



Chair’s Corner

Eric Thomas, Washington

January marked the start of a new year and new members and leaders of the NLPES Executive Committee are eager to forge ahead. We thank Kristen Rottinghaus (KS) for serving as 2021-22 Chair and introducing several innovations that helped us stay connected and share ideas during the pandemic. I look forward to serving as the 2022-23 Chair, with Darin Underwood (UT) as Vice Chair, and Jennifer Sebren (MS) as Secretary.



Jason Juffras (DC) will head up the Communications subcommittee and lead work on the newsletter, report library, social media. Drew Dickinson (VA) will lead the Awards subcommittee, and Jeanine Brown (GA) will lead the Professional Development subcommittee and continue the virtual trainings that have been so successful during the pandemic.

We are grateful to Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts for hosting the first in-person event since 2019 in Atlanta this fall. The StaffHub ATL 2022 was a success, with 515 attendees from 45 states. Those of us who attended connected with peers in other offices and staff sections. The New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee offered to host the 2023 Professional Development Seminar in [Santa Fe](#). Stay tuned for dates and additional details.

2023 will be a year of transition for many of us. Brenda Erickson, NLPES’s long-tenured liaison, retired in December, and several of our offices saw senior staff and office directors retire last year. While the profession is losing a tremendous amount of institutional knowledge and experience, this is an opportunity for other folks to step up. We look forward to new ideas and approaches for how and where we work, and how we present results. We also have an opportunity to reassess how NLPES supports our offices.

To that end, the Executive Committee administered a survey this fall. We are using

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NLPES Liaison Brenda Erickson Retires

Shunti Taylor, Georgia

After nearly 39 years of dedicated service to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Brenda Erickson, our treasured NLPES liaison, is retiring!

Brenda began her career with the Minnesota Legislature where she served from 1979 to 1984. She joined NCSL in 1984 and served as liaison to the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries and the National Legislative Services and Security Association. Brenda is well-known for her work on legislative process and parliamentary procedure (she supports the Mason’s Manual Commission). Most importantly to us, Brenda has shepherded NLPES and its members for at least a decade.

When I think of Brenda and her contribution to NLPES, I liken it to a stage production. For NLPES members, she’s the stage manager, always in the background making sure every member (especially new staff) has access to all the benefits of membership (don’t blame her for the listserv snafus y’all!). For NLPES Executive Committee (EC) members, she is casting director, managing elections and serving as a resource to ensure EC members have a successful term. For the EC Chair, she is director, there every step of the way to provide guidance. Here are a few examples of Brenda’s guidance and support provided by former and current EC members:

- Brenda returned to NLPES about the time we began planning the 2012 PDS in Atlanta. She was eager and willing to help wherever we needed her and was a great supporter throughout the whole process. Turns out that was because that’s just the way she is. She brought an energy and enthusiasm to each of our EC meetings. And, while always willing and able to provide the NCSL perspective, she also encouraged us to use the membership we served as a lens for our decisions. Between the meetings and the afterhours dinners and events, I enjoyed getting to know Brenda and getting glimpses into the rest of her world. She was a wealth of information– from NCSL operations to Robert’s Rules of Order. I’m grateful that my time on the EC overlapped with hers and that I got to know her personally and professionally. *(Lisa Kieffer, Director, Performance Audit Division, Georgia Department of Audits & Accounts)*
- Brenda, you have been invaluable to the success of NLPES and supporting its member offices. Whether it was working through elections and the resulting transitions in leadership on the EC, keeping us on track with the annual awards cycle, organizing the fall PDS, coordinating an external peer review, or fielding some random inquiry, you have provided continuity, institutional memory, and personal investment that has sustained and strengthened NLPES. Brenda, you are a dear friend and colleague. Through your many years of service to NCSL, you have made a difference for me and countless others! *(Greg Fugate, Director of Communications & Quality Assurance, Colorado Office of the State Auditor)*



