



North Dakota House of Representatives

STATE CAPITOL
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BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Representative Steve Vetter

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COMMITTEES:

Judiciary (Vice Chair)
Government and Veterans Affairs

Chairman Weber and Senators of the Tax & Finance Committee,

My name is Steve Vetter, I represent district 18, eastern part of Grand Forks along the Red River. It has a little rural area going as far north as Manvel, ND.

Here I am dealing with another tax bill. Actually, it is a resolution for a shall consider study for personal staff for legislators.

Because of Term Limits it is now needed. Instead of fighting the current system, let's make it the best it can be under the circumstances we are given.

1. Jump Start new legislators: With only 8 years in office, a person must learn quickly and be up to speed right away. Currently it takes a session just to learn what is going on, now they only have 3 sessions left. You only have one chance every 2 years to get a bill right.
2. We must maintain Institutional Knowledge: Trained staff working for the legislators maintains institutional knowledge otherwise lost. Termed out Legislators.
3. More informed and knowledgeable legislature leads to better laws.
4. Effectiveness of the Legislators. Be all you can be. Look at everything you do now. Imagine if you could multiple yourself. I envision legislators getting someone compliment their objectives as a legislator. For example: the Speaker might want a parliamentarian, Chair of Judiciary might want someone knowledgeable in the law. Someone in Tax Committee would need someone really smart. Or maybe you are like the chairman and you are near perfect, maybe your staff person's job is to communicate back to your constituents how great you are. Just like we all have different objective goals, we would all we would all want different objectives from a staff person.

5. Elected should be making the decisions and setting policy versus the Bureaucracy: Citizens can hold elected officials accountable but can't do anything about the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy has a vested interest in their own wellbeing, not the individual wants and needs of the citizens. We need staff that are working directly for us and therefore the people of our individual districts.

We currently have the benefit of legislators that have been here 10 to 20+ years. That won't be the case. Do you remember when you were a freshman...

A major national study on personal legislative staff for legislators was done 15 years ago. Another study was done by CSG in 2021 and provides additional information and more up-to-date. The NCSL are currently doing a national study and it will be done June or July of this year. This would be good additional information to know when making a decision on what model North Dakota should use.

10 states have full time legislatures with large amounts of full-time staff people. (Over 80% of their time).

26 state have intermediate staff and time is about 2/3 at the legislature.

10 states are Citizen-lite legislatures with some but limited staff and are there close to half of the time. 4 states are truly citizen part-time legislature and are there less than 50% of the time.

Most every state has some form of what we call legislative counsel. 38 states have at least 1 personal staff person. Most common is 1 staff person per legislator. 8 states have shared staff. 6 states have an allocated amount of money to hire staff. 6 states have 2 or more personal staff. 5 states have 3 or more staff.

In my research I have learned 38 states have personal legislative staff with several version types. My research indicates the most common type is to have at least 1 staff person per legislator. Some share staff members. Some states require leadership approval. Some states have staff assigned by leadership. A few states give a legislator more flexibility with an expense amount to spend on how and who they want to spend it on. I think this might be a good way to transition to the legislator staff idea as the experienced legislators that don't want staff could have another use for this expense account like education trips. It could be used for travel expenses for training seminars and/or conventions for different national organizations or other political events. CPAC, ALEC, National Conventions, etc.

The important question becomes what is the objective of the personal staff member. Is the help to become more efficient? Institutional Knowledge and expertise in certain subject matter? A staff member for communication or technology help? Policy research

for a bill or helping with bills in the Senate? Or do we want a system that encourage termed out legislators to provide their invaluable institutional knowledge and stay involved? We can set it up how we want but there needs to be more buy-in with multiple legislators, hence the reason for there study.

Ingenuity of America is we have individuality and then we come together as a team. This allows for the best ideas and then we together to achieve them. That is what legislature staff is all about

How much individual power do you want to give to the office of state senator and/or state representative?

