

Canada – United States  
Inter-Parliamentary Group  
Canadian Section



Groupe interparlementaire  
Canada – États-Unis  
Section canadienne

---

**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
respecting its participation at the 70th Annual Meeting  
of the Council of State Governments  
Southern Legislative Conference (SLC)**

**Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group**

**Lexington, Kentucky, United States of America  
9–13 July 2016**

# Report

## DELEGATION MEMBERS AND STAFF

From 9–13 July 2016, Senator David Wells, Vice-Chair of the Canadian Section of the Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG) led a delegation to the 70<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Council of State Government’s Southern Legislative Conference (SLC) in Lexington, Kentucky. The other members of the delegation were Mr. Kerry Diotte, M.P. and Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury, M.P. The delegation was accompanied by Ms. June Dewetering, the Canadian Section’s Senior Advisor.

## THE EVENT

Founded in 1947, the SLC includes state legislators from 15 southern U.S. states (see the Appendix). Its mission is to foster and encourage intergovernmental cooperation among member states.

At the 70<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, each of the SLC’s six committees – Agriculture & Rural Development; Economic Development, Transportation & Cultural Affairs; Education; Energy & Environment; Fiscal Affairs & Government Operations; and Human Services & Public Safety – met. As well, plenary sessions were held, a food packaging community service project was undertaken and a discussion of the Overseas Voting Initiative occurred.

## DELEGATION OBJECTIVES FOR THE EVENT

Members of the IPG’s Canadian Section have been attending the annual meetings of the SLC since 2005. Their interactions with state legislators enable them to achieve better the aims of finding points of convergence in respective national policies, initiating dialogue on points of divergence, encouraging exchanges of information and promoting better understanding on shared issues of concern. Moreover, the meetings provide the IPG’s Canadian Section with an important means by which to provide input to, and gather information about, state-level issues that affect Canada.

At this event, the delegates conveyed to state legislators the nature, magnitude and importance of the relationship between Canada and the U.S. South. They also identified areas of new and existing cooperation and collaboration.

## ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

At the 70<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, the plenary sessions were:

- Commuter and Light Rail Systems in the SLC States: Recent Trends
- Opening Plenary Session: John Calipari, Head Men’s Basketball Coach, University of Kentucky
- Closing Plenary Session: James Carville and Mary Matalin.

The committee sessions were:

- Agriculture & Rural Development Committee:
  - Industrial Hemp Cultivation
  - The Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement
  - Animal Welfare: Bringing Balance to the Provision of Care.
- Economic Development, Transportation & Cultural Affairs Committee:
  - Impact of Federal Surface Transportation Legislation on the SLC States
  - Ingredients Necessary to Promote Economic Development
  - The Arts and Kentucky: Catalyst for Economic Growth
  - The Equine Industry's Impact in Kentucky.
- Education Committee:
  - Effective Teacher Preparedness Programs
  - Student Success in Postsecondary Systems
  - Update on the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- Energy & Environment Committee:
  - Clearing the Air: An Update on the Clean Power Plan
  - Legal Challenges to Waters of the United States
  - Cyber Security and Nuclear Power
  - Legislative Roundtable.
- Fiscal Affairs & Government Operations Committee:
  - Public Pensions: Trends from the SLC States
  - National and Regional Economic Trends
  - Comparative Data Reports
  - Tax Credits, Deductions and Exemptions: Making them Work for States.
- Human Services & Public Safety Committee:
  - Prescription Opioid and Heroin Epidemic
  - Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women
  - Diabetes in SLC States.

This report summarizes the presentations made during the plenary and selected committee sessions.

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE: ONE SOUTHERN STATE'S APPROACH**

### **Jonathan Grate, *Justice and Public Safety Cabinet for the State of Kentucky***

- Consideration should be given to imposing requirements on those who prescribe drugs.
- Doctors should perhaps be required to consider a patient's prescription history prior to writing a prescription, to examine the patient prior to writing a prescription, and to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of various drug options with the patient's médicaments.

### **John Tilley, *Justice and Public Safety Cabinet for the State of Kentucky***

- For at least some U.S. states, "drug problems are driving prison problems," and people are being "warehoused" in prisons.
- Some probation conditions are unrealistic, and they set people up for failure.
- Certaines conditions de probation sont irréalistes et poussent les gens vers l'échec.
- Every drug treatment program should be assessed for its accountability and performance.

