1970

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Walter J. Oleszek

Library of Congress, Legislative Reference Service; State University of New York, Washington Study Program,
oleszek@american.edu

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FEDERAL AID TO STATE LEGISLATURES:
PROBLEMS AND POTENTIAL

Walter J. Oleszek*

Many scholars and other observers have argued that state legislatures are ill-equipped to play a vital role in the federal system,¹ and yet they must play such a role if pressing national problems are to be met. Government at all levels faces the difficulty of resolving such issues as air and water pollution, urban blight, traffic congestion, inadequate housing, unemployment and underemployment, racial unrest, educational and recreational deficiencies, and rising crime. As President Nixon has pointed out: “By their very nature these modern problems demand diversity of approach, independent creativity, citizen participation and involvement, local direction and coordination.”²

National, state, and local governments are partners in the federal system. They are not partners in the traditional business sense of being equal; they are partners because all seek to improve the general welfare.³ With this goal in mind, a novel idea in federal-state relations has been proposed. It concerns the use of cash grants by the federal government to state legislative instrumentalities. The broad objective of this aid is to stimulate the states to upgrade the research capabilities of their legislatures. This is necessary because:

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As public problems have become more complex, many state legislatures have increasingly depended on the administrative branch of government, with its numerous experts, to provide the answers and suggest the policies of the future. If legislatures relinquish initiative to the "experts" in state or federal bureaucracies, they invite the erosion of their leadership, public apathy toward their activities, and they may fail to solve the problems of the state.4

This article's purpose is to discuss some of the deficiencies of state legislatures and some suggested approaches to eliminating or at least alleviating those deficiencies with federal assistance. The format for this study will be as follows: (1) a discussion of the needs of state legislatures, (2) the federal aid concept, (3) alternative approaches to its implementation, (4) some political and practical issues, and finally, (5) some conclusions.

I. PROBLEMS CONFRONTING STATE LEGISLATURES

Many analyses of state legislative ills have been presented by political commentators.5 Typical reforms often called for include state constitutional revision, longer and more frequent legislative sessions, better physical facilities, standards of official conduct, modernized rules and procedures, adequate compensation for legislators, and a reduction in the size of state legislatures. Alexander Heard aptly summarized the major deficiencies of state legislatures when he said:

They do not meet often enough nor long enough; they lack space, clerical staffing, professional assistance; they are poorly paid and overworked; they are prey to special interests, sometimes their own; their procedures and committee systems are outmoded; they devote inordinate time to local interests that distract them from general public policy; they sometimes cannot even get copies of bills on which they must vote. They work, in short, under a host of conditions that dampen their incentive and limit their ability to function effectively.6

Supplying information is a vital part of the legislative process, for it assists legislators in making informed judgments on complex policy issues. However, many legislatures lack essential supporting services necessary for the formulation and initiation of public policies.7 The pattern of legislative assistance described in Massachusetts and Oregon is common in many states.

4 A. Bolton, Expanding the Power of State Legislatures, July 1968, at 2 (paper delivered at State Legislator's Seminar, Key Biscayne, Fla.).
5 Id. at 1.
6 AMERICAN ASSEMBLY, STATE LEGISLATURES IN AMERICAN POLITICS, supra note 1, at 1-2.
7 Studies of legislative research services include: Dent, The New Look in Pennsylvania's Legislative Research, 30 STATE GOV'T 61 (March 1887); Lentz, Better State Government Through Better Legislative Services, 10 WESTERN POL. Q. 448 (June 1887); Smith, The Constitu-
So woefully understaffed is the Massachusetts legislature that the Republican and Democratic Clubs of Harvard Law School operate a kind of charity program of volunteer research assistance for the law-makers. Similarly, in Oregon, the state bar association provides 21 volunteer lawyers in two-week stints to help out with bill-drafting.\(^8\)

Because they lack sufficient research facilities of their own, state legislatures are often dependent upon two suspect sources of information: the executive branch and special interest groups. For example, an Oklahoma legislator stated: "The governor of this state has people working for him who are experts in anything you can name and we legislators are the people who are supposed to be checking on them for the taxpayer. But much of the time we don't even know what questions to ask them."\(^9\) As primary agents of the people, legislators who function under these circumstances cannot develop policy alternatives, correct abuses of power, or assure democratic control of the government. Federal assistance to state legislatures may help to remedy these defects.

