

THE LEGISLATOR

April 2013

A PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL BLACK CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS

**“TECHING”
IT TO THE
NEXT
LEVEL:
CHANGING
THE FACE OF
AMERICA’S
COMMUNITIES**

THE BAR HAS BEEN SET:
UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY
AND INNOVATION IN
ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

THE MEDICAID
EXPANSION BALL IS IN
YOUR COURT

ONLINE VOTER
REGISTRATION:
THE FUTURE ARRIVES



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APR 2013 CONTENTS

07



12



14



40



- 02 **TO OUR READERS**
By Lauren E. Williams
- 03 **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**
By Rep. Joe Armstrong (TN)
- 05 **FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**
What Happens when Technology Meets Opportunity in the Hands of a Young Adult?
By LaKimba B. DeSadier

HIGHLIGHTS

- 07 **FEATURE ARTICLE** By Michael K. Powell, President & CEO, National Cable and Telecommunications Association
"Teching" it to the Next Level: Changing the Face of America's Communities
- 09 **PERSPECTIVES** By Stefanie Brown James, Vestige Strategies, LLC
The Bar Has Been Set: Utilizing Technology and Innovation in Electoral Campaigns
- 12 **PERSPECTIVES** By Assemblymember Holly J. Mitchell (CA)
Online Voter Registration: The Future Arrives
- 14 **PERSPECTIVES** By Joy Johnson Wilson, Health Policy Director and Senior Federal Affairs Counsel, National Conference of State Legislatures
The Medicaid Expansion Ball is in Your Court
- 17 **PERSPECTIVES** By Kristal Lauren High, Editor in Chief, Politic365.com
Tech Engagement in the Age of Obama

FEATURED TOPICS

- 19 **SPOTLIGHT: CORPORATE ROUNDTABLE**
Data, Diabetes, and Disparities: Two local programs leverage technology in innovative ways to reduce healthcare disparities
By Noreen M. Clark, Ph.D., Director, National Program Office, Alliance to Reduce Disparities in Diabetes; Myron E. Wegman Distinguished University Professor, Director, Center for Managing Chronic Disease, University of Michigan
- 22 **LEGISLATIVE SCOOP**
NBCSL's Legislative Priorities Take Washington: NBCSL Visits the White House, Exchanges with Members of Congress
By Ajenai Clemmons
- 25 **LEGISLATOR HIGHLIGHTS**
NBCSL Members Supporting Technological Innovation
- 28 **EDUCATION**
Cyberbullying in the Classroom and Beyond: Solutions for State Lawmakers
By Lauren E. Williams
- 32 **BUSINESS, FINANCIAL SERVICES, AND INSURANCE**
E-Commerce and State Tax Reform
By Michael Belitzky
- 36 **ENERGY, TRANSPORTATION, AND THE ENVIRONMENT**
Growing a Sustainable Economy
By Brandt Thorington
- 40 **NBCSL EVENTS**
NBCSL's 36th Annual Legislative Conference Highlights
By Lauren E. Williams

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TO OUR READERS

POLICYMAKING FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

Almost everything we do involves technology.

From the simplest act of buying shoes to the more complicated task of filing taxes, we seem to log on to a computer, swipe a card, or use a phone application every day. We tend to welcome these advances because it can mean that we spend less time getting more accomplished. However, as with everything else in life, there are adverse outcomes to our increased use.

Some argue that our quality of life has been negatively impacted by a constant barrage of information. We have short attention spans, spend more time texting instead of engaging in conversation, and constantly place our personal data at risk due to online privacy concerns. Furthermore, technology has yet to be fully adopted by (*and made accessible to*) everyone.

Understanding that our lives will continue to be impacted by innovations in technology, it is important to examine policies surrounding technology and the different ways in which it can (*and will*) touch our communities. In this issue, we cover various topics related to advances in technology, including the encouraging results of online voter registration, the emerging concerns surrounding cyberbullying, and the potential effects of e-commerce. We also discuss the ever-present Digital Divide and its impact on the future of our communities.

Regardless of how we use and view technology, state legislators need to be cognizant of its influence on society. Just as often as our devices are updated, rapid improvements in technology require us to revisit our perspectives and fine tune our approaches to policymaking for the digital age.



Lauren E. Williams, MPA
Editor



CHOOSING TO ADVANCE: MAKING TECHNOLOGY AVAILABLE FOR ALL

The seamless integration of technology into our everyday lives is seemingly a given. We sync our legislative and professional calendars to our phones and use email reminders to make sure we get from point A to point B on time. We use GPS features to guide us around states and read legislation easily on our tablets and smartphones. So much of our work at the statehouse and in our districts is improved through the advancement of technology, but this resource is still not realized by all.

In fact, access to technology, be it at a desk or in the palm of our hands, is still a challenge for tens of millions of Americans, and is acute among minorities, low-income communities, and senior citizens. Although we have taken great steps to close the digital divide in the United States through lower cost services, cheaper mobile devices, tailored broadband plans, and greater educational outreach, the fact still remains that everyone cannot take full advantage of technology.

Why is that? Barriers to full technology adoption still exist.

These barriers are a matter of both infrastructure and personal choice. Physical barriers, such as limited broadband coverage in

rural and inner city areas, remain a problem. Increased technology infrastructure throughout the nation is underway. As lawmakers continue to work with public and private partners, intentional placement of this infrastructure can help to provide a more immediate solution. However, even if universal access is achieved, barriers of personal choice may still prohibit minority and low-income communities from total adoption. These barriers include cost, relevancy, and literacy. If all Americans are to have access to technology innovation, we must address each one of these issues concretely.

While the overall access to technology has improved, the ability of all America's families

to pay for this access has not. Poverty rates for Blacks and Hispanics still greatly exceed the national average. In 2010, 27.4% of Blacks and 26.6% of Hispanics were poor, compared to 9.9% of non-Hispanic Whites and 12.1% of Asians.¹ Furthermore, the median household income for Blacks in the United States was \$32,229 in 2011 as compared to the national median of \$50,054.² This is a nearly \$18,000 gap. A digital divide will continue to exist within our communities if there are no financial resources to help pay for it.

Poor and low-income families are like all families—they make financial choices. Many of these choices fall between much needed staples for everyday

survival and non-staples such as new technologies, clothing, entertainment, and the like. In a struggling economy, “luxury” items will always be passed over for necessities, no matter how “discounted” or “financially manageable” they are perceived to be. When deciding between a gallon of milk or new technology, for poor families, the choice is clear.

Technology must also be made relevant and understandable to users. An April 2012 Pew Study found that among adults who do not use the Internet, almost half of them choose not to go online because they don’t think the Internet is relevant to them. Another reason members of low-income and/or minority communities may not use technology is because they may not know how. About 80% of Americans (who do not use the Internet) say that they lack know-how about technology. Only 10% of these same Americans are interested in using Internet technologies in the future.

Examining current barriers to full technology adoption is critical. It helps us to see that reducing the cost of Internet

services is not the sole answer to closing the remaining digital divide. The gap will not be closed by a multimillion dollar literacy campaign or a slew of fresh new content aimed at minority communities. As state legislators and leaders in our communities, we must understand that the solution lies in a combination of these initiatives. Public policy does not exist within a vacuum and must be formulated through recognition of all related factors.

It is our obligation to pass and implement sweeping policies that not only broaden access, but also make it easier for our constituents to embrace, use, and “reach” these resources as well.

It is vital that we advocate for policies that increase telehealth, technology in schools, and broadband adoption. The same is true for those policies that support overall human welfare. Combining legislative efforts that use innovation to improve our everyday lives and lower the costs of necessities will prove beneficial in the future.

As we move into a seamless technological era in the United States, many understand the need for these gadgets and

processes. Their usefulness is a given. However, this question remains; how will we ensure that all Americans understand, use, and can afford them? We must begin these discussions at our statehouses and resolve these issues in our communities.



Rep. Joe Armstrong (TN)
President, NBCSL

1. National Poverty Center (2013). Poverty in the United States. The University of Michigan. Online: <http://www.npc.umich.edu/poverty/>.
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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TECHNOLOGY MEETS OPPORTUNITY IN THE HANDS OF A YOUNG ADULT?

America is in the midst of a technological storm. We have a sprawling e-culture that has left us with little time or opportunity to plan for how young people interact with technologies and tools that are vital to their social, educational, and civic lives. While these new gadgets and technologies have great potential to benefit youth and young adults from all social strata, it is clear that disparities in access have put us in danger of perpetuating current inequities.

According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project's *Digital Differences* (2012), there are persistent disparities between White, Blacks, and Hispanics in regard to Internet access—with use among Blacks and Hispanics at 71% and 68%, compared to 80% for Whites. Where bigger disparities exist is with regard to households that have high-speed Internet. Nationally, over 60% of households have high-speed access. According to a 2011 U.S. Department of Commerce report, *Exploring the Digital Nation-Computer and Internet Use at Home*, 70% of White households have high-speed Internet compared to 57% and 55% of Hispanic and Black households respectively. It

is important to note that a lack of high-speed Internet serves as a significant barrier to Internet use. The primary barrier to in-home high-speed Internet is cost. Teens living in households without high-speed access are less likely to receive the full benefits of the Internet. Due to the lack of Internet access at home, teens seem to turn to cell phones for web use, which contributes to a proliferation of cell phone ownership and use in urban communities. Most cell phone industry data indicate that at least 87% of Hispanic and Black adults own mobile phones compared to 80% for their White counterparts. Amongst all teens, ages 15-17, 83% have a cell phone (Pew

Internet & American Life Project, Gaming and Civic Engagement Survey of Teens/Parents, 2008).

Upon initial consideration, these numbers may appear encouraging to communities of color, but they also indicate disparities in access that have greater implications, including those surrounding education, social interaction, and civic engagement. In terms of education, a cell phone/smartphone is no substitute for in-home access to the Internet. While high-end smartphones provide expanded functionality, they are less able to support teens in fulfilling academic requirements. Therefore, teens from homes without Internet

access, particularly high-speed Internet, are at greater risk of under-performing academically as they have limited access to information. Even though a teen might access the Internet on his or her cell phone, it is very difficult to write a term paper on a mobile device.

Teens and young adults in America are heavy users of social networking platforms, limiting face-to-face interaction. For Black and Latino teens, social networks are an integral part of their daily lives. Their extensive use of the Internet, primarily

through mobile devices, as well as a heavy focus on applications, mobile-based entertainment, and gaming indicate a proclivity for technology. Unfortunately, this also indicates that Black and Latino youth are more inclined to engage in the aforementioned activities as opposed to using the Internet for educational or employment purposes. These disparities in usage and e-culture have the potential to create even greater divides in educational attainment and employment success between teens of color and their White counterparts. In addition to the challenges

associated with education and social networking, young people with limited or no access to technology and the Internet may be less inclined towards civic participation and engagement. The last two presidential elections have demonstrated that civic activities will continue to become more dependent upon technology. Without equal access, young people of color may have a lesser voice in the most important issues of our time and lower voter participation in the future.

Ultimately, legislators and their constituents must work to ensure that accessibility, affordability, and meaningful use of technology by teens and young adults are high priorities. Collectively, we should work to establish an effective e-culture. By being intentional about the integration of technology into our lives, we can avoid the potential destruction of the technological storm and instead harness its power to galvanize our young people. [L](#)

LaKimba B. DeSadier has served as the Executive Director for NBCSL since 2003. She has worked to promote the organization in state legislatures, as well as increase its membership and visibility nationwide.



“TECHING” IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL: CHANGING THE FACE OF AMERICA’S COMMUNITIES

By Michael K. Powell, President & CEO, National Cable and Telecommunications Association

With high-speed Internet access available to 95% of the country, and more than 90% of the U.S. population owning mobile devices or using a mobile

broadband connection, America has become a truly connected nation. From innovations in set-top boxes, smart technologies in homes, hospitals schools, in addition to the ever-increasing access to an array of mobile devices and applications, the majority of our population currently enjoys the benefits of technology to enhance and improve their everyday lives.

In the last four years, \$250 billion has been invested in America’s broadband infrastructure, but that represents just a fraction of the total economic impact the technology and telecommunications sectors have on our economy. The benefits of America’s tech revolution are

real, particularly for communities of color who were once on the wrong side of the digital divide.

TECHNOLOGY HELPS LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

During this country’s agricultural and industrial revolutions, African Americans were unable to capitalize on social and economic gains made by the broader society. The advent of the technological revolution, however, has provided an unobstructed pathway for our communities to become innovators and entrepreneurs, as well as tap new levels of unrealized potential. Furthermore, African Americans over-index in the use of mobile technologies and social media, representing a new area of market

concentration and potential economic growth for our communities.

Technological advancements of the past decade have enabled our families to stay better connected both at home and abroad. They allow us to explore new opportunities as online content creators in addition to establish and support digital enterprises. Not only are we using technology to find jobs or research answers to daily queries, but technology allows us to become more energy efficient, better manage our finances, and connect with each other in previously unheard of ways.



