The Southern Legislative Conference of The Council of State Governments completed its fifth annual Center for the Advancement of Leadership Skills (CALS), September 24-28, 2011. The 2011 CALS program was hosted by Coastal Carolina University in Conway, South Carolina.

The 2011 class comprised 18 leaders representing the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Texas, Tennessee and West Virginia.

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Senator Larry Teague, Arkansas

Arkansas Senator Larry Teague, 2008 CALS alumni, has been elected to serve as President Pro Tempore during the 89th General Assembly.

Senator Teague began his public service career as an alderman in Nashville, Arkansas. In 1997, he was elected to the House of Representatives and served through 2002, when he left office due to term limits. He was elected to the Senate in 2008, and served as chair of the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee.

Senator Teague has been the recipient of several honors and awards, including State Legislator of 2011, Arkansas State Employees Association; 2011 Community Service Award, Mental Health Council; 2011 Freedom Champion Award, Arkansas Bikers Aiming Towards Education; and 2011 Kids Count Coalition Champion, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families.

Perspectives on Leadership

What is the biggest challenge facing leaders today?

Education, K-12 and higher education, healthcare, tax relief – all are important and challenging areas. Whether you call it a challenge or an opportunity, I believe keeping the political parties communicating with each other and working together instead of against each other is of utmost importance. Almost daily, we see the difficulties caused by partisanship behavior in our nation’s Capitol. In my constituency, there are members of both the Democratic and Republican parties and perhaps some Green and Libertarian party members. I am elected to represent all of them, and I am convinced government is at its best when there is open dialogue between the parties and everyone has had input and an opportunity to affect the outcome.

What is one characteristic you believe every leader should possess?

A leader should have good listening skills. While listening, a good leader is able to keep the conversion moving and steer it into needed areas by asking pertinent questions. I remember several times when I was approached by someone with a problem or need. After listening, I asked what it was they wanted me to do or how I could help them and their reply was, “I don’t really want you to do anything, I just wanted someone to listen.” Leaders should possess the ability to listen respectfully and attentively. This is a skill I continue to apply and hopeful improve upon on a daily basis.

How has your participation in the CALS program enhanced your leadership skills?

I believe a leader also needs to be a good follower. I remember at the 2008 CALS program, my fellow class members were all leaders – some established, some emerging – but all were leaders. It was interesting and very informative to watch the group during the exercises and discussions. We could not all lead at once, so sometimes we had to be followers, and some of us were better at following than others. I believe a good leader should try to have a fairly accurate view of his/her own skills and be willing to let someone else lead or share leadership when that person can better provide the tools to get the job done. Some people are born leaders and have an intuitive grasp of the skills needed to lead. However, leadership can be learned by those who don’t have that gift. Every leadership class I take, I gain something of value. I particularly thought the CALS program was on the mark and felt I brought back to my state skills and knowledge that better equip me for working with everyone.

Representative Darrin Williams, Arkansas

Representative Darrin Williams, CALS class of 2011, was elected 2013 Speaker-designate of the Arkansas House of Representatives. His election is one for the history books, as he is the first African-American chosen to hold the position of Speaker. Although proud of this accomplishment, Representative Williams is looking past the historic footnote as he prepares to lead the 89th General Assembly.

Representative Williams currently is a partner at Carney Williams Bates Pulliam & Bowman law firm, where he specializes in securities fraud. He previously worked for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, U.S. Senate Sergeant at Arms, and U.S. Senator David Pryor. He later accepted the position of chief of staff and counsel to Attorney General Mark Pryor and went on to serve as chief deputy attorney general.

Representative Williams currently serves as chair of the House Judiciary Committee and member of the House Rules Committee, Committee on Aging, Children and Youth and Committee on Legislative and Military Affairs. He was named as one of the “12 State Legislators to Watch in 2012” by Governing magazine and “2011 Legislator of the Year” by the Arkansas Realtors Association as well as the Arkansas Police Chiefs Association.

Perspectives on Leadership

What is the biggest challenge facing leaders today?

I believe polarizing partisan politics is the biggest challenge facing political leaders today. Following the example of the U.S. Congress, many of our state legislatures are adopting Washington, D.C.-style politics, where more importance is placed on scoring points for your team (political party), rather than ensuring the best policy for the people who we are sworn to serve. Partisan polarization is paralyzing the policy-making process and very little meaningful work gets done. People are growing more and more frustrated with this type of system, and they are losing respect, not just for politicians, but the process itself. This is dangerous because a thriving democracy needs public engagement. Additionally, in many term-limited legislatures, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find candidates to run for public office because people are afraid that it is too difficult to make a real difference. We need more statesmen and stateswomen who care more about doing the people’s business than their political parties. I believe in healthy debate and discussion where legislators treat each other with civility, always remembering the Golden Rule. Through tough, intense and civil debate we can find common ground and common sense solutions that benefit our constituencies and not just our political party.

What is one characteristic you believe every leader should possess?