## II. FEDERAL AID TO STATE LEGISLATURES

Jesse Unruh, while Speaker of the California Assembly, raised the issue of federal aid to state legislatures in June, 1966, at a White House meeting of state legislators and federal officials. Subsequently, the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations held several meetings to discuss the eligibility of state legislatures for federal funds.\(^10\) In a discussion concerning California's application to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the commission's staff concluded that no statutory or administrative language prohibited the legislature from receiving federal funds.\(^11\) However, since no national policy on this question exists, the research proposals of some state legislative agencies have been rejected by federal executive units.\(^12\) On the other hand, at least two

\(^8\) Miller, *Hamstrung Legislatures*, 54 NAT'L CIVIC REV. 178, 184 (April 1965).

\(^9\) Id.


\(^11\) Id.

\(^12\) For example, an official of the New York State Senate informed this writer that a legislative committee applied to a federal agency for funds to assist it in studying the construction of safe automobiles, but the committee's application was turned down.
state legislative instrumentalities have received funds, indirectly, from the national government under existing federal statutes.

Prior to the session convening in January, 1969, a pre-legislative conference for West Virginia's state legislators was held. The conference was organized by the Bureau of Government Research and the Bureau of Business Research at West Virginia University and the West Virginia Office of Legislative Services. Under Title I of the Higher Education Act of 1965, federal funds were made available for the orientation of new state legislators.\(^\text{13}\)

Utah's Legislative Council began a long-range planning program in 1965 at the request of the state legislature. The council's aims were to define the state's problems and suggest future goals. Kenneth Olson wrote:

\begin{quote}
The assistance was provided through Section 701 of the Housing and Urban Development Act under a modification of the Utah State Development Program. Under this assistance the Legislative Council agreed to pledge the amount of $1,000 towards the goals effort which would be generally directed by the planning coordinator's office. The 701 program provided an additional $2,000 toward this same effort and an inter-agency agreement between the planning coordinator's office and the Legislative Council was worked up to provide the general framework of cooperation between the two agencies.\(^\text{14}\)
\end{quote}

Recently, the California State Assembly submitted "A Proposal for a Cost and Benefit Study of California Urban Transportation Under Section 9 of the Urban Mass Transportation Act" to the Department of Transportation.\(^\text{15}\) Under the direction of the bipartisan Assembly Rules Committee, "a practical method (model) for determining the social and economic benefits and costs of all modes of urban transportation and non-transportation alternatives" will be developed.\(^\text{16}\) The Assembly's proposal has not yet been acted upon by the federal department.

These examples suggest creative ways in which the national government can assist state legislatures to meet research needs and solve substantive problems.


\textsuperscript{14} Letter from Kenneth C. Olson, Utah State Planning Coordinator to William G. Colman, Executive Director, Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, September 6, 1967.

\textsuperscript{15} Assembly Office of Research, Legislature, State of California (January 1, 1969).

\textsuperscript{16} Id. at 7.
III. ADMINISTRATION AND THE FEDERAL AID CONCEPT

Three general administrative devices seem to offer feasible approaches toward implementing a federal aid program: grants-in-aid, a nation-wide consortium of legislative reference bureaus, and regional legislative institutes. The three approaches are not mutually exclusive; many combinations and relationships are possible. Nor can one arrangement solve all the problems of a legislature, for each method fills only some gaps in the research needs of our states.

A. INTERGOVERNMENTAL PAYMENTS

An intergovernmental mechanism of long-standing usage is the grant-in-aid. Several criticisms are often lodged against the grant-in-aid technique: some local autonomy is lost, there are too many centralized controls, state incentive is undermined, and state expenditures become misdirected. Yet the grant-in-aid is probably the most flexible method of assisting state legislatures, for it permits both scope and specificity, depending upon the aims of a particular program. For example, federal funds could be made available not only to assist legislatures with research, but in areas that range from the construction of physical facilities to the installation of electronic roll-call devices or data processing equipment. Several ways to channel research aid to the states are described below.

