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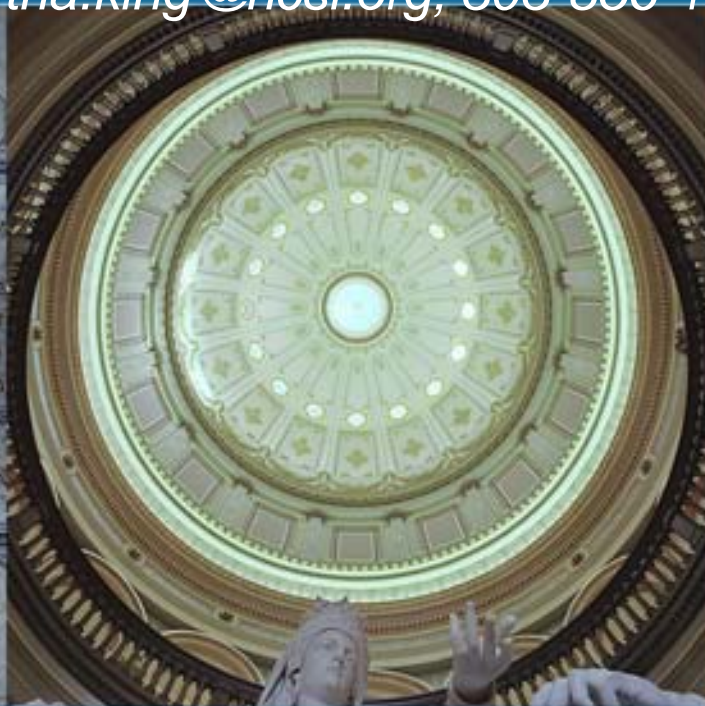
The Forum for America's Ideas

Working with State Legislatures

Prepared for: Keeping Kids Alive Symposium; May 21, 2009

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National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

National membership organization:

- 7,382 legislators
- 3 gazillion legislative staff
- Offices in Denver and Washington, D.C.

Goals:

- To improve the quality & effectiveness of state legislatures
- To promote policy innovation and communication among state legislatures
- To ensure states a strong, cohesive voice in the federal system



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50 Examples of a State Legislature

- **If you've seen one legislature—you've seen one legislature!**
- Variety of different powers, rules, political make-up, etc.
 - California
 - Full-time job, members earn >\$100,000 year
 - Large staff (non-partisan, partisan, personal)
 - Wyoming
 - 40-day general session, 20-day budget session
 - Members earn \$150 day for short time
 - No personal staff; few full-time professional staff



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What does Your State Legislature Look Like?

- 15 states have term limits
- Largest chamber: New Hampshire House--400 members
- Smallest chamber: Alaska Senate--20 members
- Nebraska has the nation's only bicameral, non-partisan legislature



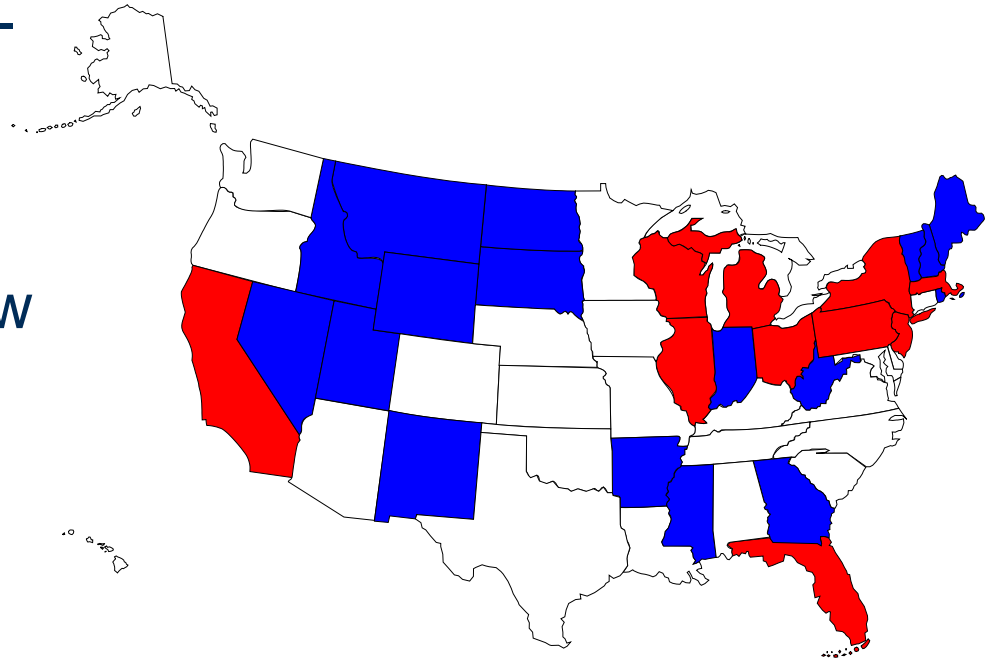
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Red, White and Blue Legislatures

