

2018 EDITION

Critical Lessons for Governors-Elect



NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

NGA Consulting

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Founded in 1908, the National Governors Association (NGA) is the collective voice of the nation's governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations. Its members are the governors of the 50 states, three territories, and two commonwealths. NGA provides governors and their senior staff members with services that range from representing states on Capitol Hill and before the administration on key federal issues to developing and implementing innovative solutions to public policy challenges through the NGA Center for Best Practices.

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Contents

- Preface: Critical Lessons for Governors-Elect** **3**
- Introduction** **5**
- 1. The Governor’s Chief of Staff** **7**
- 2. Getting Started** **9**
- 3. Personal Challenges** **11**
 - a. Relocating to Your State Capitol
 - b. Your Spouse’s Role
 - c. In the Public Spotlight
 - d. Preserving Time for Your Family
 - e. Prerequisites and Perceptions
- 4. Transition Mechanics** **14**
 - a. Define Your Role
 - b. Delegate
 - c. Articulate an Ethics Policy
 - d. Administrative Tasks
 - e. Substantive Tasks
 - f. The Decision-Making Process
- 5. Shaping Your Administration with Leadership and Management Tools** **18**
 - a. The Importance of Understanding State Government
 - b. Building Relationships
 - c. Accessing Information
 - d. Setting Priorities
 - e. Your Team: Governor’s Staff and Agency and Department Heads
 - f. The Executive Budget—Allocating Fiscal Resources
 - g. Using the Bully Pulpit
- 6. Organizing, Staffing and Operating the Governor’s Office** **28**
 - a. Preserving Management Capacity
 - b. Structural Options
 - c. Major Functions

- d. Skills, Knowledge and Abilities
- e. Defining a Management Style
- f. The Decision-Making Process
- g. Transparency

7. Recruiting, Screening and Selecting Department and Agency Appointments	33
a. The Recruitment Process	
b. Understand the Job	
c. Collecting and Managing Applications	
d. Background Checks	
e. Selection Process	
f. Appointment Announcements	
8. Emergency Management and Preparing for the Unexpected	37
Conclusion	39

Preface

Each newly elected governor across the country will take the oath of office and immediately assume his or her official duties on inauguration day. A new governor must be prepared to articulate priorities for the new administration, craft a balanced budget, staff his or her office, and select the appointees who will head state departments and agencies. The governor must begin to build effective working relationships with the state legislature and a variety of stakeholders, including public employees. He or she also must be prepared to deal immediately with any natural disaster or threat to the public safety.

Fortunately, with a few exceptions, most governors-elect will have an eight- to ten-week period between election day and inauguration day to prepare to assume office. This period, along with the early weeks of a new term, is generally called the transition. While each state and governor-elect may approach the transition differently, there are many tasks that must be accomplished during this brief time. Most of these tasks can be performed by a transition team and senior staff members, with guidance from the governor-elect, and are described in more detail in the National Governors Association (NGA) publication, *Transition and the New Governor: A Planning Guide*.

There are, however, a number of tasks that will require the time and personal attention of the governor-elect. *Critical Lessons for the Governor-Elect* was written specifically for the governor-elect to assist him or her in identifying and addressing those crucial tasks. Using lessons learned from veteran governors, the publication highlights the need for governors-elect to be involved in the selection and role of the chief of staff, aware of the personal issues that their families should be prepared to address, and well-informed about their role in responding to emergencies. Other important topics addressed include: transition mechanics; shaping the administration; leadership and management tools; organizing, staffing and operating the governor's office; and recruiting, screening and selecting agency heads.

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For more information about managing the transition, please contact NGA's Office of Management Consulting and Training at (202) 624-5300.

Introduction

This publication contains “lessons learned” shared by incumbent governors who have served as faculty governors during the National Governors Association (NGA) Seminar for New Governors over the past four decades.

The veteran governors’ insights and advice are offered for the benefit of governors-elect to help ease their transition into office and to ensure they have successful administrations.

This publication is organized into eight sections:

The Governor’s Chief of Staff

The appointment of your chief of staff is one of the most important decisions you will make. This section discusses the roles that chiefs traditionally play in the governor’s office and the characteristics that have contributed to their success.

Getting started

How governors-elect spend their time during the days immediately following the election is crucial. This section discusses why it is important for governors-elect to set aside time in the immediate days following the election to attend to personal issues and to lay the groundwork for tasks and activities that will need to be addressed.

Personal challenges

It is important to focus on the impact your election as governor of your state will have on you and your family. This section will discuss your spouse’s role, protecting personal time on your schedule, and preparing yourself and your family for the public spotlight. This is also a time to define your own management style.

Transition mechanics

There are a significant number of activities that need to occur during the gubernatorial transition period. This section provides guidance regarding the mechanics of transition and the importance of both defining and delegating responsibility to your transition team.

Shaping Your Administration with Leadership and Management Tools

Serving as governor is unique and complex. A number of decisions will be made during the gubernatorial transition period that will shape your administration. This section will provide information about the governor's role and identifies the tools that enable governors to shape their administrations and do their job effectively; such as setting priorities, recruiting personnel and allocating financial resources.

Organizing, Staffing and Operating the Governor's Office

The governor's office is a powerful force in providing support to the governor as he or she leads and manages state government. Operational efficiency and effectiveness in the governor's office are critical for the successful direction of the executive branch of government and the successful accomplishment of the governor's agenda. This section will outline major functions of a governor's office along with structural considerations.

Recruiting, Screening and Selecting Agency and Department Heads

Experienced governors urge new governors to make key personnel decisions a high priority and assign clear responsibility to a trusted senior staff member for developing and managing the recruitment process used during the transition and through the early days of a new administration. This section discusses governors' involvement in and priorities for recruiting cabinet and agency appointees as they transition from campaigning to leading and managing state government.

Preparing for the Unexpected

An unexpected emergency can occur at any time during a governor's administration—even on inauguration day. This section will provide guidance on how governors should prepare for and respond to emergencies, such as hurricanes, floods, tornados, and man-made disasters.

NGA offers a number of additional publications that provide more details about the nuts and bolts of the transition process, the organization and operation of the governor's office, and the leadership and management of state government. These additional publications will be referred to throughout this publication and can be found on NGA's website at www.nga.org.

The Governor’s Chief of Staff

Your chief of staff will play a critical role in your success as governor. If possible, you will want to name the individual who will be filling this position immediately after the election so that he or she can be intimately involved in helping to shape the transition process and in structuring and staffing your office.

It is likely that you will look to your campaign staff and supporters for candidates to serve as chief. Often the most obvious candidate would appear to be your campaign manager. While it is absolutely critical that your chief have your full faith and confidence, it is important to understand that your chief will be much more than a political advisor. While the roles you assign your staff may vary, most chiefs will be expected to play all or most of the 10 major roles identified below:

- Chief operating officer;
- Initiative manager;
- Office manager;
- Chief strategist;
- Policy advisor;
- Gubernatorial vicar;
- Guardian of the palace;
- Headhunter;
- Crisis coordinator; and
- Personal confidant.

