

Chapter Eight

The Office of the Governor

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AS THE HIGHEST-RANKING and most visible government officials in state politics, governors are in a position to make substantial contributions to policies that will improve the lives of the citizens of their states. However, the governor's mansion is often the springboard to higher office: many members of Congress and presidential candidates—as well as presidents—have previously been governors. Because of the opportunities for fostering policy change, as well as furthering personal goals, state governors must maintain a fine balance between present and future aims.

This chapter will explore the numerous contradictory aspects of the Washington governor's office. It will first present a brief historical explanation of the evolution of the governor, both on a national as well as a state-specific timeline. It will then discuss the roles a governor must fill and the challenges that may help or hinder governors in exercising those responsibilities. The third section will briefly examine careers of governors—where they come from, what experience they bring to the job, and where they head after leaving the governor's mansion. Finally, this chapter will examine the eight other statewide-elected officials in Washington and briefly discuss their job descriptions and interactions with the governor.

Evolution of the Office of Governor

Washington has had its own governmental structures since its separation from Oregon Territory in 1853. The first territorial governor, Isaac I. Stevens, is most

widely known for his settlement of Native American land claims and moves to improve transportation, both of which he perceived as critical to the economic development of the new territory. Territorial governors following Stevens were also political appointees and most served short terms, which inevitably influenced the kind of leadership, as well as the policies, they were able to pursue. Because territorial governors were presidential appointees, they were often viewed as political puppets of the then-current White House administration, an image which ultimately undermined their credibility and legitimacy in the territory's political scene.

After Washington was admitted to the Union in 1889, the situation changed for the governorship. No longer appointed by the president, governors were obligated to forge their own political careers, which in turn influenced the approaches those individuals took to leadership. The Progressive reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contributed to increasing demands for accountability in state government, while strengthening the previously weak executive branch. In response to this trend, Washington's governors asserted greater leadership and assumed a dominant role in the politics and government of the state. The Washington governor's strength is evidenced by the power to call extra sessions, the ability to propose and veto legislation, and the opportunity for (and sometimes burden of) setting the state's agenda through creating the budget.

The new state's concern and reaction to the national move for accountability in government is evident in the state constitution, which resembles many other state constitutions, as well as the Constitution of the United States of America. Checks and balances were established in an attempt to minimize the opportunity for corruption, with executive, legislative, and judicial branches assigned some overlapping responsibilities. At the same time, prevailing skepticism about politicians was reflected in the low salaries paid to the citizen-legislators, who would spend most of their time in their regular employ, rather than as legislators.

The period of cooperative federalism following the end of World War II, too, displayed a relationship between federal and state government in which state governments were not altogether trusted, due to a legacy of corruption and misappropriation of federal funds. Governors were inevitably affected when federal programs circumvented the state governments and funneled monies directly to local governments instead. In response, state legislatures and governors started to institute policies to prove their responsibility and to reduce the amount of pork in state politics. The 1950s saw the creation of formulas to determine the allocation of resources instead of basing allocations on promises made by legislators to vote for gubernatorial proposals, and the capital budget began going through prioritization processes prior to its submission to the legislature.

Divided government was the norm from the 1950s through the 1970s, and intermittently since then—a situation creating difficulties for Washington governors interested in policy change. From the 1950s through the 1970s, the governor's office was occupied by Republicans for twenty years, while the Democrats were in control for twelve years. In that period, ten legislative sessions featured different parties controlling the governor's mansion and the state legislature. Legislative accomplishments required careful negotiation between governors and legislature, and governors sometimes used the line-item veto to delete individual words in legislation, changing the entire meaning of a bill's provisions. The latter practice eventually led to a constitutional amendment that permitted individual deletion of spending items, but limited the governor's ability to make substantive legislative changes by veto action.

