

CSG

Council of State Governments
Adapted by Leslie Dyke



Harvard Model
Congress Asia

“Resolved, that the several States composing the United States of America, are not united on the principle of unlimited submission to their general government; but that by compact under the style and title of a Constitution for the United States and of amendments thereto, they constituted a general government for special purposes, delegated to that government certain definite powers, reserving each State to itself, the residuary mass of right to their own self-government.” – Thomas Jefferson, The Kentucky Resolutions, 1798

INTRODUCTION

Dear newest Council of State Governments lobbyist,

Welcome to the Council of State Governments (CSG)! As states take on more responsibilities, they are finding that it pays to share resources, strategies, and ideas for doing all that needs to be done. One resource that states have relied upon since 1933 for the support of state sovereignty is the Council of State Governments. Leaders know they can't succeed if they work in **isolation**, and that's why states turn to the CSG for research and policy assistance involving the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of state governments.

Changes at the **federal** level mean that states will be required to do more; however, taxpayer concerns mean states will be doing it with less money. You can turn to CSG for help in responding to this crucial challenge. Citizens don't want states to replace federal **bureaucracies** with more bureaucracies at the state level. Instead, CSG helps states increase efficiency by identifying the best new, creative, and practical policy approaches to significant state problems.

Isolation—*alone*

Federal—*national*

Bureaucracy—*an extensive body of government officials and agencies that is often burdensome when trying to accomplish something*

CSG AT HARVARD MODEL CONGRESS ASIA

The CSG is not a typical lobbying group, either in the real world or at HMCA. It functions in all the ways that an interest group does, however. Specifically, there are several issues of interest to the CSG. These issues stem from several different principles derived from the political philosophy of the **anti-Federalists** of the American Revolution. The CSG not only focuses on combining resources among states to handle similar issues, but it also recognizes the importance of deciding certain issues at the state level. In other words, the CSG is a pro-state's

Anti-Federalists—*a group that opposed the adoption of the US Constitution*



rights organization. Much like the anti-Federalists of the early 19th century, the CSG recognizes that there are issues that are best left to the states to decide. The CSG feels that having the federal government create uniform policy decisions for all states can be dangerous and ineffective because states differ greatly in their interests, needs, and priorities. Issuing blanket, national policies on issues that may differ on a state-by-state basis does little to **accommodate** for important differences that may affect the policy or its **implementation**.

It may seem that almost every issue could be decided at the state level; however, there are decisions that must be made at the national level by federal law. For example, issues of foreign policy are to be determined by the federal government because it concerns the entire country. As a counterexample, issues such as education, marriage, **welfare programs**, and state taxes are almost always decided by each of the state governments. Yes, the federal government provides federal money for education, state highways, and welfare programs in the form of federal grants, but each state governs these areas independently of outside forces. The CSG lobbies for certain issues to be taken up and decided upon by the states instead of the federal government. It is on this basis that this interest group will function at Harvard Model Congress Asia 2008.

HOT TOPICS

The CSG takes a stand on a number of issues including education, labor regulations, technology, health, the environment, elections, and more. Some topics that are particularly relevant to the CSG are discussed below, but these are not the only issues you will need to know for the conference; rather, they are matters about which the CSG feels especially passionate. You should continue to keep **abreast** of these issues and the CSG's actions by reading information on the organization's website: <http://www.csg.org>.

Education

Education has historically been an issue that has been managed at the state level. The majority of funding comes from each state, whether through property taxes, state income taxes, or another means of funding. Several states and schools do receive federal funding, but the majority of these funds are **disbursed** by **grants** that are usually intended for special projects. For example, a special grant might offer money to schools in order to build new sports facilities. However, the funding for basic educational needs comes from the state budgets. The CSG supports the **status quo**. The Council recognizes each state's right

Accommodate—to give consideration to

Implementation—execution; the carrying out of an action or decision

Welfare program—a US government program that seeks to provide a minimum level of income and monetary assistance to disadvantaged groups

Abreast—to be informed

Disburse—to distribute

Grants—financial aid from the government

Status quo—the existing state of affairs



to organize and manage its own school systems in the manner the state sees fit. Recently, the federal government has taken a larger role in setting education policy, but CSG maintains that this is primarily a state's responsibility. Each individual state is at the forefront in trying to adapt educational institutions to each state's needs. What needs to change in Alabama school systems may not need to change in the state of New York. The CSG works to track trends in education and help state policymakers remain aware of how changes in the economy, **demographics**, technology, and society are likely to affect students and educational institutions in the future. At HMCA, the CSG functions to make sure that education policy and decisions in this area are left to the states.