In most states the chief will serve as the state’s chief operating officer—serving as your surrogate in overseeing the management and operation of state departments and agencies. The chief also will play an important role in developing and enforcing your policy priorities and in developing relationships with the legislature and other critical stakeholders.

The successful chief needs to be familiar with state government and skilled in managing a large and complex organization. Each of these tasks requires a set of skills that may or may not be present in the leaders of your election campaign.

The difficulty of making the correct selection—and likely the demanding nature of the position itself—is illustrated by the fact that, on average, a chief will serve less than three years. Probably more significant is the fact that this average tenure obscures that some governors will have four or more chiefs during their term(s) in office while some will retain the same chief during their entire tenure as governor.

The selection of the chief of staff is almost always one of the first issues addressed by the governors who have served as faculty for the Seminar for New Governors. Their almost universal advice:

“Don’t appoint your campaign manager as chief of staff.”

That being said, a significant number of the governors-elect will have already made that appointment or will do so before their inaugurations. And the majority of them will return to a future seminar and offer this advice:

“Don’t appoint your campaign manager as chief of staff.”

Considering the strong personal relationships that most candidates develop with their campaign manager, the more useful advice might be:

“Take time to understand the roles that the chief of staff will play and make certain that you and your preferred candidate agree that he or she has the knowledge, skills and experience to succeed.”

NGA has prepared a series of detailed publications that describe the many roles of the governor’s chief of staff. It is highly recommended that you review these documents as you consider potential candidates and that you discuss these roles with your top contenders to make certain that your chief of staff appointment is successful.

Getting Started

In the weeks immediately following your election, it is important that you focus your personal attention on a relatively limited number of issues. These issues range from items you will want to address almost immediately to critical issues that you will need to focus on throughout the transition period. All these items are significant and should demand attention during the transition period.

We will discuss critical issues in more detail in the sections that follow. The steps below focus on items that need to be addressed immediately.

STEP 1: Make Connections with the Outgoing Administration

By now the current governor probably has been in touch to offer congratulations and his or her cooperation in assisting you during your transition into office. If not, you should consider making that initial contact. The relationship between you and the governor will affect the tone you set for your transition.

STEP 2: Take a Break

You will need down time for rest and recuperation before beginning the transition. This also is an opportunity to reconnect with your family and to discuss the impact of your election on your lives and plans going forward.

STEP 3: Attend the NGA Seminar for New Governors

This seminar, held every two years, provides an opportunity to meet your new colleagues and to learn from your peers. It is an excellent introduction to the challenges you will face as governor and an introduction to tools and techniques that have proven useful to those who have served before you.

STEP 4: Name a Transition Director

Before you leave for rest and recuperation and the Seminar for New Governors, be certain to name a transition director. Task your transition director and chief of staff to develop a work plan and schedule that will ensure that critical items are identified, prioritized and assigned to your staff. The number of tasks to be addressed during the transition is almost endless. NGA's *Transition and the New Governor: A Planning Guide* presents a useful overview of these tasks and a suggested schedule or sequence of events. Make it required reading for your transition director and for your chief of staff.

STEP 5: Designate a Spokesperson

Make it clear who has the authority to speak on your behalf during the transition period and make certain that all other transition staff and transition team members understand that they should refer inquiries to that spokesperson.

STEP 6: Take Control of Your Schedule

The demands on your time during the transition will soon become overwhelming. There is a real danger that ceremonial and political items will overwhelm more substantive items. Create a structured scheduling process that will avoid ad hoc decisions and preserve your time for critical tasks. This structured process also may serve you well once you assume office.

Personal Challenges

“If you don’t involve the spouse in scheduling you will have a war—at least a skirmish. After all, half of the invitations involve the spouse, and the spouse frequently is called upon to represent you.”

It is essential to consider the impact your election will have on you and your family. The transition period is an excellent time to address a variety of issues such as adjusting to the public spotlight, preserving personal time and if you have a spouse, how he or she will assume the role of the governor’s spouse.

Relocating to Your State Capitol

Most states provide an official executive residence for the comfort and convenience of the governor and First Family during the governor’s tenure in office. Most executive residences consist of private quarters for the governor’s family and public space used for official and ceremonial functions. Given public interest, many states also choose to offer tours of the executive residence.

You and/or your spouse will need to work with the departing governor and his or her spouse to coordinate the logistics of your move into the executive residence. If you have school-age children, you and your spouse should discuss how this move will affect your children and should explore possible options for local schools.

Your Spouse’s Role

If you have a spouse, the two of you will want to consider the role that he or she will play in your administration and how your election may affect his or her own career. In most cases, your spouse will be responsible for the management of the governor’s executive residence. Often he or she will employ

state staff who will assist in this task. These appointments, like your own, are apt to receive public scrutiny, and you will want to see that your spouse's staff is subject to the same screening process as other appointees.

The role a governor's spouse will play in state government can vary considerably. Some spouses may assume an active role in the administration, with some serving as a personal and/or political advisor to the governor, while others may choose to focus their attention on particular programs or initiatives. Still others may decide to maintain their outside career, on a full- or part-time basis, while serving in their role as a governor's spouse. Again, in some states the governor's spouse will have access to state staff to assist in these roles. It is critical to inform your staff about the roles that your spouse and his or her staff will play as valued members of your overall team. NGA is available to provide information and resources to assist governors' spouses. Of note, NGA develops business programs for governors' spouses during the Seminar for New Governors and during its biannual meetings (Winter and Annual Meetings).

In the Public Spotlight

As governor, you will be in the media spotlight constantly, and it is to be expected that your public actions and public remarks will be subject to detailed review and analysis. However, keep in mind that ever-evolving technology and social media has greatly diminished the separation between the public and private spheres. The possibility of private conversations and personal activities being captured and publicized has increased significantly. Be aware that you may always be on a live mike or camera. Increasingly the blogosphere plays a game of "gotcha" and questionable or risky behavior will almost always be exposed.

The governor's family may also be subject to intensive media scrutiny. If you have a spouse and/or children, you may want to work with your communications director even before you take office to establish clear guidelines on media access to your family. Most responsible media have been willing to respect reasonable limits (when asked to do so) to ensure the privacy of children.

Preserving Time for Your Family

As governor, you will face relentless demands for your time. From day one, establish strict scheduling guidelines with your staff to ensure you preserve personal time for you and your family. Many governors and their families have developed a calendar of important dates, special events, and recurring "family time" (such as Sunday dinner or weekly lunches) to hold sacred and to place first on the governor's schedule.