The ability to build a consensus is a critical skill necessary for leaders. With a broad diversity of needs, interests and political perspectives coupled with finite resources, a leader must be able to forge a consensus. A leader must be able to get people to think about the big picture and about the greater good and not simply their narrow interests. Finding common ground can be difficult, but those leaders who can encourage people to work together in a meaningful way are the most effective type of leader. This often requires a leader to be part visionary, part prophet and part salesman.

How has your participation in the CALS program enhanced your leadership skills?

Whenever you have an opportunity to spend time with leaders from other states and listen and learn different ways and approaches to problem solving, it is beneficial. Often we become creatures of habit; we do things and look at them the way we always have. The CALS program challenges you to think “outside of the box” and to take a look at issues from varying perspectives. The CALS program allows its participants to actively engage in leadership development training in a non-threatening, non-partisan environment, where the focus is on learning and developing the leader and not on individual political agendas. Additionally, the CALS program allows participants to establish a network of leaders across the country that share similar issues and challenges, which you can call upon for assistance, advice or just a sounding board.
ALUMNI ACCOLADES

Representative John Tilley, Kentucky
The Department of Public Advocacy presented Representative Tilley with its 2011 “Public Advocate Award.” He shared the honor with his fellow co-chair of the Kentucky General Assembly Judiciary Committee.

Representative Kathy Webb, Arkansas
Representative Webb is chair of the Economic and Tax Policy Committee and Joint Budget Committee-Special Language. She also is vice-chair of the Joint Budget Committee.

Representative Paul DeMarco, Alabama
Representative DeMarco serves as chair of both the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee and the Legislative Joint Oversight Committee over the Alabama Homeland Security Agency.

Representative Skye McNiel, Oklahoma
Representative McNiel was presented a 2012 “Meritorious Service Award” by the Oklahoma Farm Bureau.

Senator Arthur Orr, Alabama
Senator Orr recently was named “Athylene C. Banks - 2012 Citizen of the Year” by the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce. Last November, Senator Orr received the “Outstanding Elected Official Award” from the Resource Conservation and Development Council of Alabama Mountains, Rivers and Valleys (formerly Tennessee Valley).

Representative Shirley B. Randleman, North Carolina
In her second term representing District 94, Representative Randleman served as the chair of Justice and Public Safety Oversight (JPS) and the appropriation sub-committee for JPS. She also chairs the Legislative Research Commission study committee on Incapacity to Proceed (Criminal Cases) and vice-chair of Judiciary and Mental Health.

Representative Lee Denney, Oklahoma
Representative Denney received the 2011 “Distinguished Service Award” for her support of higher education. Representative Denney, an OSU alumna, is one of only two state elected officials who have received the award twice. She also was presented the award in 2009.

Judge David Kimberley, Alabama
Judge David Kimberley has served on the Alabama Sentencing Standards Committee and Advisory Committees for the drafting of the Alabama Uniform Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act, Alabama Uniform Foreign Country Money Judgments Recognition Act, Revised Notary Act, and Uniform Unsworn Foreign Declarations Act. Judge Kimberley also has been appointed to the Alabama Criminal Pattern Jury Instruction Committee, and helped design and develop the curriculum for the National Judicial College’s Taking the Bench: An Online Course for New Judges.

Representative Tiffany Rogers, Arkansas
Representative Rogers is chair of the Energy Committee and a member of the Speaker’s Leadership Team. She also was selected by the Administrative Office of the Courts to receive the 2011 “First Branch Award.”

Representative Patricia Smith, Louisiana
Representative Smith has been elected to her second term as chair of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus.

Representative Amy Carter, Georgia
Valdosta State University presented Representative Carter with the 2012 “Loyce W. Turner Outstanding Public Service Award.”
Now Accepting Applications

CALS 2012 | ATLANTA, GEORGIA | SEPTEMBER 22-26, 2012

The SLC is accepting applications for the 2012 CALS program to be held September 22-26, in Atlanta, Georgia. The Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University will serve as our partner.

The SLC encourages CALS alumni to nominate emerging leaders who should be considered to receive a scholarship to the region’s premier leadership program.

To nominate someone for the program, please contact Lori Jones-Rucker at 404-633-1866 or at ljones-rucker@csg.org.

DATES TO REMEMBER

| May   | 25 | SLC Annual Meeting early bird registration closes |
| June  | 22 | Housing forms due for the SLC’s 66th Annual Meeting in Charleston, West Virginia |
|       | 24 | Online registration for the SLC Annual Meeting closes |
| July  | 6  | CALS applications due (get in your recommendations!) |
|       | 28-31 | SLC Annual Meeting in Charleston, West Virginia |
|       | 29  | CALS Alumni Reception (in conjunction with the SLC Annual Meeting, location TBD) |
| September | 22-26 | 2012 CALS program, Atlanta, Georgia |

66th Annual Meeting of the Southern Legislative Conference

July 28-August 1, 2012

Charleston, West Virginia

CALS

center for the advancement of leadership skills

Leadership Program of the Southern Office of The Council of State Governments / Southern Legislative Conference

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