

“LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR MANIA: FROM FIFTH WHEELS TO POWERHOUSES”

Dr. Larry Sabato wrote a July column entitled “Lieutenant Governor Mania: From Fifth Wheels to Powerhouses” noting that people “may not think the candidates for lieutenant governor are worth (one’s) time and attention, but they are.” The Wall Street Journal says Dr. Sabato is “probably the most quoted college professor in the land.”

Twenty (20) gubernatorial successions occurred between 2000 and today, with 29.5% of the nation's governors this decade having served first as lieutenant governor or the official first in line of succession. The majority of the nation’s largest states are led by former lieutenant governors with twelve sitting governors having first served as lieutenant governor. “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 National Lieutenant Governor Association (NLGA) Director Julia Hurst.

“The rate of gubernatorial successions this decade shows an increase in the rate of gubernatorial successions since 1900,” said NLGA Associate Director Morgan Mundell. Utah Governor Gary Herbert is the twentieth (20th) lieutenant governor to succeed to governor since 2000 and the fifth to succeed in 2009 alone. Illinois Governor Pat Quinn and Arizona Governor Jan Brewer both succeeded in January of 2009, while Kansas Governor Mark Parkinson succeeded in April, Alaska Governor Sean Parnell succeeded in July, and Herbert succeeded in August. New York Governor David Paterson succeeded in March of 2008. Four of the five were NLGA Executive Committee members.

Twelve current governors first served as lieutenant governor or first in line of succession. These include the governors of Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. Illinois, New York, and Texas are three of the largest states by population in the United States. Seven of these sitting governors served on the NLGA Executive Committee and/or as a NLGA meeting host.

“Data for more than a century showed an average of one in four governors first served as lieutenant governor or first in line of succession,” said Mundell. NLGA research in 2006 and 1996 showed 25% of the governors and 23% of governors, respectively, had also served as lieutenant governor or first in line of succession.

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