Today the governor's office still encounters some of the widespread public skepticism common in American politics, but as the office has become increasingly professional, it has generally been afforded greater respect, authority, and compensation. In 2003, Washington's governor received \$142,286 annually, which was currently one of the highest salaries in all of the fifty states. (In comparison, Oregon's governor received \$93,600, while Idaho's governor earned \$98,500. The highest paid governor was New York's, with an annual salary of \$179,000. The lowest gubernatorial salary of 2003 went to the governor of Nebraska, at \$65,000.) In addition, the job of governor includes other perks, such as state-provided housing, and auto and air transportation.¹ The governor is also afforded protection by the Washington State Patrol, both on the capitol campus in Olympia and around the state.

Governors are regularly viewed as advocates for their states' interests, both nationally and internationally, and often use their office and its affiliated power and prestige to promote those interests. The formation of the National Governors' Association gives further evidence of an increase in governors' power nationwide. Governors come together on a regular basis to discuss not only how best to lead their states, but also to mobilize their power to further states' interests in the federal system. Most states maintain representatives permanently in the nation's capital to keep an eye out for legislation that may affect them corporately or individually. Governors and their advocates regularly lobby and seek to influence Congress and the president now more than ever before.

The Roles of the Governor

The duties of the state's governor are complex, due particularly to the numerous roles a governor must play. A governor must try to lead the public, his party, and the legislature, while looking out for his own political interests. It is not unusual for these roles to conflict and create a difficult balancing act for a governor to maintain.

Politician and Party Leader

First and foremost, governors are politicians. They cannot pursue any of the other jobs delegated to their office without first gaining, then maintaining, their access to the office. While they may not overtly consider their political career in all actions, governors often have career interests in the back of their mind. If they hope to survive in office and accomplish their goals, they must gain support and cooperation, while coping with opposition and criticism. Washington is one of twelve states nationwide that has no limit on the number of terms a governor can serve, which may affect a governor's actions in office.

The politician role becomes particularly prevalent when a governor exercises his or her responsibility as a party leader. A state's governor is often the highest-ranking member of his or her state political party. Governors are often required to not only lead their party in the state's legislature, but to also lead the party within the state. Washington's governor, Democrat Gary Locke, was quite active in his party's politics, not only in making appearances for Democratic candidates throughout the state, but also in attending party functions and fundraisers. The governor's presence at fundraising events is especially critical for lesser-known candidates; without the governor in attendance, there may be considerable difficulty attracting people to these events.

Washington's governor, however, faces significant challenges as a politician and party leader. In particular, the geopolitical conditions of Washington make it difficult for a partisan governor to connect with the entire state. The Cascade Range divides the state not only geographically, but also politically. The western side of the Cascades, home to most of the larger metropolitan areas, has an economy primarily driven by industry and business, while the eastern half is an agriculturally-dominated economy. These economic differences between the two parts of the state also perpetuate distinct differences in politics. The western half of Washington, particularly in the greater Puget Sound area, tends to vote primarily Democratic, while the eastern half leans more toward the Republican Party.

In formulating a campaign strategy, a governor must adapt to this, as well as the distinct urban-rural divide that also influences the division of political power in Washington. The major population centers—Seattle, Tacoma, Vancouver, Everett, and Spokane—tend to be liberal (i.e., Democrat) strongholds, while the remainder of the state, encompassing the rural areas and the smaller towns and cities, tends to hold more conservative ideals.

A governor's role as party leader only extends as far as other members of the party will allow. While the governor is involved with the political party he or she represents, the governor's power as the leader of his party has declined significantly in recent years in Washington, primarily due to the weakness of political parties in the state. Because of the distinct differences between the east

and west and urban and rural areas, political parties have had to adopt different strategies in different parts of the state to facilitate electoral and legislative success. This has led to a lack of unified policies for the parties at the state level, which can make it difficult for a governor to find common ground within his party. Not only are Washington's political parties regionally oriented, they also tend to be independent, further limiting the governor's power and ability to lead the party as a whole. The need to appeal to the large number of political independents in the state, as well as concerns that too much party involvement may tarnish a governor's public image, also work against vigorous party leadership at times.