1. Executive Order

A national policy to aid state legislatures could be established by an Executive Order of the President of the United States. Inconsistencies among federal executive agencies in dealing with requests from state legislatures prompted the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to draft a proposed Executive Order and submit it to the Bureau of the Budget for presidential consideration. The chairman of the commission suggested to President Johnson that he consider the establishment of a uniform policy among the executive agencies admitting state legislative instrumentalities as eligible competitors for federal grants. The Bureau of the Budget circular was proposed as the proper vehicle to fulfill this purpose.


18 See letter from Farris Bryant, Chairman, Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to President Lyndon B. Johnson, cited in July 1, 1968, memorandum of Phillip S. Hughes, Deputy Director, Bureau of the Budget.
The chairman suggested that certain eligibility criteria be given primary weight by federal grant administrators when considering applications from state legislative agencies. These included potential scientific merit of the project, potential social benefit, relationship to effective conduct of federal grant programs, interstate character of the project, and extent of applicability of results to other states. No action was taken on this matter by the Johnson Administration.

The chief advantage of an Executive Order is that, in a relatively short time, it would establish a national policy enabling the fifty state legislatures to receive federal research funds. Further, the presidential order would affirm the principle that state legislative agencies and state executive units are to be considered coequal for federal assistance. In either case, of course, the research objectives would need to be socially significant and the requisite research capabilities would need to be available.

If strong opposition arose to the idea of having legislative units apply directly for federal funds, an alternative for indirect channeling is available. The President could authorize the executive departments to channel funds to non-profit organizations or university-based research corporations. These units would then conduct studies for the various state legislatures. This position was outlined by Representative Al Ullman (D. Ore.), a member of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. Mr. Ullman stated:

I favor the second alternative ... research grants to universities or other nonprofit organizations for studies requested by State legislatures to meet the latter's need for specialized background information on tough questions of public policy, while not involving Federal administrators with the sensitive task of direct financial negotiations with legislatures.

A related alternative would be to have Congress enact legislation. It could simply indicate its preference for the program through a concurrent resolution, or a statute could be enacted that formulates a clearly defined policy in this area. The danger with this approach would be that a defeat by the national legislature might significantly retard the little progress that the states have already made in this area. Federal executive agencies could simply reject all state legislative applications for funds, regardless of their merit, with Congress's action serving as the precedent for this position.

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20 Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, Dissents to the Commission's Position on Federal Research Grants to State Legislative Agencies 1 (April 21, 1967).
2. Advisory Council on State Legislatures

Another approach would involve the formation of a federally funded Advisory Council on State Legislatures. Its purpose would be to assist the state legislatures in playing a more meaningful role in the federal system. The composition of the new agency could include state legislators, other public officials, and private citizens. State legislators on the council could be selected to ensure regional balance. Further, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the United States Senate would appoint two Representatives and two Senators, respectively, with the Chairman of the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations selecting two other individuals. A chairman would be elected by and from the council members.

The primary function of the council would be to administer the funds appropriated to it by the Congress. For example, Congress might appropriate 25 million dollars to the Advisory Council on State Legislatures with the stipulation that each state receive 500 thousand dollars if it voluntarily joined the program. The council would act to screen requests from the states to insure that adequate planning had prepared the way for the effective use of monies. Funds, of course, would be appropriated to provide a permanent professional staff for the council.

In this sensitive federal-state area, two salient problems—partisanship and states' rights—might be diminished by the incorporation of certain features. Since the program would be strictly voluntary, states could simply withdraw if they felt it interfered with their freedom to act. The 500 thousand dollars might be a strong incentive to join, but freedom of choice would be guaranteed. Further, applications for funds would be screened and authorized by state legislators and others on the council, thereby insuring state supervision of the program. Monies not utilized would revert to the United States Treasury.