TECHNOLOGY KEEPS US CONNECTED – ECONOMICALLY, SOCIALLY AND POLITICALLY

Technological innovation is driving America's economy in the 21st century, and broadband Internet access has become the critical infrastructure of our day. It facilitates commerce and economic development, and can be leveraged to improve social and political outcomes. Whether we refer to technologies that help connect students to new educational opportunities through distance learning programs, or ground-breaking applications that enable people in rural communities to take advantage of mHealth and telemedicine to prevent or monitor serious health conditions (like diabetes and heart disease), technology has a profound ability to help us live better.

Beyond its economic and social benefits, technology has become the ultimate community-organizing tool. The dramatic impact social media and online mobilizing had on President Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaigns exemplifies the manner in which technology has changed the face of civic engagement in this country. Whereas people once relied on sit-ins and protests to achieve political impact, today a laptop, broadband connection, and social media serves as our everyday ballot box allowing ordinary

Americans to quickly mobilize to voice support or concerns about pending legislation or looming regulations.

STATE POLICYMAKERS ARE KEY TO INCREASED TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

Policymakers are uniquely positioned to ensure that we continue to support technological advances and employ a 21st century framework to problem solving. Whether the challenges we face as a nation pertain to finance, unemployment, commerce, healthcare or education, technology can help create more efficient and affordable outcomes.

State legislators should encourage their colleagues in Congress and the Federal Communications Commission to ensure robust spectrum delivery to the market so we can continue to innovate in this space. Cable operators have utilized unlicensed spectrum to deploy more than 100,000 Wi-Fi hotspots in communities across our country, enabling consumers to stay connected well beyond the home. Additionally, it is worth revisiting the current regulatory structure of our technology and telecommunications policies. If those policies are antiquated and do not take into consideration the advanced technology infrastructure we have available to us today, policymakers ought to consider revising or repealing them.

In addition to supporting infrastructure growth and eliminating regulatory barriers to innovation, state policymakers can play a critically important role in promoting technological adoption and digital literacy. By expounding upon the value proposition of technology to our communities, the country and the world, you can help set the tone for increased activity and engagement in this space.

In this new connected nation, we have an opportunity and obligation to ensure that our communities are well situated to take advantage of technological innovation. We are facing a watershed moment in our collective history that will allow us to enhance our country and improve lives. Together we can “tech” things to the next level. **L**



Michael K. Powell, former Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) from 2001 to 2005 and a member of the FCC for eight years, began his tenure as President & CEO of the National Cable and Telecommunications Association (NCTA) on April 25, 2011.

THE BAR HAS BEEN SET: UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

By Stefanie Brown James, Vestige Strategies, LLC

Prior to Governor Howard Dean's campaign for President in 2004, the idea of utilizing the Internet to raise massive amounts of money was basically laughable. This was especially true when you consider that the donors his campaign was soliciting via the Internet weren't the traditional millionaires and CEOs, but working class people who had a genuine interest in seeing their candidate reach the highest office in the land.

Dean ultimately had to withdraw his candidacy due to poor showings during the primary season, but his grassroots funding strategy raised almost \$50 million, with an average individual donation of just \$80. This set the stage for then-candidate, Barack Obama to

fine-tune Dean's strategy and completely demolish the idea of politics-as-usual for electoral campaigns.

So what does this have to do with state lawmakers? Two words: technology and innovation. Like peanut butter and jelly, milk and



cookies, or Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, technology and innovation are a perfect pair. In an ever-changing society where young people ages 18 to 29 had the strongest participation levels in the Black community in 2012, it is imperative for current and prospective elected officials to use new technologies and innovative ideas to stay connected with their communities.

While there are a multitude of ways technology and innovation may be used to register, educate, and mobilize voters to the polls, highlighted below are a few key examples of how the bar was set in 2012.

THE NECESSITY...

As partisan and non-partisan political campaigns become more sophisticated, access to a registered voter list management system is essential for a campaign's voter registration,

outreach and get-out-the-vote efforts. As a result of the *Help America Vote Act (HAVA)* passed by the United States Congress in 2002, states were required to compile an official voter database for the state by January of 2006. Consequently, many companies paired this compiled data with consumer data to create a comprehensive database that gives a clearer picture about the voters you are working to engage.

An online, voter database is a necessity for any organization or campaign that conducts a large-scale voter contact program. From identifying the issues and candidates voters care about to "cutting turf" for a volunteer canvass operation, this database is the most important tool in the world of electoral politics.

OLD TOOL, NEW TRICKS...

One of the most ambitious projects undertaken by the *Obama*

for America campaign in 2012 to reach supporters and voters digitally was the creation of the online organizing platform, *Dashboard*. With this revolutionary technology, staff, volunteers, and supporters were able to create individual profiles to help them better engage with people across the country. With *Dashboard*, users were able to use a myriad tools to bolster their work on the ground, such as keeping track of their field activities (i.e., number of doors knocked and phone calls made); joining groups to discuss a particular topic of interest; and sharing best practice tips.

Even with *Dashboard's* many uses, perhaps the most valuable function the online system provided was its customizable call tool that enabled a supporter anywhere in the country to log in to their account, obtain a script with phone numbers, and dial registered voters in a key



battleground states. The ease and convenience of this call tool mobilized thousands of supporters to call potential voters and has permanently advanced the level of engagement by campaigns.

WHERE'S YOUR BENCH?

As a state legislator, it is important to create a bench of leaders not just for your campaign, but for the community as well. If the five people you talk to the most can vividly remember the civil rights movement because all of them actually lived it, you have a problem. Identify talented young people who can serve as interns, coordinators, and consultants, etc., to help with your outreach efforts and technology needs. Oftentimes, students serve as a good population to from which to recruit. They can receive educational or community service credit, so be sure to have them confirm the options

and necessary requirements. Providing a young person with knowledge, a positive experience, and opportunities is one of the best investments you could ever make.


Another essential part of your bench is its skill and expertise. Just like professionals who must earn continuing education credits, your team must be trained (and re-trained) on the latest techniques to drive voters to the polls. This training should be interactive, held in-person whenever possible, and take place continuously throughout any campaign to ensure everyone is on the same page and resourced with the latest information.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS A SOCIAL MUST!

Gone are the days when you had to wait until the next morning to hear about breaking news or use an encyclopedia to research a topic. Media, especially the news, is a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week staple that can pass you by if you're not paying attention. But the most exciting thing about social media is its ability to scale down the world and place information at your fingertips. According to research conducted by *Google* and *GlobalHue*, African Americans use social media – especially *Twitter* and video sites – and own smartphones significantly more than other communities.

In this day and age, every public official should have an account on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram* to give and receive information to your constituents. Remember, however, it is imperative that you keep your online and social media profile updated and relevant—a perfect job for a trusted staff member or intern.

THE WORK CONTINUES...

At the end of the day, technology and innovation are only useful if they help you reach the people you are working to serve and support. By keeping your constituents at the forefront of your agenda, our communities will continue to progress and see meaningful change that will impact generations to come. 



Stefanie Brown James is the CEO of Vestige Strategies, LLC and served as the National African American Vote Director for the 2012 Obama for America campaign. Formerly, Stefanie served as the National Field Director and Director of the Youth & College Division for the NAACP. Visit her online at StefanieBrownJames.com or on Twitter @StefBrownJames.

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION: THE FUTURE ARRIVES

By Assemblymember Holly J. Mitchell (CA)

While California has the largest, most diverse electorate in the nation, we rank near the bottom in the percentage of eligible citizens who are actually registered to vote. Unfortunately, those who are registered do not reflect our state's diversity. As a result, California elected leaders, academicians, and

philanthropists have joined forces in an effort to identify structural barriers to California's voter registration system.

A new trend in voting rights is clearly underway across the country: online voter registration. While no states or territories allow citizens to cast votes or submit ballots online, 12 states now allow online voter registration, and three states are considering doing so. Of the 12, only New York and Maryland have higher percentages of African-American residents than California, which suggests important potential impacts for African Americans.

California launched its online voting registration system last September, after the 2012 Presidential and most legislative primaries. Prior to

the implementation of online registration, general registration had begun trending toward a two percent increase in the first half of 2012. Nonetheless, a University of California at Davis study concluded that the increase in those registered to vote in the November general election was unprecedented, adding more than 510,000 new voters to the rolls. Approximately 49% of both general and youth registrants used the online option to register to vote—signifying that this became the dominant method of registration for Californians once implemented.

By far, the most significant outcome of online registration appears to be the number of new African-American voters it brought into California's electorate. Of the 38,000 African Americans who registered

between September 2012 and the registration deadline on October 22nd, 30,000 actually voted – nearly 80%. This may well change ballot outcomes in future elections and on voter initiatives, effecting progressive changes in taxation and social justice issues such as the state's "three strikes law."

Clearly, those who are motivated to register online do turn out to vote, especially as compared to those who sign up through voting registration drives (e.g., door-to-door, mall sign-ups). First-time voters under the age of 25 are most likely to take advantage of the online option. Their representation among overall registered voters rose one percent—easily enough to change election outcomes in close local, statewide, and even national elections. Research confirms

what has long been common sense: Ease of access improves voter turn-out, especially in communities with less access to other resources, including alternative voting methods (e.g., mobile units).

The United States' political electorate has become so polarized since the Vietnam War that elections are increasingly decided by a fraction of one percent of the ballots cast. Districts that were historically considered "safe" for one party or the other continue to undergo tectonic shifts in class and ethnic population as the "browning" of America re-shapes political constituencies. Nowhere are the impacts of those shifts more acutely felt than in African-American communities. The 2000 presidential campaign between Vice President Al Gore and Governor George W. Bush is the classic example of how close modern elections can be, how important the individual voter is, and how local voting sectors can determine the outcomes in national races. The 2012 re-election of President Barack Obama is yet another example highlighting the importance of each vote. Several states were initially too close to call, resulting in weeks of re-calculation and review.

Unprecedented campaigns to suppress the African-American vote through intimidation,

disqualification, and disinformation, were brazenly carried out nationwide during the past presidential election, further demonstrating that African-American voters continue face obstacles at the polls. Homelessness and incarceration further contributed to the under-registration of African Americans. The Supreme Court's 2010 decision in the *Citizens United* case aggravated the situation by banning limits on corporate spending in elections. Voter apathy and alienation, obscured by the presidential elections of 2008 and 2012 but still apparent in local elections, behooves African-American communities and their elected leaders to seek new ways to facilitate their communities' participation in elections.

For all of these reasons, it is crucial that online registration become a tool of enfranchisement. The Internet is a useful tool that allows our democracy to function better. It also offers the prospect of more accurate and targeted tracking of voter rights violations as well as documentation of census undercounts that cheat minorities of votes through gerrymandered re-apportionments.

Yet, many members within our communities fear security risks associated with the gathering of personal data through online registration, as well as the prospect of "paperless" balloting they believe could lead to stolen elections. Those fears are not groundless, but they can and should be addressed through vigilance and the smart use of technology. Making registration more accessible to everyone through the Internet is essential. It gives the power of the ballot box to everyone, and "everyone" includes us. [L](#)



Elected in 2010, Holly J. Mitchell represents the 54th Assembly District, which stretches from South Los Angeles to UCLA. She chairs California's Legislative Black Caucus and the Assembly's Budget Sub-committee on Health & Human Services. Previously, she headed child advocacy and Black women's health organizations, and has staffed State Senator Diane Watson, the California Senate's Health & Human Services Committee and the Western Center for Law and Poverty. She is a UC Riverside alumna, a Coro Fellow, and a mother.



THE MEDICAID EXPANSION BALL IS IN YOUR COURT

By Joy Johnson Wilson, Health Policy Director and Senior Federal Affairs Counsel
National Conference of State Legislatures

March Madness had nothing on “Medicaid Expansion” hoopla! Even now, there are states in the game and on the bubble. Some are looking to next year and other are not even in the game at all. There are maps with colors, stripes, dots, checks, plaids, and various combinations of such trying to provide a visual of the state of the decision-making process and progress to date. Thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court, state legislators have become perhaps the most critical players in the game.

When it comes to the Medicaid expansion, governors usually have to seek legislative approval. Spectators from across the country sit on the edge of their seats waiting for next moves by state legislatures and the federal government. The next few months will prove to be very interesting.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MEDICAID EXPANSION MANDATE?

President Barack Obama signed two groundbreaking bills in March 2010, the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* and the *Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act*, signed into law March 23 and 30 respectively. These laws, commonly referred to as the *Affordable Care Act*



(ACA), include a plan to extend affordable, comprehensive health insurance coverage to most Americans. The ACA accomplishes this mission by

1. maintaining and building upon the existing employer-based health care system;
2. supplementing that coverage with private coverage for individuals with income between 138% and 400% of the federal poverty level (FPL);
3. making coverage affordable by providing premium and cost-sharing assistance;
4. expanding Medicaid to able-bodied, childless adults age 19-64 who are not pregnant and that have income at or below 138% of the federal poverty level, and providing states enhanced federal matching for new eligibles over a ten-year period, including 100% reimbursement for the first three years;
5. providing tax credits to small businesses that purchase qualifying products for their employees;
6. creating a health insurance exchange, now referred to as a “marketplace,” in every state to provide a one-stop shopping experience for people seeking qualified coverage in either the individual or small group insurance markets; and
7. reforming health insurance rules, including the prohibition of pre-existing condition exclusions and

establishing rate review and reforms.

