades. But it would be an important first step, said Vanags. The pilot would consolidate the waste from defunct reactors, creating cost savings and testing the logistics of transporting the fuel.

Most important for the local economy, removing the fuel from the defunct plants would enable new development. “Wiscasset, Maine, is a great site, but no one is going to build there with spent nuclear fuel,” said Vanags, who served as a nuclear safety advisor for the state of Maine for 11 years, and as the state nuclear engineer for Vermont.

The task force is funded by a cooperative grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, which also funds three other regional groups—in the southeast, Midwest, and West — that have been planning for transportation of spent nuclear fuel since 1993. Each state has its own requirements for the transport of the waste along its highways and railways, and forging collaboration and trust across borders and communities takes time, he said.

“This planning builds cooperation,” said Vanags. “It makes sure states have what they need for emergency response capability, so their citizens and leaders can be comfortable with all of these materials being transported on their highways, railways, and waterways.”

States on a Mission

Boosting Local Economies through International Trade

For one small Delaware-based manufacturer, a little help from the state's international trade office literally went a long way.

The company, Analtech, Inc., supplies thin-layer chromatography plates that are sold to more than 70 countries for use in food safety, forensic science, pharmaceutical development, environmental testing, industry, and agriculture. Analtech's executives have long known the importance of international trade, which represents 30 percent of sales and sustains a workforce of 15, said Steven Miles, the company's general manager.

But it wasn't until Miles traveled with his colleagues to Brazil in 2011 on their first-ever trade mission, sponsored by the Delaware Office for International

director of sales and marketing. "Phone calls are too limiting when doing business development. Outside of the U.S., clients still want to know who they are buying from on a personal level." Since then, company officials have had similar results following trade missions to India, Korea, and the Middle East. In 2013, Grant participated in Arab Lab, the largest technology show serving the Middle East and Africa, India, Asia, and Europe. With support from the ETC's foreign trade representative in Dubai, Analtech was able to hire a network of distributors there. Grant will be returning to Dubai this year to work on the leads generated by his distributors.

Making productive connections between local businesses and foreign markets is the overarching

"The ETC has enabled Delaware to access markets through ETC's collective power that we would otherwise not have been able to enter on our own."

— David Máthé, Export Trade Director, Delaware

Trade with help from CSG/ERC's Eastern Trade Council (ETC), that he witnessed how critical face-to-face meetings are for establishing meaningful ties with clients abroad. The trip was made possible by a State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration, which funds efforts by state economic development agencies to help small businesses stay competitive.

During that trip back in 2011, Analtech executives held a series of in-person meetings with potential buyers. It quickly became apparent that the gatherings fostered a level of personal rapport and trust that is impossible to forge over a few conference calls. Following the visit, the company was able to significantly increase its exports to Brazil.

"It was a revelation," said Ken Grant, Analtech's

goal of the ETC, composed of directors of international trade offices in 11 northeastern states. In recent years, ETC has led 15 trade missions to nine countries, including Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Poland, Sweden, Germany, Turkey, South Africa, China, and the Czech Republic.

ETC members meet quarterly and work collectively to increase regional export success and trade-related job creation, and to strengthen the region's global competitiveness. Members share trade information, analysis, and best practices; jointly promote exports of goods and services; and advocate for federal trade-promotion programs and policies that will benefit the region. ETC partners include economic development agencies, state legislatures, industry groups, business associations, state international develop-



ment organizations, federal and international trade stakeholders, trade-related transportation agency programs, and academic institutions.

“Regional collaboration in export trade promotion is a hallmark of the Eastern Trade Council,” said David Máthé, Delaware’s export trade director. “Delaware has benefited greatly from our active involvement in the ETC. From offering shared-trade offices to participation in joint trade missions, the ETC has enabled Delaware to access markets through ETC’s collective power that we would otherwise not have been able to enter on our own.”

Over the years, ETC’s unique role as facilitator between the public and private sectors has gained more urgency, as businesses in the Northeast increasingly look to foreign buyers for their products in an ever more competitive marketplace. Last year, 16 states set new records for export sales, with 10 additional states experiencing merchandise export growth, including 5 in the Northeast.

“These export numbers show that for more and more American companies, selling internationally is critical to growing their businesses and strengthening our economy,” said U.S. Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker in a recent statement. Every \$1 billion in exports supports nearly 5,000 jobs nationwide, she said. “With more than 95 percent of the world’s potential consumers residing outside our borders, exports will continue to be an important driver of the local and national economy.”