Partisanship—the use of federal funds to benefit the party in control of the legislature—might be reduced if requests for funds required bipartisan support in each state legislature. The stipulation could be that a majority of each major party in the two legislative chambers would need to support a request for funds before a state could submit its proposal to the council. Some problems are apparent with this approach, especially if there were only a few legislators in the minority party. A small group of men could then veto any proposal. However, if recommendations were framed with the aim of improving the legislature rather than a political party, partisanship should not be a stumbling block.
The chief advantage of this method is that a new agency, though subject to "birth" pangs, can be flexible and innovative in its approach to problems. Furthermore, establishment of the council would symbolize that a vital national need had been recognized and was about to be met—the revitalization of state legislatures. As a result, legislatures might vigorously seek to modernize their structures and research capabilities.

A major drawback to this proposal is that a new agency would add to the present proliferation of executive departments. The question then becomes whether an established unit, such as the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, would be the proper instrument to administer the program. Can such an agency, with the divided viewpoints of the governors, mayors, and state legislators who compose it, manage the program as effectively as a council composed of individuals primarily attuned to legislative interests?

3. Demonstration Grants

An alternative discussed by some individuals is the use of demonstration grants to aid state legislatures. Similar in some respects to the demonstration grants of the Model Cities program, a Model Committee Staffing proposal for state legislatures could be authorized and funded by Congress. An agency such as the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations could select several state legislatures to participate in the program on the basis of congressionally defined criteria. Or state legislatures could apply to an agency such as the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations for grants to plan and implement the project. Grants would be made directly to state legislative agencies, with each participating legislature encouraged to develop a program tailored to its particular problems. A grant for three years could be the time limit for this program.

The purpose of the grant would be to demonstrate to state legislatures the desirability and need for a competent, year-round staff. Methods could be developed by the legislatures to explore

21 In a telephone conversation in December 1968, Larry Margolis, Executive Director of the Citizen's Conference on State Legislatures, indicated that his staff had discussed a model committee staffing proposal.


alternative and new ways to use staff personnel. Thus, innovation and state initiative would be key elements of the program while, at the same time, resources would be concentrated to alleviate a specific need—the information gap. As pointed out in a recent report:

Much of this information gap could be abridged if the major standing committees of State legislatures were professionally staffed on a year-round basis, and if these staffs were made responsible for keeping abreast of major statewide issues and developments in Federal-State and State-local relations. In this way a great deal of valuable investigatory and preparatory work, including bill drafting, dealing with initiation of legislation, as well as budget review, analysis, and evaluation could be performed by legislative committees between sessions. Improving legislative information resources and communication channels should also generally strengthen the State legislature's capacity to develop programs and to exercise oversight of the executive branch.  

A potential difficulty with the demonstration grant approach might be that after the states had recruited and trained committee staffs for the duration of the program, they would need to assume responsibility for its funding. At a time when state and local communities are confronting an emerging fiscal crisis, the probabilities seem low that many states would continue to finance a legislative staff system adequate for their needs. The model committee measure could provide an example of what ought to be, but the reality of the financial "is" might cause an "ought" program to lapse.

4. Matching or Block Grants

Whether a new or existing agency administers a program of federal aid to state legislatures, an important issue is the type of grant-in-aid that will be most beneficial to state needs: the matching or the block grant.

Under a matching grant approach, the recipient state legislature contributes to the federal program with a cash or non-cash contribution. Since many states are not now prepared to efficiently and effectively use funds allocated to them, the matching proposal would encourage legislatures to evaluate their needs and establish priorities before participation. The conditions or "strings" on matching grants would help insure creative initiative by the states.

24 ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, NEW PROPOSALS FOR 1969, supra note 1, at 409-10.
Another way of distributing research funds to state legislatures is through the block grant. Under this system, the federal government could provide each state with a sum determined by a congressionally established formula: per capita population for example. Matching funds would not be required of the recipient government, for the aim of the grant would be to provide unrestricted monies to be used for legislative research. Involvement in the program would be promoted because a state facing financial difficulties could still participate. Further, state treasuries need not be burdened to provide matching funds. One danger in this approach might be that without adequate legislative preparation, funds might be used ineffectively. Or an attitude might develop that the monies were "gifts" and need not be spent carefully. On the other hand, maximum freedom of choice would be allowed the states in the design, execution, and management of their programs.