To make the new program work financially, the Act also requires individuals to have health insurance coverage or to pay a penalty for non-compliance (individual mandate); large employers (employers with more than 50 full-time equivalent employees) to provide comprehensive, affordable coverage to their employees or pay a penalty for each employee that seeks coverage through the marketplace (employer responsibility); and states to expand Medicaid coverage to the new adult category or lose their Medicaid funding.

Soon after the bills were signed into law, a number of legal challenges arose. Twenty-six state attorneys general, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) and several others challenged the constitutionality of the individual mandate and the Medicaid expansion in Federal Court. In June 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the challenges, finding that Congress exceeded its authority under the Spending Clause of the U.S. Constitution with respect to the mandated expansion of the Medicaid program. The Court found that when states originally agreed to participate in the Medicaid program, they could not have anticipated such a major

expansion. As part of the opinion, the Court prohibits the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) from withholding Medicaid funds from a state for failure to comply with the expansion to the new adult category, essentially making the Medicaid expansion an option.

HOW DID U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES RESPOND?

Shortly after the decision, HHS issued guidance on how to proceed under an optional Medicaid expansion. The HHS guidance clarified that

1. the opinion does not affect other aspects of the Medicaid expansion in the ACA;
2. states that adopt the Medicaid expansion may decide to stop providing the coverage at any time and can go in and out of the expansion at will;
3. the enhanced matching funds are provided for specific years in the statute, so if a state chooses to start its expansion program in the years after the 100% enhanced match are over, the state cannot reach back and receive higher matching rates for years when it was not participating; and
4. HHS will not permit phasing in of the expansion by year, by income level, or by demographic factors. HHS continues to provide guidance and to review proposals put forth by states.

STATE GAME PLANS

Medicaid expansion will require some state resources, and there are no guarantees that the new marketplaces and the new program will be successful. So as in basketball, states are like teams taking different approaches to the Medicaid expansion. States where the governor and legislature agree on the game plan are “going all the way” with the expansion (Maryland). Others where the coach and the team cannot agree on the game plan may study some more plays and try next year (Alabama), and some may decide they are in the wrong league and sit the whole thing out (Louisiana). At the same time, state budgets tend

to be tenuous and the federal government can be fickle.

The extremely generous enhanced match is enticing and the expansion of coverage is important to many states. If states do not approve the Medicaid expansion, this will slow efforts to extend coverage and improve our nation’s overall status. **L**



Joy Johnson Wilson is the Health Policy Director and a Senior Federal Affairs Counsel at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). NCSL represents the legislatures of the 50 states, its commonwealths, territories and the District of Columbia. As Senior Federal Affairs Counsel, she assists with overall government relations and public affairs activities in the NCSL Washington Office. As Director of Health Policy, she designs and implements the lobbying strategy for the conference on health care issues. She also staffs the NCSL Task Force on Federal Health Reform Implementation.

MEDICAID EXPANSION: PROS AND CONS

| EXPANSION - PROS | EXPANSION - CONS | NO EXPANSION - PROS | NO EXPANSION - CONS |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Provides affordable, comprehensive coverage to low-income workers who would otherwise likely be uninsured and increase the number of healthy workers.</p> <p>Most consultant reports point to economic growth due to growth in employment and investment in the health care sector.</p> <p>Less state spending on supplemental health programs.</p> <p>HHS is showing some willingness to work with states to address special circumstances and to review new ideas.</p> | <p>Will the federal government honor the enhanced Medicaid match over the 10-year period?</p> <p>Will the Medicaid program take a major hit when/if Congress agrees on additional budget cuts or entitlement reform?</p> <p>Will the premiums and cost-sharing be too high despite the assistance?</p> <p>What if a state doesn't have enough players to make the health insurance marketplaces feasible?</p> | <p>Allows state time to prepare for 2017 when states can develop their own health reform program and apply for a federal waiver to replace the Affordable Care Act with the state initiative.</p> <p>State can focus on other Medicaid reform efforts without concern about expansion costs.</p> | <p>If a state does not approve the expansion to the new adult population, individuals with incomes below 100% FPL will not be eligible for Medicaid OR to purchase coverage through the new marketplaces.</p> <p>Makes it harder for a state to improve health status and outcomes.</p> <p>Assistance to hospitals that serve a disproportionate share of people with low-incomes is scheduled to be reduced beginning in 2014 when the Affordable Care Act becomes fully implemented. The ACA assumed many of the people they served would be on Medicaid in 2014.</p> <p>Increased state costs because the outreach effort brings in more people who were already Medicaid-eligible, but not enrolled. No enhanced federal match for them.</p> |

TECH ENGAGEMENT IN THE AGE OF OBAMA

By Kristal Lauren High, Editor in Chief, Politic365.com

Six years ago, on February 10, 2007, then U.S. Senator Barack Obama made an announcement that would forever change the course of political engagement in this country: “In the shadow of the Old State Capitol, where Lincoln once called on a divided house to stand together, where common hopes and common dreams still live, I stand before you today to announce my candidacy for President of the United States.”

This declaration proved monumental—not only because it led to the election of America’s first Black president—but because it set the stage for a political campaign unrivaled by any this country had seen ever before. President Obama and his campaign team made history by appealing to the often uncoun- ted and under-represented members of our society: Blacks, Hispanics, young people, and women. In addition, they did so using tools of 21st century – blogs and social media. They turned the

community-organizing model on its head by applying grassroots mobilizing to Internet time and interfaces.

Social technologies and online media have now totally transformed the way we receive and use political information, and they have fundamentally altered the ways we can activate our communities to affect particular ends. *Twitter* has become the sounding board for political protests and *Facebook* is used as an organizing mechanism

of affinity groups. *Kick Starter* is a website that helps people fund causes they believe in, and *Change.org* allows people to create online campaigns to promote the issues they care about. Furthermore, hundreds, if not thousands, of new applications have been created that allow us to reach people in new ways, and African Americans have been at the forefront of adopting and using these tools of digital engagement.

Just as our tools have expanded, so too have our possibilities for connecting with new audiences. Especially when it comes to outreach among young people—who are already online in droves—the Internet provides a brave new space for us to communicate about the issues that matter most: healthcare, education, entrepreneurship and economic development, civic participation, the impact of changing demographics on our increasingly digital world, and socio-economic parity.

In taking up the mantle to relay the importance of these issues, blogs like *Jack and Jill Politics*, *Field Negro*, and *Michelle Obama Watch*, as well as online publications like *The Root* or *Politic365*, have combined political savvy and social commentary with current tech-tools to facilitate better the discourse around the importance of Black politics and the impact of “our issues” on the nation at



large. Even organizations like the NAACP and the National Urban League have taken to the Internet to reach broader constituencies and make policy and politics more accessible for the masses.

Some of the most compelling examples of the impact new media have on policy conversations in our communities include (1) the response to the untimely death of Florida teen Trayvon Martin; (2) the campaign against voter ID laws meant to disenfranchise the Black vote; and (3) the Get-out-the Vote efforts supporting President Obama's re-election.

After a blogger posted a story about Trayvon's murder and circulated a petition requesting that George Zimmerman be brought to justice, the story went viral, being shared across social networks and commented on by a variety of websites until it was eventually picked up by mainstream media. In the case of the campaign against voter ID laws, new coalitions were created, websites were erected, social media campaigns were designed, virtual town halls were conducted and online press conferences were held, all

in an effort to raise awareness about the issue and provide people with the tools to confront pending legislation in their states. Likewise, to help support President Obama's re-election bid, online voter registration tools were used to make it easier for people to get certified to vote, GPS-enabled mobile applications were created to help people find polling locations and make online contributions to President Obama's campaign, and photo sharing sites like *Instagram* and *Pinterest* were used to help visualize the various aspects of the campaign, giving people a different medium through which to interact with each other and the campaign.

These uses of new media and social technologies are but the beginning of how we can make policy and politics more relevant to people's everyday lives. To further the impact of these technologies and platforms, state elected officials can play an important role in making sure their constituents stay connected to issues of importance by using new media themselves. In addition to having active social media accounts, policymakers should consider implementing

blogs on their websites to help keep the people in their district updated on hot issues, pending legislation, and opportunities to get more engaged and participate in the democratic process. At the same time, policymakers should seek out publications that focus on African Americans, politics, and public policy, and develop opportunities to collaborate, either through interviews, sharing of content, hosting events, advertising, or other creative partnerships.

Social media and web-based technologies have ushered us into a brave new era, and together, we can continue to make history using these new media. [L](#)



Kristal Lauren High, Esq. is the founding Editor in Chief of *Politic365.com*, the nation's first online publication exclusively focused on politics and public policy from a multicultural point of view. Prior to launching *Politic365*, Kristal developed an expertise in broadband adoption among minority, low-income and underserved populations through her work with the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council and the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies' Media & Technology Institute.

DATA, DIABETES, AND DISPARITIES: TWO LOCAL PROGRAMS LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY IN INNOVATIVE WAYS TO REDUCE HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES

By Noreen M. Clark, Ph.D., Director, National Program Office, Alliance to Reduce Disparities in Diabetes; Myron E. Wegman Distinguished University Professor, Director, Center for Managing Chronic Disease, University of Michigan

National policies to reduce disparities often do not reflect the very real obstacles faced by those working to improve the quality of and access to care in challenging communities. For example, the lack of adequate federal and state requirements for sharing community-wide health data make identifying those populations most in need of interventions very difficult, furthering disparities. With the help of



technology, local programs that make up the Alliance to Reduce Disparities in Diabetes are finding ways to overcome care delivery barriers and could serve as models for national efforts to reduce diabetes disparities.

Health care disparities are perhaps among the most vexing problems in medicine, public health, and health policy. Despite an increasing awareness of the wide gaps in health between low-income and minority populations and the rest of Americans, disparities continue to grow. This is especially true for diabetes, a chronic disease that sits at the center of America's struggle with how to increase access to care, improve quality of care, and decrease the costs of care, battling all at the same time.

Diabetes affects 25.8 million Americans (about 8.3% of the U.S. population). Individuals in specific racial and ethnic groups experience the greatest prevalence and widest disparity in outcomes for both type 1 and

type 2 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes disproportionately affects African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and Pacific Islanders. These groups also comprise a disproportionate share of the poor and uninsured.

At the Alliance to Reduce Disparities in Diabetes, a national program launched and supported by the Merck Foundation, we are working to uncover ways to reverse this trend through a series of local health care delivery programs being run in five communities across the country. Each of the Alliance's health care delivery sites have implemented multifaceted, evidence-based programs designed to improve care for those who are most likely to be burdened by diabetes.

Extensive research has shown that disparities in health care are often a result of insufficient health resources and poor disease management. Success in identifying critical gaps in care and reducing disparities

can be realized by addressing these factors together. The challenge is how best to balance the responsibilities of lawmakers with the needs of local healthcare professionals. According to the experience of the Alliance grantee sites, healthcare providers need flexibility, incentives, and comprehensive support to shape their care delivery in ways that maximize the use of evidence-based interventions and, thereby, improve diabetes outcomes for underserved communities.

Alliance sites are making progress, but their leaders report facing an array of barriers in the healthcare delivery and financing systems that have limited the success of interventions. These include

- the healthcare system's focus on payments based on units of care, on specialty care, and high-cost, high-tech interventions;
- state credentialing standards that present barriers to payments for community

health workers who can provide needed links to community care resources and education; and

- technologies, costs, and policies that can obstruct timely and comprehensive exchange of patient information.

Health systems face many challenges in their efforts to collect more comprehensive data and create community-wide datasets. Challenges include tight budgets, inadequate staff expertise, and lack of information technology infrastructure to meet regulatory requirements for data collection and to realize the benefits of such data collection. Furthermore, some providers express concerns that capturing such data could raise privacy concerns among patients and within the community. But data collection efforts among the Alliance's grantees are improving identification of health disparities and the creation of better interventions to address them.

For example, the Alliance's Camden, New Jersey site learned from analyzing local insurance claims data that from 2002 to 2008, only 7,041 Camden residents made 62,560 visits to the emergency departments and hospitals in the area, racking up more than \$1.5 billion in charges. Using these data, they were further able to determine that most of the residents making these repeat visits to the hospitals came from only a few housing communities in one of Camden's poorest areas. Based on this information, Camden is now reaching out specifically to these

patients, sometimes even within the housing communities, to help them better manage their diabetes. Camden has seen a reduction in hospital visits as a result of this intervention.

The problem is that the data needed to recognize these patterns are often not available to community healthcare providers, because there is a lack of data-sharing requirements, and hospitals are reluctant to share claims data. The Camden site is working to fundamentally change how providers, office staff, and community agencies in Camden care for city residents with diabetes by building an accessible, high-quality, coordinated, and data-driven health care delivery system with a strong primary care base.

