



Third Northern Mariana Islands Constitutional Convention

MEMORANDUM FOR THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AND PUBLIC FINANCE

Attached is a report entitled "Staffing The Legislative Branch" just received from Howard N. Mantel of the Institute of Public Administration in New York. Mr. Mantel, although a lawyer by training, has spent the last 20 or more years worrying about governmental problems of the kind that the Convention is concerned with. He was, incidentally, a consultant to the First Constitutional Convention.

Legal Counsel

cc: President
Legal Team

D R A F T HNM June 19, 1995

STAFFING THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Issue

Can Constitutions effectively dictate legislative staffing structures? Underlying this question is the support which legislators need to do their job: What staff units do they need? How should these units be organized and funded? How professional and how partisan should they be (the terms are not totally separable)? How can they best serve members, leaders, committees--and the public? What technological and information resources are needed within the legislative branch? And, overall, what can be done to assure a quality product while containing costs?

Other questions that may be posed to the revisors of the Northern Marianas Constitution:

- . Should the Constitution specify duties and responsibilities of the Legislative Bureau (i.e., in addition to those mentioned in the Constitution)?

- . Should the Constitution specify public information responsibilities of the Legislature? What types of staff units should provide such services?

- . Should the Constitution mandate or encourage staff recruitment and promotion on "merit and fitness" requirements?

If yes, should it be extended outside the staff of the Legislative Bureau? All legislative staff? Or should such matters be left to legislation or internal rule?

Not all of these questions are directly related to the Constitution, but issues may arise during the consideration of it.

Types of Legislative Support Services

The Council of State Governments identifies the following types of legislative functions:

- . Administrative Management
- . Administrative Rules Review
- . Bill Drafting
- . Bill Status
- . Computer Services
- . Fiscal Review and Analysis
- . Legislative Reference Library
- . Legislative Service Agency
- . Post Audit
- . Public Information Services
- . Research and Policy Analysis
- . Statute and Code Revision

Different state legislatures organize these services in different ways, some combining several of them within distinct units, some dealing with services in limited ways--e.g., for the session itself, and some identifying units as part of the Legislature, albeit they are independent bodies, e.g., legislative auditor, law revision commissions, inter alia.

In the Northern Mariana Islands, some aspects of staffing are specified in the Constitution, including the basic bicameral form of the Legislature, and the references in the Constitution to legislative committees (Article II, Section 14(b), second sentence, and Section 14(c), first sentence). Atypical of the states as a whole, there is constitutional establishment of a legislative bureau (Article II, Section 17).

Size of Legislative Staffs

In the past several decades staff and its professionalization have increasingly characterized modernization trends of state legislatures. Recent fiscal crises have had their constraining impact on the legislative branch of governments. (One interesting footnote on costs: Nevada's Constitution, Article 4, Section 28, prohibits changes in compensation of any "...officer or employee of the Legislature, or either branch thereof..." at the session where such change is approved.)

The National Conference on State Legislatures estimated that between 1979 and 1988, staff working in the fifty state legislatures had increased from 27,000 to 34,000 (a 26 percent increase). The size ranges from Wyoming, which had the smallest full-time legislative staff (about 20) to New York (about 3,600). Of total staffs (full and part (or session) time), Vermont had the smallest number (about 70), while New York led the nation, with about 4,150.

The states with the smallest full-time staffs (under 100) are:

Wyoming
Delaware
New Mexico
North Dakota
Vermont
Idaho
South Dakota
Utah

Those with the largest full-time staffs (over 1,000) are:

Illinois
Michigan
Texas
Florida
Pennsylvania
California
New York

Legislative Staffing Structures

The Council on State Governments (Reference, State Legislative Leadership... pp. 259-261) identifies legislative support agencies in the states and territories. For example, among legislative fiscal support units are Minnesota's Legislative Coordinating Committee and within it the Chief Legislative Fiscal Analyst; New Hampshire's Office of Legislative Budget Assistant; and Maine's Office of Fiscal & Program Review in the Legislative Council.

Staffing structures among selected states help portray the diversity of arrangements, but also denote common features, such as shared services of the two houses. (Information drawn from a report by the National Conference of State Legislatures, from the Council of State Governments, and from telephone interviews).