B. CONSORTIUM OF LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAUS

A second approach would involve the funding of state legislative reference bureaus by the federal government. Every state has some legislative research agency attempting to provide assistance to legislators, though the quality of these services varies greatly among the states. A new step in intergovernmental cooperation would involve the use of the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress as a central administrative unit to oversee this program. Not only would it fund state reference bureaus, but its actions could promote greater understanding between federal and state governments. At a minimum, a basic information system could be set up and made available to the states. The purpose of this organizational system, and one for which it is best suited, would be to close the information gap that now exists between executive and legislative units.

The organization of the program might be as follows: Congress could supply funds to the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress. State reference bureaus or similar agencies would apply for grants to this body for the establishment or improvement of legislative research services. Further, language in the congressional statute could urge that national and state units

cooperate in the dissemination of knowledge. A coordinated inter-
governmental policy could strengthen cooperation among research
units and personnel. In addition, if states requested technical assistance in establishing or revamping their research units, this skill could be made available through the national Legislative Reference Service.

Two major cooperative benefits are foreseen with this approach. First, not only would each state legislature benefit from increased information but the interchange of knowledge might improve federal-state relationships. Arizona, for example, might need data about New York's joint committee structure and this knowledge could be provided by New York's Legislative Reference Bureau. Legislatures would thereby be kept informed about the new developments and needs of the various states. Further, national legislators, through the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, could become more familiar with state needs and problems as its research unit began to compile and analyze data about each state. Conversely, state legislators might further appreciate and understand the national legislative process as materials about congressional and executive proposals became readily available at the state level. Thus, a circular flow of knowledge would serve to increase understanding between and among governmental units. Further, because the staffs of legislative reference services would presumably be competent specialists, common standards, goals, and professional values would be shared. Cooperation among political units might be increased and friction decreased as professionals viewed policy as the product of shared decision-making to reach a set of common goals.\(^{28}\)

Second, state reference bureaus could act not only as clearing-
houses of information, but could conduct policy research as well. With the growing complexity of American society, legislators need research assistance in order to make knowledgeable decisions on vital policy questions. A statement by Charles R. Dechert about the informational needs of the United States Congress also applies to state legislatures:

Congress needs two kinds of information: that which applies to current matters demanding immediate attention, and that which applies to issues likely to emerge in the future.\(^{29}\)

\(^{28}\) Elazer, The Shaping of Intergovernmental Relations in the Twentieth Century, 359 ANNALS AM. ACADEMY POL. & SOCIAL SCI. 10-22 (May 1965); Grodzins, supra note 25, at 71-75.

State reference bureaus could help fill this gap by conducting original research for committees and legislators.

C. REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE INSTITUTES

A further effort at innovation and cooperation would be the formation of regional legislative institutes. The purpose of these centers would be to assist state legislatures in functions and responsibilities that range from policy research to pre-session orientation. Individual states are hard pressed financially to meet the needs of their citizens, but a union of state legislatures could contribute monies on a proportional basis to create a research organization or fund an existing body capable of meeting the varied needs and interests of several states. The New England region provides an example of an area where states could voluntarily join together for such a purpose. Federal financial aid would be made available, subject to program requirements, through an appropriate federal agency.

Several regions could be designated by a congressional statute on the basis of historical, geographic, economic, or cultural criteria. Representatives from each state legislature in a region, selected by the majority and minority leaders of each chamber, for example, could meet to discuss the organization of a regional research unit. Its functions and goals would be outlined. Whether a new unit should be created or reliance placed on one or more university-based research bureaus or similar groups are typical problems that would need resolution prior to application for federal funds.

Many problems are associated with the implementation of this idea. To whom should the unit be accountable? Should the organization undertake spot research, long-range policy projects, or both? What would its relationship be to related agencies in the region? Of especially great importance would be the need for a competent and effective staff that could establish a relationship of confidence between the research institute and the various state legislatures. Professor Royce Hanson identified a factor in the growth of metropolitan councils that would be applicable to the development of regional legislative institutes:

The speed with which a council develops and the range of activities it undertakes is largely a function of staff capacities and interests.