I would ask you for your consideration for a Do Pass recommendation on HCR 3033

STATE LEGISLATURES						
Table 3.21						
Staff for Individual Legislators						
	Senate			House/Assembly		
	Capitol			Capitol		
State or other jurisdiction	Personal	Shared	District	Personal	Shared	District
Alabama*	YR	YR/2	(a)	YR	YR/10	(a)
Alaska (b)	YR/SO	X	YR	YR/SO	X	YR
Arizona	YR (c)	X	X	X	YR (c)	X
Arkansas	X	YR	X	X	YR (d)	X
California	YR	X	YR	YR	X	YR
Colorado	YR (e)	YR (e)	X	YR (e)	YR (e)	X
Connecticut (f)	YR/1	X	X	X	YR/4	X
Delaware (pp)	YR/1.3	YR/0.8	X	YR/0.9	YR/1.2	X
Florida*	YR (h)	X	YR (h)	YR (h)	X	YR (h)
Georgia	X	YR/3, SO/68	X	X	YR/25, SO/113	X
Hawaii (nn)	YR/2	X	X	YR/1	X	X
Idaho	X	SO, YR (i)	X	X	SO, YR (i)	X
Illinois	YR (j)	YR (j)	YR (j)	YR (j)	YR (j)	YR (j)
Indiana	X	YR/2 (k)	X	X	YR	X
Iowa	SO/1 (oo)	X	(oo)	SO/1 (oo)	X	(oo)
Kansas	SO/1	X	X	(l)	SO/3	X
Kentucky	X	YR (m)	X	X	YR (m)	X
Louisiana	(n)	YR (o)	YR (n)	(n)	YR (o)	YR (n)
Maine	(p)	YR, SO (p)	X	X	YR/11 (q)	X
Maryland*	(r)	X	YR (r)	YR (r)	SO (r)	YR (r)
Massachusetts*	YR	X	X	YR	X	X
Michigan	YR (s)	X	X	YR/2 (s)	X	X
Minnesota	YR (t)	Varies	X	YR (t)	Varies	X
Mississippi*	X	YR	X	X	YR	X
Missouri	YR/2	YR/1	X	YR/1	YR/1	X
Montana*	X	SO	X	X	SO	X
Nebraska	YR/2	X	X	Unicameral		
Nevada	SO (u)	YR	X	SO (pp)	YR	X
New Hampshire	X	YR	X	X	YR	X
New Jersey	YR (h)	X	YR (h)	YR (h)	X	YR (h)
New Mexico (qq)	SO/1	X	X	X	SO/2	X
New York*	YR (w)	X	YR (w)	YR (w)	X	YR (w)
North Carolina	YR (x)	YR	X	YR (x)	YR	X
North Dakota	X	SO (v)	X	X	SO (v)	X
Ohio	YR/2 (y)	X	(z)	YR/1 (aa)	X	(z)
Oklahoma	YR/1 (bb)	YR (bb)	X	YR (bb)	YR/1 (bb)	X
Oregon	YR (cc)	YR	YR (dd)	YR	YR	YR (rr)
Pennsylvania	YR	X	YR	YR	X	YR
Rhode Island	X	YR (ee)	X	X	YR (ee)	X
South Carolina**	X	YR/2	X	YR/4	X	X
South Dakota	(ff)	(ff)	X	(ff)	(ff)	X
Tennessee	YR/1	X	X	YR/1	YR/1	X
Texas	(hh)	X	(hh)	(hh)	X	(hh)
Utah	SO (ii)	YR /6-8(ii)	X	SO (ii)	YR/5-8(ii)	X
Vermont	YR/1 (jj)	X	X	YR/1 (jj)	X	X
Virginia	SO/1 (kk)	X	(kk)	SO (kk)	SO/2	(kk)
Washington*	YR/1	X	IO/1	YR/1	X	YR/1
West Virginia	SO	X	X	X	SO/17	X
Wisconsin	(ll)	X	(ll)	(ll)	X	X
Wyoming	X	X	X	X	X	X
American Samoa*	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guam*	X	X	X	Unicameral		
CNMI** **	YR (mm)	(mm)	X	YR (mm)	(mm)	(ll)
Puerto Rico*	YR (mm)	X	X	YR (mm)	X	X
U.S. Virgin Islands*	YR (mm)	X	X	Unicameral		

Source: The Council of State Governments' survey of state legislative service agencies, 2022.