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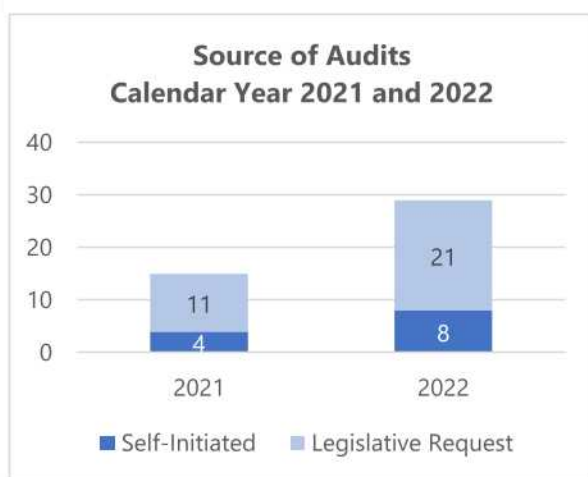
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Louisiana Introduces Informational Briefs and Reports

Karen LeBlanc, Louisiana

In April 2021, the Louisiana legislature appointed Mike Waguespack, a CPA and former sheriff for 16 years, as the new legislative auditor. For the past 25 years, our office has selected its own topics based on risk or legislative and public interest, but with any new administration there are opportunities to reflect on how we can improve current processes and products.

In his first year as auditor, Mike developed an excellent and collaborative relationship with the legislature and has rebranded our office as a team of trusted advisors. This has increased our visibility with legislators, resulting in a significant increase in the number of legislative requests (*see chart below*).



Since many legislators were simply seeking information, we developed templates for an informational brief and an informational report. Because neither report type follows governmental auditing standards, we expected that we could complete these reports faster than a traditional audit – from one to two months for an informational brief and two to four months for an informational report.

Our first informational brief communicated the results of a data analysis of complaints against insurers after Hurricane Ida since this was a significant issue during the 2022 legislative session. Since then, we have issued four informational reports and three informational briefs, all of which have received positive feedback from both legislators and the public.

The legislature and press like them because the reports are more succinct and often follow a question/answer format. Most staff like them because they require less documentation and can be pulled together relatively quickly. However, staff still often prefer the deeper dive of traditional audits.

Based on our experience with these types of reports, we can share the following lessons:

1. Choose informational briefs for topics where you already have data or can easily access it. For example, the report *Residential Property Insurance Complaint Statistics* used data compiled for a larger performance audit on insurance regulation and took about one month to compile and publish. The report on *Optional Pay Adjustments for Classified Employees* used data from the state's financial management system.
2. Choose informational reports for topics where you compare your state to other states or best practices, while

being aware that these take longer as the research required can be extensive and time-consuming. For example, the report titled *State Central Registry: Comparison of Selected Processes to Other States* and *Louisiana State Police: Comparison with Law Enforcement Agencies in Southern States* took about 1,000 hours and several months to complete.

3. Assign staff who are interested in these types of reports and can work quickly. Some staff are more comfortable with the rigor and depth that comes with traditional performance audits.
4. Assign staff who have previously conducted work in an area to lessen the onboarding needed. For example, the team that completed *Louisiana Watershed Initiative* had worked on several water-related audits in the past.
5. Include “areas for further study” in the final report to note problems identified during the work. The legislature can then request more in-depth audit work. For example, we identified data integrity issues in the report *Industrial Tax Exemption Program – Program Statistics Fiscal Impact on Local Governments* that led us to schedule a full performance audit to examine these issues in more detail.

Karen Le Blanc is director of performance audit services for the Louisiana Legislative Auditor.

Did You Know?

The intrepid staff of *The Working Paper* have been impressed by the creative names for NLPES member offices. This issue includes an article on Oklahoma's Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency (LOFT); the prior issue included a feature on Alabama's Commission on the Evaluation of Services (ACES).

With our curiosity thus piqued, *The Working Paper* decided to find out which name was most common among member offices.

Like a seemingly simple audit project, this task turned out to be much more complicated than we expected. There were thorny issues of classification: for example, does an Office of Legislative Audits fall into the same category as a Division of Legislative Audits?

Nevertheless, *The Working Paper's* probing field work yielded one interesting finding: the most common title for the directors of NLPES member offices is *Legislative Auditor*.

We identified the following 10 states with a legislative auditor: Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, West Virginia, and Washington.



Chair's Corner (cont.)

your feedback to shape our plans for the next year. It is clear that communication, especially through our listserv, is important to you all, and that it is currently not meeting your needs. NCSL is working to secure a new vendor and hopes to have listserv issues resolved in early 2023. At its core, NLPES is about connecting with peers and sharing best practices and learning from each other. We are committed to maintaining the listserv and exploring other ways for our members to communicate.