In the cutthroat world of global manufacturing, companies need to take advantage of every available tool to maintain their market share and grow, said Miles, Analtech’s general manager. “Some of the greatest resources we have are the individuals who can help connect Delaware businesses with customers, distributors, and partners around the

world and elected officials who can raise the profile of our state on the international stage,” he said.

Over the years, through trade missions and research, and by promoting policies at the federal level that benefit regional companies, ETC has helped more than 130 companies across the Northeast establish and maintain international markets for their products.

“I cannot overemphasize the important role our elected officials play in helping our Delaware businesses in the global marketplace,” said Miles. “When we travel to visit with current and potential distributors, they consistently express that they are impressed by three things: the quality of our U.S. made products, that we meet with them face to face, and the fact that our elected officials have visited their country and support our efforts.”

An ETC consultant recently concluded a regional survey and cluster analysis focused on the aerospace industry, with the goal of developing several export-promotion projects based on the report’s recommendations. The board hopes the research will help broaden market access for small and medium-size businesses in the sector.

Below: ETC’s first trade mission to South Africa (Photo by Véronique Cavaillier).



With Gratitude: Members Moving on

Crafting Better Public Policy

Pennsylvania State Representative Chris Ross

Ask Pennsylvania State Representative Chris Ross what his biggest takeaway has been from his extensive leadership at CSG/ERC, and the conversation will likely turn to the benefit of looking beyond one's borders. Sometimes, he said, the most effective legislative strategy might come from far away.



This was an insight Ross gained early in his nearly two decades serving residents of eastern Pennsylvania's 158th District, when he became a member and then chair of CSG's Committee on Suggested State Legislation (SSL). The position required him to review scores of bills from states across the country that offered innovative strategies for tackling issues that often were not yet on legislators' radar in Pennsylvania.

"The work that we did with SSL was fascinating," said Ross, who currently chairs the Pennsylvania House Commerce Committee and plans to retire at the end of this year. "You're looking at issues that have percolated to the surface elsewhere that you haven't yet had to deal with, so you get to see early on what you're going to have to address going forward."

In 2005, Ross assumed a leadership role in a project that would engage lawmakers across the region and contribute to his environmental legacy in Pennsylvania. He and colleagues from several states were concerned about the growing number of used computers and televisions being tossed in the trash, and the lack of a federal policy to address the issue. That year, research from the U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency revealed that discarded electronic products, known as e-waste, comprised the fastest-growing component of the consumer waste stream. Ross and others asked CSG/ERC's Energy and Environment Program to convene industry stakeholders to see if they could reach agreement on a uniform approach to managing e-waste that safeguarded the environment — one that could be adopted in a number of states.

On display in Ross's office is a framed copy of the outcome of that effort: Public Act 108, the Covered Device Recycling Act, enacted in 2010. The project, a collaborative effort with the Northeast Recycling Council, brought together more than 100 manufacturers, retailers, recyclers, and environmental groups, and over two dozen officials from ERC states.

"E-waste was huge," said Ross, who currently serves as co-chair of CSG/ERC's Energy and Environment Committee. "Having the strength in numbers to get all of the key players in a room together and explain their positions and do it in an iterative process is really a technique that I've used in the legislature here," he said.

During his nine terms in the Pennsylvania House, Ross authored 28 bills that have become law, including the state's landmark Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard of 2004, which made Pennsylvania the sixteenth state to require that utilities derive an increasing amount of power from renewable sources, such as wind and solar, over time. The legislation attracted manufacturers of wind turbines and installers of solar power, and led to a dramatic increase in jobs in clean energy industries.

"Chris Ross has been a valuable friend of CSG/ERC," said Representative Bob Godfrey, deputy speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives and former national CSG chair. "I will miss his friendliness, intelligence, and commitment both nationally and regionally."

New York State Senator Carl Marcellino, chair-elect of CSG, added that Ross "is a gentleman and a fine public servant. His service will be missed, as will he."

Supporting Local Foods and Healthy Communities

Connecticut State Representative Pam Sawyer

Throughout her 22 years in the Connecticut House, Representative Pam Sawyer has been on a mission to help residents of the state's rural communities succeed. Even the chickens.

That's because healthy chickens produce abundant eggs, which are a cheap source of complete protein and often serve as a staple in the diets of low-income families. Connecticut farmers produce enough eggs to supply consumer demand in the state, ensuring regular access to a high-quality, home-grown product.