Chief Legislator

The Washington State governor also functions as the chief legislator in the state. The governor exercises many duties associated with introducing, approving, and lobbying for legislation. The governor's office, too, is required to introduce all budgeting legislation. Governors, in fact, often exercise the most influence on their particular issues through the budget, therefore it has become one of the governor's chief tools for policy leadership.

The Washington governor can also exercise influence as chief legislator by calling special sessions. The constitution gives the governor authority to reassemble the legislature after their regularly scheduled annual session has ended. While special sessions are usually called to address issues not covered during the regular session, or to reconsider a veto, in recent years Governor Locke has used the special sessions to deal with some of his priority issues, particularly transportation. During the summer of 2001 alone, the governor called three special sessions to address transportation issues not resolved during the regular session.

However, the governor's position as legislative leader is not absolute. There are several institutional characteristics and political factors limiting a governor's ability to lead the legislature. In recent years, at least one house of the legislature often has been controlled by the opposition party (see Table 1). In the 2001 legislative session, the House was evenly split, with each party holding 49 seats, and the Senate was divided almost evenly with the Democrats holding the majority by only one seat. The 2002 legislature also was closely divided, with the Democrats controlling the House, 50 seats to the Republican's 48, while the Senate retained the same partisan composition as the 2001 session. The 2003–04 legislature also was divided, with the Democrats in control of the House and the Republicans holding a one-vote majority in the Senate. Divided government is not unique to Washington. Prior to the fall 2002 elections, fifteen states had divided legislatures, and after the election, twelve states still witnessed different parties controlling the two houses of their legislative branch.

Table 1

United or Divided Party Control of the Governor and Legislature

Governor	Year	United or Divided Party Control
Langlie (R)	1949	Divided
	1951	Divided
	1953	United
	1955	Divided
Rosellini (D)	1957	United
	1959	United
	1960	United
	1963	United
Evans (R)	1965	Divided
	1967	Divided
	1969	Divided
	1971	Divided
	1973	Divided
	1975	Divided
Ray (D)	1977	United
	1979	Divided
Spellman (R)	1981	United
	1983	Divided
Gardner (D)	1985	United
	1987	Divided
	1989	United
	1991	Divided
Lowry (D)	1993	Divided
	1995	Divided
Locke (D)	1997	Divided
	1999	Divided*
	2001	United**
	2003	Divided

Sources: *Book of the States* (Lexington, KY: Council of State Governments, various volumes).

*In 1999, the governor's party had a majority in one house; the other house was evenly divided between the two parties.

**In 2001, the House remained tied until a special election in November gave Democrats unified control.

Even when one party controls the governor's mansion and both houses of the legislature, party majorities are sometimes too small to give the governor dependable support. When party control of the state House of Representatives

was evenly split between the two parties, the dual leadership structures created to cope with the tie led to nearly insurmountable obstacles to leadership, both within the house and from the governor. While the close division of both houses of the legislature reflects the close political divisions of the state, and indeed, the nation as a whole, the nearly evenly divided government and the increasing polarization of the two parties make it extremely difficult for the governor to exercise effective leadership.

Though the governor exercises leadership through budget submissions, this too is constrained. In Washington State, due to the initiative and referenda processes and other requirements set forth in the constitution and statutes, perhaps upward of 80 percent of the state's budget already is allocated. In recent years, voters have passed several initiatives mandating spending on K-12 education, health care, and road maintenance, while simultaneously passing initiatives cutting property and excise taxes that have decreased tax revenues substantially. This leaves less money for the governor to utilize politically to placate constituents or legislators. Ultimately, due to a high level of already allocated funds, the governor has fewer opportunities to effect policy through spending decisions, and must often capitulate to demands from legislators in order to ensure passage of the budget (see Chapter 10; "Budgeting and Public Finance in Washington").