If you have other feedback, please feel free to reach out to me or any of the other Executive Committee members. We are here to serve you and make NLPES responsive to your needs. Thank you all for all that you do, and have a great 2023!

Eric Thomas is Legislative Auditor for Washington State and the 2022-2023 NLPES Executive Committee Chair.

Oklahoma Office
Gets Aloft

Jason Juffras, District of Columbia

Legislative evaluation units continue to spread across the land. In 2020, the [Oklahoma Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency](#) (LOFT) was launched to help the Oklahoma Legislature make informed, data-driven decisions to promote accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness in state government.

The Working Paper recently spoke with LOFT executive director Mike Jackson and deputy director Regina Burchum to learn about this new member of the NLPES family.

Despite the word “fiscal” in its name, LOFT has a strong focus on evaluation, analyzing program operations and results to help the state get maximum value for its tax dollars.

Executive Director Jackson served in the state House of Representatives for 10 years and also worked for U.S. Senator James Inhofe. While in office, he realized that the legislature needed sources of objective, non-partisan information similar to the Congressional Budget Office and U.S. Government Accountability Office.

After three years of work – punctuated by the emergence of a global pandemic – LOFT’s leadership already sees a marked impact from its work.

Deputy Director Birchum noted that legislators used to rely on information from state agencies and program advocates. “There wasn’t a way to verify if an agency said, ‘We have a crisis. We need an emergency appropriation,’” she stated. Instead, legislators often had to accept these claims on faith.

Jackson concurs, noting that, “Executive agencies have not been in the habit of answering questions from a legislative body that has the same tools.”



LOFT reports to a 14-member [Legislative Oversight Committee](#), comprised of seven legislators from each chamber. In June and July each year, the Committee reviews project ideas with other legislators and the LOFT staff before approving LOFT’s annual work plan. Jackson notes that, “There are always far more ideas than time or staff to carry them out.”

LOFT has a 10-member staff including financial analysts and program evaluators. Although the GAO’s “Yellow Book” informs LOFT’s work, the office focuses on program evaluation and policy analysis rather than strict adherence to governmental auditing standards.

LOFT has published a wide range of important reports, including an operational assessment of the state [Department of Corrections](#), a review of state-funded [road and bridge improvements](#), and a study of the state’s [developmental disabilities](#) system.

LOFT’s leaders emphasize the need to identify successes as well as areas that need improvement. Birchum observes that state agency employees are well-intentioned, but often get locked into existing processes and “survival mode.” Therefore, it can be helpful for LOFT to look at agency operations with a fresh pair of eyes.

Jackson points out that agencies collect a lot of data but don’t use it strategically, and the data typically reflect outputs. LOFT can help push the agencies to use their data to assess outcomes and effectiveness.

Jason Juffras is a senior analyst in the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor and serves on the NLPES Executive Committee.

Reflections on
StaffHub ATL

Darren McDivitt, Texas

StaffHub ATL 2022 brought together six NCSL staff associations, including NLPES, for a joint professional development seminar in Atlanta. More than 500 participants from across the country gathered for four days of learning and professional growth, with three general sessions, 25 concurrent sessions, several staff association roundtables, and a tour of the Georgia Capitol.

Panelists provided relevant and interesting perspectives on topics including technical and professional skills, communication, and organizational development.

Issues such as staff retention, returning to the office during the pandemic, and navigating a hybrid or remote work environment continually arose in panels and casual conversations. It was particularly notable that many of the discussions we have in our office and encounter at other Texas state agencies are also happening across the country.

Other highlights included a reception at the [National Center for Civil and Human Rights](#), and a memorable fall evening at the Atlanta Botanical Garden where we were able to network in a unique setting and explore the beautiful grounds. A personal highlight for me was the inspirational lunch keynote from bobsledder Elana Meyers Taylor, who shared her story of perseverance and dedication resulting in multiple Olympic medals and world championships.

Many thanks to NCSL, the panelists from various states, and our hosts in Georgia for their hospitality and hard work that resulted in such a memorable event.

Darren McDivitt is a policy analyst with the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission and serves on the NLPES executive committee.

Prepare for NLPES Awards Season

Soon the NLPES Executive Committee will announce the deadline to apply for our annual awards – so give some thought to applying!

