76th Annual Southern Legislative Conference Policy Sessions & Government Staff Tracks

SATURDAY, JULY 9  
2:00 – 3:30 PM  
Energy Sector Outlook: Powering the 21st Century

Worldwide energy consumption was down in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, as COVID cases declined and businesses and schools re-opened, energy consumption started returning to pre-pandemic levels. As China and India continue to grow, global demand for energy is expected to increase. Meanwhile, new technologies, such as hydrogen power and electric vehicles, are rising in demand. To address this need, the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act included $8 billion for Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs and electric vehicle charging stations. This session delves into recent domestic and global energy consumption trends and previews how the energy sector might look in years to come.

Presenters:
• Kenneth E. Wagner, Secretary of Energy and Environment, OK
• Senator Kim David, OK
• Kunal Patel, Senior Business Economist, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, TX

Infrastructure: It’s Been Burning Since the World was Turning

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has passed, sending $1.2 trillion to states for infrastructure development and enhancement. In a time when ports are backed up, there aren’t enough trucks to move cargo, critical energy infrastructure is vulnerable to cyber-attacks and America’s infrastructure averages a C-, where should states invest their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and IIJA dollars for the biggest return on their investment? What limitations currently exist?

Moderator: Sarah Needler, Director of Research, Center for Innovation, The Council of State Governments, KY

Panelists:
• Andrew McLean, Former Maine House Member, CDM Smith, ME
• Anna Denecke, Director Infrastructure Initiatives, American Society of Civil Engineers, Washington, D.C.
• Scott Haggard, Director of Government and External Affairs, ATL Transit Authority/State Road and Tollway Authority, GA

2:00 – 3:30 PM  
Stats, Facts and Policy Tracks: A 2020 Census Update

In late 2021, the US Census Bureau released the results of the 2020 US Census, allowing state legislatures around the nation to redraw district maps according to population shifts – and political gain. These shifts are particularly prescient in the Southern US, where three of the largest states in the region gained seats, and a myriad of demographic changes are fueling new policies aimed at combating housing shortages, providing training and employment services, and allotting funding to community economic development efforts. The panel will explore how the 2020 Census will affect our 15 member states, and the importance what the data means for the South.

Panelists: Greg Wilson and Taylor Hafley - The Carl Vinson Institute for Government, University of Georgia

SUNDAY, JULY 10  
9:00 – 10:00 AM  
Committee Business Breakfasts

• Agriculture & Rural Development Committee
• Human Services & Public Safety Committee
• Education Committee

Brewing Economic Development: Microbreweries as a Tool to Revitalize Downtown

It took almost 100 years for the brewing industry to recover from prohibition. Now, craft everything is in vogue. This session explores how states use craft breweries and distilleries as economic development tools to revitalize downtown areas and assesses how state regulatory frameworks may adjust in order to foster this development.

Panelists:
• Lisa Parker, Executive Director, North Carolina Craft Brewer’s Guild, NC
• Margie A.S. Lehrman, Chief Executive Officer, American Craft Spirits Association, VA

9:00 – 10:00 AM  
Working 9 to 5: How Can I Stay in this Living?

With increasingly tight state budgets, early to mid-career staffers across the region are leaving the profession to search for private-sector employment. Meanwhile, staffers themselves provide an invaluable human resource not just to their bosses, but to the very essence of a functioning state government across all branches.

In this panel, LSA Directors across the south will discuss how to attract and retain this wealth of knowledge and ability, focusing on leadership development efforts and innovative investments in the public servants who staff our legislatures, executive, and judicial offices, making them top-tier professionals prepared to take on larger roles in the ranks of state government. For staffers earlier in their careers, professional development and resume-building will also be topics for discussion.

