

# Office of Lieutenant Governor: Unheralded but Critical Leadership

By Julia Hurst

*Occupants of the office of lieutenant governor provide unheralded but critical leadership, as demonstrated across the past decade. This often overlooked office steadily performs its function, providing quiet, stable leadership, even in times of crisis. From the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks through the Great Recession, lieutenant governors led at critical junctures both individually and through use of their collective voice. Events demonstrate this office continues to grow in its critical leadership role in states and territories.*

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## Introduction

The 2000s were a transformational decade of “100-megaton events” that reshaped the U.S. physically and psychologically, according to Barry Horstman of *The Cincinnati Enquirer*. He notes terrorist attacks, two wars, \$4-a-gallon gas, a tanking economy, the 2000 presidential election resolved not by voters but by the U.S. Supreme Court, the disintegration of the space shuttle Columbia during re-entry, the Virginia Tech massacre, worries from Y2K to H1N1, global warming, Katrina and other natural disasters of massive scope here and abroad. Amidst a decade of nation-changing events, every event had as a core underpinning the participation and quiet leadership of a lieutenant governor.

## Elections

To start the decade, the 2000 presidential election contest between Texas Gov. George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore resulted in a month of uncertainty about the succession of the nation’s top elected leader in the country known as the seat of world democracy. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately resolved the dispute, but the enormity of this election issue resulted in an intensive review of elections process in nearly every state and territory. In seven states and territories, the same official serves as head of elections and first in line of gubernatorial succession.

By law, the lieutenant governors of Alaska and Utah oversee elections. By gubernatorial appointment, New Jersey Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno will serve dually as secretary of state certifying elections. In Arizona, Oregon, Wyoming and Puerto Rico, the secretaries of state oversee elections and serve as first in line of gubernatorial succession, i.e. serve as lieutenant governor. Still other lieutenant governors have shaped the futures of international

elections this decade. Former Colorado Lt. Gov. Jane Norton served on the board of directors of the International Foundation for Election Systems in 2003–04, contributing leadership to efforts to assist Afghanistan as it prepared for its first free presidential elections.

In March 2008, Former Utah Lt. Gov. Gary Herbert, who later became governor by succession, and former Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury led all the nation’s lieutenant governors in adding voice to national debate on elections. The members of the National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA) unanimously endorsed the Rotating Regional Presidential Primaries plan. Lieutenant governors collectively stated they endorsed a Regional Primary concept designed to ensure each state and region of the nation has an opportunity to influence presidential primaries and to prevent the front loading of the national primary system.

## Technology

Horstman also noted with irony that the decade which began with unfounded Y2K worries about a massive computer crash ended with technological advances of unprecedented scale. YouTube, iPods, Facebook, Twitter, BlackBerrys and high-def TV are fixtures of daily life in 2010. The decade’s explosive leapfrog of technology had enormous impact for both state government and the policies its officials set or promote. Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy chairs the state Information Technology Commission overseeing technology investments in government, education, health care and more. Connecticut Lt. Gov. Michael Fedele is co-chair of the Judicial Information Technology System task force and part of the Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) Initiative.

## LIEUTENANT GOVERNORS

With leadership from Kentucky Lt. Gov. Daniel Mongiardo, a physician, NLGA members have taken a collective position in support of health information technology systems. Former Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn, who later became governor by succession, sponsored an NLGA-passed resolution to bridge the digital divide in bringing broadband to rural and remote areas. Missouri Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder chaired that state's Rural High-Speed Internet Task Force, while more than a half-dozen lieutenant governors submitted testimony to the Federal Communications Commission in 2009 as part of the FCC work to devise a 2010 strategy to deploy broadband.

### Homeland Security and Defense

A defining moment of American history occurred on Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorist attacks destroyed the World Trade Center and damaged the Pentagon. On that day, the words "homeland security" entered the nation's daily lexicon and states were faced with yet another significant, immediate leadership and policy need. Emergency plans for leadership succession, which had become often overlooked, now became a critical state management item. The one shared duty of every lieutenant governor is to become governor should a vacancy in the office occur. Lieutenant governors are called on to lead daily, always preparing for tomorrow, to provide a seamless transition in time of need, often during a crisis.

The office of lieutenant governor itself is a critical element of homeland security emergency management planning. Many governors and states tapped this official to take the lead on homeland security issues. Iowa Lt. Gov. Patty Judge and Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy are their state's respective homeland security directors. The lieutenant governors of Indiana, Utah and Vermont were named chair of their state's respective homeland security or counterterrorism commissions.