Another major challenge will be to ensure your schedule is coordinated with your spouse's schedule. Your spouse has a strong vested interest in your

schedule, particularly if events are taking place out of town, at the executive residence, or if your spouse is expected to accompany you to certain functions. Make certain that your scheduling process provides your spouse with an opportunity to be consulted in advance if there are conflicting engagements or if he or she is expected to participate in events. For example, a proven strategy is to include the governor's spouse and/or the spouse's staff in the governor's regular scheduling meetings to provide opportunities to jointly review schedules and upcoming invitations and events.

Prerequisites and Perceptions

Many of the decisions you make regarding residence staffing, staff support for your spouse, and choices of your personal prerequisites of office—such as your choice of a car or the use of a state airplane—will likely be compared to those of the departing governor. You will find it useful to consider how changes from tradition or your state's culture may be portrayed in the media before committing to them.

Transition Mechanics

Most states make provisions available to the governor-elect to provide support during the period between election and inauguration. These resources often are supplemented by private donations and volunteers. Some states appropriate funds to the transition team, and other states provide government office space and delegate state employees to support the transition. Your transition staff should work with the current administration to identify these resources as quickly as possible.

While many important activities will occur during the transition, not all of them deserve or require your personal attention. You will want to preserve as much time as possible to focus on the policy, personnel, and financial decisions that will shape your administration.

The first step is to ask that your transition staff become familiar with the tasks they will be expected to address during the transition. Transition materials provided by NGA should be required reading for your transition director in order that he or she may develop and monitor a detailed action plan.

Your most important decision is the selection of a transition director. In addition, there are several issues that you may want to address personally as the transition process is formalized.

Define Your Role

Take a few minutes to define your role; your staff should not be expected to inherently know your management style. This is the time for you to be explicit on your desired level of involvement in the decision-making process. How do you like to receive information? How much detail do you want? When can others speak for you? With whom do you want to meet and how frequently?

Delegate

As noted earlier, the demands on your time during the transition will be overwhelming. Therefore, it is critical to delegate a variety of tasks to others. Two tasks that should be delegated are closing the campaign and planning the inauguration. In most states, closing the campaign can be delegated to your campaign committee. In the case of the inauguration, you may want to be involved in some early decisions (such as developing financial guidelines and deciding on the tone and theme for the inaugural events); however, you will be wise to leave the details to an inaugural committee. Your spouse also may want to be involved in the planning process to some degree. Make certain that your planning committee is aware of state inaugural traditions and that they are careful to consider the public relations impact of departing from traditions. Finally, try to distance yourself from the day-to-day management of the transition process. You need to spend your time making key decisions about the future of your administration and communicating those decisions to key stakeholders.

Articulate an Ethics Policy

Government ethics has become and will remain a major focus of the media. All states have ethics statutes and regulations that governors and appointees must be careful to follow. In addition, your predecessor may have established additional ethics requirements for the governor's office and administration appointees. Work with your staff to review any additional requirements to determine whether you wish to continue, expand, or eliminate them. Bear in mind that the media will be critical if they perceive you are reducing any current ethical requirements.

While the transition staff may or may not be legally required to adhere to these standards, you may want to require them to do so as a matter of practice. Alternatively, you may want to articulate your own expectations for those who will be participating in the transition. Establishing your expectations immediately will help avoid potential embarrassment in the future.

Make certain that established standards and requirements are communicated clearly to your appointees and reinforced on a regular basis. Institutional knowledge during the transition and in a governor's office and among gubernatorial appointees is particularly fragile. Requirements and expectations need to be shared repeatedly both to inform new staff members and to remind more experienced staff.

Administrative Tasks

“An unanswered letter or rude telephone response will probably never be forgiven. On the other hand, [the governor's office] can create positive impressions and even a sense of personal involvement through timely and responsive answers to inquiries.”

In most instances you will not want to be involved in administrative tasks. However, you will want to be certain that your transition director is aware of their importance and is managing them effectively. The team's ability to effectively handle telephone calls, correspondence, and scheduling requests, along with how it receives and tracks résumés and job applications, will do much to shape the public's perception of your new administration. There are a number of administrative tasks that will need to be performed during the transition. These activities include:

- Creating an administrative infrastructure (phone systems, information technology, email, etc.);
- Scheduling;
- Media relations;
- Website development;
- Correspondence and constituent relations; and
- Résumé tracking.

Substantive Tasks

Your transition staff will need to address substantive tasks such as:

- Organizing and staffing the governor's office;
- Recruiting and selecting gubernatorial appointees;
- Prioritizing policy proposals; and
- Taking control of the budget.

Transition teams take many forms and play many roles. In some states the process may be informal with key tasks performed by a small group of advisors who are familiar with state government and the challenges you will face. In other states, the transition is a larger and more formal process. In these states, many governors-elect choose to supplement a transition staff—either paid or volunteer—with a variety of expert or citizen task forces.

As governor-elect, you will need to decide how these tasks will be addressed during the transition. Generally speaking there are three or four options, including:

- Paid or volunteer transition staff;
- “Expert” advisory groups;
- “Citizen” advisory groups; and
- The governor's office team designate.

In practice most transitions incorporate several of these options.

“Expert” advisory groups may be particularly useful for recruiting and screening department and agency appointees and in reviewing the executive budget. “Citizen” advisory groups are often seen as a valuable tool for encouraging citizen involvement and also to recognize campaign supporters. In both

cases, appointments to advisory groups need to avoid the appearance of any conflict of interest.

One of your early decisions will relate to the size and tasks of any advisory groups you decide to establish. In making this decision it is important that you ensure that your transition team is able to provide the logistical support that these groups will need to do their jobs. As with staff appointments, you will want to screen potential advisory group appointees to avoid potential conflicts of interest or other ethical issues. You also will need to be prepared to clearly define their roles and responsibilities and provide access to you and/or to those who will be making policy decisions on your behalf. Special efforts will be required to keep these groups informed as the transition progresses and to make sure that their work is acknowledged. A disgruntled transition team can prove costly throughout the life of your administration.

The Decision-Making Process

Numerous substantive decisions will need to be made during the transition regarding your administration's priorities, the selection of key personnel, and the presentation or revision of the executive budget. It is critical that you make clear which decisions you wish to make personally and which you are prepared to delegate. In the later cases it also is critical that you are clear as to whom this decision-making authority has been delegated and who on your staff you expect to be consulted or informed.

Regardless of your decisions, it is important that these decisions be communicated clearly to all participants. You also will also want to make clear that you will respect these ground rules and that you expect that your transition director will enforce them.

In most transitions, the governor's office staff designate will play an increasing role in the decision-making process as inauguration nears. Your personal involvement may be needed to make sure that this move from transition to governor's office staff takes place smoothly.