Panelists:
• Marty Garrity – Director, Bureau of Legislative Research, AR
• Arnella Karges – Chief Operating Officer, Senate, OK
• Gwennetta Tatum – Director, House Legislative Services, MS

12:00 – 1:30 PM  
State and Local Efforts to Improve Health and Safety

Communities across the South are facing a growing mental health crisis characterized by high rates of suicidal ideation, depression, and overdose deaths. This session will highlight local efforts in Florida and Texas to reduce the number of people with mental illness who are involved with the justice system and connect them to long term care. These initiatives have not only improved outcomes for people struggling with mental illness, but also increased public safety and reduced justice system costs and inefficiencies. Panelists will discuss...
various ways in which state leaders can support local innovation and identify statewide solutions to common challenges, highlighting state-level efforts in Georgia and Tennessee.

Panelists will address some of the most difficult issues and biggest opportunities that state leaders face including: 1) Strengthening behavioral health crisis services to reduce the burden on emergency departments and law enforcement officers; 2) Improving public safety outcomes, realizing cost savings by reducing system contact for people who most frequently cycle through jails, emergency department, and homeless shelters; 3) Expanding access to evidence-based diversion and reentry programs; 4) Leveraging the launch of 988 - the new three-digit number of the national suicide prevention lifeline.

Moderator: Megan Quattlebaum, Director, CSG Justice Center, NY
Panelists:
- Presiding Justice Michael Boggs, Supreme Court of Georgia
- Marie Williams, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, TN
- Ann MacLeod, Director of Crisis Services, The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD, TX
- Steve Leifman, Associate Administrative Judge, Miami-Dade County Court, FL

SUNDAY, JULY 10 | Policy Sessions

2:00 – 3:30 PM
The Road Oft Taken: Mileage-Based User Fees and the Future of Road Revenues
Faced with declining revenue streams, crumbling infrastructure, increased road usage, significant federal assistance, and more fuel-efficiency or alternative fuel vehicles, lawmakers must consider new revenue streams and road funding plans to fund much-needed infrastructural improvements in their states. This program explores potential alternatives to fuel taxes and innovative solutions for state fiscal and transportation leaders.

Moderator: Senator Bo Watson, TN
Panelists:
- House Speaker Pro Tempore Kyle Hilbert, OK
- Shawn Wilson, Ph.D., Secretary, Department of Transportation and Development, and 2022 President, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, LA
- Brianne Glover, JD, Program Manager and Research Scientist, Infrastructure Investment Analysis Program, Texas A&M Transportation Institute, TX
- Patricia Hendren, Ph.D., Executive Director, The Eastern Transportation Coalition, MD

Making the Grade: Addressing the Educator Shortage through Innovation and Reforms
Facing a decades-long drought in the educator workforce, state leaders have looked to varying strategies to recruit, retain, and incentivize more graduates, professionals, and school support staff to join the teaching ranks. Policymakers have implemented myriad measures in recent years, from increased pay, student loan forgiveness, and career-ladder steps to address this critical shortage. However, the coronavirus pandemic laid bare how much further states must go to address this shortage while maintaining the balance between quantity and quality of educators. During this session, attendees will hear presentations from education policymakers and experts regarding a few innovative solutions to this perennial problem, such as micro-credentialing, teacher apprenticeships, grow-your-own strategies, career transition pathways, and licensure examination reform.

Presenters:
- Commissioner Penny Schwinn, PhD, Department of Education, TN
- Hannah Putman, Managing Director of Research, National Council on Teacher Quality, Washington, D.C.
- Representative Rhonda Baker, OK
- Senator Brenda Stanley, OK

SUNDAY, JULY 10 | Government Staff Track

2:00 – 3:30 PM
Leading in Chaos – You and Your Role Have Never Been More Important
The realities of the modern workplace are complex: shorter attention spans, five generations working side-by-side, and the pressures of accommodating and accomplishing practical remote work. These demands necessitate staffers to become more effective communicators to the general public, and the elected officials they serve.

This track will provide you with specific strategies and tactics that will make you a more decisive leader and communicator, and offer you the tools to weather the storms of the rapidly changing tide. Attendees will leave this session feeling renewed, refocused, and with the recognition that YOU have never been more important to do the job you are called to do.

Speaker: Jay McChord, President/CEO, McChord Inc.