### **Van Ingram, *Office of Drug Control Policy for the State of Kentucky***

- The United States is currently experiencing the worst drug epidemic in its history; the epidemic is "30 years in the making," and started when drug companies changed the way in which they market drugs and interact with doctors.
- Americans have a "huge appetite" for opiates.
- The drug "battlefield" is changing every year.
- Mexican drug cartels are focused on making money, and they are now buying chemicals from China and reproducing fentanyl.
- There is a need to address underlying drug addiction issues, and legislation often cannot assist in this regard.
- Those who prescribe opioids should be considering alternatives to such prescriptions.

### **Speaker Greg Stumbo, *Kentucky House of Representatives***

- UPS and FedEx drivers are transporting expensive and dangerous illicit drugs, including across state lines.
- In addressing addictions to illicit drugs, long-term education and treatment are needed, and dedicated funding should exist; there is no single-bullet solution and it is a constant battle.
- Accurate information is required in order to identify appropriate solutions; for

example, regarding illicit drugs, overdose deaths should be reported.

- Doctors are overprescribing drugs in massive amounts, and some people engage in “doctor shopping”; doctors should be made to be responsible for their behaviour in this regard.

#### **Senator Whitney Westerfield, *Kentucky Senate***

- In relation to illicit drugs, threats and enforcement issues should be addressed on an ongoing basis.
- Synthetic drugs are always changing.
- The United States cannot punish or incarcerate its way through the country’s drug problem.
- People who are addicted should receive the treatment and re-entry services that they need.

### **IMPACT OF FEDERAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION ON THE SLC STATES**

#### **Senator Steve Gooch, *Georgia Senate***

- In considering transportation funding and investment, key questions include the following:
  - Why are the funds needed?
  - How will the needed funds be generated?
  - What is the guarantee that additional funds will be directed to transportation?
  - How will additional funds directed to transportation lead to improvements for those who use the transportation system?

#### **Alex Herrgott, *U.S. Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works***

- Because no U.S. state is an “island,” states need to be interconnected; interstate commerce does not stop at the states’ borders.
- About 73% of the world’s “purchasing power” is outside the United States, so it is important for businesses to be able to get their goods to export markets in an affordable manner.
- The amount collected through the U.S. federal gas tax is declining, partly because of more fuel-efficient vehicles.
- State and local governments must have the flexibility they need to address their specific transportation requirements.

### **INGREDIENTS NECESSARY TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Neal Wade, *University of Alabama***

- Economic development is the process of creating wealth through recruiting and attracting businesses, retaining and sustaining existing businesses, enhancing tourism, engaging in retail and commercial development, and supporting entrepreneurs and incubators
- Economic development is an investment good, not a consumption good.
- The workforce is an important consideration in relation to economic development; because business decisions are data-driven, businesses should be provided with evidence that a suitable workforce exists and that infrastructure is adequate.
- Economic development is the process of elimination; states' objective should be getting into, and remaining in, the "site selection game."
- It is possible for every community to improve, and successful economic development occurs at the level of the state's communities; each community may need a separate plan in order to meet its particular needs and opportunities.
- "Coopetition" is the way of the future, and businesses should cooperate in certain areas – such as research – while realizing that they will compete against each other in the marketplace.
- The United States is competing with emerging "powerhouses" from around the globe.
- Trade agreements are important in a global economy.
- State economic development entities and local economic development officers need to work together; everyone has a role to play.
- Because economic development is a process of elimination, it is important to identify ways in which to be more competitive and to move from "good" to "great."

## **COMMUTER AND LIGHT RAIL SYSTEMS IN THE SLC STATES: RECENT TRENDS**

### **Senator Brandon Beach, *Georgia Senate***

- Appropriate transit options improve neighbourhoods, property values, the environment, etc.; they also support economic development and create jobs.
- Transportation systems are an important consideration when making decisions to locate in a particular city or region.
- Investments in transit as part of an overall transportation system can lead to economic development.
- Millennials want, and boomers need, transit systems.

### **Delegate Ronald Villanueva, *Virginia House of Delegates***

- Transportation contributes to development.
- Multi-modal transportation linkages require partnerships, including public-private partnerships.
- Transportation congestion has negative consequences.
- Local governments and the electorate should be engaged in

transportation planning.

## **OVERSEAS VOTING: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING SOUTHERN U.S. MILITARY AND CIVILIANS**

### **Alison Lundergan Grimes, *Kentucky Secretary of State***

- The barriers that U.S. military personnel and other Americans face in voting from an overseas location should be removed.
- Some U.S. states are allowing overseas voters to register to vote online, and to receive their ballot electronically.