The deadline will be in early May and we will communicate the exact date by the end of February. The awards include:

- the [Excellence in Evaluation](#) award, given to one legislative office for significant contributions to the fields of program evaluation or performance auditing during the four-year period from January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2022.
- the [Excellence in Research Methods](#) award, given to legislative offices that used exemplary research methods in a report released during calendar year 2022.

- the [Certificate of Impact](#), awarded to legislative offices for reports issued during calendar years 2020, 2021, or 2022 that resulted in documented public policy changes, program improvements, dollar savings, or other public impacts.



The NLPES Executive Committee is in the process of selecting judges for the 2023 awards cycle. If you are interested in serving as a judge, or if you have any questions about the award process, please contact [Drew Dickinson](#), who leads the NLPES Awards Subcommittee.

We look forward to another round of superb submissions.

Florida’s OPPAGA Examines Access to Healthy Food

Daphne Holden, Florida

Editor’s note: OPPAGA’s work on access to healthy food in Florida won a 2022 NLPES Excellence in Research Methods award.

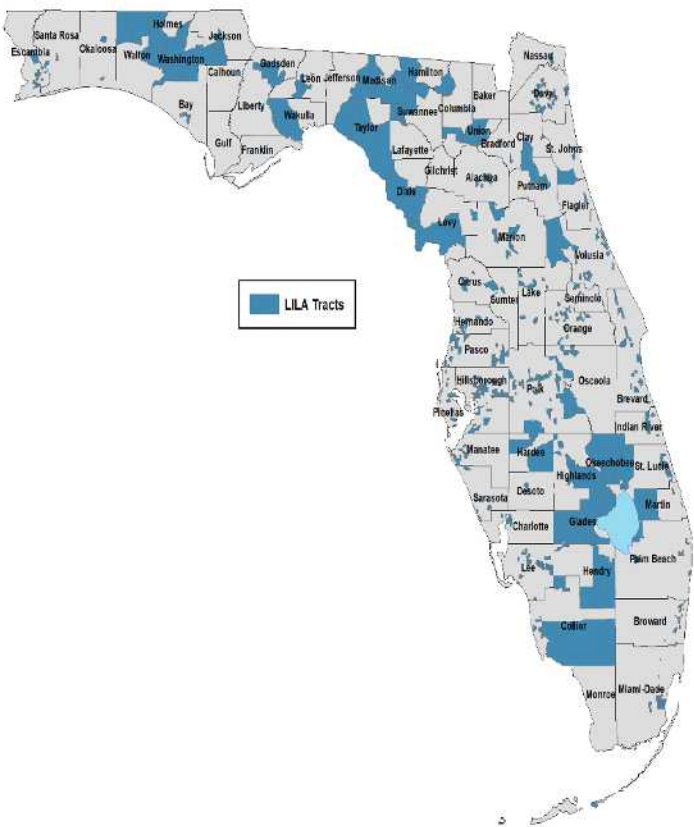
The 2021 Florida Legislature directed the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to examine low-income, low-access (LILA) food areas in the state. The research had four objectives: 1) describe what is known about these areas and effects on residents; 2) describe the incidence of LILA areas statewide; 3) provide in-depth information about LILA areas in three counties, and 4) present high-level policy considerations to expand access to healthy food in LILA areas.

Access measures, such as the USDA Food Access Research Atlas (FARA), focus on areas that are both low-income and low-access, sometimes called “food deserts.” Policy makers are concerned that LILA areas contribute to poor diets and health outcomes for residents without access to healthy food, but little research has been done on food access in Florida.

Methodology. OPPAGA used multiple methods to triangulate findings and ensure a robust analysis. The project team (Emily Leventhal, Michelle Ciabotti, Joseph Crupi, Daphne Holden, and Anastasia Prokos) mapped food desert census tracts across the state with USDA FARA data, conducted a literature review, and interviewed stakeholders to understand efforts to address healthy food access statewide. The literature review showed that rich information from case studies would help develop high-quality policy recommendations; therefore, the team conducted case studies of communities in three counties: Hillsborough (urban), Pinellas (urban), and Suwannee (rural).

Evaluation Results. According to USDA data, approximately 13.5% of Floridians live in census tracts that are both low income and have low access to a retailer that provides healthy and affordable food. (See Exhibit 1.)