* Information from The Council of State Governments' 2020 survey of state legislative services agencies and 2021 review of state websites

** Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

Note: For entries under column heading "Shared," figures after slash indicate approximate number of legislators per staff person, where avail

Survey respondents indicate that the most common responsibilities for personal staff are scheduling for the member, managing the member's office, constituent services and writing constituent correspondence. Editing and managing the member's website, on the other hand, was the least common responsibility for personal staff. The most common to least common responsibilities are ranked below:

1. Scheduling for the Member
2. Managing Member's Office;
3. Constituent Services (casework, congratulatory letters and resolutions, letters of recommendation, etc);
4. Writing Constituent Correspondence;
5. Tracking or monitoring legislation;
6. Managing or supervising other staff;
7. Writing newsletters, memos, talking points, speeches;
8. Coordinating Press for the Member (initiating press releases, scheduling press opportunities, etc);
9. Policy and Legislative Research;
10. Providing Strategic or Political Advice; and,
11. Editing and Managing Member's website

12 states: Arkansas, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana(shared SO), New Hampshire, SC, RI, ND, Wyoming, SD

Full- and Part-Time Legislatures

Updated July 28, 2021

Related Topics: [About State Legislatures](#) | [Center for Legislative Strengthening](#)

It seems like an easy question: Which legislatures are full-time and which ones are part-time? But with 50 different formulas for designing a state legislature, it's difficult to paint this issue in black and white. So we've done it in green, gray and gold.

Being a legislator doesn't just mean attending legislative sessions and voting on proposed laws. State legislators also spend large amounts of time assisting constituents, studying state issues during the interim and campaigning for election. These activities go on throughout the year. Any assessment of the time requirements of the job should include all of these elements of legislative life.

Beyond that point, NCSL prefers to look more broadly at the capacity of legislatures to function as independent branches of government, capable of balancing the power of the executive branch and having the information necessary to make independent, informed policy decisions. To measure the capacity of legislatures, it's important to consider the amount of time legislators spend on the job, the amount they are compensated and the size of the legislature's staff.

NCSL has grouped the 50 state legislatures into three major categories: Green, Gray and Gold-and for those who want to know more, NCSL has provided some shading within those categories.

Green Legislatures (Full-time, Well-paid, Large Staff)

Green legislatures require the most time of legislators, usually 80 percent or more of a full-time job. They have large staffs. In most Green states, legislators are paid enough to make a living without requiring outside income. These legislatures are more similar to Congress than are the other state legislatures. Most of the nation's largest population states fall in this category. Because there are marked differences within the category, we have subdivided the Green states. Those in Green generally spend more time on the job because their sessions are longer and their districts larger than those in Green Lite. As a result, they tend to have more staff and are compensated at a higher rate. Within subcategories, states are listed alphabetically.

Green: Full-time, well paid, large staff (4)

- California
- Michigan
- New York
- Pennsylvania

Light Green: Full-time Lite (6)

- Alaska
- Hawaii
- Illinois
- Massachusetts
- Ohio
- Wisconsin

Gray Legislatures (Hybrid)

Legislatures in the Gray category are hybrids. Legislatures in these states typically say that they spend more than two-thirds of a full time job being legislators. Although their income from legislative work is greater than that in the Gold states, it's usually not enough to allow them to make a living without having other sources of income. Legislatures in the Gray category have intermediate sized staff. States in the middle of the population range tend to have Gray legislatures.

Gray: Hybrid

- Alabama
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Delaware
- Florida
- Georgia
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Maryland
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Nebraska
- Nevada
- New Jersey
- North Carolina
- Oklahoma
- Oregon
- South Carolina
- Tennessee
- Texas
- Virginia
- Washington

Gold Legislatures (Part-time, low pay, small staff)

In the Gold states, on average lawmakers spend the equivalent of half of a full-time job doing legislative work. The compensation they receive for this work is quite low and requires them to have other sources of income in order to make a living. The Gold states have relatively small staffs. They are often called traditional or citizen legislatures and they are most often found in the smallest population, more rural states. Again, NCSL has divided these states into two groups. The legislatures in Gold are the most traditional or citizen legislatures. The legislatures in Gold Lite are slightly less traditional.