Keeping local production and the associated jobs is so important to Sawyer that when a planned investment of several million dollars in the state's egg farms threatened to go sour, she took action. The investor, a major producer, was considering moving its business elsewhere amid criticism that its production methods would not offer chickens cage-free environments. Through research provided by the University of Connecticut and by CSG/ERC's agriculture program, the Northeast States Association for Agriculture Stewardship (NSAAS), Sawyer learned that new technologies being used to maintain chicken populations were providing the animals with better welfare than cage-free methods and produced high-quality eggs.

Based on her new knowledge, Sawyer and her colleagues in the legislature wrote letters of support to the company, which opted to proceed with its planned operations in Connecticut.



“ERC educated me about the broad issues that were occurring,” said Sawyer. “Because I had that understanding, I was able to work with the University of Connecticut and other legislators to expand their knowledge, and we were able to show significant support for the egg farmers.”

Thanks in part to their efforts, the number of poultry farms in Connecticut rose by 20 percent between 2007 and 2012.

There have been other rural challenges. Before the chickens, it was the milk cows. Back in 2007, dairy farms were going out of business at an alarming rate due to a dramatic drop in milk prices. Farmers were losing money on milk sales because of high energy and transportation costs.

Working with NSAAS, Sawyer brainstormed with her colleagues, who decided to offer the state's dairy farmers a one-time, \$5 million appropriation to help them buy seed and feed and pay off their electric bills. The money enabled producers to stay afloat, and led to further discussions about creative ways to help them lower their energy costs by installing wind and solar power.

“The outreach from NSAAS has been very positive and fruitful because most legislators get swamped with their local issues—and it's nice to know there is a friend out there who will aid with problem solving,” said Sawyer.

During her tenure in the legislature, Sawyer has held multiple positions, including deputy House Republican leader. She has worked to forge bipartisan support for farmland preservation, created a fund for small towns, and sponsored a safe-haven law permitting a mother who cannot care for her newborn to leave it with a hospital emergency room, where staff will provide treatment and ensure that the child is placed with an appropriate caregiver through a state agency.

“Representative Sawyer's efforts for rural communities will be missed, but we can be pretty certain that even though she is leaving the legislature, she will still be making a difference in Connecticut in some way,” said NSAAS Director Carolyn Orr.

Seizing the Opportunity to Serve
Pennsylvania State Senator Michael Brubaker

For Michael Brubaker, a two-term senator from Pennsylvania's 36th District, a varied career in public service started years ago, when opportunity literally knocked on the front door of his home in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.



The caller explained that a seat had opened up on the local sewer and water board, and that Brubaker, who at the time was running a successful agricultural consulting firm, was being asked to fill it.

"I had no idea what they did, but I said yes," said Brubaker. His stint on the board led to a decade of service on the Township Board of Supervisors in Warwick, Pennsylvania. He eventually served as chairman of that board, and later of the statewide Association of Township Supervisors, where he met counterparts from across Pennsylvania.

Brubaker frequently held coffee roundtables in people's homes, which gave him critical insight about issues that mattered most to them. The value of informal, face-to-face conversations informed Brubaker's work years later, when he was elected to the state Senate, where he represents a largely rural district with more than 250,000 constituents.

On his first day in office, Brubaker was appointed to chair the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. Soon after, he conducted eight listening sessions across the state, which is how one day he

found himself in a meeting with constituents in Philadelphia's inner city that would have a profound impact on his Senate work. During the meeting, the conversation quickly turned to matters concerning access to food. Some of the people who lived in the neighborhood did not know whether they would have food to eat when they went home that night, despite the fact that they lived in a state that is a major agricultural producer.

"Even though we had ample food production in Pennsylvania, we didn't have affordability," said Brubaker, who currently chairs the Senate Finance Committee. One in eight households in the state is "food insecure," and one in five households with children does not have sufficient resources to feed its members.

The next year, Brubaker formed the Hunger Caucus, which engages state, federal, and local governments to work with communities to raise awareness of hunger issues and address their underlying causes. In 2010, the caucus formed a "hunger garden" on a 1,000-foot strip of land adjacent to the state capitol building, which supplies fresh produce to local food banks and soup kitchens. The garden is staffed by volunteers and supported by donations.

During his tenure in the Senate, Brubaker, who plans to retire at the end of this year, found that interacting with colleagues from other states would prove critical to his work.