Exhibit 1: Statewide, 550 of Florida’s 4,180 Populated Census Tracts Are Low-Income and Low-Access Transportation



Stakeholders reported that healthy food access was limited because residents may not seek healthy food even when it is accessible, may experience market barriers, or may lack transportation. (See Exhibit 2.)

Exhibit 2: Florida Stakeholders Reported Three Main Barriers to Accessing Healthy Food

Barriers to seeking healthy food, even when accessible	Barriers to creating a better food environment	Transportation barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Little interest or knowledge✓ Unfamiliar foods✓ Do not know how to cook or have a place to do so✓ Cannot afford	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Small profit margins✓ Do not attract higher-income customers in some urban areas✓ Do not have density to sustain food outlets in some rural areas✓ Perishable food is not profitable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Many residents do not have a vehicle✓ Insufficient bus routes✓ Accessible stores do not have healthy food

OPPAGA determined that food access issues vary by location, and food access policies that address community-specific causes of food access problems will be most effective. Notably, using GIS analysis in the three case study counties allowed the team to see important differences in access to transportation even across two adjoining urban counties (Hillsborough and Pinellas), which confirmed residents’ comments. For example, 49 of the 143 (33%) chain supermarkets in Hillsborough County do not have a bus stop within a quarter mile, and the southeastern LILA tract area has low vehicle access, no public bus stops, and no major chain grocery stores within the neighborhood boundaries.

In contrast, in adjacent Pinellas County, only 3 of the 124 (2%) chain supermarkets and supercenters do not have a bus stop within a quarter mile. Thus, a policy solution such as increased bus routes would be more effective in Hillsborough County than in Pinellas County.

Examining the food environment provided key insights that shaped research findings and recommendations. For example, in one LILA area in Pinellas County, government officials described a local supermarket’s closing as due to a lack of community demand for healthy food; however, some stakeholders saw the closing as due to the retailer’s failure to provide the community a well-maintained, clean store that offered fresh and affordable food. This difference underscores that local initiatives that are not resident-driven may not garner support and that community input is key to initiatives’ success.

Because OPPAGA collected data at two levels—statewide and local—and because evidence pointed to the importance of multifaceted approaches, the research team split recommendations into two levels.

Statewide recommendations included developing a state-level plan, supporting local planning by developing model policies, expanding highly-effective programs like school-based food programs and nutrition incentive programs, and increasing resident participation in programs such as SNAP and WIC.

Local recommendations (which could be supported by state funding) included establishing urban farms and community gardens and expanding healthy grocery retailers through incentives for grocers in underserved communities. Relevant policy considerations are that low-income residents have limited money and transportation, making it more difficult to visit farmers’ markets; big box stores can be less expensive and more convenient as a one-stop source for household needs; and communities may not support new food retailers if they do not offer the food residents want or it is too expensive.

OPPAGA presented its findings to the Senate Agriculture Committee, which proposed legislation to create a Food Policy Advisory Council to serve as a forum for presenting, investigating, and evaluating barriers to food access for Floridians and for identifying solutions to such barriers.

Daphne Holden is a senior legislative analyst for the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.

Washington State’s Konopaski Reflects on Career

Jason Juffras, District of Columbia

Washington State Legislative Auditor Keenan Konopaski retired at the end of last year, capping 12 years of directing audits and evaluations for the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission ([JLARC](#)).

Konopaski was kind enough to speak with *The Working Paper* about his career and the challenges he sees confronting our profession.

Like most of us, Konopaski did not aspire to be a legislative auditor. Instead, he followed his commitment to “be interested and care about making a difference” after earning an MPA from the Evans School at the University of Washington. A series of serendipitous career moves and connections led Konopaski to JLARC in 2004.

During his career, Konopaski has seen a growing emphasis on how legislative auditors communicate their work. He points out that offices must be very deliberate about communicating more clearly while maintaining the quality of the work. Still, Konopaski warns that if no one knows about an office’s good work, “You might as well not have done it.”

Under Konopaski’s leadership, JLARC has published many reports in a webpage format while also developing short videos



to summarize reports. Konopaski notes that PDF versions of a report do not represent a big advance, because they mirror the linear format of a print report. He recalls that colleagues were nervous about doing videos at first, but then they realized that this was not that different from appearing before their committee.