Data sharing across institutions in Camden is helping to identify individuals who need the most intense case management. Data are also enabling the health system to better assess the impact of its various policies to improve health care quality, control costs, and expand access to care among at-risk populations.

At the Alliance's Dallas, Texas site, the use of a diabetes registry also has yielded benefits. Data from the registry has been included in electronic medical records and patient charts, allowing healthcare professionals to identify high-risk patients. Program staff also implemented a series of uniform patient data collection protocols across 110 provider network clinics, which systematically ensured the recording of patient self-declared

race, ethnicity, and language choices from a prescribed list. In combination, these data allowed the program to identify the percentage of each group (e.g., ethnic, racial, language) that met the diabetes management goal and to understand statistically significant differences in outcomes at a 95% confidence level.

The success of health information technology (HIT) models used in the Camden and Dallas programs affirm the value of uniformly and consistently sharing and reporting community-wide data, as discussed in a new report from the Alliance, "Policy Considerations that Make the Link." National and state policies aimed at requiring data collection will be important to ensure that providers at the community level have access to the data. [L](#)



Dr. Noreen M. Clark is the Director of the Alliance to Reduce Disparities in Diabetes' National Program Office; Myron E. Wegman Distinguished University Professor; Professor of Health Behavior & Health Education; Professor of Pediatrics; and Director of the Center for Managing Chronic Disease at the University of Michigan. She is interested in systems, policies and programs that promote health, prevent illness, and enable individuals to manage disease. She is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

NBCSL'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES TAKE WASHINGTON:

NBCSL VISITS THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCHANGES WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

By Ajenai Clemmons, MPP, NBCSL Policy Director

NBCSL's *2012 Legislative Priorities* served as the flagship document for the organization's policy agenda last year. These priorities were based on policy resolutions ratified during the 2011 Annual Legislative Conference, which focused on affordable housing and homeownership, small business expansion and job creation, increasing affordable access to quality healthcare, education, and rebuilding infrastructure.

Throughout the year, NBCSL members continued to voice these priorities in Washington. However, when legislators cannot be in the nation's capital to speak about their priorities with the President, members of his Administration, or Congressional members, NBCSL staff ensures their concerns land in the right lap and in a listening ear. The following recaps two recent efforts where legislators and staff placed NBCSL's policy platform on a national stage in 2012.

NBCSL PRIORITIES IN THE MIDST OF A FISCAL CLIFF

On the eve of our 36th Annual Legislative Conference, 12 NBCSL members visited the White House to discuss the fiscal cliff and our legislative priorities. Members met with President Barack Obama and his senior economic and domestic policy advisors: Ms. Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to the President and Chair of the White House Council on Women and Girls; Mr. David Agnew, Deputy Assistant to the President and

Director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; Dr. Alan Krueger, Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers and Cabinet Member; Mr. Roberto Rodriguez, Special Assistant to the President for Educational Policy and Member of the White House Domestic Policy Council; and Mr. Luke Tate, Senior Policy Advisor for the White House Domestic Policy Council.



Led by NBCSL President, Representative Barbara W. Ballard (KS), the delegation included legislators from Alabama, Colorado, Iowa, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas, and Tennessee. During the meeting, President Ballard spoke about protecting disenfranchised groups, such as the elderly, disabled, and working poor, from the brunt of deep federal cuts. President Ballard also expressed concern that the fiscal cliff could adversely impact Community Development Block Grants (CBDG), community-based public safety, workforce training, Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and funding for education. Finally, she acknowledged President Obama's efforts to improve the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit, touting them both as proven anti-poverty tools that reward hard work and help families on the path toward

economic self-sufficiency. Continuing in that vein, President-Elect Joe Armstrong of Tennessee offered ideas for how to simultaneously accomplish goals of job creation, sustainability, financial stability, and the transitioning of more people to greater self-sufficiency. Referring to the *2012 Legislative Priorities*, President-Elect Armstrong called for appropriate funding of programs that pair economic development goals with the building and revitalization of affordable communities.

Maryland Senator Catherine Pugh, Financial Secretary, raised concerns regarding owners of minority business enterprises (MBEs) and recommended leveraging MBEs to create more jobs in underserved communities. She also urged the Administration to continue to help build the capacity of HBCUs to be hubs of economic development, research, and

workforce development. Alabama Representative Laura Hall, Housing Policy Committee Chair and veteran teacher, spoke about the need to create pathways to a high-quality education system for all children. She also expressed the importance of fully funding the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant and Promise Neighborhoods, and raising the maximum Pell grant award.

Immediate Past President, Representative Calvin Smyre of Georgia closed out the delegation's presentation by connecting the fiscal cliff discussion to infrastructure and community health. He underscored the central role of Community Health Centers (CHCs) in delivering care, reaching underserved populations, and in serving as a rich source of jobs.

As a former member of NBCSL—while a state senator in Illinois—President Obama said he understood exactly where the members were coming from. “Your constituencies are our constituencies,” President Obama stated. “What you are fighting for, we are fighting for. The most important thing right now is to grow our economy and to make sure that every American can take part in that.”

NBCSL PARTICIPATES IN BLACK WOMEN'S ROUNDTABLE, ENGAGES CONGRESSMAN PAUL RYAN ON HOUSE BUDGET

In March of this year, NBCSL's Policy Director Ajenai Clemmons joined representatives of organizations across the country

under the banner of the Black Women's Roundtable (BWR), a program of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation of which NBCSL is a partner organization. Over 300 Black women gathered at the Capitol to lobby members of Congress. Ms. Clemmons's most notable exchange was with Congressman Paul Ryan (R-WI). On the morning he released his budget as Chairman of the House Budget Committee, he hosted the delegation of 11 women in his office for a discussion on how his budget addresses poverty through job creation, workforce development and education. The group also briefly discussed the criminal justice system.

Chair Ryan answered the group's question on how his budget would help poor people by stating that America's current tax system is inefficient and overburdens businesses. He continued stating that once the new budget lowered taxes across the board for small businesses and large corporations – thereby making the United States more competitive than our neighbors, like Canada – job creation would ensue. Then our communities (and all communities) would be able to take part. Ms. Clemmons expressed that there had been several instances over the past twenty or more years in which certain corporate taxes had been lowered, but the wealth generated was concentrated among a small group of beneficiaries. She asked Congressman Ryan how his budget would concretely translate into broad, shared gains for the nation. He highlighted how his budget preserved job

training programs to ensure disadvantaged individuals would be able to have the skills necessary to qualify for current jobs and new ones being created. Noting the importance of quality education for all children, Congressman Ryan talked about how his budget would give states greater flexibility. He also lauded the pivotal work of long-time NBCSL member, retired Assemblywoman Annette "Polly" Williams of Wisconsin, who served in the Legislature for 31 years and whom he called a "true champion." The Congressman's examples of solutions for overcoming poverty were rooted primarily in individual choice, and in the government "getting out of the way" of non-profits and faith-based organizations that could be far more effective. At the same time, he agreed with Ms. Clemmons that poverty was largely structural and the result of public policy decisions. When she offered the example of over-criminalization causing unnecessary poverty, Congressman Ryan agreed and interjected that felonies were an example of this. He said that having too many laws designated as felonies not only led to poverty because of people being incarcerated and taken out of the workforce during their sentence, but also because they are too often unable to re-enter the workforce later due to having a criminal record. NBCSL's policy attests to this dynamic demonstrated by our support for full funding of the Second Chance Act—which aims for successful reintegration of returning citizens into our communities—that capped off

the *2012 Legislative Priorities*. Originally created as a discussion platform for NBCSL on the Hill, the response to NBCSL's *2012 Legislative Priorities* has been so overwhelming that it will be issued annually beginning this spring. The *2013 Legislative Priorities* document will reflect state priorities that emerged from December's ratified resolutions: (1) Protecting Constitutional Rights for All Americans, (2) Fostering Economic Development and Minority Ownership, (3) Ensuring Quality and Affordable Health Care, (4) Promoting Healthy Lifestyles, (5) Improving Education for All Students, and (6) Creating 21st Century Jobs. NBCSL's *Legislative Priorities* is an important communiqué that places the organization at the forefront of every policy dialogue exchanging ideas about how to improve communities, optimize the nation's resources, and help all of our constituents achieve the American dream. **L**



Ajenai Clemmons currently serves as NBCSL's policy director. She was formerly the ombudsman for Denver's Office of the Independent Monitor, where she helped establish a civilian agency that monitors police and sheriff internal affairs investigations. She has worked in the Iowa State Legislature as well as non-profit and private sectors. Ms. Clemmons holds a Master of Public Policy and B.A. in International Relations, Spanish, and Latin American History.

NBCSL MEMBERS SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Technology plays an important role in the growth of our economy and in our everyday lives. Policies that promote technological advancement, broad adoption, and safe use not only change the viability of urban communities, but improve our overall quality of life. Advancements are being made in various fields from health and science to education to housing. Furthermore, careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are rapidly growing, and they provide additional professional advancement opportunities for African Americans and other minorities. Here we recognize NBCSL members who have contributed to and developed policies that grant access to technological resources and address its usage in our communities. It is through these innovative initiatives that our communities will continue to grow and thrive.



Senator Don Davis (NC)

Senator Don Davis has been a member of the North Carolina Senate since 2009. He is a member of the following standing committees: Education/Higher Education, Appropriations on Education/Higher Education, Healthcare, Appropriations, State and Local Government, and Transportation. In addition, he served as a co-chairman of the Joint Legislative Commission on High School Dropout Prevention and vice chairman of the Agriculture, Environment, and Natural Resources Committee.

Specific to his interest in education, Senator Davis helped sponsor *SB 118: Digital Learning Competencies/School Employees* that directs the state board of education to develop and implement digital learning standards for teachers and school administrators. These standards were recommended by the state's legislative research commission study committee on digital learning environments in public schools. The bill also calls for education professionals to receive continuing education to improve their skills so that they can provide the best guidance for students as they seek to become successful in their educational pursuits and professional careers.



Representative Mia Jones (FL)

Previously a political aide, Representative Mia Jones was first elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2008. Prior to being elected, she also served on her hometown, Jacksonville, City Council from 2003 to 2008. Her current committee appointments include Appropriations, Education Appropriations, and Health Innovation Subcommittees. Representative Jones is also Ranking Member of the Health and Human Services Committee.

Representative Jones's support of technology is demonstrated in several ways. In the past few Legislative Sessions, she has introduced legislation to broaden health care coverage by requiring health insurers, corporations, and HMOs to provide coverage for telemedicine services. This session, the bill went through its first reading in March 2013. Representative Jones also serves as Chair for the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative (NOBEL) Women's Technology Caucus. This caucus focuses much of its efforts on eliminating the digital divide, and in 2010, Representative Jones received the NOBEL Women's President's Award as recognition for her work. That same year, NOBEL published a joint policy paper with National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) titled *Empowering Women in the 21st Century: Paving the Way with Broadband and Mobility*.



Representative Marcus Evans (IL)

Representative Marcus Evans was first elected to the Illinois General Assembly in 2012 and is one of the youngest members of the State Legislature. He has also been appointed to the Agriculture and Conservation, Appropriations-General Service, Business Occupational Licenses (Vice-Chair), Finance, and Elementary and Secondary Education committees. Prior to entering the Assembly, his legislative work included serving as the Deputy Chief of Staff for City of Chicago Alderman Michelle A. Harris of the 8th Ward.

Representative Evans recently co-sponsored legislation that supports the use of technology to address crime. Introduced in the 2013 Legislative Session, *HB 2893* seeks to establish a state-wide blue alert system that is activated when a suspect has not been apprehended and is considered a threat to the public and police officers. Additionally, the bill outlines the use of television commercials, radio spots, and telephone systems as additional ways to spread awareness about the program and fully implement the new blue alert system.



Representative Beverly Earle (NC)

Representative Beverly Earle was first elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives in November 1994. Representative Earle's legislative committee memberships include Appropriations, Commerce and Development, Government, Health and Human Services, Insurance, Public Utilities and Energy, Subcommittee on Alcoholic Beverage Control, and the Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. Representative Earle has also served as NBCSL's Health and Human Services Committee Chair (2011-2012).

Representative Earle's recent work toward the advancement of technology includes sponsoring two bills during the 2013 Legislative Session: *HB 44* and *HB 45*. Signed into law this past March, the *Transition to Digital Learning bill* (HB 45), called for additional funding for digital textbook resources for elementary, middle, and high school students. HB 45 was just introduced in February 2013 and focuses on adding Internet access and infrastructure to public schools throughout the state.



Representative Anastasia Pittman (OK)

Representative Anastasia Pittman has served as a State Representative since 2006. Her committee memberships include the Conference Committee on Human Services (Vice Chair), Human Services (Vice Chair), Appropriations and Budget (A&B) for Higher Education, A&B for Human Services, the Conference Committee on Tourism and International Relations, and Tourism and International Relations.

During the 2013 Legislative Session, Representative Pittman introduced legislation to curtail harassment within the technological space. HB 2278 seeks to expand Oklahoma's definition of bullying to include cyber-bullying, electronic communication, and other types of harassment. The bill also introduces certain policies for district boards of education in Oklahoma.