- **RED:** Full-time, well-paid, large staff
- **WHITE:** Hybrid
- **BLUE:** Part-time, low pay, small staff



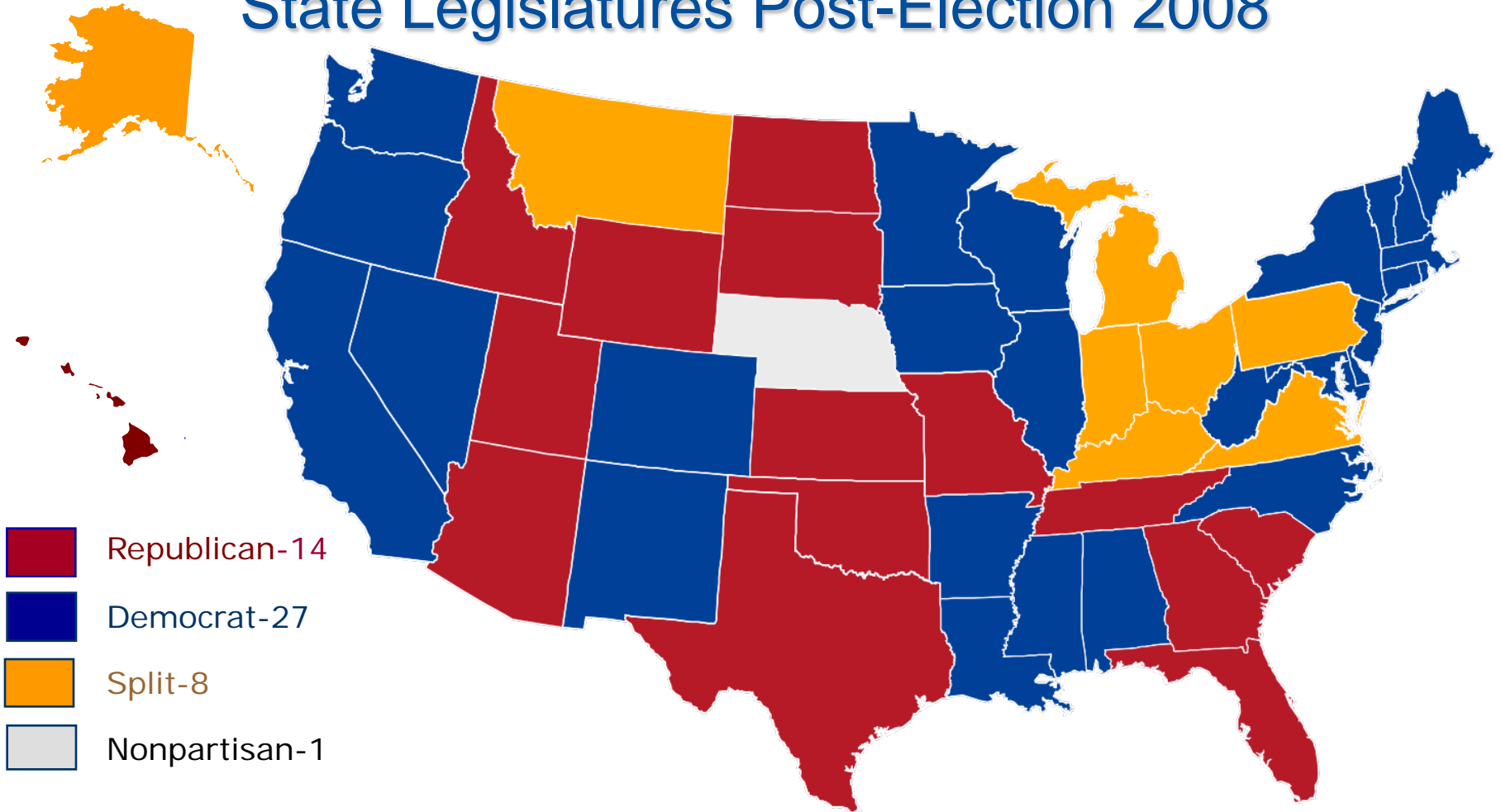


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State Legislatures Post-Election 2008