Gold: Part-time, low pay, small staff (4)

- Montana
- North Dakota
- South Dakota
- Wyoming

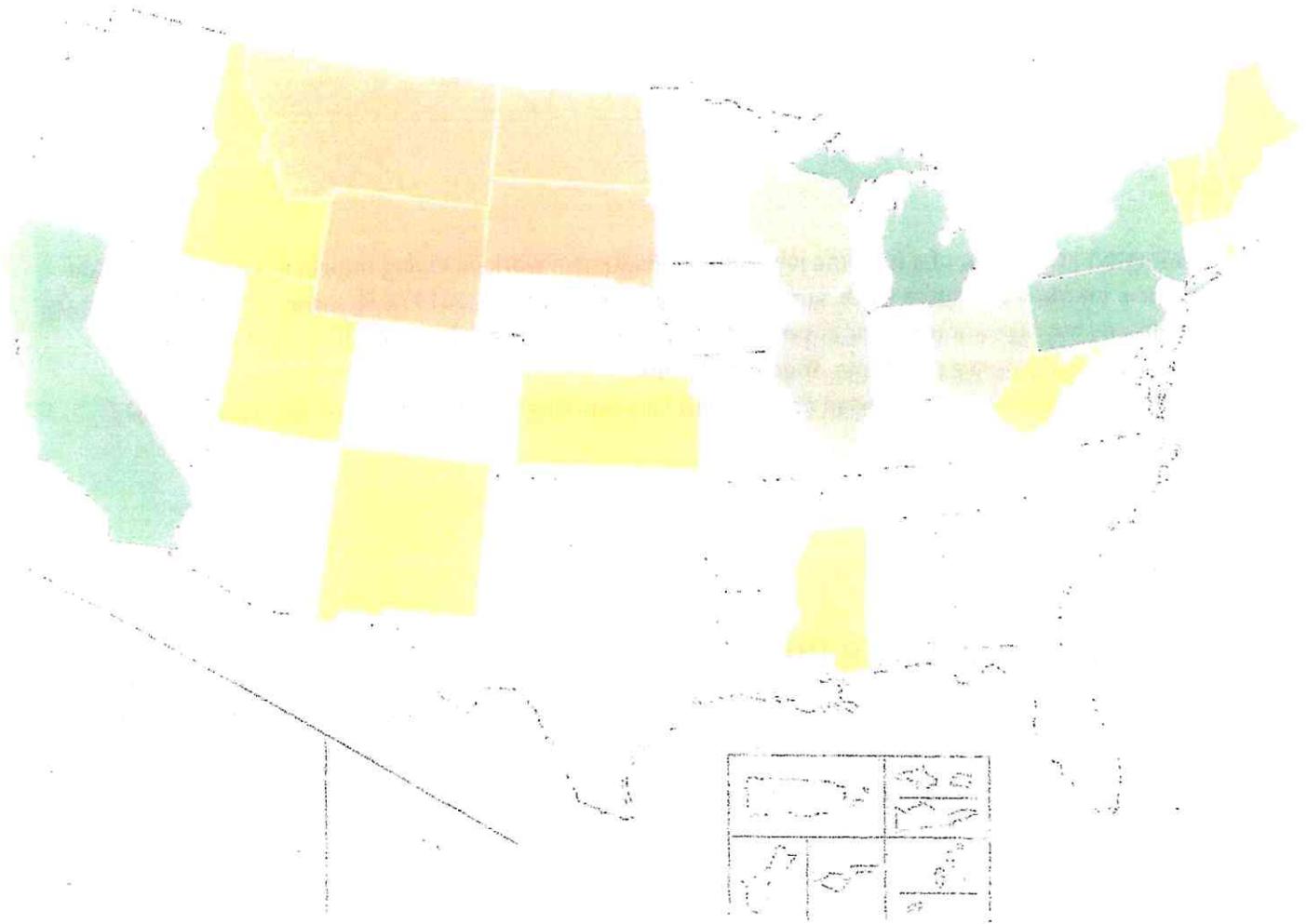
Light Gold: Part-time Lite (10)