Senator Valencia Seay (GA)

Senator Valencia Seay was first elected to the Georgia State Senate in 2003. Prior to this election, she served as a State Representative from 2001 to 2002. Senator Seay's current committee memberships include Appropriations, Government Oversight, Public Safety, Science and Technology, and Transportation. Senator Seay has also served as first vice chair of NBCSL's Policy Committee on Telecommunications, Science, and Technology.

During the 2013 Legislative Session, Senator Seay co-sponsored legislation to include the term "cyberbullying" in the state's definition of "bullying." The bill, SB 279, also provides professional development for bullying prevention strategies and intervention and additional provisions for parental notification. [L](#)

CYBERBULLYING IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND: SOLUTIONS FOR STATE LAWMAKERS

By Lauren E. Williams, MPA, NBCSL Communications &
Research Associate; Editor, The Legislator Magazine



It goes without saying that teens are heavy users of online communication. According to a Common Sense Media study, 90% of all American teens have used social media, three-quarters of them have a social networking profile, and nearly one in three teens visits their social networking profile several times a day or more.¹ The study also reports that social media use begins at a young age, with 76% of 13-to-14 year olds having visited one of these sites. Increased cell phone use and ownership provides additional access to the Internet for teens. The Pew Center reports that 23% of all youth ages 12-17 say they have a smartphone with ownership being highest among older teens.² The Internet and social media hold great potential for America's youth; however, misuse of emerging technologies is a concern for parents, school officials, community members, and legislators. One example of the misuse of these technologies is online intimidation and harassment. Constant intimidation or harassment through the use of the Internet has been termed "cyberbullying."

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) defines cyberbullying as harassment "taking place online and through text messages sent to cell phones."³ This phenomenon broadly includes bullying through e-mail, instant messaging, in a chat room, on a website, or through digital messages or images sent to a cell phone. In a 2007 study, researchers Kowalski and Limber found that the most common methods for electronic bullying involved the use of instant messaging, chat rooms, and e-mail.⁴ The frequency of cyberbullying reporting varies. In a report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Justice, the Youth Internet Safety Study, researchers found a 50% increase in cyberbullying incidents between 1999 and 2004. Ybarra and Mitchell also saw differences in reporting by race and income

level with non-White teens and teens from households with an annual income of less than \$75,000 less likely to report cyberbullying.⁵

Bullies tend to be easily recognized in the school and neighborhood setting but less is known about them in cyberspace. While some officials see a difference in these perpetrators, others do not. Cyberbullying can be different from the traditional bullying because the perpetrator may not be easily identified, the victim can be seen as an enabler, and the act is less controllable. Researchers have found that close to half of cyberbullying victims have reported not knowing the perpetrator's identity.⁶ Psychologists also see online intimidation as particularly distressing because youth are more likely to confront bullies alone and without adult/parent

intervention due to fear of restrictions on cell phone, tablet, and/or social media use.⁷

Cyberbullying is considered especially painful to youth and teens because it can cause great emotional and psychological stress, go unnoticed and underreported for long periods of time, and lead to more severe reactions such as suicide and depression. For this reason, NBCSL highlighted this act as a form of "indirect" bullying in a 2012 Policy Resolution, *Addressing Bullying Prevention and Intervention in Schools* (YTH-12-27). Ratified in December 2011, this resolution aims to eradicate bullying through increased research, stronger laws that define bullying and cyberbullying, and additional funding to support professional training and mental services for students and faculty.

STATE ACTION

Increased incidents of cyberbullying have prompted action from states across the country. As of January 2013, 16 states enacted legislation specifically to address cyberbullying and 47 states have legislation that addresses “electronic harassment.” States with laws that specifically outline cyberbullying are Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Kansas, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah, and Washington.⁸ In most cases, these laws address bullying in school and expand the definition to cyberbullying giving additional jurisdiction to school officials. To ensure appropriate action, proponents of these laws implore state legislators to make sure that all legislation surrounding bullying and electronic harassment also include provisions against cyberbullying.

Legislators in Connecticut amended their state law with the passage of “An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws,” or S.B. 1138. Signed by Governor Daniel Malloy, this legislation surpassed the language in other anti-bullying laws to define cyberbullying as “any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.” The legislation also stated that school policies must “include provisions addressing bullying

outside of the school setting if such bullying (a) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, (b) infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or (c) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.”⁹

North Carolina has arguably taken some of the strongest steps to address cyberbullying inside and outside of the school setting. In 2009, lawmakers not only included the term in statutes, but they also made it a criminal offense. Cyberbullying is punishable in the state as a Class 1 misdemeanor if the defendant is 18 years of age or older and as a Class 2 misdemeanor if the defendant is under 18.¹⁰ In addition to making laws tougher to protect students, North Carolina has recently enhanced laws to protect faculty. It is the first state to make student-to-teacher cyberbullying a crime. As of December 2012, lawmakers expanded the 2009 law to make it a misdemeanor for students to post something online with “the intent to intimidate or torment a school employee.”

CYBERBULLYING AND RELATED TOPICS: EDUCATION AND THE LAW

School officials are vital partners in combatting cyber-bullying and devising ways to control distracting uses of the Internet for children while at school. Many have already taken strides to combat this issue. Psychologists Subrahmanyam and Greenfield state, “The challenge for parents and schools alike is to eliminate the negative uses of electronic media while preserving their

significant contributions to education and social connection.”

While many proponents of cyberbullying legislation agree on strong definitions and effective laws to address the issue, not all believe it should be made a criminal offense. Criminalizing cyberbullying has drawn sharp criticism as some see it as a conduit for the “school-to-prison” pipeline system. Although some state legislation explains that the offense can be expunged from a juvenile’s record, this action is not guaranteed. Critics warn these harsh laws may disproportionately affect children in under-represented and underserved communities, as well as teens in communities of color.

Addressing cyberbullying also has constitutional implications. Since these laws often look to prohibit what one can post, say, or do on the Internet, some perceive the law as a violation of the First Amendment freedom of expression clause. In a National Public Radio article about North Carolina cyberbullying laws, legal expert Eugene Volokh says, “It’s something of a trend [cyberbullying laws that attack free speech], but once those laws are challenged, they’ll be struck down.”¹¹ Volokh is a UCLA professor who specializes in First Amendment and cyberspace law. Although his analysis suggests the law’s unconstitutionality, lawmakers on the state and federal levels continue to grapple with the broad range of legal and constitutional ramifications.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Alleviating incidents of cyberbullying is not as easy as taking away a teen's cellphone, gaming system, or tablet. It can only be solved through a comprehensive strategy including public policy, school programming and intervention, and parent/family involvement. In addressing this problem, legislators are encouraged to do the following:

1. Stay Socially Engaged:

Legislators are encouraged to become more social media savvy and keep abreast of emerging changes and innovations in communications technology. If legislators are to address these issues through policies and programs, they must understand the complex domain of "cyberspace," where online bullying occurs. This understanding will not only help legislators in relating to their younger constituents, but it shall also assist them in drafting legislation to address the problem without violating constitutionally-protected rights to privacy and speech.

Programs that continue to educate stakeholders – from legislators to laypersons – on the use and proliferation of social media will prove beneficial in addressing incidents of cyberbullying in the U.S.

2. Expand Definitions in State Legislation:


While many states have taken steps to address cyberbullying, some parents and school officials feel that more can be done. Amending state legislation to add the term "cyberbullying" and expand school jurisdiction past school grounds may provide additional security for parents and students.

3. Fund Youth-Centered

Programs: Through traditional and non-traditional partnerships, programs that provide unique workshops focused on safe use of the Internet and social media sites may help lower cyberbullying incidents and ensure greater communication between all stakeholders.

Just as a picture, tweet, or status can never be completely deleted or removed from cyberspace, neither can the

ultimate effects of bullying and harassment. Increased incidents of cyberbullying demonstrate the way in which the "real world" is now intersecting with the "virtual world." Lines are ever blurring; therefore, stakeholders must come up with solutions that recognize fast fading boundaries. The heightened number of incidents also corresponds to the speed of technology advancement and innovation. Social media platforms change quickly and the mechanisms and features that these sites offer users evolve even faster.

Social media is moving fast and pertinent legislation should not be left behind. 

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E-COMMERCE: POTENTIAL STATE REVENUE SOURCE OR COMPLEX TAX ISSUE?

By Michael Belitzky, NBCSL Policy Associate

As the nation begins to rebound from the 2008 financial crisis, an effort to improve the country's fiscal outlook is gaining momentum in Washington, D.C. Leading the way is a conversation surrounding the potential benefits of e-commerce and state sales tax (or lack thereof). Heightened consumer participation has spurred growth of an otherwise stilted retail economy, with the Internet as the largest contributor. E-commerce sales grew from \$995 billion in 1999 to \$2.39 trillion in 2006. The online marketplace is currently estimated to contribute approximately \$4 trillion annually, or around two percent of GDP.¹ With the rapid boom of Internet sales, taxing these transactions may be a useful revenue generator for states and the federal government.

The convenience of shopping online has decreased traditional in-store sales, causing turf wars between brick-and-mortar stores and Internet-based retailers. While sales continue to grow, the Internet marketplace remains virtually unregulated. States and the federal government see little to no revenue from these transactions. If online shopping continues without "reform" or regulation, it is projected that brick-and-mortar retailers will see decreased profits, and states will continue to lose out on uncollected revenues.

BEFORE AMAZON, THERE WAS QUILL

The ability of online retailers to operate without collecting sales and use taxes is thought to have begun after an important U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1992. In *Quill Corp. v. North Dakota*,² the Supreme Court ruled that a company must have a physical presence in a state in order to require collection of sales or use tax for purchases made by in-state customers. The ruling substantiated that online retailers did not have to pay state and local sales taxes, and created

a path of lost revenue for state and local governments. The ruling also enabled retailers to provide lower prices to consumers (undercutting traditional brick-and-mortar stores). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), as a result of not being able to collect sales tax revenue on remote sales, states lost out on an estimated \$18 billion dollars in 2008, with more than \$7.7 billion alone from electronic commerce transactions. In 2012, these losses significantly increased to \$23 billion and \$11.3, respectively.³

The Court also maintained that Congress has the authority to enact legislation requiring all retailers to collect sales taxes without Constitutional infringement by stating, “Congress is now free to decide whether, when, and to what extent the States may burden interstate mail-order concerns with a duty to collect use taxes.”⁴

STATES BYPASS COURT RULING, ENACT REMOTE SELLER LAWS

Despite the Court’s ruling in 1992, states have maintained their right to collect taxes, and in some cases, enacted legislation to this effect as well. In 2000, forty-four states and the District of Columbia formed a consortium, the Streamlined Sales Tax Project (SSTP), dedicated to simplifying the collection and remittance of sales taxes by remote sellers. As a result of this consortium, the SSTP drafted a document called the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement. To date, 24 states

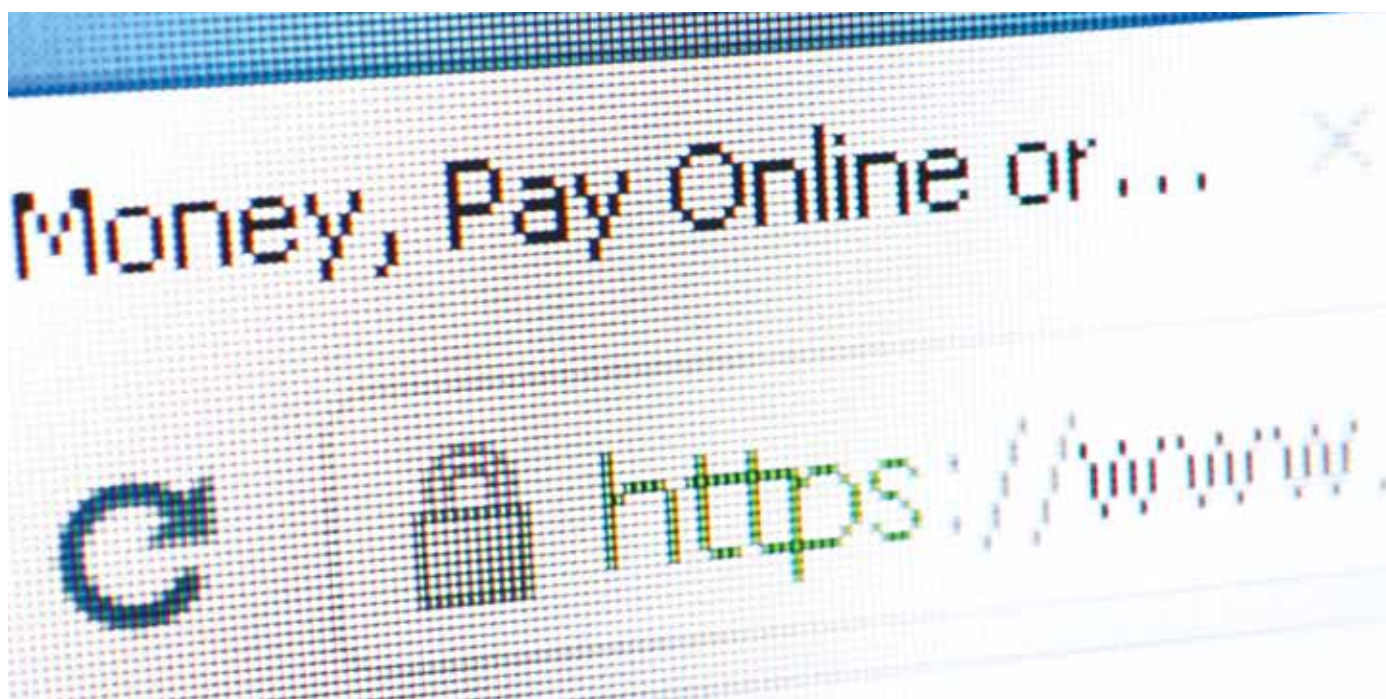
have enacted legislation to echo this document.