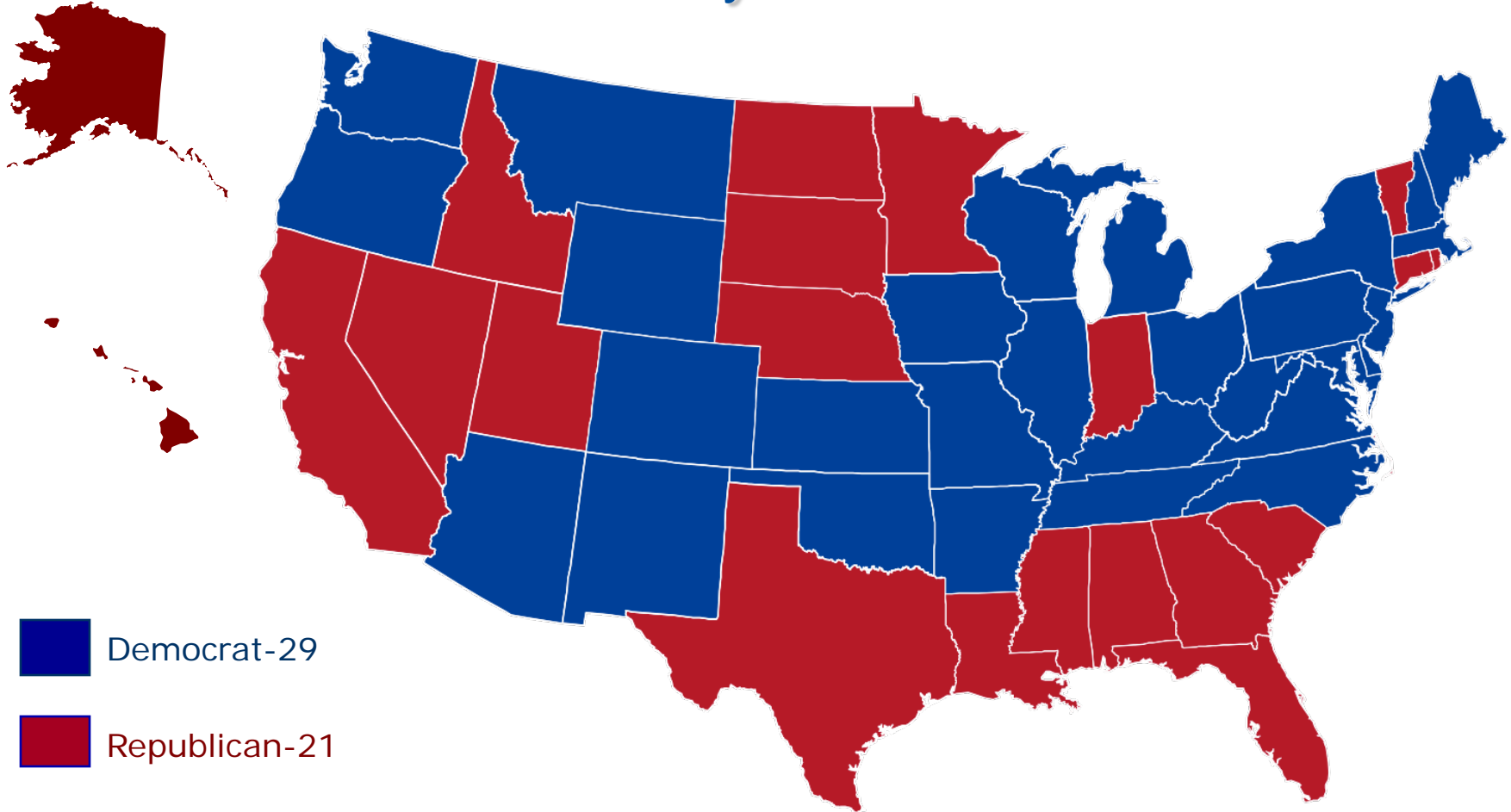


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Governor's Party Post-Election 2008





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Legislators Are Generalists

- Dozens of topics:
A to Z
- Hundreds of bills
- Can't be experts in all
- **Good News:** Most Legislators see themselves as **Students**
- Agriculture
- Corrections
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Human Services
- Labor
- Transportation
- Zoning . . .



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Health Issues by the Dozens (... and dozens)

- Medicaid
- Insurance/mg'd care
- Pharmaceuticals
- Long-term Care
- Health disparities
- Uninsured
- Health professions
- Health Facilities
- Environmental
- Public health
- CHIP
- Prenatal Care
- Emergency services
- Nutrition
- Oral health
- Injury prevention
- Mental Health
- Disabilities
- Substance Abuse
- etc. ...