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30 This idea was proposed in an interview with Albert J. Abrams, Secretary of the New York State Senate, December 1968.
31 Studies of regionalism include: R. Martin, Federalism and Regionalism (1957); Graves, supra note 25, at 612-53; Regionalism in America (M. Jensen ed. 1951); J. Fesler, Area and Administration (1949); W. Heseltine, Sections and Politics: Selected Essays 97-113 (R. Current ed. 1968).
No other single element seems as important in the development of councils. The trials and length of the formative period can be substantially reduced with able staff.\textsuperscript{32}

Though states have many common problems, professional staff personnel would need to be sensitive to the diverse configurations of each state's political system. As Jacob and Vines point out:

The milieu in which state politicians operate conditions their behavior in many ways. It leads to the development of some demands and the absence of others. It provides resources which help some states meet their problems; in other states, the resources are missing. It provides social conditions to which the political system must adapt or which it must seek to change.\textsuperscript{33}

The staff cannot ignore state differences if they are to assist legislators in making policy judgments. The recruitment of competent staff personnel sensitive to these issues would be a key priority.

The advantages of regional legislative institutes are several. Turnover among state legislators is relatively high.\textsuperscript{34} As a result, state legislators often find it difficult to acquire expertise in substantive areas. A regional research organization could improve the effectiveness of many part-time legislators by giving continuous attention to important state problems while, at the same time, serving as data and information centers. Further, these regional units would help establish intergovernmental communication and cooperation in vital policy areas.

IV. POLITICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES

Two problems are viewed as potential roadblocks to any of the aforementioned approaches: partisanship and states' rights. As to the first, it may be argued that federal funds would be used to aid the party in control of the state, with legislative improvement of secondary importance. For example, committee staff is needed by many state legislatures. With federal funds available, this need could be met, but in a manner that might intensify partisan differences. Since chairmen are often responsible for the selection of committee assistants, minority members might be denied access to

\textsuperscript{32} ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, METROPOLITAN COUNCILS OF GOVERNMENT: AN INFORMATIVE REPORT 32 (R. Hanson Dec. 1967); Conway, Making Research Effective in Legislation, 1967 Wis. L. Rev. 252-66.

\textsuperscript{33} POLITICS IN THE AMERICAN STATES 5 (H. Jacob & K. Vines eds. 1965).

\textsuperscript{34} Dye, State Legislative Politics, in POLITICS IN THE AMERICAN STATES 169 (H. Jacob & K. Vines eds. 1965); Hyneman, Tenure and Turnover of Legislative Personnel, 195 ANNALS AM. ACADEMY SOCIAL & POL. SCI. 21 (Jan. 1938); Huntington, Congressional Responses to the Twentieth Century, in AMERICAN ASSEMBLY, THE CONGRESS AND AMERICA'S FUTURE 8 (D. Truman ed. 1965).
the professional staff. As a result, the effectiveness of minority members could be impaired. Not only would they be unable to play their committee role properly but their ability to evaluate legislative policies might be limited.35

Another political factor should be noted. Some state legislatures continue to be dominated by factions unresponsive to local, state, or national needs. Even with reapportionment, fair and effective representation of the citizen's interests is not assured.36 If poverty, racism, and urban blight are viewed as the nation's chief domestic ills, it is questionable whether some states have the will, not to mention the capacity, to meet these complex problems. Federal funds might therefore strengthen the position of the most recalcitrant elements in the legislature, further delaying legislative improvements in some states for many years.

The states' rights issue raises concern about the perils of paternalism, particularly the subversion of state initiative and independence. Objectors to federal aid could claim that "handouts" destroy responsibility and self-reliance. Grants to state legislatures would result in institutions dependent on the federal government. An undermining of the democratic order could also occur, some might suggest, as the tentacles of the national government spread in every direction to control individuals and institutions under the guise of serving them. These objections and fears would have to be met by legislative language stressing the voluntary nature of the program and the states' influence on management.

Duplication might be another problem.37 Why fund the research projects of legislative units when state executive agencies usually study similar topics? A three-faceted assumption seems evident in this viewpoint: executive reports are sufficient for policy development, they are neutral and objective in character, and the legislatures have little to contribute by way of research and analysis. All three are open to serious question.

