



# Modernizing Congress: Lessons from State Legislatures

September 23, 2019

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## PANELISTS



### SENATOR LARRY OBHOF (R-MEDINA)

*President of the Ohio Senate*

[@LarryObhof](#)

Larry Obhof serves as President of the Ohio Senate for the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly. He proudly represents the people of the 22nd Senate District, which includes Medina, Ashland and Richland counties, as well as portions of Holmes County. Prior to his election as President of the Senate, he served as both President Pro Tempore and as Majority Whip.

President Obhof chairs the Ohio Senate's Rules and Reference Committee, which determines which bills, resolutions and appointments are considered by the full Senate. He is Vice Chair of the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee, and Chair of the Legislative Service Commission, which oversees a staff that is responsible for providing members of the General Assembly with impartial and accurate information and reports concerning legislative issues. President Obhof also serves on the Intergovernmental Policy Advisory Committee on Trade (IGPAC), which provides policy advice to the U.S. Trade Representative on issues involving trade and development, including the impact and implementation of trade agreements.

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### EMILY BAER

*Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of New Hampshire*

Emily Baer is an assistant professor of political science at the University of New Hampshire. She previously served as a National Fellow at the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, and an APSA Congressional Fellow with Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) where she worked as a legislative assistant on labor and regulatory issues, and equal pay and paid leave legislation. Her research examines the development and evolution of American political institutions, including Congress and political parties, as well as women and politics, from an inter-disciplinary and multi-method perspective. Her current projects address the causes and consequences of

congressional reform and group organization in Congress, including recent historical and contemporary efforts by party factions (such as the liberal Democratic Study Group and the conservative Republican House Freedom Caucus) to challenge the status quo in the House of Representatives. Her research is ultimately focused on identifying specific strategies that members of Congress can adopt to reform the static legislative branch to be more representative of and responsive to the public and national policy problems.

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## **REP. GEORGENE LOUIS (D-ALBUQUERQUE)**

*New Mexico Representative to the 26<sup>th</sup> District*

[@georgenelouis](#)

Representative Georgene Louis was elected to the New Mexico House of Representatives in 2012. She represents House District 26, which includes much of the Westside of Albuquerque. She is an attorney and a member of Acoma Pueblo, where she grew up. Representative Louis is the chair of the House State Government, Elections & Indian Affairs Committee and a member of the House Judiciary and Rules & Order of Business Committees. She is also a member of several interim committees, including Indian Affairs, Economic and Rural

Development, and Legislative Council. Representative Louis is the first Pueblo woman elected to the New Mexico legislature.

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## **MODERATORS**



## **NATALIE WOOD**

*Director, Center for Legislative Strengthening, National Conference of State Legislatures*

Natalie Wood is the Director of NCSL's Center for Legislative Strengthening. She provides expertise and leads research on legislative institutional issues, including internal legislative operations, management and human resources policies, legislative workplace culture, and critical issues impacting representative democracy in the states. During her 15 years with NCSL, she held key roles working on ethics and lobbying policy, legislative management and organization, and leadership staffing. Prior to

rejoining NCSL in 2019, Natalie was a policy expert for Colorado non-profit organizations. She holds a B.A. in political science from Saint Mary's College at Notre Dame and an M.A. in political science, politics and policy from the University of Colorado Denver. She lives in Wheat Ridge, CO with her husband, Matt and sons, Emmett and Declan.

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## **MICHAEL THORNING**

*Associate Director of Governance, Bipartisan Policy Center*

[@ThorningMichael](#)

Michael Thorning is an associate director of Governance. Prior to joining BPC, Thorning worked on Capitol Hill for Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall, where he focused on campaign finance and election reform, Senate rules and congressional reform, and judiciary, civil rights, and civil liberties issues. While working for Bingaman, he also coordinated the senator's social media outreach. In 2014, Thorning served as co-chair of the Senate GLASS Caucus, the association of LGBT Senate staff and allies. Thorning earned his B.A. in

political science with honors from the University of New Mexico, and served as a Fred R. Harris Congressional Intern. He is currently a fellow of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies at American University and a member of the guest faculty of the University of New Mexico.

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