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*The Forum for America's Ideas*

## A Bird's Eye View of State Adolescent Health Policy (And How You Can Get Involved!)

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## National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

### National membership organization:

- 7,382 legislators
- 3 gazillion legislative staff
- Offices in Denver and Washington, D.C.

### Goals:

- To improve the quality & effectiveness of state legislatures
- To promote policy innovation and communication among state legislatures
- To ensure states a strong, cohesive voice in the federal system



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## 50 Examples of a State Legislature

- **If you've seen one legislature—you've seen one legislature!**
- Variety of different powers, rules, political make-up, etc.
  - California
    - Full-time job, members earn >\$100,000 year
    - Large staff (non-partisan, partisan, personal)
  - Wyoming
    - 40-day general session, 20-day budget session
    - Members earn \$150 day for short time
    - No personal staff; few full-time professional staff



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## What does Your State Legislature Look Like?

- 15 states have term limits
- Largest chamber: New Hampshire House--400 members
- Smallest chamber: Alaska Senate--20 members
- Nebraska has the nation's only bicameral, non-partisan legislature



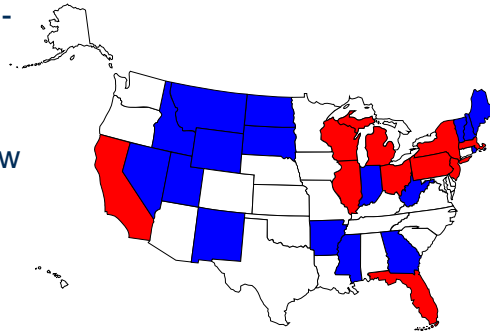
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## Red, White and Blue Legislatures

- **RED:** Full-time, well-paid, large staff
- **WHITE:** Hybrid
- **BLUE:** Part-time, low pay, small staff

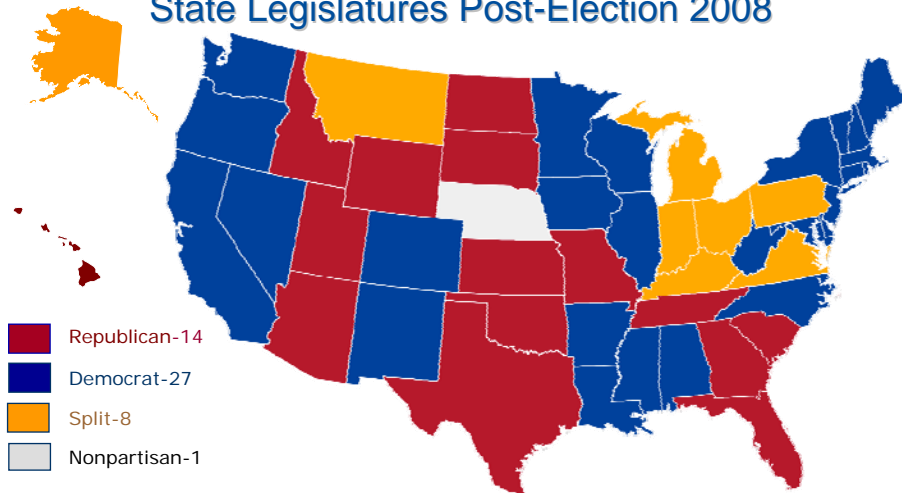


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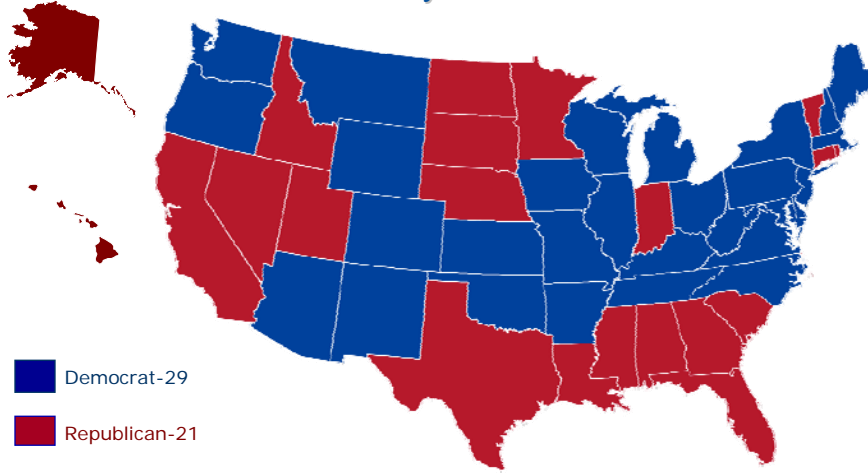
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## State Legislatures Post-Election 2008