Budgetary problems are further complicated by the economic constraints faced by state government. Washington has two major sources of revenue from individual citizens: property taxes and sales taxes. The reliance on these two taxes becomes particularly problematic when the state faces an economic recession, as Washington has during the early 2000s. As the recession worsened, sales tax revenues continued a dramatic drop-off. In October 2002 the Office of Financial Management predicted that the deficit for the 2003-05 biennium, just to maintain 2002 services levels, would be approximately \$2.5 billion. Initiatives that require voter approval for tax increases or limit the percentage by which taxes may be increased limit the ability of the legislature or governor to make up the shortfall in tax revenue. Thus, the governor may look to other avenues to address temporary economic difficulties.

Washington also gathers revenue from taxes levied on businesses. However, the number of large companies from which a majority of state tax revenue relies—such as Microsoft and Boeing—are few. Since companies are susceptible to the volatility of the economy, their tax contributions decrease during recessions. Boeing, in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the resulting financial difficulties for the airline industry, has seen orders for airplanes decline dramatically, and has not won enough lucrative federal contracts to make up the difference in revenue.

Further complicating the budgetary maze are constitutional limits put on the amount of debt the state can incur. These limitations may reduce the risk of

future financial difficulties, but in times of recession, those limits can almost be debilitating. The reliance on two taxes—one of which is subject to economic volatility (sales taxes), the other of which is not quickly adjustable (property taxes)—and the constitutional limits placed on spending have the combined effect of making the budgetary leadership role quite challenging for the governor.

The governor faces other challenges regarding the legislature. Washington's governor, like others, has the power to veto legislation to which he objects. He also has line-item veto power, but is constrained by the state's constitution to vetoing not less than entire paragraphs of legislative language, except in the cases of spending bills, when the governor may delete individual appropriations items. The governor's veto power may be used for more than blocking legislation; it can be used in negotiating with the legislature in order to further the governor's policy goals. However, casting large numbers of vetoes risks angering legislators and political opponents; consequently, governors tend to use their veto power cautiously.

Finally, the governor's leadership can be constrained by the judicial branch of state government. Decisions by Washington State's Supreme Court have had impacts on budget allocations and other policy decisions that must be adhered to by the governor. For example, in several rulings the Supreme Court has indicated the priority status of education, relative to other policy areas. Support for primary and secondary education in the state of Washington is already constitutionally mandated, and Article IX requires the state to fund schools to appropriate levels by allocating funds out of general revenue sources. However, as the Supreme Court has reinforced the constitutional provision for education, it has in essence given K-12 education priority status in the state budget.

Administrator and Chief Executive

Another large area of responsibility for Washington's governor is the oversight of numerous state agencies. Governors influence the bureaucracy by requiring reporting from state agencies and by ensuring that laws are properly executed. While a governor usually minimizes involvement in the day-to-day operations of each state agency, the governor still holds ultimate oversight responsibility, and usually works very closely with state agencies on policies important to the gubernatorial office. As provided for in Washington Administrative Code (WAC), the governor also is provided with professional staff assistants to help in fulfilling these duties. These personnel totaled thirty-six in 2002, which is close to the national average. The governor also has a personally appointed, twenty-eight-member cabinet with whom he meets on a weekly basis during legislative sessions, and a bi-weekly basis when the legislature is not in session. WAC also requires that commissions, task forces, or similar entities must report to the chief executive, which thereby, by default, falls under the governor's purview.

The job as administrator is particularly challenging for the governor. As with bureaucracies at any level of government, the amount of time and energy required to effectively oversee state agencies is extensive and generally requires special attention to detail. Washington, as already mentioned, relies quite heavily on task forces and citizen boards, which also report to the governor in implementing policies passed by the legislature. The sheer volume of entities involved, not to mention the increasing numbers of policies they deal with, contribute to the gubernatorial quagmire. Due to other overall governmental responsibilities, governors have little time to sufficiently administrate all agencies, task forces, and boards.

In addition, it is up to the governor to fill numerous appointed positions on boards and task forces. Finding or hiring appointees is an extremely time-consuming process, often requiring a coordinated effort with others. The governor's acquaintance with individuals throughout the state and the ability to draw on networks may ease the job of filling appointed positions, but the chief administrator always must consider potential political consequences resulting from these selections.