- Idaho
- Kansas
- Maine
- Mississippi

- New Hampshire
- New Mexico
- Rhode Island

- Utah
- Vermont
- West Virginia

5 Types of Legislatures



Full-time Lite (6) Part-time, low pay, small staff (4)

Full-time, well paid, large staff (4) Part-time Lite (10)

Average Job Time, Compensation and Staff Size by Category of Legislature

Category of Legislature	Time on the job (1)	Compensation (2)	Total Staff (3)
Green	84%	\$82,358	1,250
Gray	74%	\$41,110	469
Gold	57%	\$18,449	160

Notes

1. Estimated proportion of a full-time job spent on legislative work including time in session, constituent service, interim committee work, and election campaigns. *Source: 2014 NCSL survey of all state legislators.*
2. Estimated average annual compensation of legislators including salary, per diem, and any other unvouchered expense payments. *Source: NCSL 2014.*
3. Average number of staff--partisan and nonpartisan--working for the legislature. *Source: NCSL 2015.*

Related Resources

Updated February 07, 2025

Mason's Manual 2020 Edition

Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure is a premier parliamentary authority for state legislatures. NCSL follows Paul Mason's tradition of updating and reprinting the book approximately every 10 years.

[About State Legislatures, Center for Legislative Strengthening](#)

Updated January 28, 2025

NCSL State Liaisons

On this page, legislators and legislative staff can find their NCSL state liaison and information to contact them.

[About State Legislatures, Legislative Staff](#)

Updated February 25, 2025

2025 State Legislative Session Calendar

2025 State Legislative Session Calendar - view the legislative session calendar and map of the 50 U.S. states and territories. Find dates and notes about upcoming and current regular sessions and special sessions.

Job Description for Staff Advisor Position

A personal staff member for a state legislator directly supports the legislator in their day-to-day operations during the legislative session, managing constituent relations, researching policy issues, drafting legislation, coordinating schedules, and generally assisting with all aspects of their legislative duties, often acting as a primary point of contact for the legislator's office and district needs; requiring strong communication, organizational, and analytical skills to effectively navigate the legislative process and represent the individual legislator's interests.

Key responsibilities may include:

- **Constituent services:**
Responding to constituent inquiries, addressing concerns, providing information on legislative issues, and facilitating communication between the individual legislator and their constituents.
- **Policy research:**
Conducting in-depth research on policy areas relevant to the legislator's district and legislative agenda, analyzing data, and preparing summaries for informed decision-making.
- **Legislative drafting:**
Assisting with the drafting of new bill ideas and revising legislation, including amendments, based on the legislator's policy positions.
- **Schedule management:**
Coordinating the legislator's calendar, and scheduling meetings with stakeholders.
- **Committee support:**
Attending legislative committee hearings, taking notes, summarizing discussions, and providing analysis on potential legislation. Allows the legislator to track multiple bills in both chambers especially after crossover.
- **Communication and outreach:**
Preparing press releases, constituent newsletters, and other communications to inform the public about the legislator's activities and positions.

- **Lobbying and stakeholder engagement:**
Building relationships with interest groups, advocacy organizations, and other stakeholders to advocate for the legislator's priorities.
- **Administrative tasks:**
Managing office operations, handling correspondence, maintaining records, and overseeing the work of interns or other staff members.

Required skills and qualifications:

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Strong research and analytical abilities
- Detail-oriented with strong organizational skills
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Knowledge of the legislative process and state government structure
- Understanding of relevant policy issues within the legislator's district
- Political acumen and ability to navigate complex political dynamics

Note: Specific responsibilities and titles may vary depending on the committees of the legislator, and the legislator's individual needs.

- The most recent state by state comparison was in 2010. A new one is being done currently but not finished yet.

Fiscal Note for additional considerations

3.3 million for current plan

6.7 million for health insurance

3.3 million for lodging/hotel if from the district

1.76 million for a monthly \$500/month