Alabama. Most staff services are nonpartisan, centrally organized and operated by the House and Senate. Central agencies function independently from one another, supervised by different legislative committees. Shared House/Senate Services include: Legislative Reference Service (under the Legislative Council, with Senate and House chairs); Legislative Fiscal Office (similarly structured); and Data Center. The Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate are responsible for hiring other full-time and session employees, including secretaries, chamber staff, messengers, and security personnel. Pool and shared arrangements provide secretarial support to the leadership and members. Each house has a public information officer.

Arizona. Most research and administrative staff are organized separately by the two houses, under the supervision of their presiding officers. The House has an Office of Research, supervised by the majority leader, a Chief of Staff (administrative support), and a chief clerk. The Senate has a Secretary, responsible for calendars and journals; and the office of Senate President (administrative support). The Office of Research provides staff to Senate committees. Secretarial support is provided to members (one

secretary is assigned to two House members, Senators have full-time secretaries during the session); and there is staff provided to the leadership. Fiscal, legal, and bill drafting services are centralized through the Legislative Council and the Joint Legislative Budget Committee.

Kansas. Staff services largely are nonpartisan and jointly organized under a Legislative Coordinating Council, "a bipartisan leadership group." Four autonomous staff divisions operate under LCC: Legislative Research Department; Office of Revisor of Statutes, Legislative Administrative Services, and Legislative Counsel ("...responsible for litigation, investigative proceedings involving the legislature and other legal matters..."). There is a separate post-audit staff; and a joint, bipartisan committee which appoints the post auditor. Units of LCC provide counsel and research to standing committees. Separate officers are the House Chief Clerk and Senate Secretary. Senators have a personal secretary while in session, while representatives share secretaries (one for three members). Leaders also are assigned staff, who "...conduct partisan projects, monitor committees, do constituent work and assist the leader..."

Montana. Most services are provided by a joint, general purpose, nonpartisan agency--the Legislative Council. It is comprised of four members from each house and oversees staff research services, committee studies, bill drafting, legal counsel, code revision, and legislative administration; and it operates electronic text and data processing systems and a reference library. The Council provides additional services to the Revenue Oversight and other committees. An audit committee appoints the legislative auditor (state-wide audit functions). A Legislative Finance Committee oversees the Legislative Fiscal Analyst. There are also staffs to the Environmental Quality and Legislative Consumer Councils. Separate offices include the Chief Clerk of the House and Senate Secretary. Pooled secretarial support is provided to members, and presiding officers and majority and minority leaders hire staff during the session.

New York. Because it is so vastly different from the arrangements for the smaller states, a word on it may be instructive. The NCSL survey of the 50 States notes, "Staff services {in the New York Legislature} are structured by chamber and party lines with few joint, nonpartisan entities. The Assembly speaker and the Senate president pro tem determine personnel levels and policies...set staff allowances for each committee and allocations for other staff under direct member supervision. Members, however, have considerable independence in hiring personnel and committee staff once the funding levels are established..." (p. 97). Well respected professional joint units include the Legislative Bill Drafting Commission, Law Revision Commission, Legislative Library, Legislative Commission on Expenditure Review (established by statute in 1969 as a permanent, independent, bipartisan body, which, "...conducts financial and expenditure studies of agency performance to ensure compliance with legislative intent..."; it has long earned a nationwide reputation), and the Administrative Regulations Review Commission. Less renown are a variety of temporary study commissions reviewing a number of subjects, e.g., the dairy industry, solid waste management, and real property taxation. (The Council of State Governments, State Legislative Leadership... p. 78, identifies 14 such temporary commissions, all with executive directors and staffs.) Still other entities are under the Senate and Assembly leadership, e.g., the Assembly's minority office of correspondence services, the Speaker's Washington {D.C.} counsel, the Senate, Washington, D.C. Senate Office, etc. In 1988, NCSL reported that each Senator received a base allowance of \$130,000 to hire staff; Assembly members \$33,000.

Wyoming. A single office, the Legislative Service Office, under the supervision of the Legislative Management Council, provides general research, drafting services, and audit budget analyses; and internal administrative support. Each house selects its respective chief clerks to serve during the session only; they are responsible for calendars, journals, bill processing, and so forth. Secretarial service is provided to standing committees during sessions (interim committees are provided staff by the Legislative Service Office). A steno pool assists committees and members during the

session; and presiding officers are provided personal secretaries--also just during the session.