In another aspect of administrative duties, the governor fulfills an additional role as chief executive. The state of Washington provides for an executive branch headed by the governor, but also features eight other independently elected state executives—a larger number than in most other states. Although the governor has no direct involvement in their selection, to be effective a governor must ultimately work with them. Most of the statewide elected officials are partisan, which means party politics are inevitable in the management of the executive branch. The chief executive often faces divided political loyalties that must be overcome; deciding which battles to fight and which ones to forego can have long-lasting consequences.

Another executive power has gained in significance since September 11, 2001. The governor has the authority to issue executive orders in order for the state to cope with civil defense problems, disasters, and other public emergencies. Governors in several other states have broader authority in this regard than Washington's governor, however.

Ceremonial Leader and Figurehead

Finally, the governor has an important role as the ceremonial leader and figurehead for the state. This has many aspects. The governor may represent the state either on a national or international level. Washington governors regularly attend the National Governors' Association Conference, and frequently travel to the nation's capital to lobby for policies relevant to the state, or to meet with Washington's congressional delegation. The governor also is often involved with international trade delegations and promoting Washington's overseas trade

interests. In recent years, Governor Locke has traveled to Korea, Japan, China, and Mexico to advocate markets for Washington goods, including agricultural and technological products.

Within the state, the governor performs responsibilities as a ceremonial leader and chief of state. As a ceremonial leader, the governor may speak at public commemorations, welcome dignitaries, or attend events of importance to a large segment of the population. The governor makes regular appearances at events on holidays such as Veteran's Day or Memorial Day. The governor's job as ceremonial leader and figurehead is probably the least controversial of the position's duties.

Where do Governors Come From?

The governor's office has become increasingly professional because of the many demands attending it. Individuals seeking election to state government have responded to this change and gubernatorial candidates are increasingly well skilled and experienced in government. This is a considerable contrast to Washington's territorial governors who, as political friends of presidents, were appointed on the basis of politics rather than because of skill or governing experience.

Contemporary governors tend to be younger than their historical predecessors, and better educated. According to information recently compiled by the National Governors' Association, the most common degrees for governors holding office are in business, history, and political science; twenty-three governors hold law degrees; and two are doctors.

Generally speaking, most governors now have some degree of previous political experience. Most have served in a legislative capacity, either at the state or national level, as well as in different levels of state or local government. Washington Governor Gary Locke served five terms in the state's House of Representatives prior to his election as governor. Idaho's governor, Dirk Kempthorne, was a U.S. Senator, and Oregon's governor, Ted Kulongoski, also was a member of the state legislature. This trend is not unique to the Pacific Northwest; in 2003, thirty-five state governors had legislative experience at the national or state level (National Governors' Association fast facts website), and seven governors formerly were mayors. Only eight governors had never held political office prior to their election as governor.

State governorship is also straying from being dominated exclusively by white males. Women and ethnic minorities have been elected to the governor's office. For example, Washington's Governor Locke, son of immigrant parents, was the first Chinese-American elected to the governorship. At the time of this writing, there are two governors from minority ethnic groups in the United States.

Women are also assuming a rightful place in state leadership. Prior to the 2002 election, there were five female governors in the United States. Although several women had been elected governor on the death of their governor husbands or as stand-ins for their husbands who were not eligible to run for another term, Dixy Lee Ray of Washington State was one of the first female governors elected in her own right. Carroll (1994) and O'Regan (2000) have shown that the presence of women in government has an impact on the kinds of policies addressed. If government is supposed to reflect the citizens it represents, and if ideally the population of government should mirror the population in terms of gender, ethnicity, and religious composition, the presence of representatives from all groups in society is necessary. Therefore, it is to the great pleasure of those concerned with equal representation that more ethnic minorities and women are being elected to gubernatorial positions. The talent pool from which governors are chosen has expanded.