Shaping Your Administration with Leadership and Management Tools

As governor-elect you bring your own specific experience and knowledge base to your new position. Some governors-elect have extensive executive experience while others may come from a legislative or advocacy background. Some will have an in-depth knowledge of state government and the powers, roles and responsibilities of the governor; others may not. No matter what your specific experience and knowledge base, there are familiar tools that enable you to do your job effectively. Those tools include:

- Understanding the Context of State Government;
- Building Relationships;
- Accessing Information;
- Setting Priorities;
- Your Team—Governor’s Staff and Agency and Department Heads;
- The Executive Budget—Allocating Fiscal Resources; and
- The “Bully Pulpit.”

The Importance of Understanding State Government

One of the most common complaints is that the governor and/or the governor’s staff members don’t understand or respect the role of the legislature and that they do not understand what department and agencies must or must not do under statutes and regulations.

It is likely that the media and the public will hold you accountable for almost anything that goes wrong during your administration. That comes with the territory. In fact, many governors seek to position themselves in the forefront of any crisis or policy challenge; however, your authority and responsibilities are not unlimited. The reality is constrained by the state constitution as well as state statutes and regulations. It also is constrained by history and tradition. The federal government requires and prohibits many activities, of-

ten with the threat of lost federal aid. Many responsibilities may have been delegated to local government. Court orders may require or prohibit certain activities.

You will want to make certain that your staff members are well grounded in these realities and recognize appropriate limits when developing your programs and policies. It also is important that your staff and agency and department heads understand and comply with state personnel and procurement systems and requirements. Disregarding such requirements can result in embarrassment, dismissal, and even criminal charges.

Building Relationships

“Legislators have three jobs—representing their constituents, making laws, and balancing the power of the executive branch. Help them do all three well:

- *Help them represent their constituents by listening to legislators voicing their constituents’ concerns and by solving their constituents’ problems;*
- *Help them make better laws by working with them to achieve consensus to create win-win situations and avoid vetoes; and*
- *Help them balance the power you have by acknowledging and respecting their powers in your constitution and laws so that neither of you is forced to fight each other over power.”*

“Help legislators with their work before you need to ask them for their help with your work. Anticipate their problems/need. Solve/satisfy them. This is done primarily with your staff.”

Two relationships will do much to enhance the success of the transition. First is the relationship between the outgoing administration (governor and his/her staff) and the incoming one (you and your staff). You can help ensure a positive relationship by reaching out to the departing governor and by demanding that your staff and transition teams be respectful of the time and input provided by departing staffs and agencies. You also may choose to enhance this relationship by being willing to assist the departing governor in his or her transition out of office. Your spouse also will want to make contact with the governor’s spouse, particularly as it relates to transition in the governor’s residence.

Second is the relationship with the state legislature. Experience suggests that it is important that you and your staff be knowledgeable and respectful of the legal and traditional roles of the legislature in your state. To ignore or challenge these traditions either deliberately or inadvertently can poison relationships for years. Legislative leadership and legislative staffs often can be of help in providing access to critical budget and policy information during the transition.

While it is important to establish good relationships with legislative leaders and individual legislators, it is also important to recognize that the guidelines you establish during the transition will carry over to your new administration.

In this regard it should be important to think carefully about access to you and your staff.

The transition also is a time to begin to define your relationship with the state bureaucracy. While your campaign may have been critical of state programs and performances, recognize that you will soon become dependent on the bureaucracy for the implementation of your priorities and for the conscientious delivery of a wide array of state services. With few exceptions, most state employees will be responsive. Don't make the mistake of defining them as enemies. Let enemies define themselves, don't create them unnecessarily.

Accessing Information

You will receive an enormous amount of information during the transition process. Most outgoing administrations develop briefing materials for the incoming administration. Typically, these materials will provide background on state departments and programs. Most significantly, they may highlight critical issues or decisions that may confront the new administration in its first few months in office. This material also can help identify management issues that your administration will need to address. A critical message to convey to staff is "no surprises." The transition provides an opportunity for staff to identify potential land mines without fear of consequences. The materials provided by the current administration also may be supplemented by the work of your own transition teams. These teams may help in evaluating the information provided by the current administration and in seeking additional input from a variety of stake holders to identify issues that may not have been addressed by the current administration.

A governor has access to an overwhelming amount of demographic and programmatic information. The governor's challenge is to create a systematic approach to identifying, collecting, organizing and analyzing the available information so it can be used effectively to:

- Accurately describe the characteristics of a problem or issue;
- Support evidence-based decision making; and
- Monitor the implementation of priorities and/or the ongoing operations of state government departments and agencies.

Unfortunately, readily available information often goes unused, and there is a tendency to proceed based on opinion, misinformation and incomplete data. It is critical that staff avoid overconfidence if they are to avoid false starts and ineffective decisions. Much of what we believe to be true may not be so in fact. Insist that your staff and your appointees are data driven and look to evidence-based research to develop policies and programs.

Many states collect and report extensive performance data either as part of their budget process or as a separate performance management system. The transition process provides an excellent opportunity to determine how you

want to use performance management tools during your administration. As governor-elect you may want to take the time to:

- Understand the performance measurement systems that are already in place and consider building on that base rather than establishing new performance management systems;
- Consider beginning small—focus first on those measures that are most important to you; and
- Recognize that measurement, while helpful, is not enough; it is most effective when it is combined with a system of performance management, a system that identifies problems and works to develop solutions to those problems.

A number of national organizations and the federal government collect and report performance data that allows for state-to-state comparisons. This information can assist you and your staff in evaluating current agency operations and in assessing potential policy changes.

Setting Priorities

“Keep your agenda short. You’ll only have time to build the necessary coalitions around three or four major priorities.”

One of the governor’s most powerful tools is the ability to establish priorities for his or her administration. In most states, these priorities will focus on policy changes, usually in the form of new programs or major modifications of existing programs. They may be as broad as improving education and promoting economic growth or as “small” as a change in the formula for local government assistance or the construction of a new state facility. In some states, the governors’ priorities also may include management initiatives to improve customer service or improve the economy and efficiency of government operations.

Every Seminar for New Governors emphasizes the importance of your priorities. The basic message is to select a limited number of priorities—somewhere in the range of three to five. A longer list tends to dilute public and legislative attention and may overtax the governor’s limited political capital. Your priorities form the basis of your communications and scheduling strategy. In addition to guiding the allocation of resources and focusing the work of the governor’s staff, the governor’s priorities help the department and agency heads that report to the governor establish their own missions and priorities. In a number of states, departments and agencies are challenged to examine and prioritize their own programs and services and thereby contribute to the achievement of the governor’s priorities.

Also, they help inform the budget-making process. The establishment of priorities provides an important opportunity to build connections to the legis-

lature and with key interest groups and constituencies. It also provides the opportunity to build a team mentality among the department and agency heads that report to the governor. In both cases, the opportunity to suggest and evaluate alternatives can be important.