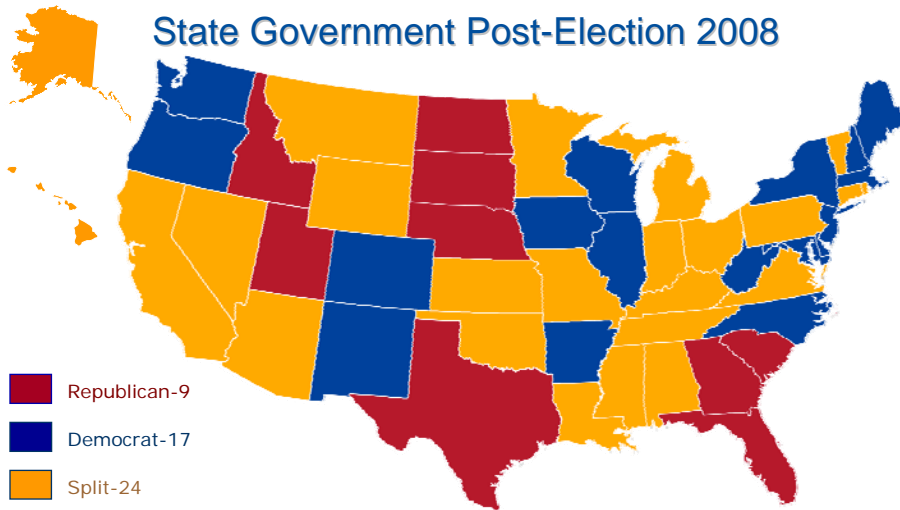




## Governor's Party Post-Election 2008



## State Government Post-Election 2008





## Legislators Are Generalists

- Dozens of topics:
- **A to Z**
- Hundreds of bills
- Can't be experts in all
- **Good News:** Most Legislators see themselves as **Students**
- Agriculture
- Corrections
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Human Services
- Labor
- Transportation
- Zoning . . .



## Health Issues by the Dozens (...and dozens)

- Medicaid
- Insurance/mg'd care
- Pharmaceuticals
- Long-term Care
- Health disparities
- Uninsured
- Health professions
- Health Facilities
- Environmental
- Public health
- CHIP
- Prenatal Care
- Emergency services
- Nutrition
- Oral health
- Injury prevention
- Mental Health
- Disabilities
- Substance Abuse
- etc. ...



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## Your Audience for Adolescent Issues

- The "citizen" in the Citizen Legislature
  - **Legislators' "other jobs"**
  - 16% full-time legislators
  - 18% own or manage a business
  - 15% attorneys
  - 11% retired
  - **6% educators (K-12 and College)**
  - **3.6% medical professional**
  - **2.4% state or local employee**
- Demographics
  - **Women** hold 24.2% of the legislative seats in the 50 states
    - Colorado 40%
    - South Carolina 10%
  - 9% **African-American**
  - 3% **Latino**
- Age
  - Average age: 56 (and getting older!)
  - 16% over age 65
  - **3% younger than 35**



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## Adolescent Well Visits

Statements recognizing the importance of adolescent well visits:

- "...[t]he importance of adolescent well health visits are recognized, and state legislators seek to improve adolescent health and wellness by recognizing the importance of an adolescent well physical to prevent chronic diseases, help parents and health care providers better identify and treat chronic disease, and make decisions on updating immunizations ..."
- 2009: Considered in Missouri, South Dakota, Virginia
- Adopted SD, VA



## 2008 Enacted Legislation

(in addition to health)

### **States passed laws about:**

- Youth at Risk: Substance/drug abuse, tobacco and truancy
- Youth in Transition: Financial literacy, aging-out of foster care
- Out of School Time: After-school programs and juvenile justice
- Youth Violence: Bullying, gangs, school safety, mental health and suicide
- Positive Youth Development: Children and youth commissions, cabinets or councils; civic education and engagement; legislative youth councils; mentoring

***What affect do these laws have on an adolescent's health?  
Were health issues considered?***



## 2009 Legislative Update

Sample of Adolescent Health Issues Considered

- **Sexual Education in Schools:** 28 states (46 bills)
- **Suicide Prevention:** 8 states (11 bills)
- **Teen Dating Violence** (prevention and intervention):  
14 states (19 bills)
- **HPV Vaccine:** 12 states (18 bills)
- **Mental Health/Substance Abuse in Juvenile Justice:** 15 states (39 bills)
- **Teen Tanning Restrictions:** 25 states (28 bills)
- **Teen Driving:** 39 states (133 bills)