However, the increasing cost of running for office may hinder access to the position. In Washington's 2000 governor's race alone, spending by the two major party candidates totaled almost \$6.5 million, with Governor Locke spending just over half of that amount. Most of this was spent on television access. As the importance of television and other media exposure in campaigning continues, the costs will rise, limiting those who can run successful campaigns. Gubernatorial candidates accrue more expenses than, say, legislative candidates, because of the necessity of reaching the electorate in all parts of the state.

The governor's office often is a springboard for individuals aspiring to higher public office. There were thirteen former governors in the 107th Congress, and seventeen governors have become presidents, including former President Bill Clinton, who was governor of Arkansas, and President George W. Bush, who served as governor of Texas. Many governors have entered various positions at the federal level, either after finishing their terms, or sometimes in the middle of a term. Former governor of Massachusetts, William F. Weld, left the governor's mansion to pursue an unsuccessful ambassadorial appointment, and his successor, Paul Cellucci, left the governor's office to become the ambassador to Canada in 2001. Still other governors have become a part of the federal executive branch, including the first Homeland Security Secretary, Tom Ridge, the former governor of Pennsylvania. Christine Todd Whitman, the ex-governor of New Jersey, became administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Thus, governors throughout history often have followed their tenure in the governor's mansion by assuming elected and appointed positions at other levels of government. As governors enter office at a younger age, however, the opportunity for an extended political career increases. Personal considerations for a future in politics may inevitably influence a governor's actions, but those considerations do not require that a current governor ignore the issues and policies relevant to his or her constituency. Regardless of what the future may hold for

them personally, most governors are concerned with the well being of their states, and work for the greater benefit of their citizens.

Other Statewide-elected Officials

Article III of the Washington State Constitution designates seven other statewide elected officials besides the governor as part of the executive branch of state government. Their responsibilities range from oversight of the legislature, to protection of the legal interests of the state, to management of the vast state-owned public lands in Washington. In addition to these seven constitutionally mandated officers there also is an insurance commissioner, who is elected by a statewide constituency. These elected officials each serve four-year terms and, like the governor, walk the fine line between public responsibility and self-interest.

Lieutenant governor. As the title would suggest, the lieutenant governor is the governor's second-in-command. In the event that a governor is incapacitated or out of the state, the lieutenant governor may act on the governor's behalf. The lieutenant governor's primary responsibility is to oversee the Senate in the capacity as that body's president. The lieutenant governor also is an appointed member and chair of the Senate Rules Committee. Finally, the lieutenant governor may, on occasion, nominate individuals to various statewide commissions or task forces. Lieutenant Governor Brad Owen has been particularly active in addressing children's issues, especially regarding health and safety needs. He also has been involved in promoting Washington's international trade.

Secretary of state. The secretary of state has a wide variety of responsibilities. The state constitution requires that the secretary of state keep the record of the legislature and executive department, and also delegates possession and regulation of the state seal to this office. Over time, the office has been given responsibility for supervising elections and verifying signatures on the filing of initiatives. Secretary of State Sam Reed was particularly active in voter mobilization, as well as in updating Washington's voting technology and accuracy following Florida's voting problems in the 2000 presidential election. Reed also was instrumental in bringing the state archives, another of the secretary's responsibilities, into the digital age and has documented the oral histories of previous members of state government. In addition, the office of the secretary of state has been active in rewarding governmental innovation and efficiency through the Employee Involvement and Recognition Board.

Attorney general. The attorney general is the primary legal counselor for the state. The attorney general's duties include representing state interests in any supreme or appeals court proceedings, and, when requested by other state officials or the legislature, issuing opinions on constitutional or legal questions pertaining to the duties of those officials. The attorney general is responsible for

oversight of deputy attorneys and has the authority to initiate or intervene in local prosecutions, either at his or her own discretion or by request of the governor. The attorney general also may instigate civil or criminal proceedings on a limited basis, and also serves the public through administering consumer protection programs and handling consumer complaints. The attorney general's office also may review legislation prior to passage or before signing.