### **Tre Hargett, *Tennessee Secretary of State***

- Every vote counts and every vote should be counted.
- Efforts should be directed to making it easier for Americans to vote from an overseas location.

### **Christy McCormick, *U.S. Election Assistance Commission for Maryland***

- Americans who vote from an overseas location face such obstacles as registering to vote, receiving an absentee ballot and returning their ballot in time to have their vote counted; as well, there are connectivity and logistical issues.
- Electronic contact, including through social media platforms, is probably the best way in which to reach Americans who vote from an overseas location.
- Americans who vote from an overseas location are the most disenfranchised group of voters; they often miss deadlines and their vote often does not get counted.

### **David Stafford, *Escambia County Supervisor of Elections***

- Perhaps more so than anyone else, U.S. military personnel serving overseas should have their vote counted.
- There are security issues associated with electronic voting; it is unrealistic to believe that 100% of security issues will ever be addressed, but the risks are likely small and the benefits of allowing military personnel serving overseas to vote exceed the risks.
- Because military personnel serving overseas have limited time to devote to voting, it is important that they be able to find voting-related information – and to vote – quickly.

## **PRESCRIPTION OPIOID AND HEROIN EPIDEMIC**

### **John Tilley, *Justice and Public Safety Cabinet for the State of Kentucky***

- The United States is experiencing a drug epidemic, and the size and scope of the

problem exceed the country's ability to address it.

- The United States' drug epidemic persists despite the correct legislative and public health responses; perpetrators are staying "one step ahead" of efforts to address the epidemic.
- One of the effects of the United States' drug epidemic is that the criminal justice system is being used to address a public health crisis; there is a large number of mentally ill, drug-addicted inmates in the United States. *mentale et de toxicomanie sont incarcérées au pays.*
- About 4.5% of the world's population is located in the United States, and the country imprisons 25% of the world's inmates; one in three women imprisoned worldwide is imprisoned in the United States.
- If convicted felons have meaningful employment when they leave prison, they are less likely to return to prison.
- It is important that those who are suffering from an addiction are not "judged"; instead, they should be treated, and it should be recognized that "addiction" is a disease of "relapse".
- A prescription drug monitoring system helps to stop "doctor swapping."
- More than 80% of the opioids consumed worldwide are consumed in the United States.
- Fentanyl patches that are used to alleviate pain experienced by peoples' pets are being "sought out" by those who have a drug addiction, and are being "re-used" by those individuals.

**Van Ingram, *Office of Drug Control Policy for the State of Kentucky***

- Americans have a "large appetite" for opioids and the United States has a long history of prescription drug abuse.
- In attempting to address the United States' drug epidemic, states are taking actions that include monitoring prescriptions, establishing drug disposal programs and sites, and educating prescribers.
- Access to naloxone should be broadened, and consideration should be given to co-prescribing naloxone and opioids.

**Robert Childs, *North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition***

- Injection drug users need to have honest conversations with law enforcement officers.
- There is a need for syringe exchange programs, which evidence indicates do not lead to an increase in drug use; at \$0.05 each, the cost of a syringe should be compared to the cost of treating someone with AIDS.
- Some people are using the same syringe up to 50 times, and the incidences of hepatitis and HIV would be reduced if a new syringe was used for each injection.
- Access to naloxone should be expanded.
- Fair hiring practices should exist regarding those with a criminal record; someone should not be penalized for the rest of his/her life for a non-violent behaviour



when he/she was 18 years of age.

## **DOMESTIC ABUSE AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

### **Representative Helena Morena, *Louisiana House of Representatives***

- The U.S. National Coalition Against Domestic Violence has indicated the following:
  - Every minute, 20 people are victims of violence committed by an intimate partner.
  - More than 75% of victims of intimate-partner violence are female.
  - About 33% of female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner.
  - About 20% of women will be raped in their lifetime.
- About one third of sexual assaults are reported to law enforcement agencies.
- In the United States, the highest rates of reported forcible rape occur in Alaska, South Dakota, Michigan, New Mexico and Arkansas.
- In the United States, the highest rates of females murdered by males occur in South Carolina, Alaska, New Mexico, Louisiana and Nevada.
- Preventing violence against women is an ongoing process, and requires both training and accountability.

### **Claire Renzetti, *University of Kentucky***

- In recent years, there has been unprecedented federal action to address violence against women on college and university campuses.
- Most colleges and universities do not want to “look bad” when compared to other educational institutions, leading to underreporting of sexual assaults.