## Overload!

“Going through all this information we have here is kind of like trying to drink from a fire hydrant.” Colo. Rep. Mark Paschall

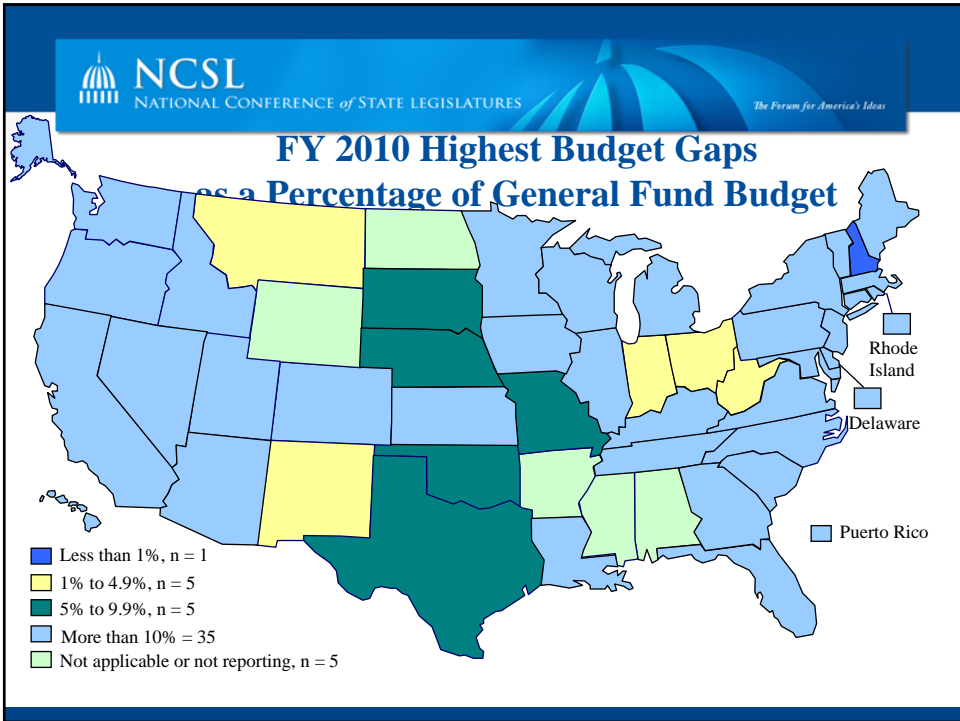
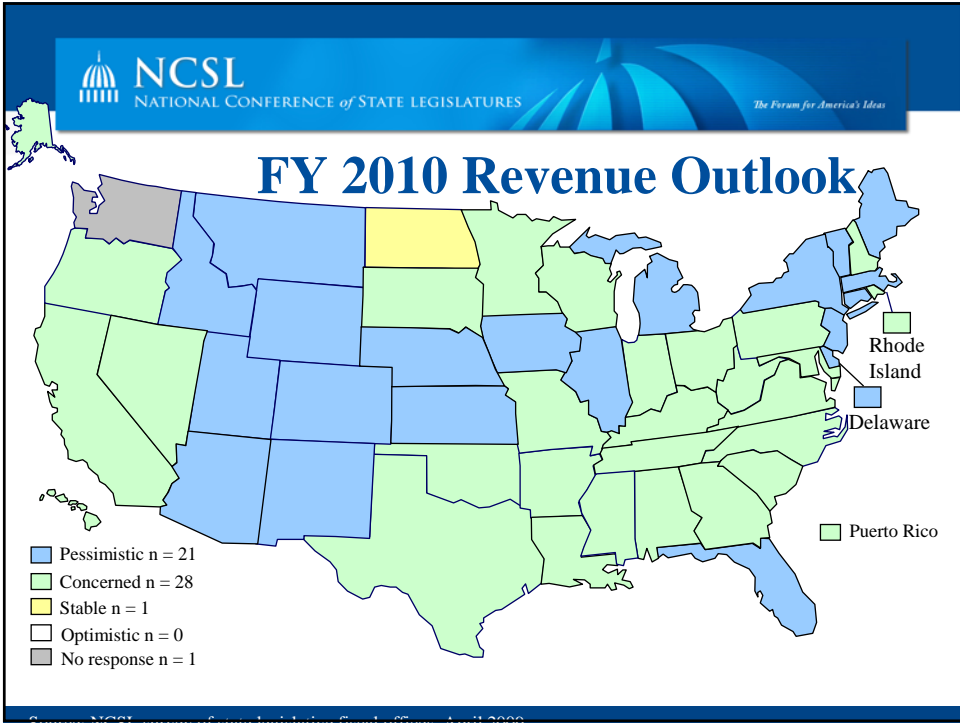
“My seatmate told me this was a bad bill. I was going to vote no on it until I realized it was my own bill.” Colo. Sen. Ray Powers



If That's Not Enough...Along Comes the Budget!