Legislative Audit Function

One of the principal tasks of a legislative body is to oversee the efficacy of the laws and appropriations made by it. One way of doing this is to have as part of the legislative machinery an audit function, such as a Legislative Auditor. The auditor's office may be complemented or supplemented by other units, as noted in several of the summaries of state legislative structures. The post audit function is usually an independent branch of the legislature or entirely independent either of the legislature or governor (the auditor may be elected). At the federal level, the General Accounting Office is a part of the Congress, but operates with considerable independence. (A recent study for the Senate Government Operations Committee, prepared by Annmarie Walsh of the Institute of Public Administration (for the National Academy of Public Administration), identified questions about the mission of GAO, and the quality of its product.) Both state constitutions and statutes create and define state auditor (or comptroller) functions.

Appointed Auditor

Louisiana's Constitution, Article III, Section 11 provides:

There shall be a legislative auditor responsible solely to the legislature. he shall serve as a fiscal advisor to it and shall perform the duties and functions provided by law related to auditing fiscal records of the state, its agencies, and political subdivisions. He shall be elected by the concurrence of a majority of the elected members of each house and may be removed by the concurrence of two-thirds of the elected members of each House.

By statute a number of legislative committees and joint committees also deal with budget and audit matters. These include: Legislative Audit Advisory Council;

Legislative Budgetary Control Council, Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget, and the Joint Legislative Committee on Capital Outlay.

In the Northern Mariana Islands, Article III, Section 12 of the Constitution specifies that the public auditor is appointed by the governor, with advice and consent of both houses. The power to remove the public auditor vests in the Legislature, "...only for cause and by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of each house..." Until the 1985 Constitutional Convention, vacancies were filled temporarily by the presiding officer of the Senate. This was changed to temporary appointment by the governor. The public auditor reports at least annually to the legislature and the governor (the reports are to be "...made public promptly...").

Georgia's State Auditor (Department of Audits and Accounts) is considered an independent office, albeit technically a part of the Legislature. The Auditor is appointed by the Legislature (majority vote of both houses) for an unstated term (according to Claude Vickers, the present State Auditor, presumably until the Legislature holds a new election--there is no statutory or constitutional removal provision). The State Auditor reports on the State's economy and efficiency both to the Governor and Legislature. All of the nearly 300 staff (most are accountants, plus about 35 performance auditors who come from a variety of backgrounds) serve at the pleasure of the State Auditor. The office has always been regarded as nonpartisan. It has audit jurisdiction over all state agencies, state colleges and universities, and all 183 local boards of education. It also reviews the audits of the cities and counties. The State Auditor's proposed budget is forwarded to the governor, who is not permitted to make any changes in it. Mr. Vickers notes that the State is fiscally conservative, has excellent credit ratings, and maintains its "rainy day" account, which is calculated at three percent of the prior year's state budget.

Hawaii, under Article VII, Section 10 of its Constitution, provides that the Legislature by majority vote of each house in joint session, appoints an auditor to serve for a

period of eight years. By a two thirds vote of the members in joint session, the auditor can be removed for cause. That official is given a post audit function of "...the transactions, accounts, programs and performance..." of all departments, offices and agencies of the state and its political subdivision, and to certify the accuracy of all financial statements issued by accounting officers. (The "programs and performance" language was added in 1978.) He or she reports his or her findings and recommendations to the governor and legislature "...at such times as shall be provided by law. The auditor shall also make additional reports and conduct such other investigations as may be directed by the legislature."

Delaware has a somewhat unusual and limited audit function within the Legislature: the Office of Comptroller General is one of two units in the Legislature's Legislative Council (the Research Division is the other). The Comptroller General prepares fiscal notes as part of the Legislature's review of the proposed state budget, undertakes program evaluation, and performs an audit function, apparently on a limited basis. The bulk of its activities appear to be more of a fiscal support unit, rather than an audit unit. The Comptroller General's staff is 15, including clerical. The Comptroller General formally reports to the Legislative Council (described separately), as well as to two joint committees of the Legislature: the Joint Finance Committee and the Joint Sunset Committee.

Kansas similarly includes a post auditor office within the Legislature, and is overseen by a joint bipartisan committee.

Elected Auditor

A different approach is the elected comptroller, which of course increases the independence of that official from the legislature and governor.