Every candidate creates an extensive “to do” list during the election campaign. This list will be found in position papers, press releases, speeches and the commitments made to constituents and stakeholders. Most transition offices move quickly to compile these items into a comprehensive list. This makes considerable sense as both your friends and your critics likely will use the list to evaluate your performance. However, the list also provides a starting point for establishing your priorities. While you may want to accomplish every item on your list, all of them cannot be accomplished in the first weeks and months of your administration and not all of them require your personal attention. Focus your time during transition on selecting your priorities and on the personnel, policy and financial decisions that will be needed to accomplish those priorities. As you consider your priorities, there are some truths your transition may not tell you. Not every incumbent is incompetent. Not every issue is new. Not every existing program is a failure. Not every problem can be solved tomorrow.

“There is no such thing as a new idea. Be willing to copy, borrow and freshen up the old ideas.”

There is a strong, and often appropriate, desire to do something new. However, there may be promising work already underway that deserves continuing support and attention. In these times of fiscal constraint, it may make good sense to build on the foundations that have been created by prior administrations.

You have the opportunity to focus your staff on the collection of facts that can supplement the opinions of your supporters and advisors. How are current policies and programs designed to address issues? Where do those programs stand in terms of implementation? Are they producing results? Or even, has there been time for them to do so? Could you accomplish more by continuing or strengthening those programs rather than by starting anew?

These same questions also might apply to some of the systems that have been created to assist you in managing state departments and agencies. Can you build on existing systems or do you need to start fresh?

Your Team: Governor’s Staff and Agency and Department Heads

The governor’s personal staff is the primary tool for interacting with the executive branch, the legislature, the media, and a wide variety of stakeholders. In every state the governor has a considerable degree of flexibility in determining the organization and structure of the governor’s office and in defining the ways in which that staff will function. The governor also has broad flexibility in selecting the members of his or her staff.

The department and agency heads that the governor appoints will be key to the governor's success. They play an important role in developing the governor's priorities and often will be responsible for the successful implementation of those priorities. More importantly, they will be responsible for detecting and responding to operational problems and issues within their authority that threaten the governor's credibility, re-election potential, or legacy. Most governors can survive the loss of a specific priority, but they are less likely to survive a major ethics scandal, a major service snafu, or an inadequate response to a natural disaster or other emergency. Loyalty and trust are critical, but they should not substitute for competency.

The most successful governor often will seek to focus on building and maintaining a team approach in the operation of the governor's office itself and between the governor's office and department and agency heads. The team concept is enhanced when all players understand your objectives and priorities as well as their roles and the roles of others on the team. It is critical for agency heads to be included in the decision-making process. It is critical for governors' staff that liaison with department heads to possess a basic understanding of what agencies can and cannot do. Conversely, it is important that agency heads practice political sensitivity and keep focused on the governor's priorities and not become captives of their agencies or constituencies. The complexity of state government and the relatively small size of the governor's office suggest that the key lies in the appointment of department and agency leadership that the governor trusts, that shares a commitment to the governor's priorities and that has the political and management skills needed to succeed.

The Executive Budget—Allocating Fiscal Resources

“Take time to understand the budget. Learn what drives revenues and what drives state spending, how much is committed and cannot be readily changed, and how much is really available for your own priorities. One way or another, most issues come down to money.”

In the vast majority of the states, the governor is charged with developing an executive budget to fund a combination of new initiatives and the ongoing operations of state government. Some governors will begin their term in the midst of a biennial budget cycle. Under these circumstances, the new governor will likely have the opportunity to propose a fairly limited set of amendments that may provide additional resources for his or her priorities. Most new governors will take office near the end of the development process for an annual budget. In these cases much of the work of collecting and analyzing appropriation requests will already be well underway. In some cases the departing administration may have already made public its own budget proposals and recommendations. With an annual budget, the new governor will generally have more flexibility in reorienting priorities and directions.

The governor has three important tools in preparing and approving the executive budget. An appropriation request can:

- Send clear signals as to the governor's priorities;
- Provide the resources needed to accomplish those priorities; and
- Provide useful bargaining chips in working with legislators and important stakeholders.

Historically, governors have been able to fund new initiatives and priorities from the annual growth in state revenues. Unfortunately, this option will be extremely limited or unavailable in most states over the next several years. While state revenues will eventually begin to grow, the recovery will be slow, and revenues are not apt to reach pre-recession levels for several years. In addition, federal mandates and/or matching requirements or grant conditions (especially in big ticket areas such as health care and education) will require the commitment of much of the available growth.

Possibly the most critical step—particularly in the current financial climate—is to begin with an accurate assessment of likely state revenues during the upcoming budget cycle. In many states, the revenue estimating process relies heavily on outside economic expertise and/or a joint effort of the executive and legislative branches. Unfortunately, critical data may not be made public during the campaign, and incoming governors may face challenges greater than they anticipate.

Forecasters, for the past several years, have been largely unsuccessful in projecting the impact of the economic recession on state revenues. Generally speaking, actual revenues have continued to decline further and faster than predicted. There are signs that this situation is beginning to stabilize and that forecasts are likely to become more reliable. However, for fiscal year 2011 and for several years to come, revenue projections may need special attention.

The development of the budget is a complex task. Fortunately, in most states the professional budget staff will likely be available to help you consider your options; you also may want to call upon legislative staff and other fiscal and program experts to help you in this complex process. If possible, you may want to make an early decision on who will become your budget director so that he or she can be actively engaged in the process.

As noted above, it is likely that any resources needed to fund your own priorities will have to come through reductions in other programs. Under these conditions, the governor can consider a number of options to minimize uncontrolled growth and to develop public support for more creative strategies.

The process might easily begin with asking a single question each time the governor is told that any expenditure is mandatory. That question is: Why? Department and agency heads should be expected to provide clear documentation for any mandatory request. In many cases what may initially appear

to be mandates may prove to not be so. In addition, at least some mandatory expenditures may be well meaning attempts to respond to or avoid potential federal audit exceptions or criticisms. In some cases, the costs of preventive activities may well exceed any potential losses or benefits.

Perhaps the easiest approach focuses attention on improving the economy and efficiency of existing programs. Toward these ends, governors have used a variety of tools, including:

- ***Enterprise Solutions***—initiatives designed to breakdown the silos in administrative or management systems in order to reduce duplication or obtain savings through economies of scale;
- ***Government Reorganization***—efforts to reduce duplication and/or overhead costs through the elimination or consolidation of administrative structures;
- ***Economy and Efficiency Reviews***—comprehensive reviews of government operations, often with private sector involvement to identify opportunities for savings;
- ***Reduction of Fraud and Abuse***—focused efforts to identify and eliminate fraud and abuse in government programs, with a major emphasis on medical payments and program eligibility;
- ***Shared Services***—opportunities to reduce costs by identifying cross agency and cross jurisdiction opportunities to share services; and
- ***Employee Involvement/Empowerment***—agency or government wide initiatives that focus internal attention on potential improvements.