Attorney General Christine Gregoire received national recognition during the state's lawsuit against the tobacco industry in 1999. She was one of the chief architects of the settlement that allocated \$206 billion to Washington and 45 other states, to be dispersed over a 25-year time span, and she also disputed the federal government's attempt to use settlement money to pay Medicare and Medicaid costs associated with treating patients suffering from tobacco-related illnesses.

State treasurer. The state treasurer has the primary responsibility for managing state finances and serves as the state's representative in any financial contracts into which the state may enter. The treasurer's office also manages all state financial accounts and provides annual updates of those accounts to the legislature and governor.

State auditor. The state auditor has the responsibility of overseeing all the public accounts of approximately 2,400 governmental units throughout the state. The auditor must account for all these public resources to prevent their misappropriation or misuse, while simultaneously ensuring that units throughout Washington adhere to laws and regulations relating to state finances. The auditor's office sets forth standards for uniform budgeting, accounting, and reporting, and provides training and technical assistance to implement those standards. It is also the auditor's responsibility to provide mandatory reports to the governor and legislature of any financial accounting problems that may have arisen in state units.

Superintendent of public instruction. The superintendent of public instruction is Washington's chief educator. This individual has oversight of all concerns pertaining to public education from kindergarten through the 12th grade, and acts as the liaison between public schools and the governor and legislature, particularly in matters concerning management and policy. The office prepares and publishes the state's common school code, administers basic education programs, and issues and keeps the record of all teaching certificates in the state. The superintendent also is responsible for implementing educational reform. Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson has been particularly active in the debate over the use and reform of the state's standardized tests, and has been a strong advocate for increased pay for teachers and for smaller class sizes.

Commissioner of public lands. The last of the constitutionally mandated offices, the commissioner of public lands manages the more than five million

acres of state-owned public land and real estate in Washington, including forests, farms, commercial properties, and underwater areas. The office is charged with the duty of managing lands in a way that generates profits to benefit public schools and universities by selling products such as timber or wheat, while simultaneously ensuring that the properties will be useful and profitable in the future. The commissioner of public lands also is responsible for managing natural resources such as fish, wildlife, and waterways. During the annual summer fire season, the commissioner of public lands oversees fire prevention and protection measures. Commissioner Doug Sutherland was elected in November 2000.

Insurance commissioner. The insurance commissioner is the only non-constitutionally mandated officeholder selected by a statewide election. The office was established in 1907 to enforce the state's insurance code through implementing and enforcing rules and regulations. The insurance commissioner is responsible for investigating and, if necessary, bringing charges or fines against any insurance company engaged in fraudulent behavior. The commissioner has authority to revoke licenses or fine insurance agents, brokers, solicitors, or adjusters found to be engaging in unethical behavior. Additionally, the insurance commissioner is responsible for enforcing the rights of Washington citizens as promised to them by insurance companies or providers, and ensuring that requirements for insurance policies set forth in Washington State law are adhered to by providers. The current insurance commissioner is Mike Kreidler.

Conclusion

The governor's office has evolved since Washington's statehood from a position with little power or public trust, to an institution that has not only state, but national, influence as well. As state governors have come to work together, they have been able to exert tremendous influence at the federal level.

However, the governor is only one person in a state system designed to prevent the accrual of absolute power in any one individual or institution. The governor, as the chief executive, has the great responsibility of leading the state in both policy and administration. A governor faces numerous obstacles and challenges, but these are not insurmountable. A governor who can negotiate the political and partisan terrain is a governor who can have lasting impact.

Endnote

1. From *The Book of the States, 2002* edition, Table 4.3, The Governors: Compensation. For discussions and comparisons of gubernatorial authority across the nation, see *The Book of the States, 2002* (Lexington, KY: Council of State Governments, 2002), chapter 4, and the sources cited there. For an earlier discussion of Washington's governor, see George Scott, "The Office of Governor and Elected Statewide Officials," in David Nice, John Pierce, and Charles Sheldon, *Government and Politics in the Evergreen State* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1992), pp. 17-32.

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