States have also created “affiliate nexus” laws to collect tax revenue. In 2008, New York enacted a pioneering measure requiring large online retailers operating “affiliate programs” in the state to charge sales tax on New York sales, even if they have no physical presence. Under this program, affiliate organizations, such as local blog sites, newspapers, and non-profit organizations, post links to online retailers and receive a commission from purchases made through these links. By advertising through affiliate marketers located within the state, New York lawmakers postulated that retailers then created a “nexus” or physical presence in the state. According to the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, in the first six months since the provision became law, the state gained \$46 million.⁵ Since 2007, eleven other states —

Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Vermont—have enacted affiliate laws.⁶ Unfortunately, little sales taxes have been collected. Many online companies have canceled existing in-state affiliate arrangements and threatened to eliminate future programs in states with such laws.⁷ However, even if successful, the affiliate nexus laws reached only remote vendors with affiliate arrangements, leaving states unable to collect the maximum amount of sales taxes owed.

CONGRESS TACKLES E-COMMERCE

To some, the solution to this “tax problem” rests in the federal government. All state tax systems are not uniform, but a federally mandated standard of collection could help alleviate these issues. Members of Congress have attempted to regulate the collection of sales and use tax



twice. The first attempt was in 2007, and the second attempt is currently moving through Congress. In 2007, The Sales Tax Fairness and Simplification Act was introduced to promote uniformity in the administration and collection of sales and use tax. The legislation also addressed concerns of small online retailers through a small business exception (SBE), whereby sellers with less than \$5 million in gross-remote taxable sales were not required to collect taxes on their online sales. With little unified support, and concerns over the “high” SBE threshold, the legislation failed.

Now, with added support from online retailers and a lower threshold amount of \$1 million, a bipartisan, bicameral coalition of 18 U.S. Senators and 35 U.S. Representatives introduced *The Marketplace Fairness Act of 2013* this February.⁸ The act gives states the authority to enforce existing sales and use tax laws, if they choose to do so, by adopting one of the following options:

- Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement (SSUTA): Allows any state that is a member of SSUTA to require remote retailers to collect state and local sales and use taxes; or
- Alternative Minimum Simplification Requirements: States that are not SSUTA members may require remote retailers to collect state and local sales and use taxes if they adopt minimum simplification requirements as outlined in the bill.

The legislation gives states the option to require the collection of “sales and use” taxes already owed under State law by out-of-state businesses, rather than rely on consumers to remit those taxes to the States—the method of tax collection to which they are now restricted. The proposed legislation seeks to eliminate what is thought to be a competitive advantage enjoyed by internet retailers.

U.S. Senator Michael Enzi (R-WY), an advocate for “e-fairness” stated, “For over a decade, congressional inaction has created one of the largest tax loopholes of our lifetime. The federal government should not favor some businesses over other businesses and some taxpayers over other taxpayers. It’s time to stop discriminating through the tax code and put local and Main Street retailers on a level playing field with their out-of-state and online counterparts.”⁹

DIVIDED ON FEDERAL SOLUTION

E-commerce reform opponents have bolstered efforts to prevent required collection of sales tax. Organizations such as the *National Taxpayers Union* and *Americans for Prosperity*, and companies such as *Overstock.com* and *eBay* argue it would create a complicated new tax system and would stifle Internet commerce. “Small business retailers using the Internet are innovators using technology to grow a business, create jobs in local communities, and serve consumers with competitive alternatives,” said Tod Cohen, Vice President and Deputy General Counsel of

Global Government Relations, at eBay. “Congress should reject any Internet sales tax legislation that throws a new tax barrier in front of small businesses.”¹⁰

Despite e-commerce reform proponents’ claim that streamlining the taxation system would help the entire process become more efficient and simplified, opponents counter that complying with Internet sales taxes would be a significant administrative burden for companies, particularly small businesses. Keeping track of the nearly 10,000 different tax jurisdictions throughout the country, with varying rates, bases, and collection methodologies, would be very challenging for online retailers that have a national reach.

Another argument addresses the manner in which the sales taxes are used to support local revenues. Bill opponents say that since most Internet companies require little in the way of state services and infrastructure, sales and use tax should not apply to them. Proponents disagree with this notion and see the use of state highways, postal services, and other transportation mechanisms as justification for tax collection.


Brick-and-mortar retailers have joined dozens of government associations in applauding the proposed federal solution to the collection of sales and use tax. David French, Senior Vice President for Government Relations at the National Retail Federation, stated, “While store owners collect and remit state

and local sales taxes, their digital competitors are off the hook – and benefiting because of it. This sales tax disparity hinders community-based retailers, hurts Main Street jobs, and has [led] to a \$24 billion loss for state and local governments.”¹¹ The Marketplace Fairness Act boasts support from over 200 business, labor, and state and local government organizations including the National Conference of State Legislatures; Governors Association; National Association of Counties; National League of Cities; Retail Industry Leaders Association; National Retail Federation; International Council of Shopping Centers; Amazon.com; and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.¹²

State Governors have long supported legislation that allows states to collect and remit state sales taxes from online companies that do not have a

physical presence in the state. To date, thirty governors have written individual letters in favor of the bill. The National Governors Association contends this is an issue on which states and Congress can come together. Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam testified before the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary in support of the Marketplace Fairness Act stating, “This discussion isn’t about raising taxes or adding new taxes. This is about states having the flexibility and authority to collect taxes that are already owed by their own in-state residents.”¹³ Although all parts of the legislation have not been agreed upon yet, many state governments see it as a step in the right direction towards Internet regulation reform and increased revenues. Previously a formidable opponent, online giant *Amazon.com* now also supports the new proposed legislation causing a notable divide within the online sector. Other large-scale online

and traditional retail businesses in support of the measure include *Bed, Bath, and Beyond*, the *Target Corporation*, the *J.C. Penney Corporation*, and *Buy.com*.

For now, it appears momentum is on the side of e-commerce reform proponents. Whether standing as independent legislation or as part of a larger bill, Washington chatter indicates that requiring collection of Internet sales tax will soon be standard practice, no matter where a consumer decides to shop. 

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GROWING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

By Brandt Thorington, NBCSL Policy Consultant

A green economy is a system of resources aimed at creating long-term jobs, industries, and opportunities while maintaining sustainable practices such as

energy efficiency, waste and pollution reduction, and clean energy generation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) examines sectors within green economies by monitoring goods and services that benefit the environment, or Green Goods and Services (GGS). In 2010, GGS jobs accounted for 2.4% of U.S. employment with 2.3 million jobs in the private sector and 860,300 jobs in the public sector. More specifically, GGS jobs make up roughly 6.8% of the construction industry, 11.9% of the utility industry, and 4% of the manufacturing industry. Although green economies offer various environmental and sustainable benefits, elected officials are still working on ways to fully implement them on state and national levels. In this article, we highlight innovative practices being used to create green economies across the nation.

GREEN COLLAR JOBS

One benefit of the green movement is the opportunity for economic empowerment. Proponents of the green movement see it as a way to provide social and economic mobility for all Americans. Leading the conversation on green jobs and empowerment are *Green for All* and *The Ella Baker Center*, two non-profit organizations founded by committed green jobs champion, Van Jones. *Green for All* is an organization dedicated to supporting sustainable practices while providing long-term employment and financial stability to low-income communities. *The Ella Baker Center* is named after a civil rights hero who sought to inspire and guide emerging young leaders, and it is dedicated to advancing “racial and economic justice to ensure dignity and opportunity for low-income people and people of color.”

Together, these projects work to provide “green collar jobs”

to deserving communities through the *Oakland Green Corps Jobs* program. *Green for All* defines a green-collar job as a “well-paid, career track job that contributes directly to preserving or enhancing environmental quality.” The jobs program is an innovative initiative that combats barriers to employment and assists non-traditional job seekers with opportunities in green construction, solar installation, home weatherization, and other green fields. The program targets parolees, at-risk youth, those without a GED or high school diploma, and non-English speakers, and provides them with job opportunities and access to wrap-around services such as financial education and other training.² Since the program started in 2006, it has achieved local and national success. The *Oakland Green Job Corps* model has helped to expand green opportunities and economic empowerment throughout the nation. So much so, that organization’s founder, Van Jones, was tapped to serve as the

“Green Jobs Czar” in the Obama administration.

URBAN FARMING

Fresh food options are often lacking in urban areas, which directly impacts the health and well-being of those communities. Urban farming allows residents to grow fruits and vegetables in unconventional spaces, including empty lots, abandoned buildings, and roof tops. Headquartered in Milwaukee, WI, *Growing Power* is a national non-profit organization that works to empower community members to set up farms and create sustainable food sources. The program is nationally recognized and helps develop community food systems through training, technical assistance, and education outreach.

There are many benefits to urban farming. The practice not only produces food, but helps the environment as well. Residents can save time, money, and even carbon emissions by growing their own food. Residents will

also cut down on ingesting harmful pesticides and other chemicals commonly found in produce. Urban farming also helps to beautify a state's landscape as buildings and lots are re-purposed for planting.

RETROFIT CHICAGO

The city of Chicago will spend more than \$225 million from a new public-private Infrastructure Trust to retrofit buildings throughout the city. This program will allow for over 100 municipal buildings to be retrofitted and is expected to create about 1,000 jobs for Chicagoans, while saving over \$20 million a year. In addition to improving energy efficiency in city buildings, the program will also work with businesses owners and residents to improve efficiency in offices and homes. The Infrastructure Trust allows the Chicago city government to start the project with no upfront costs, while assuring long-term savings.

The most innovative aspect of this program is the financing, which allows the city to provide no upfront costs for the retrofit. The Infrastructure Trust – the project's main funding source – will be mostly financed by private investors. Chicago will pay its energy savings (by using the past utility bills) back to the investors over the next 15 years. Should the savings not be realized, the investors will take a loss on their investment. If savings are greater than anticipated, the investors will reap the reward (up to a certain limit). This model has been used to finance private projects in the past, such as solar

projects, but this is the first time it has been implemented on such a large scale.

Since the project is in its early stages, critics worry about long-term effects and the propriety of private industry dictating city policy. However, should this model work, it could be duplicated across the country for retrofits and new means of financing. With its innovative funding structure and potential impact on urban communities, it is an initiative certainly worth watching.

CALIFORNIA CAP AND TRADE PROGRAM

California is the first state to implement a cap and trade program, which is designed to allow the state to limit (or cap) carbon emissions, and then set up a market place where the various businesses affected will be able to buy and sell their carbon credits (or trade). The first carbon credits were sold at auction for slightly more than \$10 in 2012. Under a cap and trade program like the one in California, the state sets an overall carbon limit and either auctions off carbon credits, or credits can be distributed by each industry affected. In total, their initial offering raised \$223 million. Most of that funding will be used to help reduce utility rates for residents around the state, as many utilities are raising their rates to deal with the increased focus on renewable energy.

The cap and trade legislation in the state requires that a third of the energy produced in the state must be green energy. The

state predicts that roughly 350 companies and 600 facilities are impacted by legislation. Although some facilities may move out of the state, the law could generate numerous jobs as several industries make efforts to reduce their carbon footprint. Businesses are expected to implement new practices to reduce emissions, creating a greater demand for green technologies. Should the program succeed, it could serve as a national model.⁵

NATIONAL NETWORK FOR MANUFACTURING INNOVATION (NNMI)

President Barack Obama mentioned the first of what is to become 15 centers for innovation in manufacturing in this year's State of the Union address. This program not only targets those areas of the country that have been hardest hit during the recession by creating new job opportunities, but the program also seeks to rebuild the nation's manufacturing capabilities. The National Additive Manufacturing Innovation (NAMI) Institute is the pilot center in Youngstown, Ohio. It focuses on bringing 3-D printing to the manufacturing industry by convening private companies, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. Currently, 3-D printers are used to create models in an instant, much the way your home printer does with a simple document. With these printers, you could simply print your own whistle or plastic case for your cell phone.