MONDAY, JULY 11 | Committee Business Breakfasts

9:00 – 10:00 AM
- Energy & Environment Committee
- Fiscal Affairs & Government Operations Committee
- Economic Development, Transportation & Cultural Affairs Committee

MONDAY, JULY 11 | Supreme Court Update

Between abortion, guns, vouchers, and climate change this Supreme Court term has it all! Discuss all the big cases, and how they will impact Southern states, and SCOTUS trends just one week after this historic term has come to a close.

Speaker: Lisa Soronen, J.D., Executive Director, State and Local Legal Center, Washington, D.C.
Looking ahead, experts predict the world’s population may top 9 billion by 2050. According to the Harvard Business Review, global food demand is expected to increase between 59 and 98 percent by the middle of the century. New farming practices and techniques will be needed to meet this demand. This session explores the future of the agriculture sector, techniques such as precision agriculture, and how medical marijuana is affecting farmers and rural communities.

**Presenters:**
- Blayne Arthur, Secretary of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry, OK
- Darren Buck, Panhandle Irrigators, OK
- Steve Thompson, Vice President of Public Policy, Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation

From Burnout to Turnout: Supporting Student and Staff’s Behavioral and Mental Health
During the unprecedented disruption seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, policymakers saw a nationwide renewed focus on mental and social health. Pre-pandemic, this predominantly examined support systems in the context of school safety. Now, there is a greater emphasis on connecting these factors to students’ academic and future success and ensuring an equitable post-pandemic recovery. This session features state leaders’ efforts to support students and staff’s mental and behavioral health in K-12 and higher education.

**Presenters:**
- Zack Stoycoff, Executive Director, Healthy Minds Policy Initiative, OK
- LaNika Wright, Ph.D., WHNP-BC, Director, Student Health Services, East Carolina University, and 2023 President-Elect, Southern College Health Association, NC
- H.M. “Bud” Wyatt, III, Lieutenant General (ret.), United States Airforce, OK
- Megan Blanco, Director, Safe and Healthy Schools, National Association of State Boards of Education, VA

and narrow the race gap more specifically? With more children entering foster care, how can states effectively support an already stressed system through an unprecedented pandemic while maintaining the twin goals of child safety and family reunification? This session explores policy best practices in reducing maternal mortality and strengthening state foster care systems.

**Moderator:** Eric Harrison, Policy Analyst, CSG South

**Panelists:**
- Kyeshia ‘Ky’ Lindberg, Executive Director, Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition of Georgia
- Jaia Peterson-Lent, Deputy Executive Director, Generations United, Washington, D.C.
- David Sanders, Ph.D, Executive Vice President of Systems Improvement, Casey Family Programs, WA

**MONDAY, JULY 11 | Government Staff Track**

**2:00 - 3:30 PM**
Taking IT to The Next Level: Cybersecurity and Data Visualization in the Legislative World
In 2021, cybercrime inflicted more than $6 trillion in damages globally. If this were measured as a country, it’d be the world’s third-largest economy behind the United States and China. One of these attacks targeted the Virginia legislature, the Division of Legislative Automated Systems (DLAS).

Listen to the experiences and events that took place days before the general session convened by the director at the helm of the recovery. And if you’ve ever wondered if your contingency plans and preparation are enough to ward off an attack or provide an effective incident response, this session will answer many of those concerns.

Rounding out the panel, an IT Director and data expert will present perhaps the most often overlooked component of policymaking: the technical roll-out and budgetary tracking of programs after bills are signed and press releases announce executive approval.

**Panelists:**
- Dave Burhop - Director, Legislative Automated Systems Division, VA
- Vinay Dattu - Director, Office of Legislative Information Systems, TN

**TUESDAY, JULY 12 | Committee Site Visits**

**11:30 AM - 4:00 PM**
- Agriculture and Rural Development Committee: Oklahoma National Stockyards
- Economic Development, Transportation, and Cultural Affairs Committee: Tinker Air Force Base
- Energy and Environment Committee: Tuttle Energy Sites