A second approach is to begin a formal process of evaluating and prioritizing the services that are provided or funded by state government. In many states, the focus has been on across the board expenditure reductions rather than on a more targeted approach to reduce or eliminate programs. A formal process of articulating goals and priorities and then evaluating programs and services according to their ability to help achieve those goals and priorities can be a powerful tool in helping legislators and the public reach a rational decision on what programs may no longer be justifiable in terms of existing resource limitations.

The third approach lies in a conscious effort to redefine the scorecard; to try to focus public and stakeholder attention on outcomes rather than on inputs. Like a review of expenditure priorities, this begins with an effort to articulate clear goals and objectives for major programs and expenditure areas. It includes the development of a set of simple measures to evaluate progress toward those goals and a willingness to modify programs and strategies that do not appear to be working. Because of the complexity of state government, it will often be most productive to limit this effort, at least initially, to a small number of programs or objectives.

All efforts to reduce or reallocate government resources likely will come with a political cost. As a result, one of the most important decisions that a governor must make is whether those costs are acceptable. It does not make sense to expend very limited political capital on initiatives that will have little fiscal or program impact.

Using the Bully Pulpit

“Don’t allow yourself to just respond to requests for speeches and for speech topics; use speeches to focus on your priorities.”

“You’re not ready to talk if you don’t have your message reduced to a simple sentence. Remember you have 11 seconds to say your message, and the headline or sound bite will be seven words or less. Rat poison is 97 percent inert ingredients, and only the 3 percent active ingredients kill the rat. Get your message down to 3 percent before the news conference.”

Governors are in an ideal position to communicate their concerns and priorities to a wide range of audiences. The so-called “bully pulpit” can encompass a range of formal and informal tools. The formal tools include official communications such as the state-of-the-state message and the budget message as well as official testimony before the state legislature. The less formal tools include meetings with key stakeholders, press conferences and press releases, appearances and speeches, the governor’s website, and correspondence and constituent services.

There are at least two important components in considering the use of the “bully pulpit”: defining the message and creating a strategic approach.

There will be numerous opportunities during the transition and the first few weeks in office to make use of the bully pulpit. It is important that you craft a simple and easily understood message concerning the priorities and objectives of your administration. For most people, your priorities will be translated into a one- or two-sentence “elevator message” that can be delivered during a short ride between floors. You will need to reinforce this message personally on a regular basis and to make sure it is understood and communicated by your staff and those that you will appoint to lead state departments and agencies. It must be understood and reinforced regularly by anyone speaking on your behalf and must be widely shared and accepted by your potential appointees.

In addition to appearances and interviews that will take place throughout the transition, you will have three separate opportunities to formally communicate your message during the first few weeks in office. The first opportunity will be your inaugural address. The second, in most states, will be a state of the state address or a formal transmittal of your legislative agenda. The third will be your budget message.

The biggest challenge you likely will face is not wordsmithing the message, but resisting the relentless pressure to cover every issue of concern to any significant interest group or stakeholder.

In most cases, the governor's priorities will define the message. However, it is equally important to focus on creating a strategic approach to communicating that message. The governor's schedule can provide a powerful tool as governors are almost always welcome to speak at almost any gathering. Similarly, the governor usually has considerable flexibility as to what he or she will emphasize during a speech. Since it is so crucial to use the governor's time wisely, the scheduling team often will involve several members of the governor's senior staff, including the chief of staff, the communications director and others in scheduling deliberations.

The bully pulpit also provides a powerful educational tool. The governor can play a critical role in reshaping public expectations about the role of government and the capacity to make large changes quickly. This may require a real effort toward toning down the rhetoric and improving public awareness of the actual role of state government and the choices that will be faced in times of fiscal retrenchment. In too many instances programs "fail" not because they fail to do good, but because they cannot meet the promised result. Similarly, we tend to preserve current programs and services with little attention to their actual outcomes. If governors are to alter priorities, the bully pulpit needs to be used to educate the public about the shortcomings and failures in existing programs as well as celebrate successes and advocate for needed changes.

The governor also can play a major role in creating public awareness and in engaging the public in addressing critical issues such as conservation, childhood obesity, reducing drug abuse and smoking, etc.

Organizing, Staffing and Operating the Governor's Office

“[Having the] right people in the right places is the first rule of government. A good staff doesn't make a governor; bad staff can break one.”

The governor's office is a powerful force in providing support to the governor as he or she leads and manages state government. Operational efficiency and effectiveness in the governor's office are critical for the successful direction of the executive branch of government and the successful accomplishment of the governor's agenda. The staffing, organization, and operation of the governor's office should be consistent with the governor's preferences and management style.

Preserving Management Capacity

While the functions performed within a governor's office tend to be similar across the states, the size of the governor's staff varies greatly from fewer than 20 to over 200. Some governors may be able to supplement their office staff with staff members delegated or on loan from other state departments and agencies. While it may be tempting to make reductions in your staff to demonstrate your commitment to economy in government, this is probably not a good idea. Generally, governors have already reduced their staff at a time when demands have increased. Politically, it will be difficult to restore staff even if the state's fiscal conditions improve.

In making comparisons among states, it is important to recognize that some of the larger offices include functions such as budget and planning that may be assigned to separate agencies in other states, and that many governors' offices include staffs assigned to project implementation or high priority initiatives.

Structural Options

NGA has identified two extremes from reviewing the organization and staffing models of governors' offices: a hierarchical approach where all staff members report to the governor through a chief of staff or deputy governor, and a "spokes of the wheel" model where most senior staff members report directly to the governor. While the hierarchical model is most common, many states combine the two with a hybrid approach where a few senior staff members reporting directly to the governor while the majority report through the chief of staff or deputy governor.

Major Functions

As governor, you will have the opportunity to appoint a number of staff members to assist you in your duties. The basic functions of the governor's office are similar in all states. They generally include:

- Legal counsel;
- Policy development;
- Agency oversight;
- Legislative liaison;
- Media relations;
- Constituent services;
- Appointments; and
- Scheduling.

Skills, Knowledge and Abilities

The organization and staffing of the governor's office illustrates the magnitude of the transition from campaigning to governing. There are a couple of elements that likely will require your attention. First, recognize that the skills needed within your office often will be different from those required in the campaign. This is particularly true as it relates to the leadership and management of state departments and agencies. While you need individuals you trust, you also need individuals with significant management skills and in-depth knowledge of state government. For more information on this topic, see the discussion of the role of your chief of staff in Chapter One. Second, as the transition progresses authority and responsibility will migrate from the transition staff to those individuals who will become your office staff.

Every member of your new staff will play a crucial role in the success of your new administration. When filling these positions, some important decisions you or your chief of staff will need to make include:

- The key functions of the governor's office;
- The roles and responsibilities of your individual staff members; and
- Your expectations and definitions of success.