Another change cited by Konopaski is the growing interest in equity among legislators, supplementing the longtime audit emphases on effectiveness and efficiency. His oversight committee has tasked JLARC staff with assessing racial and ethnic equity. Konopaski notes that equity work will present legislative auditors with complicated tradeoffs, such as whether the government should try to get the highest number of vaccine shots in arms, or focus on fairness in getting shots in arms. Government can do both, but it may cost more to reach those facing barriers to services.

Konopaski advises legislative auditors to take a broad view of their impact, noting that a focus on direct effects – legislation enacted, recommendations implemented – is important but should not obscure the

value of informing legislators, which may influence their actions later on. He recalls a health care evaluation published by JLARC which helped persuade a key legislator *not* to take a certain action; this was a major impact even though it was not visible. “If you’ve informed them, that’s a huge success,” Konopaski states.

Asked about challenges to the profession, Konopaski underscores the need for legislative audit shops to maintain a non-partisan reputation in a time of sharper divisions. The JLARC committee in Washington State is comprised of even numbers of Democrats and Republicans (as well as House and Senate members), making relationships on both sides of the aisle key to Konopaski’s work. Konopaski reminds us that trust is hard to gain and “super-easy” to lose.

Konopaski advises younger auditors and evaluators to understand that they must “compartmentalize” their opinions. Legislative audit may not be the right profession for those who feel constrained by working in a non-partisan environment. Konopaski also warns us to “be patient if elected officials don’t always do everything you suggested ... If legislators go a different way than you recommend, but were well-informed when they made that choice, you should still view that as making a difference and providing an important service.”

Should You Pursue a CIA?

Jason Juffras, District of Columbia

In the previous issue of *The Working Paper*, we explored the merits of pursuing a Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE) credential. Other certifications you might consider include the [Certified Internal Auditor](#) (CIA) credential, which is awarded by the [Institute of Internal Auditors](#) (IIA).

To earn the CIA, candidates must pass a three-part exam covering (1) essentials of internal auditing, (2) practice of internal auditing, and (3) business knowledge for internal auditors. Candidates also must meet standards for education and experience; those with higher levels of education have lower experience requirements.

The CIA might seem like an unusual choice for NLPES members given our external audit role. Kate Shiroff, legislative audit manager for Colorado’s Office of the State Auditor, explains that she regularly interacts with internal auditors in Colorado state agencies, and that her CIA credential “gives me some legitimacy in their eyes.”

Shiroff credits her office with encouraging (and paying for) staff to get certifications to develop specialized skills. She chose to pursue the CIA, which she obtained in 2011, because she felt it gave her “the biggest bang for the buck” and covered broader ground than a CFE. Still, she notes that the CIA material covers topics such as product pricing and inventory that are not relevant to our work as government auditors and evaluators.

Katrin Osterhaus, IT audit manager for Kansas’ Legislative Division of Post Audit, earned her CIA designation more than 20 years ago. She notes that CIA training does not cover anything an auditor would not learn in mastering the Yellow Book, except two hours of annual ethics training. Still, Osterhaus states that having the CIA initials after her name boosted her confidence early in her career.

Having obtained other certifications such as the Certified Government Auditing Professional, Osterhaus adds that, “I feel I’m getting less and less use of the CIA, but I certainly don’t want to drop it as it *was* hard to get in the first place.”

At the time of this writing, registration and test fees totaled \$940 for IIA members, \$1,445 for non-members, and \$740 for students. Applicants can prepare for the exam through self-study or online or in-person courses. A new “CIA Challenge Exam” provides a quicker route to the CIA for certified public accountants or chartered accountants, who can sit for a one-part exam.

To maintain the CIA, one must complete 40 hours of continuing professional education each year.



Brenda Erickson
Retires (cont.)