"Senator Brubaker's ability to bring together people with a wide diversity of backgrounds and interests will be missed at NSAAS meetings," said Carolyn Orr, ERC's agriculture and rural policy analyst.

As a member of CSG/ERC, Brubaker relished the opportunity to learn how members from other states built consensus in their chambers on particular issues, and to reflect on why certain bills failed.

"ERC is an excellent environment for that cross-pollination," he said. "ERC is the perfect environment where you can go and build trust with other members."

Overcoming Barriers to Quality Health Care
New Hampshire State Representative Laurie Harding

Ten years ago, New Hampshire State Representative Laurie Harding was a seasoned health care professional who was frustrated by the financial, political, and administrative barriers preventing her patients from accessing critical services.



As a registered nurse, Harding has cared for the elderly, people with chronic diseases, and individuals dealing with substance abuse and mental health issues. For patients in dire need of a variety of therapies, identifying a qualified professional could be daunting.

Time and again, Harding witnessed people with addiction and mental health concerns being denied appropriate care due to the lack of services and a dearth of licensed professionals who knew how to address a range of needs. The state's licensing process had created "silos of delivery," which favored practitioners specialized in treating people with either addition or mental health challenges, but not both.

"I realized that many of the health care rules and regulations were made by people who really didn't understand the health care environment," said Harding. "I wanted to run for office to be in a position to tell stories about how legislation would impact patients and their providers."

Following her election to the New Hampshire House in 2004, Harding sought to implement the kinds of informed policies that were absent in the field. She was appointed to the House Executive

Departments and Administration Committee, where one of her first projects was to include a provision in the state's drug and alcohol counseling laws that would enable people with certain types of clinical experience to obtain a license to treat people with both addiction and mental health issues.

Later, she co-sponsored a statewide prescription monitoring program, drawing on research performed by CSG's Justice Center. The program, which will be up and running later this year, will allow health care clinicians to track patterns of use that might indicate substance abuse. New Hampshire was one of only two states without such a program.

Harding, who chairs CSG/ERC's Health Committee, also incorporated language devised by the Justice Center into two measures that allow counties to develop specialized courts permitting judges to provide alternative sentences for nonviolent defendants who suffer from substance abuse or mental health challenges. The courts enable individuals to access the treatment they need while protecting the community and reducing recidivism.

"I am grateful to ERC for helping legislators like me who come to elected office with a lot of professional experience but not always a lot of political and policy experience — helping us to see the bigger picture, and to learn to appreciate how much benefit there is in meeting, and sharing our problem-solving strategies with members from other states," said Harding, who will retire from the legislature this year.

Harding recalled how she and her colleagues on the House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee relied on research provided by ERC Health Policy Consultant Ellen Andrews, whose report, "Value Over Volume," offered tools to assist policymakers seeking to reign in escalating health care costs and improve the quality of care.

"Laurie brings great energy and real-world experience to her work in health policy. Health care is complicated, but Laurie knows how legislation and budgets impact the overall system. Her insights will be greatly missed," said Andrews.

The CSG/ERC Annual Meeting

- Hear from Leading Experts
- Sharpen Your Skills
- Network with Peers

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The CSG/ERC Annual Meeting provides one of the single best opportunities you will have to meet with colleagues and hear from leading experts on issues of importance to you.

For more information, visit us at www.csgeast.org.

Participants in CSG/ERC's 2013 Annual Meeting in Fajardo, Puerto Rico. From top, left to right: MPP Dave Levac, Speaker, Ontario; Assemblyman Robin Schimminger, New York; Representative Bob Godfrey, Deputy Speaker, Connecticut; ERC 2013 Co-Chair Eduardo Bhatia, Senate President, Puerto Rico; Representative Carolyn Partridge, Vermont; Governor Alejandro García Padilla, Puerto Rico; CSG/ERC Black Caucus; Representative Deborah Hudson, Delaware; Representative Helene Keeley, Speaker Pro Tempore, Delaware; Senator Carl Marcellino, New York, CSG Chair-Elect; Senator Stan Rosenberg, Senate Majority Leader, Massachusetts; MNA Francois Ouimet, First Vice President, Québec; Representative Stephen Kulik, Massachusetts.



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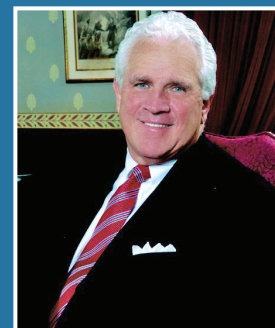
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