## **PUBLIC PENSIONS: TRENDS FROM THE SLC STATES**

### **Representative Barry Ivey, *Louisiana House of Representatives***

- Pension reform is difficult.
- The model of “pure” defined benefit pension plans may not be sustainable; where there is no shared risk, there is no shared responsibility.
- In the context of pensions, the “sins of the past” must be financed, and there may be a requirement to do the “hard thing” – yet the “right thing” – in order to eliminate pension-related debt.

### **Douglas Offerman, *Fitch Ratings***

- Credit ratings are an opinion on the ability of an entity to meet its financial

commitments; it encompasses consideration of the following:

- the degree of the financial challenges that are likely to be confronted;
  - the tools that exist to address those financial challenges; and
  - the extent to which those tools are expected to be used..
- Globally, credit ratings are expressed on a scale from AAA to D.
  - Pensions can be analyzed according to the following key rating factors:
    - the economic framework;
    - the revenue and expenditure frameworks;
    - the long-term liability burden;
    - and
    - operating performance.
  - Most reforms to pension benefits affect only newly hired employees
  - The number of retirees receiving pension benefits is rising, and retirees are living – and receiving benefits – for a longer period of time.

## **NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC TRENDS**

### **William Emmons, *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis***

- The national economic outlook for the United States for 2016 is modest growth, “tame” inflation and historically low interest rates; the long-term economic and financial outlook is slow growth, low inflation, low interest rates, low asset returns, and growing fiscal pressures for the federal and some state governments.
- The United States’ economic recovery, which has been slow and unsteady, is in its eighth year.
- Some observers think that an annual gross domestic product growth rate of 2% – which is lower than the 3% rate that existed before the United States’ “Great Recession” – is the “new normal,” perhaps due to such factors as slow labour force growth, weak growth in productivity and the lingering effects of the recession.
- In the United States, employment is growing at a faster rate than is the potential workforce; the unemployment rate is unlikely to fall much farther.
- The U.S. inflation rate is below the target of 2% established by the Federal Reserve; factors affecting the inflation rate include globalization, technology and competition.

## **OPENING PLENARY SESSION**

### **John Calpari, *University of Kentucky***

- Leaders and public servants, including coaches, help to build an environment in which those who are around them can succeed.
- It is important to have a vision for the people who you lead.
- People need to have dreams and hopes, as well as a path for realizing those dreams and hopes.
- In general, people do not want a hand out; they want a hand up.
- It is possible to drag others up with you and lose nothing yourself in doing so; some people “climb the ladder of success” and pick up the ladder behind them, while others pick up the person who is behind them on the ladder.
- People should be lifelong learners.
- It is important to work well with others, to understand and appreciate their points of view, and to be wrong occasionally so that others can be right.
- Trust is established when someone does what he/she says that he/she is going to do; trust builds belief that is blind faith.
- People should have a “refuse to lose” mentality, and should keep trying until success is achieved.
- It is possible to disagree without being disagreeable.

## **TAX CREDITS, DEDUCTIONS AND EXEMPTIONS: MAKING THEM WORK FOR STATES**

### **Josh Goodman, *The Pew Charitable Trusts***

- It is important to gather better information in order to make better decisions.
- The following are the two key steps to improving tax incentive policies:
  - Evaluate the economic and fiscal results of tax incentive programs on a regular basis.
  - Minimize or eliminate budget challenges by ensuring that the fiscal costs of tax incentives are predictable.
- When states evaluate the economic and fiscal results of tax incentive programs, they can do the following:
  - make small changes to incentives that will greatly increase their return on investment;
  - identify programs that are working well so that investments can be made with confidence;
  - repeal or replace ineffective or obsolete incentives; and
  - engage in more constructive conversations about incentives.
- Incentive programs can be evaluated by a variety of entities, including: an

executive branch agency; an independent agency; legislative staff; legislators; or external experts.