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Overload!

“Going through all this information we have here is kind of like trying to drink from a fire hydrant.” Colo. Rep. Mark Paschall

“My seatmate told me this was a bad bill. I was going to vote no on it until I realized it was my own bill.” Colo. Sen. Ray Powers



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2009 Legislative Update

Some Child/Teen Injury Prevention Issues Considered
(Current March 2009)

- **Shaken Baby:** 6 states (7 bills)
- **Child Passenger Protection:** 27 states (43 bills)
- **Teen Driving:** 33 states (131 bills)
- **Suicide Prevention:** 6 states (7 bills)
- **Bullying/Intimidation/Harassment:** 3 states (3 bills)
- **Teen Dating Violence** (prevention and intervention):
8 states (10 bills)

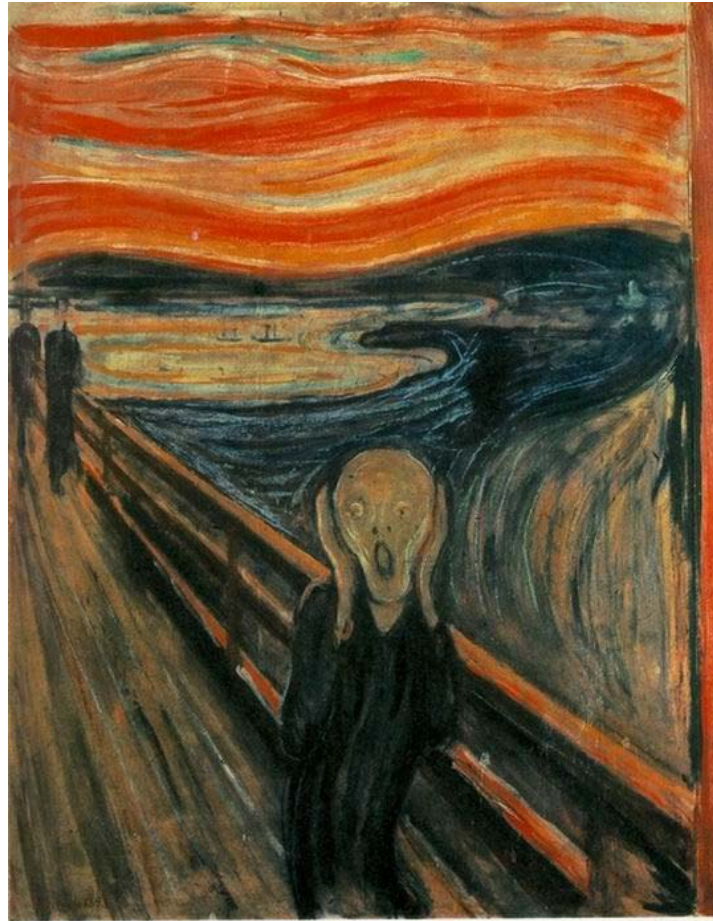


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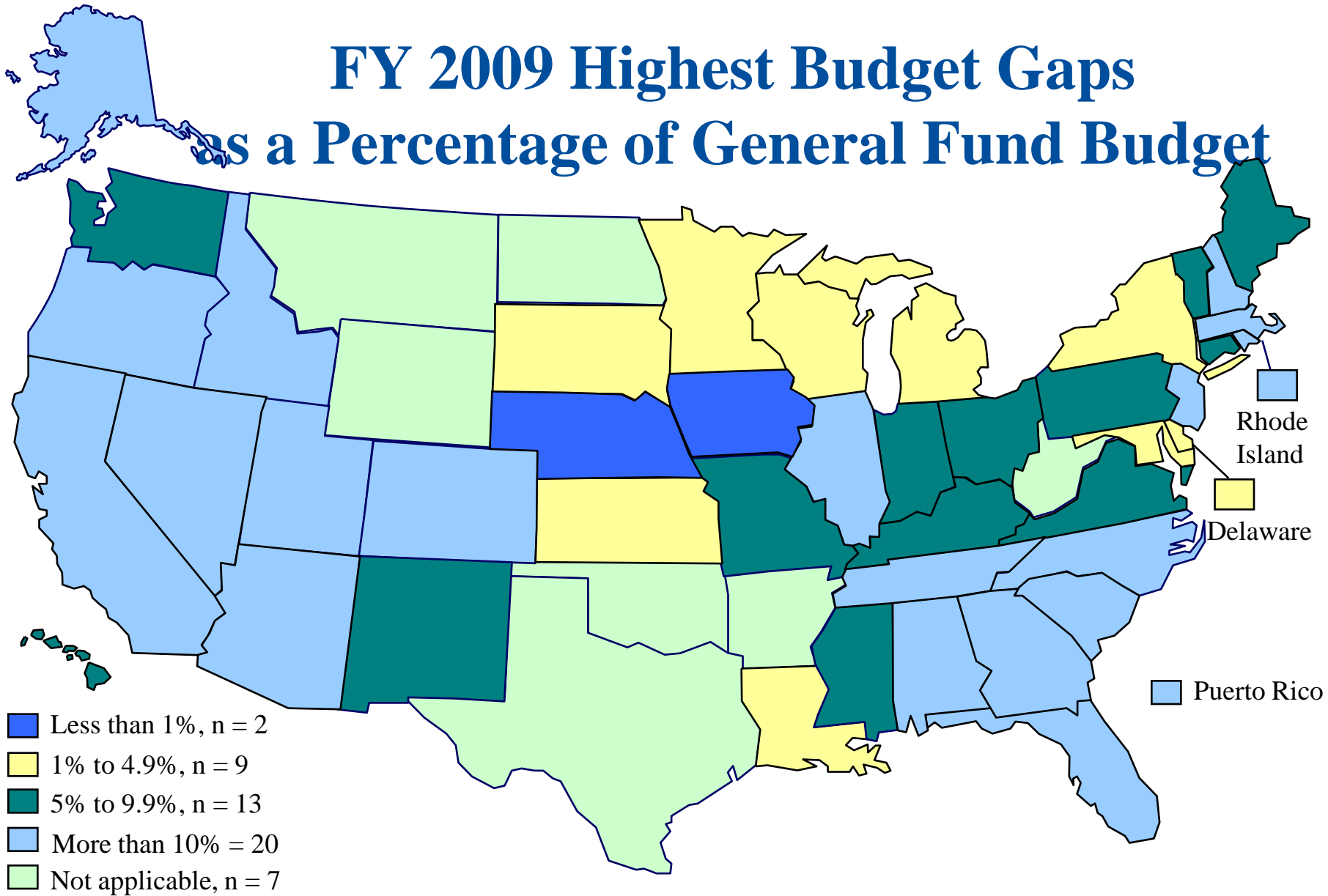
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If That's Not Enough...Along Comes the Budget!



Edvard Munch: *The Scream* 1893 (National Gallery of Norway)





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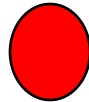
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Competing for Legislators' Attention

**A BLIP ON THE
POLITICAL
RADAR SCREEN**

Childhood Injury Prevention





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Your Role: Be the "Blip" Enlarger!

**Educate the Educators
Raise Awareness
Frame the Discussion
Provide Information &
Resources
Network with Others**



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Educate the Educators

(Be the "blip" enlarger, not the advocate!)

- 15 states have term limits
- Approx. 20% of legislators are NEW each election
- New staff (or newly assigned committee duties)
- Being "green" affects:
 - Institutional memory
 - Complex program understanding
 - Depth of issue knowledge
- **Continually educating** legislators and their staff about adolescent health issues is **crucial**