The terrorist attack on the United States led to wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Maryland Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown and Guam Lt. Gov. Michael Cruz are Bronze Star recipients for service in the conflicts. On April 3, 2003, days after the U.S. entered Iraq, lieutenant governors were the first group of state officials to pass a resolution in support of the men and women of the armed forces. Lieutenant governors continue in leadership support of the military. Initiated by Quinn of Illinois, NLGA was the first association of its type to endorse and urge states to pass military family relief funds.

The Congressional Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process of 2005 saw more than a half-dozen lieutenant governors tapped to lead state efforts to retain bases. North Carolina Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, later elected governor, established the state Military Foundation, a public-private-military sector effort to bolster the state's military economy. Brown enters this decade leading Maryland's preparation for the influx of military, which will occur as a result of BRAC.

### Energy

A Northeast power blackout on Aug. 14, 2003, left 50 million people in eight states and two Canadian provinces in the dark and cost \$6 billion, according to the state Energy Infrastructure Special Task Force, chaired by Quinn. The early part of the decade also saw a Western U.S. energy crisis and an emergency order and rolling blackouts in California. People also suffered as gasoline prices spiraled up to \$4 a gallon in 2008. Again, lieutenant governors provided underlying leadership, bringing both some stability and daily and long-term planning on the decade's most challenging issues.

Alaska Lt. Gov. Sean Parnell was the chief negotiator and spokesman regarding the establishment of a gasoline pipeline, which had potential to impact not only his state, but also the lower 48. Lieutenant governors also contributed to implementing energy conservation programs and the production of renewable energy. Kansas Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson, who later became governor through succession, chaired the state's Wind Working Group. As governor, he noted the state beat the goal of 10 percent renewable energy by 2010. Kansas has continued building additional wind farms and Parkinson brokered an end to a two-year stalemate over construction of a new coal-fired power plant. Wisconsin Lt. Gov. Barbara Lawton led a series of proposals in a Green Economy Agenda, which included the Energy Star tax holiday legislation and the Energy Star School Challenge, as well as leading passage of a 2004 NLGA resolution on energy. Likewise, Nevada Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki leads energy efforts as a member of the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Task Force and as Economic Development Task Force Commission Chair.

### Aerospace

The disintegration of the space shuttle Columbia during re-entry on Feb. 1, 2003, caused Americans to look heavenward. America's status as a world space leader and a significant engine of the nation's

economy seemed in crisis. The auto and aerospace industries are the spines of American manufacturing. As far back as 1989, the nation's lieutenant governors publicly recognized the vital role of aerospace to the states' economies. From then until now, dozens of lieutenant governors have assumed leadership mantles within the aerospace industries.

Lieutenant governors in Oklahoma and Colorado have long-standing roles as leaders in annual state aerospace conventions. Vermont Lt. Gov. Brian Dubie helped found his state's Aerospace and Aviation Association. Florida Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp is chairman of the board of Space Florida, while Hawaii Lt. Gov. James "Duke" Aiona spearheads a myriad of state aerospace and robotics efforts. More than a half-dozen current and former lieutenant governors from New Mexico, Florida and Virginia have actively supported spaceports. Through NLGA, lieutenant governors have passed bipartisan resolutions noting aerospace as an economic development engine, supporting NASA and various objectives, and resolving to assist in helping the U.S. remain the world's leader in space development.

### **Disaster Response and Emergency Preparedness**

Hurricane Katrina slammed into New Orleans in August 2005, causing massive levee failures and flooding approximately 80 percent of the city. In Mississippi, CBS News reported that officials calculated 90 percent of the structures within half a mile of the Gulf coastline were completely destroyed. Effects also were felt in Alabama and Florida. More than 1,800 people lost their lives in the hurricane and subsequent floods, and damage estimates exceeded \$100 billion.

Louisiana Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu is a member of the Unified Command Group in the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and has served as a key member of this leadership group during four major hurricanes. Statutorily charged to be head of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Landrieu engaged in activities to help restore New Orleans' tourism base. He oversaw the Hurricane Recovery Grants for Historic Properties program, which processed 2,000 applications in just 45 days without controversy.

In June 2008, storms caused hundreds of square miles in Iowa to flood, impacting a third of the state and generating an economic toll in excess of \$5 billion. Iowa Lt. Gov. Patty Judge, who serves

as the state's Homeland Security director, is in charge of flood recovery efforts. On Sept. 29, 2009, an earthquake triggered a tsunami in American Samoa. Lt. Gov. Aito Sunia led initial recovery efforts as acting governor while the governor was out of the state.