- Evaluations of incentive programs can focus on tax and/or cash incentives.
- Legislators play a crucial role in ensuring that incentive programs work as intended; in states with evaluation laws, legislators can do the following:
  - provide guidance to evaluators;
  - improve the evaluation process over time;
  - hold hearings in relation to evaluations; and
  - use the findings from evaluations and hearings to improve policies.
- In relation to incentive programs, states need predictability about the cost of incentives and the timing of those costs.
- Regarding the predictability of incentive-related costs, states can gather and share high-quality data on these costs by doing the following:
  - forecasting costs on a regular basis;
  - monitoring the costs of, and the fiscal commitments in relation to, large and high-risk programs; and
  - sharing timely information on incentives among relevant agencies.
- States can improve the predictability of incentive-related costs by designing incentives in a manner that reduces fiscal risk, including by doing the following:
  - putting a limit on the annual cost of each program;
  - controlling the timing of incentive redemptions;
  - requiring legislators to finance incentives through budget appropriations;
  - restricting businesses' ability to redeem more in credits than they owe in taxes;
  - linking incentives to businesses' performance; and
  - requiring businesses to provide advance notice of their intention to participate in an incentive program.

## **THE TOBACCO MASTER SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT**

### **Warren Beeler and Roger Thomas, *Governor of Kentucky's Office of Agricultural Policy***

- In 1998, Kentucky's tobacco sector comprised about 46,850 farms, tobacco production had a value of more than \$924 million and approximately 25% of Kentucky's farm income was tobacco-related; in 2014, the sector comprised just over 4,500 farms, tobacco production was valued at almost \$430 million and 6.5% of the state's farm income was derived from tobacco.
- In Kentucky, tobacco settlement funds have been used as seed money for investments in production practices, farm innovation, genetics, nutrition and

education.

## **ANIMAL WELFARE: BRINGING BALANCE TO THE PROVISION OF CARE**

### **Bob Stout, *Kentucky Department of Agriculture***

- The terms “animal welfare” and “animal rights” have different meanings; the former is focused on well-being or health, while the latter is linked to a privilege or entitlement
- In order to ensure the well-being of an animal, the following actions – among others – might be taken:
  - Respond to reports and complaints.
  - Be proactive whenever possible.
  - Investigate complaints objectively and thoroughly.
  - Collaborate with local law enforcement and other appropriate officials.
  - Intervene lawfully and appropriately, which can include education, confiscation, euthanizing or monitoring the situation.
- Regarding animal welfare, stakeholders include the following:
  - the owner/agent, who is responsible for the care and maintenance of his/her animals, must meet livestock care standards and regulations and, when unable to provide care, can take such actions as selling the animal or giving it away, placing the animal with a non-governmental organization, euthanizing the animal, or continuing with the same behaviour and facing legal consequences;
  - non-governmental organizations, which can provide resources, advocate, educate, raise funds and seek realistic solutions; and
  - governmental entities, which enforce regulations, investigate complaints, address immediate needs, ensure due process, seek solutions, monitor owner-managed remedies and, as warranted, euthanize.
- Animal owners may fail to ensure the well-being of an animal for reasons that include ignorance, apathy, disability, insufficient resources, over population or malice.
- To improve animal well-being, legislators can do the following:
  - advocate that species and breed associations be active in their lobbying efforts;
  - identify and engage with rescue groups;
  - develop educational programs that address animal care and responsibility;
  - review animal abuse laws and enforcement authorities;
  - create a local response infrastructure, including funding, facilities and personnel; and

- encourage judicial accountability in relation to owners and enforcement authorities.

**Cia Johnson, *American Veterinary Medical Association***

- If the social perception is that something is wrong, then science is unlikely to change that perception; consequently, decisions should consider science and societal values.
- There are three concepts of animal welfare: health and biological functions; mind; and nature.
- In the United States, there is limited federal regulation regarding animal welfare.
- High public trust generally means that regulations are not needed and that voluntary measures are probably adequate.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Michael L. MacDonald,  
Senator, Co-Chair  
Canada-United States  
Inter-Parliamentary Group

Hon. Wayne Easter, P.C.,  
M.P.,  
Co-Chair  
Canada-United States  
Inter-Parliamentary Group

# Appendix

## U.S. STATES IN THE SOUTHERN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Alabama	North Carolina
Arkansas	Oklahoma
Florida	South Carolina
Georgia	Tennessee
Kentucky	Texas
Louisiana	Virginia
Mississippi	West Virginia
Missouri	

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canada–United States Inter-Parliamentary Group
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	70 <sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Council of State Governments Southern Legislative Conference (SLC)
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Lexington, Kentucky, United States of America
<b>DATES</b>	9–13 July 2016
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	Hon. David Wells, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Kerry Diotte, M.P. Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury, M.P.
STAFF	Ms. June Dewetering, Senior Advisor
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>3,393.44\$</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>4,152.74\$</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>1,138.58\$</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	<b>2,011.80\$</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,696.56\$</b>