NGA suggests that, in addition to broad substantive knowledge, governor's staff members should have a strong capacity for analyzing problems, expressing themselves well on paper and in person, working well as a team, and following the leadership of the governor. NGA also suggests that the following traits may be of value:

- Self-confidence;
- Humility;
- Political sensitivity; and
- Accessibility.

As in the case of other appointees, you will want to insist that your staff members undergo a screening process that will serve to uncover potential ethical issues or conflicts in the backgrounds of potential employees. In most states both the governor-elect and the governor will have access to an official agency that can do formal background checks. However, these formal checks will need to be supplemented by careful reference checks and detailed pre-appointment interviews. Experience in numerous states suggests that these screening tools need to be applied to ALL appointees. Without a thorough vetting process, a governor can be embarrassed by newly discovered issues that surface about individuals they have known or who have been in the public eye for years.

Defining a Management Style

As governor-elect, it will be useful to take some time to reflect on your management style and to communicate this to your new team. Every governor has a management style. Governors' management styles vary considerably.

Some governors prefer to interact with a number of senior advisors on a largely ad hoc basis. Others prefer to rely on their chief of staff to coordinate the flow of advice and information. Some governors like to receive information orally and to make decisions in meetings and other settings. Other governors prefer written briefings and decision memos and prefer to make decisions in a more private setting. There is no best answer. The challenge is to be clear and consistent.

Management style includes a variety of factors. For example, how do you like to get information? Do you prefer background papers, decision memos, staff briefings, inclusive discussions or one-on-one meetings? Or, how do you like to make decisions? Are you comfortable making on-the-spot decisions on major issues or do you prefer to consider those decisions more privately? Whose input is important to you? Do you use email and are you comfortable with it as a policy making or management tool? Do you prefer to interact with numerous staff members or do you prefer that you interact with a small group of senior advisors or that your chief of staff manages the flow of information needed to present and evaluate decisions?

Governors also vary considerably as to the level of detail with which they wish to be involved. Some prefer to deal almost exclusively with “big picture” items while others may want to get involved in the details of program design or implementation. For most governors, the level of involvement may vary from issue to issue depending on importance, expertise and interest.

As in the case of governor’s office size, the number of appointees reporting to the governor can vary greatly. In some states the number of department and agency heads is in the teens. In a few states more than 75 heads report to the governor. Governors have numerous options in interacting with their appointees who are running departments and agencies. In some states, the governor relies on these appointees almost exclusively and interacts with them individually as needed. In other states, the governor relies on his or her staff to monitor agency activities on an ongoing basis. The governor’s willingness to address and define the nature of this interaction may be critical to his or her success and the success of his/her appointees. Some questions to consider include: What is their role in the policy making process? What types of issues do you expect them to bring to your office? How will you hold them accountable? How will you create a team? Will you have a kitchen cabinet? How will they interact with your staff and/or other department and agency heads?

While your answer to these questions will vary from time to time and even from appointee to appointee, they provide the basic framework for creating your policy and management team.

Most agency appointees eventually will express their frustration concerning their dealings with the governor’s office. These frustrations often relate to three specific issues. First, many appointees resent the fact that they lack regular access to the governor. Second, many complain about the lack of feedback from the governor’s office. Third, many also complain about the variety of individuals who seem to speak for the governor in demanding information or providing direction.

The Decision-Making Process

There is a tendency to view every issue that comes to the governor’s office as critical. Often this is accompanied by an effort to get your decision or input on a real time basis. Staff will request just “one more minute” at the end of a formal meeting or confront you in the hallway or while you are traveling to events. And in today’s electronic age, you may be bombarded by emails asking for decisions or directions.

Experience suggests that this informal and unstructured process can often lead to bad decisions. This is particularly true when you interact freely with specialized staff members who may have a limited context within which to present their recommendations. As a result, many governors have opted to create a more formal decision-making process. In general this process is designed to ensure that you have input from all relevant parties before you

are asked to make a decision. Often this process is coordinated by the chief of staff. In other cases staff specialists in areas like scheduling, legislative relations, policy and state operations may be charged with ensuring completed staff work in their own areas. In almost every case, the chief will have to be included in this vetting process.

Experience also suggests that only you can effectively enforce the process that you select. In many cases you will need to force well meaning staff to return to the agreed upon procedure.

Transparency

As governor much of what you, your staff and your appointees do will be subject to public disclosure. Most states have statutes that deal with freedom of information requests or other “sunshine” requirements. In some states the internal communications between you and your staff may be protected. In some states these protections also may extend to communications between you and the individuals you have appointed to head departments and agencies. Some states also have detailed guidelines regarding the preservation of public records. It is critical that your staff research and understand whatever may be the requirements in your state. It also is critical that these requirements be regularly communicated to your staff.

Your staff will need to pay particular attention to requirements relating to telephone logs and electronic media such as email and texting. Some states distinguish between calls and emails on public equipment and those made on personal equipment. Others do not and insist that any communications relating to government business be made public.

As a matter of good public policy and as sound practice, you will want to make certain that your staff understand the appropriate use of electronic communications and the need to limit the use of state facilities to state business. The failure to understand and adhere to these policies has resulted in embarrassment, dismissal, and even criminal charges.

Recruiting, Screening and Selecting Department and Agency Appointments

“In campaigning, you seek people. In governing, they seek you. The demands for access and jobs and adjustment in relationships with political supporters need a discriminating hand.”

It is important to develop a strategy for recruitment that ensures a diverse pool of candidates and a screening process that will help you select the right individuals for the positions that need to be filled. All governors should make staffing the governor’s office, cabinet, and agencies a personal and administration priority. However, not all positions are equally important and you may want to focus time and attention on those that will be most critical during the early days of your administration.

The Recruitment Process

Next to your personal staff, the second most important task during the transition is the selection of the individuals you will name to manage the departments and agencies that are under your control. Your transition process will need to address a number of related issues:

- Which current appointees, if any, will you retain;
- How will you ensure continuity while appointments are pending;
- What the critical issues are that will confront your agencies and what skills will be needed to effectively address those issues;
- How you will solicit and process candidates for vacant positions;
- Will you look to candidates from outside your state;
- Will you use executive recruiters;
- Who will screen applicants and select a group of finalists;
- Who will interview finalists;
- What process will be used to vet candidates; and
- What information will be made public.

Understand the Job

As your recruitment team begins work it will be helpful if you can provide them with a reasonably detailed understanding of three factors for each major position. Specifically:

- What is important to you;
- How you will measure success; and
- Interactions with you and your staff.

Too often the appointments process fails because of a misunderstanding about the governor's priorities and expectations and the anticipated interaction between the appointee and the governor's staff. Loyalty should be a given, but it will benefit from a clear understanding of who has decision-making authority and when and how the appointee is expected to both "tell the truth" and "salute." Ethics requirements and disclosure expectations also need to be made clear.