THEREFORE:

- Befriend your agency's government relations person
- Prioritize!
- Make suggestions:
 - What are the "hot" issues?
 - New, important information
 - What do newbies need to know?
- Let them know what information you have and what you can get
- They'll start coming to you!



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Raise Awareness

Make the information you have known to:

- Your agency
- Other agencies
- Professional membership groups
- Area or related non-profits
- Community organizations
- Media



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Frame the Discussion

- **Craft message to the times**

(did we mention the budget?!)

Example: preventing motor vehicle crashes offers huge cost savings to states

- **Make the message relevant**

(did we mention the budget?!)

Example: strengthening GDL laws very inexpensive; preventing motor vehicle injuries/deaths offers huge cost savings

- **Appeal to the parent in people**

- **Humanize the issue**



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Provide Information and Resources

- Give key info to people who CAN advocate
- K.I.S.S. (keep it simple stupid)
- Be responsive: when asked for information, respond quickly, make the info timely, easy to understand (no jargon!)
- Be accessible for follow-up questions
- Be the EXPERTS you are!



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Network with Others

- Don't make political enemies
- Find common ground
 - See the “injury prevention” in everything!
- Make unusual friends, unlikely partners
 - E.g., Media
 - Take advantage of PR opportunities
 - Personal interest stories:
focus on ***success stories***
 - Release new data, evidence



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You Tell Us

What are your success stories?

Why was it a successful method?

What barriers have you faced?

What information would still be helpful?



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Thank You!

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