In addition to homeland security and disaster recovery roles, lieutenant governors work on emergency preparedness, which have taken on new importance in the past decade. The Rhode Island lieutenant governor is statutorily the chair of the Emergency Management Planning commission, a similar role held by the Pennsylvania lieutenant governor. In these various roles, lieutenant governors have lent important leadership to government planning and response to bird flu, H1N1 and pandemic planning.

### **Crisis Leadership**

Many lieutenant governors automatically become acting governor when a governor leaves the state. Still others assume the post under a variety of crisis circumstances, and others as necessary. On April 16, 2007, Virginia Tech suffered the deadliest shooting rampage in U.S. history when 33 people were killed by a lone gunman. The governor was out of the country, and Virginia Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling led early and immediate state government response. On Aug. 1, 2007, the I-35W bridge in Minnesota collapsed during rush hour, killing 13 people and injuring 145. Seventy-five local, state and federal agencies were involved in the three week rescue and recovery effort. Lt. Gov. Carol Molnau led response efforts in her role as Transportation Department commissioner. Her appointment to that role was made by the governor, but legislatures can act statutorily to place a lieutenant governor in a role of departmental leader.

### **Economic Development and Recovery**

The nation ended the decade with a recession marked by, among other things, a mortgage and housing collapse, bank failures, rising unemployment and a drop in international trade. Lieutenant governors in several states led efforts to keep residents in their homes as foreclosure rates spiraled in the country. Massachusetts Lt. Gov. Tim Murray is chair of the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness, while Florida Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp chaired the Governor's Home Ownership Council. Former Delaware Lt. Gov. John Carney chaired a foreclosure council and Montana Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger chairs a Homelessness Council, while

## LIEUTENANT GOVERNORS

Missouri Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder sits on the state housing commission.

Lieutenant governors play significant economic development roles across the country. Two Ohio lieutenant governors this decade were Development Department directors, while the lieutenant governors of Louisiana and Nevada lead tourism efforts in their states. North Dakota Lt. Gov. Jack Dalrymple serves as chair of the state's International Trade Commission. During his November 2009 investment mission, Michigan Lt. Gov. John Cherry secured a deal to locate an Israeli water technology company in the state. The Washington lieutenant governor is statutorily chair of the joint Legislative Committee on Economic Development and International Relations. In 2010, Bolling in Virginia begins his role as chief job creation officer for the governor, and Guadagno will head the Partnership for Action, a new economic development group in New Jersey. The U.S. Agency for International Development is in partnership with NLGA to engage lieutenant governors in economic development relations with officials in Mexico.

### Personal Initiative

The daily role of a lieutenant governor permits transformative leadership through personal initiative and action as well. More than half the NLGA membership preside over state senates. In North Carolina, former Lt. Gov. Perdue's tie-breaking vote created a North Carolina state lottery. In the summer of 2009, a New York gubernatorial succession left the office of lieutenant governor vacant. The absence of the tie-breaking vote of that official ultimately led to a 31-day senate shutdown caused by a tie-vote stalemate on leadership. Arkansas Lt. Gov. Bill Halter championed passage of legislation allowing voters to create a state lottery funding college scholarship. The office of lieutenant governor itself saw another transformation as New Jersey passed a constitutional amendment creating the office for the first time in history, electing its first as the decade closed.

### Gubernatorial Succession

Twenty gubernatorial successions occurred during the past 10 years. At the end of the decade, the majority of the nation's largest states were led by former lieutenant governors. Five lieutenant governors succeeded in 2009 alone. Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn and Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer both succeeded in January of 2009, while Kansas Gov. Mark Parkinson succeeded on April 29, 2009,

Alaska Gov. Sean Parnell succeeded on July 26, 2009, and Utah Gov. Gary Herbert succeeded on Aug. 11, 2009. Two more gubernatorial successions were possible in 2009 as the New Mexico governor was considered, but later withdrew, for a presidential cabinet post and when the South Carolina legislature considered impeaching its governor.

### Conclusion

As a new decade dawns, history demonstrates the office of lieutenant governor, by its very nature, will continue to be an office of state government that is what it was designed to be, an essential daily and long-term post. The terrorist attacks at the start of decade and the economic meltdown near its end left people in need of reassurance. Lieutenant governors provide unheralded but critical leadership in an essential state office.

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### References

Barry Horstman, "Decade of Disruption," *Cincinnati/Kentucky Enquirer*, (December 25, 2009).

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### About the Author

**Julia Hurst** has nearly 20 years of state government experience having served as executive director of the National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA) since 2002. She formerly served as chief operating officer of The Council of State Governments, as chief of staff to a legislative caucus, and spent time as a multi-state lobbyist in fields ranging from health care to telecommunications.