Because of the complexity of most state departments and agencies, it also may be helpful for you to make sure that your personnel team recognizes the need to ensure your agency teams have the range of skills needed for success. Your team will need a leader, a manager and a navigator. The first two are probably self-explanatory and often may be found without reference to a candidate's experience in state government. The third requires an individual with a clear understanding of the mission, environment, and operational capacity of state government, often of a specific agency. In rare instances one candidate may combine all of these skills. It is more likely, however, that you will need to create a team of two or more that will incorporate all the necessary skills.

As with your personal staff, there will likely be a long list of your campaign staff and supporters who will seek appointments in departments and agencies. It is critical to recognize that, in most cases, the individuals you select for these positions will be expected to manage large and complex bureaucracies, provide advice on complex policy issues, and become the public face of your administration. The success of these appointees may well determine the success of your administration.

Collecting and Managing Applications

Increasingly, transition teams are relying on the Internet as the preferred mechanism for collecting résumés from potential appointees. This public solicitation of candidates is usually supplemented by input from the political establishment and from a variety of stakeholders. In addition, some governors-elect will task department or subject matter teams with the responsibility of identifying and screening candidates. Others may create a separate team that focuses solely on the appointment process.

As part of your transition you will create a process to receive and review job applications and to screen and recommend potential appointees. You will want to make certain that your transition staff creates a system that has the capacity to handle the huge volume of requests that you will receive. Whether qualified or not, applicants will initially judge your administration based on the way in which their applications are handled. For management purposes you will need an effective system to track and evaluate applications. For political purposes you will want a system that acknowledges their receipt and provides some follow-up once a decision is made.

Background Checks

Many states have made provisions for criminal records and other background checks to be conducted by the state police. Most states also require that appointees complete a detailed financial disclosure form. The application and the interview process should focus on identifying any potential conflicts of interest or potentially embarrassing elements in the candidate's background. Recent experience suggests that it is important that the screening process be applied with equal vigor to all candidates, even those who are public figures or well known to you or your staff. This probably should also apply to any reappointments.

Selection Process

While most governors will delegate much of the selection process, most will want to interview one or more of the candidates for a high level position. If available, other members of the governor's senior staff may want to be involved in the interview process for major positions. In many cases, the governor-elect will delegate decisions on less critical positions to his or her chief of staff.

You also will need to determine the degree to which your designated department and agency heads will be involved in the recruitment and selection of their agency leadership teams. While the active involvement of the governor's office may work to ensure loyalty to the governor, too much involvement may undercut the ability of the department or agency head to actually manage his or her organizations. Most transitions will tend to treat these appointments as joint decisions with both parties having an important voice in the process.

When legislative confirmation of appointments is required, you may want to provide an opportunity for key legislative players to contribute to the evaluation of potential candidates.

Appointment Announcements

Some governor's elect choose to announce appointments in groups. Others will announce individual appointments as they are decided. These appointments provide an opportunity to reinforce your priorities and communicate them to the public and key stakeholders. You also will want to work with your transition team and media staff to establish clear guidelines on how information about potential candidates and actual appointments will be made public. In many cases, the media's desire for transparency may make it difficult for some candidates.

Emergency Management and Preparing for the Unexpected

As noted above, the most frequent advice provided by incumbent governors at the Seminar for New Governors relates to the selection of your chief of staff. The second most frequent relates to emergency preparedness. An unexpected emergency can happen at any time, even on inauguration day. In fact, some newly installed governors have faced serious crisis situations within hours and days of taking office. While hurricanes may provide a few days to prepare, other emergencies like earthquakes, flash floods, tornados and manmade disasters may come without any warning. As a result it is absolutely critical that you and your staff be intimately familiar with your state's disaster plans—and the roles that you will be required to play—well before you formally take office.

It is a good investment of time for you and your senior staff to take a few hours to meet the state officials who are responsible for emergency preparedness and to be briefed on the state's emergency management plan. It is a good idea for your counsel-designate to obtain copies of any executive orders or emergency declarations that you may need.

While you and your chief of staff will have important roles to play during an emergency, it is crucial to make certain that your staff members clearly understand their roles and do not supplant the responsibilities of the state agencies and officials who are charged with coordinating the operational response. On a personal level, you likely will be expected to play the role of chief communicator and may be called upon to ensure that bureaucratic and intergovernmental barriers are quickly addressed and resolved. In order to do either role effectively, you will need accurate and up-to-date information. In that regard, it is important to check the facts before responding to media accounts. Many former governors recommend that in a crisis situation, the governor should personally appear at the designated emergency response headquarters in or-

der to demonstrate both personal concern and to ensure that the needed inter-agency and intergovernmental cooperation is taking place.

Most former governors also recommend visiting a disaster area as soon as possible.

Finally, it is helpful to recognize that the state role in disasters generally encompasses three distinct stages: preparation, response, and recovery. In most cases the recovery period will be extensive, and you and your staff may need to play a major role to see that this period receives the attention and resources needed to ensure a successful recovery.

The NGA Center for Best Practices offers numerous publications and other technical assistance to help you and your advisors prepare for and respond to an emergency. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security also will reach out to you during your transition. In addition, the NGA publication, *Lessons Learned from Hurricane Katrina*, can provide you with an emergency management perspective from a governor's office.

When formulating your response plan for natural disasters and other emergencies, it is important to prepare for the unexpected. A few points to keep in mind:

- It can happen at any time;
- Identify and prepare staff;
- Establish the difference between emergency operations and governor's office involvement; and
- Be clear about the governor's roles:
 - Chief communicator; and
 - Decisionmaker/expeditor.

Conclusion

“I’d have to say that being governor was one of the most rewarding times of my life. The challenges were unending, and it seemed as though time was at a constant premium. Yet I survived the governorship—I hope the governorship survived me. I personally received tremendous satisfaction from leading our state through difficult times.”

You will face numerous challenges during the transition. As noted above, daunting as they may be, they are ultimately survivable. More importantly, they lay the groundwork that will allow you to better serve the people of your state and to accomplish the objectives that led you to run for office. While all of the decisions and tasks discussed in this publication deserve your attention, some of the most critical lessons are summarized below.

Critical Lessons for Governors-Elect

- For the transition:
 - Define the framework;
 - Identify and rely on your transition team;
 - Delegate the routine;
 - Prioritize your involvement; and
 - Manage your schedule.
- For your administration:
 - Remember why you ran—focus on your priorities; and
 - Maintain a balanced perspective;
 - You need to be healthy and happy;
 - You need to continue to involve and support your family;
 - You can’t do everything—you have to delegate;
 - Not everything is important;

- You can only have one highest priority; and
 - Listen to and evaluate the clamor—judge for yourself.
- Almost everything can be fixed so long as you are willing to admit it is broken; and
- This is the beginning, not the end.



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