Demographics—the statistical characteristics of a population

Naturalization—the process of attaining citizenship

Immigration

Although immigration and **naturalization** policy and enforcement are primarily the responsibilities of the federal government, these policies have direct implications for state government. The CSG recognizes the crucial contributions made by immigrants to our country. The pursuit of policies that simplify legal and efficient **integration** of immigrants is both consistent with our founding principles and vital for the future of our society. However, these policies must be developed and pursued in close coordination with the states. The Council also expects the federal government to acknowledge and take steps to **mitigate** the negative impact upon state budgets caused by federal immigration and naturalization policies when it comes to education, law enforcement, health, and other state provided services.

Integration—incorporation

Mitigate—to lessen the severity of

Specifically, the CSG argues that any immigration legislation must affirm that the role of state and local law enforcement is limited to criminal, not civil, violations of law, except in cases where a state or local government has voluntarily agreed to accept responsibility for enforcing federal immigration policy. Further, any immigration reform legislation must ensure that state and local governments are able to address the public health concerns of their communities and prevent **reallocation** of funding for the provision of basic and emergency health care services. And finally, any immigration reform legislation should build on state and local governments' capacities to integrate newcomers into communities, through close coordination with state and local governments and **adequate** funding for English as a Second Language instruction and other vital services.

Reallocation—redistribution

Adequate—sufficient

Referendum—a direct vote in which the people chose whether or not to accept a policy proposal

Polarized—divided into opposing groups

Election Reform

Political scientists and politicians agree that over the last three decades, the nation's political environment has become much more **po-**

larized. As state and federal political parties look for new strategies to gain power in Congress, state legislatures' role in redistricting is receiving a closer look. Close elections in recent years have revealed several flaws in the nation's election system and have prompted calls for reform. Paying for these reforms, many of which are **mandated** by the federal government, places additional pressure on state budgets. The CSG recognizes that any federal election reform will have consequences for the states. As such, it is imperative that the several states are included in this process.

Mandate—to require

Logistics—the details and coordination of a situation or event

Several different forms of reform, from election identification cards to setting term limits, will greatly affect election policies in the states. The **logistics** and funding for elections, even federal elections, are conducted and set at the state level. As such, the CSG argues that states need to be included in this process more fully.

Minimum Drug Sentencing

Prosecute—to bring legal action against

Criminal laws and corresponding sentences have historically been set at the state level. There are certainly federal laws that apply to all citizens; however, in most criminal proceedings, defendants are prosecuted in accordance with state, not federal, law. There are, of course, federal officials who **prosecute** cases of federal law. However, for the most part, individual states dictate their respective criminal laws. Though state laws do not vary greatly, the specific legal requirements, definitions, and sentencing and punishment details do differ. For example, the death penalty can be utilized in some states but not in others. The bottom line is that states usually determine the punishments for breaking laws. The same applies for drug offenses. Many aspects of drug law apply to interstate commerce, such as when drugs are trafficked across state lines, and are therefore under federal jurisdiction; however, individual states certainly have their own laws in this area.

The CSG lobbies on behalf of the states' rights in this area to mandate their own punishments for drug offenses. The federal government often passes legislation regarding drug offenses, but the CSG argues that this should be left up to the states to decide.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Advocate—to argue for something

It is now up to you to lobby for states' rights at Harvard Model Congress Asia. While the conference focuses greatly on the federal level, each state is represented, and you must work with and persuade these Congressmen and women that what you **advocate** as a member of the Council of State Governments is right.

Sway—to influence



How effective you will be as a member of the CSG is up to you. Decision makers in the House and Senate are hungry for information. Intelligent arguments and well-researched presentations can easily **sway** a member who is on the fence. The best lobbyist is not the one who speaks with the loudest voice or knows the most people; rather, it is the person who provides the most new and **insightful** information. Please read carefully and research your assigned topics. If you come to the conference armed with new information to support our cause, you will find yourself in a position to help our organization and society at large.

Insightful—*perceptive*

The Council of State Government's website is very helpful in explaining its role on several different issues; however, you might also want to research the Supreme Court case *McCulloch v. Maryland*, 17 US 216 (1819). This was a landmark Supreme Court decision that forever changed the debate on state's rights versus federalism. Also, the *Tenth Amendment Center* (<http://www.tenthamendmentcenter.com/>) does a lot of work with analyzing recent congressional actions through a "states' rights lens."

For more information, including short position papers on many issues, please visit: <http://www.csg.org>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"The Council for State Governments." *CSG*. <<http://www.csg.org>>. (cited October 23, 2007)

"Same-sex Marriage Bans Winning on State Ballots." *CNN America Votes 2004*. <<http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/11/02/ballot.samesex.marriage/index.html>>. (cited October 23, 2007)

Douglas, Jim and Earl Ray Tomblin. "Statement of Intergovernmental Policy: Immigration." *CSG Intergovernmental Affairs Committee*. <<http://www.csg.org/policy/documents/ImmigrationPolicyStatement.pdf>> (cited October 23, 2007)