- NLPES had a great meeting in Park City, but it wasn't without a lot of effort and a little drama. About halfway through the PDS we had a potential snafu right before the awards ceremony. I was NLPES chair at the time and I think Brenda could see the anxiety level rising in my face as I started to strategize about how to solve the problem. Brenda remained calm and assured me this was a solvable problem, we addressed the issue, and the awards ceremony went off without a hitch. I could always count on Brenda to be responsive, insightful, and to be the calm in the eye of the storm. So allow me to say...Brenda, thank you for your service to the legislative evaluation community, we will certainly miss you, and I wish you nothing but happiness in retirement. *(Jon Courtney, Deputy Director, Program Evaluation Unit, New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee)*
- EC members come and go, but Brenda was always there! Brenda is NLPES! She knows every nook and cranny of every decision the EC ever made. She will be missed greatly for her institutional memory, but more importantly for the generous support she offered to all of us who served at one point on the EC. She fostered a culture of connectedness over shared meals and even Microsoft Teams. *(Kiernan McGorty, Organizational Development Manager, North Carolina Legislative Services Office)*
- Brenda's historical knowledge of NLPES is invaluable. She's a wealth of knowledge about our staff association and past decisions about the direction of our organization. She's also got a special knack for connecting NLPES members and pointing offices to helpful resources, examples, and

advice. Most importantly, Brenda has a genuine appreciation for our profession. Her passion and dedication to the EC and our membership will be greatly missed. *(Kristen Rottinghaus, Deputy Post Auditor, Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit)*

- In thinking of the value that Brenda brought to NLPES, three things stand out: 1) her passion and enthusiasm for NCSL's mission, and the value of states sharing information and best practices with each other; 2) her encyclopedic knowledge of NLPES member offices, their histories and the people in each of those offices – any time an issue arose, she knew who to call or how it'd been handled previously; and 3) her genuine concern and affection for all of us – she is very excited when an office does something impressive or wins an award and worries about the impact of retirements on individual offices. (I am certain that she would be most concerned for any of our offices losing someone of her stature!) *(Eric Thomas, Audit Coordinator, Washington Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee)*

As Brenda's time on this production called NLPES comes to a close, I'd like to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU! I think I speak for all of us when I say we couldn't have done the important work of NLPES without you. We will miss you.

Please join us in wishing Brenda all the best in her retirement!

(Curtain Down. Applause.)

Shunti Taylor is a Deputy Director with the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts, Performance Audit Division.

In Memoriam

Darin R. (DRU) Underwood, Utah

John Schaff, who retired as Utah's Legislative Auditor General in 2018 and served the State of Utah for 42 years, passed away on October 6, 2022.

John was a longtime NLPES member who received the Outstanding Achievement Award in 2020. John also facilitated Utah hosting the NLPES Professional Development Seminar in Park City twice—in 2006 and 2019.



After graduating from the University of Utah, John worked for the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) before returning to Utah to join the Office of the Legislative Auditor General (OLAG). John was an audit supervisor and long-time deputy auditor general before being selected by the Utah Legislature as the auditor general in 2004.

When he came to OLAG, he brought with him the "five attributes of an audit finding" used by GAO. The credibility of the office and Utah's legislative audits can be largely attributed to John, who was known for being a firm auditor general, having a strong work ethic, and great overall leadership skills.

But John will best be remembered for his ability to put people first. The welfare of his staff even came ahead of the audit product. He knew how to audit, but he also knew how to enjoy life, being nicknamed the "minister of fun" by many in the office.

His legacy will be cherished; he will be loved; and he will be greatly missed. NLPES offers its condolences to John's wife, children, grandchildren, and other loved ones.

Staff Happenings

Lisa Kieffer was named as Director of the Performance Audit Division of the Georgia Department of Audit and Accounts. She replaces Leslie McGuire, who retired last year. Kieffer is a former chair of the NLPES executive committee.

Katherine Theisen was appointed as Director of Special Reviews for the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor. She succeeds Joel Alter, who retired last year.

Karla Smith, Senior Program Evaluator for the Wyoming Legislative Services Office, retired in January.

Keenan Konopaski retired after 12 years as Legislative Auditor in Washington State. See p. 5 for his reflections on his career. Eric Thomas, the current chair of the NLPES executive committee, is the new Legislative Auditor.

The Working Paper is published two times a year by the [National Legislative Program Evaluation Society](#), a professional staff association of the National Conference of State Legislatures. NLPES serves the professionals of state legislative agencies engaged in government program evaluation. The purposes of NLPES are to promote the art and science of legislative program evaluation; to enhance professionalism and training in legislative program evaluation; and to promote the exchange of ideas and information about legislative program evaluation.

The Working Paper is produced by the NLPES Communications Subcommittee:

Jason Juffras (District of Columbia), chair
Darin Underwood (Utah), member
Darren McDivitt (Texas), member

Please contact [Jason Juffras](#) with any article suggestions, comments, or questions.