In Connecticut, that officer pursuant to the Constitution is elected for four year terms

(Article Fourth, Section 1). There is also an elected treasurer. Under Section 24, the powers of the comptroller include, inter alia, "He shall, ex officio, be one of the auditors of the accounts of the treasurer..." Under an earlier (1818) Constitution, the comptroller was appointed annually by the General Assembly.

North Carolina has an elected auditor (and an elected treasurer). Duties of the office are prescribed by law. The auditor was directly elected since the 1776 Constitution. Vacancies are filled by the governor. (Constitution, Article III, Section 7.)

Arkansas, under Amendment 56 to its Constitution, includes in the executive department, a variety of elected officers, including the Auditor of State (salary is set in the Constitution at \$22,500).

Fiscal Support Units

In addition to the auditor-comptroller posts, the legislatures have a wide array of units that review (and help set) budgets and budget proposals and appropriations, analyze tax revenues and the state's economy, and undertake related tasks. (At the federal level, the Congressional Budget Office is regarded as a source of nonpartisan analysis, although rarely a noncontroversial one.)

Vermont's Legislature utilizes a professional Joint Fiscal Office, which serves the Joint Fiscal Committee of the Legislature. Its duties are delineated by statute (2 V.S.A., Ch. 15, Sections 501-504). The Joint Fiscal Office serves what is described as "...a varied market":

The office's primary responsibility is to the Joint Fiscal Committee and the Chairs of the four money committees, House Appropriations, Senate Appropriations, House Ways and Means, and Senate Finance. The office also responds to information requests from other members of the Legislature, the administration and the general public...The Joint Fiscal Office has, since its

inception, served the same clientele

The staff...assists with the analysis of the state budget and revenue system and related legislation...During the session the office staff are primarily assigned to the four money committees...The Office contracts with a revenue forecaster...these forecast provide a basis for spending and revenue generating decisions. When the Legislature is not in session the staff...work on projects including legislatively directed studies and other studies sanctioned by the Joint Fiscal Committee and staff the Joint Fiscal Committee.

In 1994, the Joint Fiscal Office initiated publishing a fiscal fact book. In FY 96 it may create a fiscal letter, "...which will be sent out to all legislators out-of-session to keep them informed of fiscal developments." During FY 94 the Office fielded 4,200 requests, of which 2,400 were budget related requests, and 1,700 were revenue related requests. Despite this impressive level of activity, the staff is small: nine professionals, one of whom is the contracted revenue forecaster; and budget of slightly over \$400,000. The budget request for FY 96 was estimated at 1.75% over FY95. (Reference, Memo Klein to Macaulay, February 22, 1995.)

Nebraska. The Fiscal Division is under the direction of the Appropriations Committee. Staff conducts research projects, provides information on state government finances and agency activities, and undertakes performance reviews of selected agencies and programs.

New Mexico's staff are responsible for similar activities, as well as sunset reviews of state programs.

North Dakota. The fiscal division of the Legislative Council reviews, inter alia, the audits submitted by the state auditor.

Georgia has in its Legislative Services Committee (a statutory committee chaired by

the House Speaker), the Office of Legislative Council; and the Legislative Fiscal Officer (internal fiscal matters for the legislative branch). A recently-created Budget Responsibility Oversight Committee employs a staff of six persons to review the state budget. It has audit authority and can undertake performance audits, among other activities (cf. State Auditor's Office, summarized supra). The Budget and Oversight Committee staff works with the House and Senate appropriations committees on the general appropriation bills and analyzes the governor's proposed budget (separate House and Senate research offices provide short term studies for members).

South Carolina. This State has established a joint body of the Legislature and Governor, over budget matters. Noted for the dominance of its Legislature over the governor, this hybrid legislative-executive arrangement strengthens the role of the legislature in state budgeting. Whicker notes:

Two of the five members of the Budget and Control Board are prominent members of the state legislature: the chairperson of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. The governor is only one of the five members...the remaining two...members, the state treasurer and the comptroller general, are independently elected...They rarely owe the governor many political chits...the structure of the BCB then significantly weakens the governor's role in budget development and relegates the governor to a weakened position. (Whicker, p. 139.)

While it is argued that this hybrid legislative-executive device "elicits healthy cooperation between the two branches of government..." critics of BCB, "...contend that the cooperation...is more mythical than real. Some professional rivalry exists between the Budget Division of the BCB and the staff of the House Ways and Means Committee. This is the main point of intense legislative scrutiny..." (Whicker, p. 140.) There is also a Legislative Audit Council, whose staff audits state agencies for fiscal management and program efficiency and effectiveness. It is supervised by a three-person citizen board "...elected by the Legislature. The council executive director

serves a four-year term." (Reference: National Conference of State Legislatures, Legislative Staff Services... p. 119).