The problem with 3-D printers is that they can be costly to purchase and print. The NAMI

center in Youngstown seeks to lower 3-D printer costs and make this process more in line with that of a professional printing press. U.S. companies will then be more apt to use these devices and make products quickly and at minimal per unit cost to spur domestic production. The next *Manufacturing Innovation Centers* could easily focus on green technology and sustainable efforts in domestic production. The production of goods in America could be considered green because of a reduction in carbon emissions related to shipping and possibly toxic materials that are found in products from other countries. The administration is looking at funding three additional centers this year, and asking Congress for funding for the remaining 11 centers in the following years.⁶

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Going green cannot be done by just one agency or department; it takes a multifaceted approach to ensure the success of the movement. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) coordinated federal resources to institute environmentally sound practices that improve access to affordable housing, additional transportation options, and lower transportation costs. This cooperation has made potential grantee communities look at a comprehensive approach to community development and incorporate the variety of assets at their disposal to improve neighborhoods. Since 2009, this cooperation has provided over \$3.5 billion to more than 700 communities. The partnership has allowed various field offices to work together on a local basis to help achieve some of these goals as well.

A direct example of this partnership is in the city of Moline, Illinois. Here DOT, HUD, and the EPA have worked together to help fund and provide the support necessary to transform an old warehouse into a LEED-certified Moline Multimodal Station. The new station will house Amtrak services and offer aid to redevelop the city's downtown area.⁷ State and local communities can take advantage of not only the

technical and financial programs offered under this initiative, but they can attempt to employ a similar model of state agencies working together to produce similar results.

Going green can mean a number of things for communities around the country. To go green, your state is encouraged to employ a multi-faceted approach that not only works for green job training, but helps to spur the development of entire industries through public and private partnerships. In order for the green economy to take hold in America and invigorate industries like construction, all levels of government must work together to provide comprehensive solutions that provide not only training, but long-term opportunities that will employ citizens for generations. **L**

Brandt Thorington serves as Director of Government Relations for the Washington Linkage Group. Mr. Thorington specializes in the following legislative arenas: justice issues, immigration reform, agricultural policy, hurricane relief, homeland security, community development, and appropriations.

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[Opening Breakfast and Humanitarian Award Ceremony] From Left to Right, NBCSL President-Elect, Rep. Joe Armstrong (TN), NBCSL Corporate Round Table Vice Chair, Melissa Bishop Murphy, Pfizer, Inc, NBCSL President Rep. Barbara W. Ballard (KS), NBCSL Parliamentarian and 2012 Humanitarian of the Year Award Recipient, Sen. Hillman Frazier (MS), the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., and NBCSL Immediate Past President Rep. Calvin Smyre (GA) stop to take a picture after the Opening Plenary Breakfast and Humanitarian Award Ceremony during NBCSL's 36th Annual Legislative Conference.

NBCSL'S 36TH ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

By Lauren E. Williams, MPA, NBCSL Communications & Research Associate;
Editor, The Legislator Magazine

Black lawmakers from across the United States convened for the 36th Annual Legislative Conference of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) held December 5-9, 2012 in Washington, D.C. The conference's theme, *Leading a United Front: Diverse Not Divided*, underscored NBCSL's commitment to collaborate with the President and Congress in a spirit of unity.

"When we look at the urgent issues facing our state legislators each year, we can see the critical importance of embracing our diversity and making certain all of us are included in the

legislative process," explained NBCSL President, Rep. Barbara W. Ballard (KS). "President Barack Obama and Congress have always understood our role in supporting and serving the

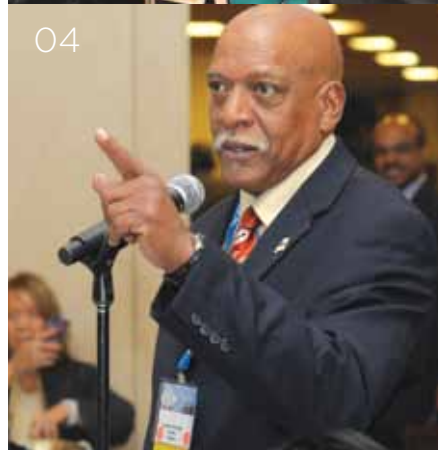
American people, because we live and so close to them. NBCSL stands ready to offer the country that united front," she further stated.

Legislators came from across the nation. Represented states included Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and the Virgin Islands. Several Corporate Round Table (CRT) members, members of the National Labor Round Table, and other stakeholders were also in attendance.

The conference began with two annual events focused on youth development, education, and empowerment. These events included the CRT school visit and the Youth Congress Day. Over 30 CRT members visited McKinley High School. During the visit, CRT members shared detailed stories of success and gave rising juniors and seniors advice for post-secondary school plans. During Youth Congress Day, 250 students from schools throughout Maryland and Washington, D.C. participated in a guided mock legislative session, by NBCSL legislators, designed to teach them about the legislative process while engaging them on issues most important to them. Attendees were also greeted by former BET personality, “Free,” and Maryland local artist and playwright, Lamont Carey. Giveaways from various sponsors were distributed at both events.

Youth Congress Day scholarship awardees were

- Ashley Jones-Quaidoo, Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr. High School
- Quasia Heru, Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr. High School



<01>
[2013 State Kickoff Event]
Members of the Tennessee Delegation gather around NBCSL President-Elect Rep. Joe Armstrong (TN).

<02>
[Opening Plenary and Humanitarian Breakfast] U.S. Congressman Elijah Cummings (D-MD), Sen. Valencia Seay (GA), and Mayor Vincent Gray (District of Columbia).

<03>
[Benjamin S. Ruffin Corporate Round Table Luncheon] Corporate Round Table Members Calvin Booker, Waste Management, Inc., Terri Lee, Merck & Co., Inc., and Larry Lucas, WLL Government Affairs, receive awards during the Benjamin S. Ruffin Corporate Round Table Luncheon.

<04>
Sen. Rodger Smitherman (AL) asks a question during a NBCSL policy session.

<05>
[Benjamin S. Ruffin Corporate Round Table Luncheon] Keynote Speaker, Bart Peterson, Eli Lilly and Company.

<06>
NBCSL President, Rep. Barbara Ballard (KS) and NBCSL President-Elect, Rep. Joe Armstrong (TN) at the ALC Press Conference.

<07>
Sen. Thelma Harper (TN), Rep. Anastasia Pittman (OK), and others stand in applause.

<08>
Corporate Round Table Member Mario Bailey, Becker & Poliakoff, smiles during NBCSL's Host Night Out.

<09>
U.S. Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) talks with Denise Hales Harrod.

<10>
[Opening Plenary and Humanitarian Breakfast]
Keynote Speaker, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., addresses the crowd during the 2012 Opening Plenary Breakfast and Humanitarian Awards Ceremony.

<11>
[Opening Plenary and Humanitarian Breakfast]
Members of the District of Columbia Color Guard officially open NBCSL's 36th Annual Legislative Conference activities.





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[Youth Congress Day]
TV Personality, Free and NBCSL Immediate
Past President, Rep. Calvin Smyre (GA).

<13>
[David S. Holmes Awards Luncheon]
Master of Ceremony, WPGC News Anchor
Guy Lambert speaks to crowd.

<14>
NBCSL Past President Rep. Lois DeBerry (TN)
is all smiles during an NBCSL breakfast.

<15>
[Youth Congress Day] Rep. Mike Shelton
(OK), NBCSL Youth Congress Day Scholarship
winner, Quaisa Heru, and NBCSL President,
Rep. Barbara W. Ballard (KS).

<16>
[NBCSL Meet and Greet]
Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC) interviews
Co-Executive Producer of ABC's "The
Scandal," Ms. Judy Smith.

<17>
[Youth Congress Day]
Over 150 students from Washington, D.C. area
schools attended Youth Congress Day this year.

<18>
[David P. Richardson, Jr. Nation Builder
Awards Reception] Rep. Omeria Scott (MS),
Rep. Earl Harris (IN) Rep. Willie J. Perkins,
Sr. (MS), and NBCSL Past President,
Rep. Mary H. Coleman (MS).

<19>
[David P. Richardson, Jr. Nation Builder
Awards Reception] Rep. Juandalynn Givan
(AL) and Willie James Jackson.

<20>
NBCSL National Labor Round Table
Chair, Foster Stringer of the American
Federation of Teachers greets legislators at
the 2012 Executive Committee Dinner.

<21>
[NBCSL Meet and Greet]
Rep. Gregory Porter (IN), NBCSL
Secretary, Sen. Constance N. Johnson
(OK), and Sen. Derrick T. Simmons (MS).

<22>
[David P. Richardson, Jr. Nation
Builder Awards Reception] Del. Meshea
Poore (WV), Rep. Angela Williams (CO),
and Atiba Madyun.

<23>
[2013 Host State Night Kick-Off] 2012
Indiana State Nation Builders, The
Honorable Viola Taliaferro and Mr.
George Taliaferro.



Following the youth day were conference events focused on policy research, innovation, and implementation. During seven conference workshop sessions, NBCSL members discussed policy issues and resolutions that addressed the immediate and long-term needs of communities and constituents. Session panels consisted of federal administration officials, members of Congress, state legislators; corporate, labor, and non-profit advocacy partners; and subject matter policy experts. Three of seven panels discussed issues relevant to children and youth, including obesity, youth violence, and institutional racism through the school-to-prison pipeline and deadly force practices in law enforcement. Two other panels discussed economic issues in minority communities, and the remaining panels discussed health information technology and nuclear power.

Session titles and speakers are as follows:

Attacking Obesity from the Start: Supporting Children's Nutrition
Speakers included **Ms. Audrey Rowe**, Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; **Congresswoman Marcia Fudge** (D-OH), U.S. House of Representatives; **Ms. Sandra Ford**, SNS, President, School Nutrition Association; and **Ms. Sandra Schefkind**, OTR/L, Pediatric Coordinator, American Occupational Therapy Association

Building Stronger, Sustainable Communities
Speakers included **Ms. Shelley R. Poticha**, Director, Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; **Ms. Carol Wayman**, Senior Legislative Director, Congressman Keith Ellison (MN-5), U.S. House

of Representatives; **Ms. Portia White**, Director, Department of Legislative and Political Affairs, Transport Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO; and **Ms. Oramenta F. Newsome**, Executive Director, Washington, D.C. Chapter, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC).

Nuclear Energy 360: Secure Families and Safe Communities in the Wake of Fukushima Daiichi
Speakers included **Mr. Ed McGinnis**, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Nuclear Energy Policy and Cooperation, Office of International Nuclear Energy Policy and Cooperation, Office of Nuclear Energy, U.S. Department of Energy; **Mr. Daniel L. Woodall, Jr.**, Business Manager, Laborers' International Union of North America; Jeff Baran, Senior Counsel, Energy and Commerce Committee, U.S. House of Representatives; and **Mr. Jon Franke**, Site Vice President for Crystal River



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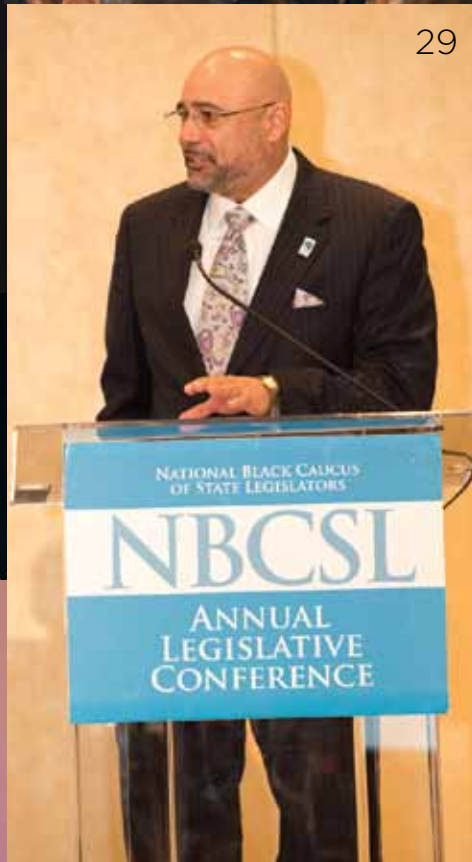
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[David P. Richardson, Jr. Awards Banquet] NBCSL President, Rep. Barbara W. Ballard (KS) and Gerald Shaffer as he receives a Nation Builder Award posthumously for his mother, Ms. Sherry Hopkins.

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[Closing Plenary] Moderator, Author, Professor, and Political Commentator, Michael Eric Dyson; Executive Director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Sharon Davis, JD, and Senior Attorney, National Center for Youth Law, Michael Harris, JD; join the crowd, raising their hands in agreement, during a riveting discussion.

<26>

[David P. Richardson, Jr. Awards Banquet] Master of Ceremony, TV Personality and Comedian, Jonathan Slocum walks to the podium.

<27>

[Closing Plenary] Rep. Ken Dunkin (IL) and Rep. Larry J. Miller (TN) approach the podium with questions.

<28>

[David P. Richardson, Jr. Awards Banquet] 2012 Georgia State Nation Builder Award Recipient, Rita Jackson smiles as she accepts her award.