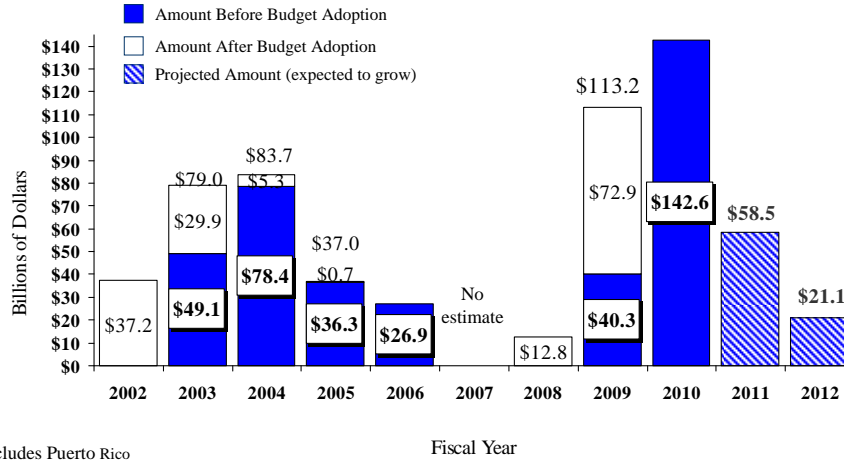


Edvard Munch: *The Scream* 1893 (National Gallery of Norway)





### State Budget Gaps FY 2002-FY 2012 (projected)



\* Includes Puerto Rico

\*\* 31 states and Puerto Rico forecast FY 2011 gaps. The amount shown for FY 2011 indicates the 24 states that provided gap estimates.

\*\*\* 15 states forecast FY 2012 gaps. The amount shown for the FY 2012 indicates the nine states that provided gap estimates.

Source: NCSL survey of legislative fiscal offices, various years



### Competing for Legislators' Attention

**A BLIP ON THE  
POLITICAL  
RADAR SCREEN**

Childhood Injury Prevention





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## Your Role: Be the "Blip" Enlarger!

**Educate the Educators  
Raise Awareness  
Frame the Discussion  
Provide Information &  
Resources  
Network with Others**



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## Educate the Educators

(Be the "blip" enlarger, not the advocate!)

- 15 states have term limits
  - Approx. 20% of legislators are NEW each election
  - New staff (or newly assigned committee duties)
  - Being "green" affects:
    - Institutional memory
    - Complex program understanding
    - Depth of issue knowledge
  - **Continually educating** legislators and their staff about adolescent health issues is **crucial**
- THEREFORE:
- Befriend your agency's government relations person
  - Prioritize!
  - Make suggestions:
    - What are the "hot" issues?
    - New, important information
    - What do newbies need to know?
  - Let them know what information you have and what you can get
  - They'll start coming to you!



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## Raise Awareness

### **Make the information you have known to:**

- Your agency
- Other agencies
- Professional membership groups
- Area or related non-profits
- Community organizations
- Media



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## Frame the Discussion

- **Craft message to the times**  
(did we mention the budget?!)
- Example: preventing motor vehicle crashes offers huge cost savings to states
- **Make the message relevant**  
(did we mention the budget?!)
- Example: strengthening GDL laws very inexpensive; preventing motor vehicle injuries/deaths offers huge cost savings
- **Appeal to the parent in people**
- **Humanize the issue**



## Provide Information and Resources

- Give key info to people who CAN advocate
- K.I.S.S. (keep it simple stupid)
- Be responsive: when asked for information, respond quickly, make the info timely, easy to understand (no jargon!)
- Be accessible for follow-up questions
- Be the EXPERTS you are!



## Network with Others

- Don't make political enemies
- Find common ground
  - See the “injury prevention” in everything!
- Make unusual friends, unlikely partners
  - E.g. Media
  - Take advantage of PR opportunities
  - Personal interest stories:  
focus on **success stories**
  - Release new data, evidence



## You Tell Us

What are your success stories?  
Why was it a successful method?  
What barriers have you faced?  
What information would still be helpful?



**Thank You!**  
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