Research and Bill Drafting Support Units

What the Northern Mariana Islands does by Constitution, other states have done by statute or internal legislative action: establishing centralized staff support units.

In the Northern Marianas, the Legislative Bureau performs a variety of somewhat defined duties and functions. According to Article II, Section 17 of the Constitution:

- . (b)...The staff members shall include legal counsel and other administrative staff.
- . (c) The bureau shall provide all required services to the legislature in connection with duties and responsibilities during sessions and committee meetings. it shall maintain all records, files, library and other documents of the legislature.

Alabama's bill drafting and research services to the Legislature are provided by the Legislative Reference Service, operating under the supervision of a joint House Senate Legislative Council. The Service was established by statute and has existed for more than 50 years. It is composed of a director and 11 other attorneys, organized in two sets of teams (by subject area), plus a support staff of 12-15.

Delaware by statute has established a Legislative Council, comprised of a Research Division and an Office of Comptroller General (discussed supra). Both units report to the Council, which is comprised of the leadership of the House and Senate, and representing both parties. The Chairmanship of the Legislative Council rotates between the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. The

Research Division performs a variety of support functions. It has a total staff of 18; six are professionals (this number will be increased when the Council adds an Office of Registrar to oversee administrative regulations of the executive branch). The Research Division provides staff to committees; and it performs legislative analysis, bill drafting, and related services. Work is undertaken for committees and for members on a first come, first served basis. The Research Division employs two attorneys; it is estimated that they draft approximately one third of the bills before the Legislature. There are bill drafting attorneys in each House. One consequence of this bifurcated arrangement for bill drafting, is that despite the fact that the Research Division has prepared a bill drafting manual, there is no review of bills drafted for conformance to that manual.

Idaho, by statute and internal procedures, has a Legislative Council composed of 14 members representing both the Senate and House. Its functions include a joint legislative oversight committee, which administers an Office of Performance Evaluations (4 positions); and the Legislative Services Office, which has a director and operates four units: Legislative Computer Network (2 positions), Research and Legislation (17 positions), Budget & Policy Analysis (10 positions), and Legislative Audits (29 positions). The FY 96 appropriation is \$4.1 million. This is separate from a \$4.3 million appropriation for the Legislature itself. According to the Idaho Legislative Fiscal Report, p. 28-02, "The House and Senate voluntarily reduced their General Fund allotments for calendar year 1995 by 5%..."

Wyoming's Legislative Service Office provides its part-time Legislature with virtually all support services. LSO has a staff of 19, comprised of its director, an attorney, five attorneys, three budget/fiscal analysts, four program specialists, two computer specialists, and support staff. (The Wyoming Legislature meets for 40 days in regular session; in the alternate years, it meets only for a 20 day fiscal session. Members are paid \$125 daily salary, plus \$80 per diem (expenses) and 35 cents per mile reimbursement.)

Public Information

All state legislatures provide staff to make information about legislative activities available to the public. The scope varies among the states. Alabama has separately identified public information officers, as do Iowa, Louisiana (Senate), Missouri, New Jersey, and Utah (House and Senate information specialists), inter alia.

Georgia has separate House and Senate information offices. According to Buzz Weiss, the Senate information officer, that unit, which is nonpartisan, provides a variety of services to members, e.g., a clipping service and bill status. It prepares daily and weekly summaries of activities for members, the media, and the public. Legislative sessions of both Houses are taped and a daily half hour summary is shown on the Georgia public television service. There is also an 800 toll free number for Georgians and others to obtain information on legislative activities.

Nebraska, with its unicameral legislature, emphasizes information availability to the public and the public's right to know. A staff of three comprise the Information Office, which publishes a weekly "Unicameral Update," during the legislative session. (The Legislature is a citizen, part-time body, many of whose members are from agricultural communities and want to see an early end to sessions). The "Update" includes articles about particular bills, and a summary of legislative activity. There is wide access by the public to legislative information. Citizens can call a hotline number for information and copies of bills; information also is available electronically. State educational authorities have prepared a curriculum on the Legislature for fourth graders! Public television provides gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Legislature's sessions.