<29>

[Closing Plenary] NBCSL President-Elect Rep. Joe Armstrong (TN) addresses the crowd at the end of the Closing Plenary session.

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[David S. Holmes Luncheon] 2012 Legislator of the Year, Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC) accepts her award.

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[David P. Richardson, Jr. Awards Banquet] 2012 Nation Builder Award Recipient, Philanthropist, Beverly Bond, accepts her award.

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[David P. Richardson, Jr. Awards Banquet] The 2013-2015 NBCSL Officers take the oath of office. From L to R, Immediate Past President Rep. Barbara W. Ballard (KS), NBCSL Parliamentarian Sen. Hillman Frazier (MS), NBCSL President-Elect Catherine Pugh (MD), NBCSL President, Rep. Joe Armstrong (TN), NBCSL Financial Secretary, Rep. Laura Hall (AL), NBCSL Vice President Rep. Gregory Porter (IN), and NBCSL Treasurer Rep. Howard Mosby (GA). Not pictured: NBCSL Secretary, Rep. Alan Williams (FL).

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[David P. Richardson, Jr. Awards Banquet] 2012 Pennsylvania State Nation Builder Award Recipient, Michael Rashid looks toward the stage.

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[David P. Richardson, Jr. Awards Banquet] Mistress of Ceremony, Washington Informer Publisher, Denise Rolark Barnes greets the crowd during an interlude.

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[Benjamin S. Ruffin Corporate Round Table Luncheon] U.S. Congresswoman Terri Sewell (D-AL) greets the crowd.

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From Left to Right (back row): NBCSL Parliamentarian, Sen. Hillman Frazier (MS), Sen. David Haley (KS), NBCSL President-Elect Rep. Joe Armstrong (TN), NBCSL Financial Secretary, Sen. Catherine Pugh (MD), NBCSL Chaplain, Rep. Helen Miller (IA), Rep. Larry Butler (CT), Rep. Bruce Morris, (CT), and NBCSL Guest. From Left to Right (front row): NBCSL Guest, Rep. Anastasia Pittman (OK), Sen. Thelma Harper (TN), Rep. Gloria Fox (MA), NBCSL Past President Rep. Mary Coleman (MS), Rep. Karen Camper (TN), and NBCSL Sen. Spencer Coggs (WI) are all smiles after the NBCSL Executive Committee dinner.

<37>

U.S. Congresswoman Marcia Fudge (D-OH) speaks during an NBCSL policy session on combating childhood obesity.

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[Humanitarian Breakfast] Lt. Governor Anthony Brown (MD), Del. Nathaniel Oaks (MD), and U.S. Congressman Elijah Cummings (D-MD) pose after the Humanitarian Breakfast event and awards presentation.

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Nuclear Plant Duke Energy, Duke Energy Corporation.

Youth Violence:

A Matter of Public Health

Speakers included **Congressman Bobby Scott** (VA-3), U.S. House of Representatives; **Dr. Carl C. Bell**, President and CEO, Community Mental Health Council, Inc; and **Ms. Rachel Davis, MSW**, Managing Director, Prevention Institute.

Ownership, Entrepreneurship, and Wealth Creation in the African-American Community

Speakers included **Mr. Eugene Cornelius, Jr.**, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Field Operations, U.S. Small Business Administration; **Mr. Lamell McMorris**, Managing Partner, Perennial Law Group, LLP; **Mr. Joe Briggs, Esq.**, Public Policy Counsel, NFL Players Association; **Mr. Rick C. Wade**, Senior Vice President and Head of China Operations, GreenTech Automotive, Inc.; Mr. Harold

Mills, CEO, Zero Chaos; and **Ms. Linda Chatmon**, President and CEO, Contracts and Grants, LLC Consulting.

Health Information Technology: The Future is Now

Speakers included **Mr. Damon Davis**, Special Assistant, Office of the National Coordinator for Health IT, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; **Dr. Jay H. Sanders**, President and CEO, Global Telemedicine Group; **Mr. Gary Capistrant**, Senior Director, Public Policy, American Telemedicine Association; and **Ms. Sarah Orth**, Division Chief, Health Information Technology, Center for Health Information Technology, Maryland Health Care Commission.

Dismantling Barriers to Institutional Racism in the 21st Century: From School Discipline to Deadly Force (Closing Plenary) Speakers included **Dr. Michael Eric Dyson** (moderator); **Ms.**

<39>

[Corporate Round Table School Visit] Members of NBCSL's Corporate Round Table visit McKinley High School in Washington, D.C. during NBCSL's 36th Annual Legislative Conference. From Left to Right (second row): Ron Buford, Alabama Power Company, Rep. Charlie Brown (IN), Centene Corporation Corey Dabney, Indiana Dabney University, Timmy Nelson, UPS, Steve Hightower, Hightower Petroleum Company, NBCSL Corporate Round Table Member At-Large LaKeitha Anderson, RAI Services Company, Tamera Brown, Merck & Co., Inc., and Yolanda Cash Jackson, Becker & Poliakoff. From Left to Right (first row), William Cheeks, ABBA Associates, Nicholas Worrell, National Transportation Safety Board, NBCSL Corporate Round Table Vice Chair, Melissa Bishop-Murphy, Pfizer, Inc, Richey Hayes, Nuclear Energy Group, NBCSL Corporate Round Table Chair, Cleo Washington, AT & T, Gregory Jones, The Jones Group, Corporate Round Table Second Vice Chair, Joe Debbs, American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, Sen. Constance Johnson (OK), Olivia Lang, CVS/Caremark, and NBCSL Corporate Round Table Secretary Paula Hoisington, Net Communications.

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[NOBEL/Women's Breakfast] Rep. Regina Barrow (LA), Rep. Barbara Norton (LA) Keynote Speaker, President of Essence Communications, Michelle Ebanks, Sen. Sharon Weston Broome (LA), and Rep. Patricia Hayne Smith (LA).

<41>

[Benjamin S. Ruffin Corporate Round Table Luncheon] NBCSL Corporate Round Table Member At-Large Patrick Hannah, Liberty Mutual, U.S. Congresswoman Terri Sewell (D-AL), and NBCSL Corporate Round Table Chair Cleo Washington, AT & T smile during a break.

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*[NBCSL Press Conference]
Maryland Residents and Deanna's
Lyric Foundation Founders, Nancy and
Anthony Green share their testimony about
how NBCSL legislators helped others avoid
their daughter's tragedy.*

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*[Closing Plenary Session]
Moderator, Author, Professor, and Political
Commentator, Michael Eric Dyson*

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*[NOBEL/Women's Breakfast]
NBCSL President Rep. Barbara W.
Ballard (KS), and Keynote Speaker,
President of Essence Communications,
Michelle Ebanks hold the most recent
edition of The Legislator.*

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*NOBEL/Women's Breakfast From Left to
Right (Back Row): Rep. Anastasia Pittman
(OK), Rep. Barbara Norton (LA), Sen.
Thelma Harper (TN), NBCSL Financial
Secretary, Sen. Catherine Pugh, Rep.
Patricia Haynes Smith (LA), Rep. Regina
Barrow (LA), Rep. Mia Jones (FL), Rep.
Sharon Beasley-Teague (GA), Rep. Angela
Williams (CO), Del. Meshea Poore (WV),
Senator Gladys Robinson (NC), Rep. Karen
Camper (TN), Sen. Valencia Seay (GA).
Seated Front Row L to R: NBCSL President,
Rep. Barbara W. Ballard (KS), NOBEL/
Women President, Sen. Sharon Weston
Broome (LA), Essence Communications
President, Michelle Ebanks, and Sen.
Arthenia Joyner (FL).*

Sharon Davies, JD, Executive Director, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University; **Dr. Tracie Keese**, Captain, Denver Police Department and Executive Director of Operations, Consortium for Police Leadership and Equity; **Mr. Michael Harris, JD**, Senior Attorney, National Center for Youth Law; and **Mr. Jewell Williams**, Sherriff, Philadelphia City and County, and Former Pennsylvania State Representative.

At the close of the policy sessions, 32 policy resolutions were officially ratified. These resolutions will serve as the basis for both state and federal legislation and collaboration with community-based and advocacy organizations. Previously ratified resolutions have resulted in enacted laws, regulations, and executive orders.

No Annual Legislative Conference would be complete

without the events that help attendees bond, network, and provide recognition to those who continue to help push forward NBCSL's mission. This year's annual events included the Humanitarian Award and Open Plenary Breakfast; the Benjamin S. Ruffin Corporate Round Table Luncheon; the NOBEL/Women Legislative Breakfast; the Prayer Breakfast and Memorial Service; the David S. Holmes Award Luncheon; and the David P. Richardson, Jr. Nation Builders Awards Ceremony, Reception, and Dinner. Congratulations to these legislative and corporate champions:

2012 Humanitarian Award

- Senator Hillman T. Frazier (MS)

2012 Nation Builders

- Beverly Bond
- The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, U.S. House of Representatives
- The Honorable Kathleen



[NBCSL Host Night Out]: L to R (front row): Rep. Barbara Ward Cooper (TN), Sen. Thelma Harper (TN), NBCSL Guest, and NBCSL Guest. L to R (second row): Rep. Gloria Fox (MA), NBCSL Guest., Rep. Anastasia Pittman (OK) and guest. L to R (third row): NBCSL Guest, Rep. Larry Butler (CT), Rep. Ernest Hewitt (CT), and NBCSL Guest.

Sebelius, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Sherry Rochelle Hopkins (posthumous)

2012 State Nation Builders

- Raymond E. Bell (District of Columbia)
- Rita Jackson (Georgia)
- George Taliaferro (Indiana)
- The Honorable Viola Taliaferro (Indiana)
- Michael Rashid (Pennsylvania)

2012 Holmes Awards

- **Lifetime Achievement Award**
Senator Arthenia Joyner (FL)
- **Corporate Achievement and Image Award**
Terri Lee, Merck Company
- **The Regis F. Groff Award**
Imani Kendrick
- **Labor Leader of the Year Award**
Mr. Darryl "Mike D." Payne
- **Crystal Gavel Award**
NBCSL President-Elect, Representative Joe Armstrong (TN); Representative Laura Hall (AL); Senator Usie Richards (USVI)
- **The Eagle Award**
Representative Sharon Beasley-Teague (GA); Representative Lois Deberry (TN); Representative Greg Porter (IN)

- **Legislator of the Year**
Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (SC)

NBCSL members were greeted by several dignitaries, world-renowned speakers, and experts throughout the conference. This year's most notable speakers included: Crisis Communications expert and Co-Executive Producer of ABC's *The Scandal*, Ms. Judy Smith; the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr.; Congressman Elijah Cummings (D-MD); Maryland Lt. Governor Anthony Brown; District of Columbia Mayor Vincent Gray; Senior Vice President of Corporate Affairs and Communications for Eli Lilly and Company, Mr. Bart Peterson; Congresswoman Terri Sewell (D-AL); President of *Essence* Communications, Ms. Michelle Ebanks; Bishop Walter S. Thomas; and TV Personality and Comedian, Mr. Jonathan Slocum.

Each year, NBCSL's Annual Legislative Conference (ALC) continues to grow. "We are discussing real, life-changing issues through this event," said President Ballard. "From our Youth Congress to our policy sessions to our closing plenary, we looked at how a spirit of

cooperation can make it possible for government to run smoothly and efficiently." The purpose of the ALC is to expose legislators and stakeholders to issues of great national importance so that they leave the event better informed, ready to collaborate, and prepared to take policy action. This year's event was no different! NBCSL thanks its participants, sponsors, and speakers for making this event a huge success and looks forward to next year!

Join NBCSL at its 37th Annual Legislative Conference to be held December 11-14, 2013, in Memphis, Tennessee. [L](#)

Lauren Evette Williams serves as NBCSL's Communications and Research Associate. She was formerly a Chief of Staff and Communications for an Atlanta City Councilmember and has provided communications and media support to elected officials and government officials on several levels including municipal, state, and national. Ms. Williams holds a master's in Public Administration, a bachelor's in Communications and Rhetoric, and served as a Communications Fellow and Diversity Program Fellow at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Congressional Research Service, respectively.



SAVE THE DATE

MEMPHIS 2013

37TH ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

December 11-14, 2013
Memphis, Tennessee

Join African American policymakers to discuss strategies for improving the quality of life for all Americans.



NBCSL
National Black
Caucus of State
Legislators

The National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) is a membership association representing over 600 African-American state legislators from 45 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. NBCSL members represent upwards of 50 million Americans of all racial backgrounds. NBCSL tracks legislation at all levels of government and actively monitors state and federal policy initiatives to provide its members with important information. Each year, NBCSL members pass policy resolutions that directly impact federal and state policy. The organization focuses on U.S. domestic policy and is committed to policies that positively affect all Americans.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

- ▶ Participate in educational sessions on a range of policy issues.
- ▶ Voice the educational, political, economic, and social impact your company/organization can offer to policymakers and their constituents.
- ▶ Hear powerful speakers and distinctive leaders of the African American community.
- ▶ Meet, network, exchange ideas, and forge new bonds with legislators, sponsors, and constituents.