It is apparent that executive agencies are not likely to analyze every question deemed important to the legislature. How to develop administrative accountability vis-à-vis the legislature is one of these. Moreover, executive reports, no matter how accurate their facts, may be written from a particular perspective. Executive "ex-

35 Cochrane, Partisan Aspects of Congressional Committee Staffing, 17 Western Pol. Q. 343 (June 1964); Ford, Congressional Minority Staffing, 1966 Good Gov't 11 (Spring).
37 Congressman Al Ullman (D. Ore.) raised this issue in an interview held in January 1969.
perts” may consider their policy suggestions as optimal methods to resolve a particular issue when, in reality, their range of alternative solutions has been limited by a narrow view of the causes of problems. The construction of a highway, for example, involves more than the technical details associated with pouring cement. It concerns human and physical values such as the relocation of people, the conservation of natural resources, and the preservation of communities. Elvis J. Stahr, president of the National Audubon Society, made a similar point in stressing the need for greater understanding of the environment. Stahr said:

There is an education gap, due to the specialization that has virtually taken us over. . . . We study the environmental sciences piecemeal. We fail to recognize how delicately the pieces fit together. We can no longer afford engineers who only know how to build highways without considering all their impacts, agricultural experts who don’t know about the dangers of pesticides to the total ecology, social scientists who don’t recognize the importance of environment in human behavior.

The legislature, through its studies, could perform a valuable function by considering and integrating diverse views and values in the development of approaches to meet today’s multi-faceted issues. A broad vision rather than a narrow focus underscores the utility of legislative research.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The problems of our state legislatures are of vital national interest. This view is rooted in the belief that democratic government functions best with a strong and independent legislature. Legislative modernization is a precondition for effective and responsible institutions. With increased concern among legislators and the availability of federal funds, an effort could be triggered to improve the state legislative branch of government.

No political institutions are guaranteed perpetual life. States must take the initiative themselves, as many are now doing, to revamp their political structures. Restrictive and lengthy consti-

38 Bolton, supra note 4, at 3.
40 The Joint Committee on the Organization of the Congress (1965–68) conducted extensive hearings on the need for legislative reorganization. Action is now pending in the 91st Congress on several legislative reform measures. Renewed interest in national legislative reform may stimulate increased legislative self-examination at the state level. See Margolis, States on the Spot, 57 Nat’l Civic Rev. 303–06 (June 1968).
41 See, e.g., Citizens League Report, Organization for State Policy Making, Twenty-Nine Proposals for Strengthening the Minnesota Legislature (Feb. 16, 1968); Idaho Citizens Committee on the State Legislature, A Report to the People of the State of Idaho from
tutions, inadequate salaries, and short sessions are only three of the many difficulties facing state legislatures. All serve to impede effective and representative decision making. Only through a concerted effort in all these areas will state legislatures begin to play their proper leadership role. The prerequisites to that effort are recognition of the need for legislative self-examination, an awareness of the potential for institutional change, and the will to take positive actions. In this way, legislatures will meet the complexities of our highly developed political system. Not only must state legislatures be equipped to initiate policies but they must have the capacity to analyze and evaluate the adequacy of programs, to develop alternatives, to identify potential consequences, and to plan for society's evolution.

Federal aid to state legislatures may take forms that have not been examined here. For example, Senator Milton Young (Rep. N.D.) introduced a bill in the 90th Congress which would have excluded "from gross income under the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 the expense allowances, not exceeding a total of $2,000 a year, paid to members of state legislatures." No action was taken on this measure, yet it symbolizes a sensitivity to the problem. Another proposal might be some type of federal tax sharing between state and local governments. Whatever direction assistance might take, the national government has the unique function of promoting legislative change at the state and local level. As Professor James W. Fesler concluded:

A recurrent theme that has emerged in our own analysis is that state and local governments are generally indisposed to strengthen their own basic capabilities. If these governments are to play significant roles in the future, it seems that the federal government will need to play a much more active part in "forcing them to be free." That is, it must choose to intervene with federal power and inducements to build the robustness that state and local governments need for successful resistance to centralizing tendencies in the American system. It is an odd responsibility for a central government to undertake. But as senior producer, as well as star, of the American drama, the federal government ultimately carries the obligation to see that the other roles in the drama are well played.

44 The 50 States and Their Local Governments 588 (J. Fesler ed. 1967).