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Subject: Data-Driven Governance; Federal Regulations; Human Trafficking; State Severance Taxes; Ballot Selfies

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Using Data and Technology to Enhance Governance

A group of CSG members recently visited the headquarters of CSG Associate member Esri, an international Geographic Information Systems software company, in Redlands, Calif., to discuss how to use data and apps to make better policy decisions in their states. "Every day as legislators we have to make important decisions about where to spend our taxpayer's money. We rely heavily on data to help us make those decisions," said Delaware state Rep. Helene Keeley, who attended the event.

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Following the Rules: A Guide to the Federal Regulatory Process

According to a 2015 report by the White House Office of Management and Budget, unfunded mandates and federal regulations cost states, cities and the general public between \$57 billion and \$85 billion each year. While state leaders are working to maintain a balanced budget in their respective states, they often can't factor in the potential economic costs of federal regulations. But how are federal rules made? CSG Federal Affairs Director Andy Karellas provides a primer.

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States Make Progress in Combating Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a fast-growing global issue with a reach that impacts every state in the country. In 2012, the United Nation's International Labour Organization, or ILO, estimated that there were 21 million victims of human trafficking all across the world, forced into labor or commercial sex work. Experts suggest it is the second largest criminal enterprise in the world, netting an estimated \$150 billion each year according to the ILO. But states are taking action.

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Transportation Policy Experts Discuss Funding Outlook for States

During a recent CSG eCademy webcast, "States to Watch in 2016: Transportation Funding," transportation policy experts made some predictions about upcoming transportation funding issues, and possible solutions, in the states. In 2015, eight states passed gas tax increases while other states considered tolling changes and other revenue options. But, according to session presenters, 2016 could be a slow year for major transportation funding initiatives.

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State Severance Taxes

A majority of states--35--impose at least one form of severance tax, which is a tax on natural resource extraction. While overall severance taxes don't make up a large percentage of total state taxes collected--2.1 percent in 2014--they have very different impacts across the states. For example, in 2014 severance taxes collected ranged from 72 percent of total tax revenue in Alaska and 54 percent of revenue in North Dakota to less than 1 percent in 18 states.

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States Adopt Laws for Savings Accounts for Persons with Disabilities

On Dec. 19, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Stephen Beck Jr. Achieving a Better Life Experience, or ABLE, Act that allows persons with disabilities to save for their futures through tax-advantaged savings accounts. The act gives qualified Americans with disabilities the chance to save money and meet the added expenses of living with a disability without jeopardizing their eligibility for important supports such as Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid.

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Ballot Selfies Trending Hard in State Elections

With the 2016 presidential primary elections in full swing, the ballot selfie is quickly becoming an important part of voting culture and political expression in the states because of modern technology. As states grapple over the ballot selfie controversy, one thing is certain, with smartphones and social media at our fingertips, the concept of privacy has shifted dramatically.

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Registration Open for CSG Spring Business Meeting

Registration for the CSG Spring Business Meeting is now open online at www.csg.org. Meetings will be held May 12-15 at the Hyatt Regency Downtown Lexington and the CSG National Headquarters building in Lexington, Ky. The new CSG Spring Business Meeting will convene the CSG Shared State Legislation Committee, 21st Century Foundation Board of Trustees and Leadership Council.

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Supreme Court Midterm Webinar

Friday, March 11, 1 p.m. EST
Free Webinar Presented by the State and Local Legal Center

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10 Years of the Roberts Court for State and Local Government Webinar

Wednesday, March 16, 2 p.m. EDT
Free Webinar Presented by the State and Local Legal Center

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Road Usage Charge:

An Update from the West

Tuesday, March 22, 2 p.m. EDT
Free CSG eCademy Presented by CSG West

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The Facts on Public Pensions

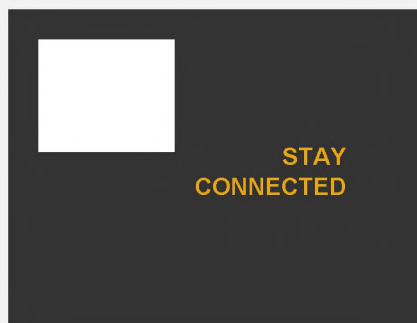
Tuesday, March 29, 2 p.m. EDT
FREE CSG eCademy Webcast

Founded in 1933, The Council of State Governments is our nation's only organization serving all three branches of state government. CSG is a region-based forum that fosters the exchange of insights and ideas to help state officials shape public policy. This offers unparalleled regional, national and international opportunities to network, develop leaders, collaborate and create problem-solving partnerships.

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