Introduction to Legislative Oversight

Jim Townsend and Ben Eikey
Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy

February 3, 2023
Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy

- Workshops for Congress, state, international legislatures
- Videos, testimony, webinars, social media
- Research & Reports (50-state analysis, contract oversight, more)
- Conferences, panels & events
- Oversight experts
- More: Benjamin.Eikey@wayne.edu

U.S. Sen. Carl Levin

Pennsylvania Oversight Committee

Wayne State Law School

NCOIL Summer Meeting

CSG West Annual Meeting

levincenter@wayne.edu
What is Legislative Oversight?

The “eyes and voice” of the people

“It is the proper duty of a representative body to look diligently into every affair of government and to talk much about what it sees. It is meant to be the eyes and the voice, and to embody the wisdom and will of its constituents.”

-- United States Supreme Court

---------------------

Agenda

• Identifying oversight topics
• Routine vs. In-Depth oversight
• Six avenues of state legislative oversight
• Recommendations
Origin of Investigation Topics

• Committee jurisdiction
• Leadership concerns
• Scandals, events, news, problems
• Reports
• Constituents
• Whistleblowers, advocacy groups
• Legislator concerns
• Lawsuits
• Agencies
• Personal experience
• Oversight plan, long-term vision
Examples of Topics

- Pension funds
- Prisons
- Foster care
- Disaster response
- Lobbying disclosures
- Contract mismanagement
- Infrastructure
# Routine, or In-Depth Oversight?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Routine: &quot;cop on the beat&quot;</th>
<th>In-depth: &quot;firefighter&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Outcomes</td>
<td>Scandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgetary</td>
<td>Disaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracts</td>
<td>Chronic Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Escalating Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deter Malfeasance</td>
<td>Long-term Investigation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your Superpowers

- Legislator phone calls and emails get returned.
- Legislators can request investigations and reports.
- Legislator questions trigger research, reconsideration, change.
- Oversight can have as much, or more, impact as legislation.

levincenter@wayne.edu
Phases of an Investigation

1. Fact-Finding
2. Written Product
3. Hearing
4. Follow up

Tutorials: https://levin-center.org/congressional-lawmakers/online-tutorials/
Avenues for State Legislative Oversight

• Analytic Bureaucracies
• Appropriations Process
• Committees

• Administrative Rule Review
• Advice and Consent
• Monitoring Contracts
Avenues: Routine or In-Depth?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Routine: &quot;cop on the beat&quot;</th>
<th>In-Depth: &quot;firefighter&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Analytic Bureaucracies
- Appropriations Process
- Committees
- Admin Rule Review
- Advice and Consent
- Monitoring Contracts
Example: Dam Safety
# Oversight Plan for 2023-24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Factual Question</th>
<th>Avenue(s)</th>
<th>Routine, or In-Depth?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations for Strengthening Oversight

• Joint oversight committee with balanced party membership.
• Bipartisan approach to topics, inquiry, witnesses, questions, etc.
• More follow-up (e.g., hearings) on reports published by analytic bureaucracies.
• Include contract oversight.
• Create oversight plan for your office.
• Be transparent about oversight outcomes: post status and results of investigations.

For additional resources: https://www.levin-center.org/state-lawmakers/state-oversight-resources/
State Oversight Academy

- Resource for state legislative oversight. Part of the Levin Center.
- Launching in late March. Programming announcement coming soon.
- Four Objectives:
  1. Improve legislative oversight across the country.
  2. Promote oversight scholarship.
  4. Increase visibility & stimulate public discourse.

For additional resources: https://www.levin-center.org/state-lawmakers/
Thank you!

For more information, contact:

Ben Eikey, Benjamin.Eikey@wayne.edu

State Oversight Resources: https://www.levin-center.org/state-lawmakers/state-oversight-resources/
State Oversight Workshops: https://www.levin-center.org/state-lawmakers/oversight-workshops/