

# **Gubernatorial Succession Impacts Largest States**

## **Lt. Governors Ascend Seventeen Times this Decade**

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Seventeen lieutenant governors and officials second-in-command have succeeded to governor since 2000, according to the National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA). Nearly half of the nation's ten largest states and both of the nation's major parties are now led by former lieutenant governors.

"In less than a year, two of the five largest states by population have seen a gubernatorial succession," said NLGA Executive Director Julia Hurst. New York Gov. David Paterson succeeded in March of 2008 and Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn succeeded last week.

"Four of the country's largest states by population have governors who first served as lieutenant governor," said Hurst. These include Texas, New York, Illinois, and North Carolina. "In addition, the past week found former lieutenant governors at the helm of both the Democratic and the Republican National Committees in the person of Gov. Tim Kaine and former Lt. Gov. Michael Steele, respectively."

According to NLGA, seventeen gubernatorial successions occurred since 2000, as follows: Missouri (Oct. 2000), Texas (Dec. 2000), Delaware (Jan. 2001), Wisconsin (Jan. 2001), New Jersey (Jan. 2001), Massachusetts (Apr. 2001), Pennsylvania (Oct. 2001), New Jersey (2002- 2003 – Five-governors-in-Seven-days successions), Indiana (Sept. 2003), Utah (Nov. 2003), Connecticut (Jul. 2004), New Jersey (Nov. 2004), Nebraska (Jan. 2005), Idaho (May 2006), New York (Mar. 2008), Arizona (Jan 2009), and Illinois (Jan 2009). Fourteen successions were due to resignation, two were due to death, and one was due to impeachment. The U.S. territory of American Samoa also had a gubernatorial succession in April of 2003 due to death.

"A lieutenant governor or official first in line of succession may become governor through succession or by being elected governor," said Hurst. "Two studies from 2006 show that from 1980 – 2006, one in every four governors in office first served as lieutenant governor. Likewise, the occupants of the office of lieutenant governor or first in succession become governor at a greater rate than any local, state or federal official."

Nine current governors first served as lieutenant governors. These include the governors of Nebraska, Arizona, New York, North Carolina, Connecticut, Illinois, Kentucky, Texas, and Virginia. "This decade demonstrates the office of lieutenant governor is a vital office with an occupant who plays a critical daily and long-range role in state government," said Hurst. Five of these current governors served on the NLGA Executive Committee and/or as a NLGA meeting host.