Professional Personnel of the Legislature

Legislatures tend to combine partisan staffs with units that are nonpartisan. Staff

members can be partisan, yet professional. It is also not unknown for appointees to be both partisan and not chosen for their "merit and fitness"! The National Conference of State Legislatures in 1994 issued a report of its Legislative Institution Task Force, which recommended that legislatures:

Continue to maintain and support the development of professional staff devoted to providing objective information and expertise of the legislature. At the same time, it is essential that the professional staff honor the ultimate authority and responsibility of the elected legislators (p. xi).

The Report cautioned:

...many legislators, staff and political scientists, like the public, are concerned that professionalization can go too far with legislatures becoming full-time highly professional bodies...Extensive professionalization fragments the institution by making members less dependent on centralizing forces. This makes it more difficult for the legislatures to resolve complex, divisive issues (p. 13).

Most states exempt legislative staffs from their civil service requirements. Examples include:

Louisiana's Constitution Article X, Section 2(10) places in the unclassified civil service, "...employees, deputies and officers of the legislature and of the offices of the governor..."

Hawaii has a less explicit constitutional provision, i.e., "The employment of persons in the civil service, as defined by law, of or under the State, shall be governed by the merit principle" (Article XVI, Section 1). According to Lee, Hawaii by statute (Haw. Rev. Stat. Ch. 76) excludes from civil service requirements, "appointees to the cabinet and to boards and commissions, as well as legislative staff positions" (p. 190,

emphasis added).

California, by Constitution, Article VII, Section 4(a) exempts from the civil service, "Officers and employees appointed or employed by the Legislature, either house, or legislative committees."

The Northern Marianas Constitution, Article II, Section 17, provides that the director of the Legislative Bureau in the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Legislature be appointed by the joint leadership of the legislature; and the director is authorized to "..employ all necessary staff, other than personal staff of the members of the legislature...the staff members shall include legal counsel and other administrative staff." Subsection (e) states: "The bureau shall be free from any political harassment or pressure."

Article XX of the NMI Constitution establishes a nonpartisan and independent civil service commission. The commission's authority does not appear to extend to "...the administrative staff of the legislative and judicial branches..."

Options

Although there are few precedents among the states to the NMI constitutional provision establishing its legislative bureau, that entity is similar in many other respects to those of other states, with an emphasis on a unit serving both bodies. One possible modification would be to amend Article II, Section 17 by providing greater specificity of the Bureau's duties and responsibilities. This might include clarifying the wording "all required services to the legislature..." (Section 17(c).) Should it, for example, specify a fiscal analysis role? Legislative research?

With respect to size of legislative staff overall, the two constitutional provisions that govern are Article II, Section 17(f) on its budget and the ceiling; and under Article X, Section

7, the Legislature's duty to establish in the annual budget a personnel ceiling, "...on the number of persons that may be employed by each branch, department, agency...of the Commonwealth to which public funds are appropriated..." "Branch" in this instance presumably includes the Legislature. These strictures aside, most issues having to do with types and size of staffs, are not constitutional concerns.

One might consider a more explicit provision on the public's right to know, which might require or imply staff units to disseminate information and respond to the public's inquiries. NMI Constitution Article II, Section 14(c) requires that meets of the Legislature and of its committees be public (by a two thirds vote of the members of one house, that body (or a committee of that body) may meet in executive session); and the requirement that "Final action on any legislative matter may not be taken in executive session." It might be useful to provide a pro-active public information/access type of provision in Section 17 (Legislative Bureau), perhaps by adding to Subsection (c) wording to the effect that the bureau shall "...provide information to the public on the legislature and its activities..." This could of course, be done by statute or rule, or by other internal legislative means.

Another option addresses the issue of the quality of support personnel in the Legislature. This could be done by adding to Section 17(e) language that would require a "merit and fitness" standard for positions in the Legislative Bureau--and perhaps for other Legislative staff posts. The methods for administering such requirements should not be overwhelming, and would not require an invasive role by the civil service commission.

Probably not appropriate for the NMI Constitution, but arrangements that also could be considered include periodic management reviews of the Legislature operations (the Constitution might mandate such reviews say every eight years or so, greater use of session-only staff, more use of electronic technology to obtain data and to compare statutes, proposals, and policies among the states and territories, the value (versus the expense and rewards) of joining national professional organizations and attending conferences, and providing more opportunities for training of staff.

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