

The International Legislators Forum Background and History

The **International Legislators Forum** (ILF) is an annual meeting of legislators from Manitoba, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota. It provides an opportunity for delegates to share information, understand problems, build relationships, and develop collaborative agreements on a wide variety of issues relevant to the participating jurisdictions. Forums have been hosted in Winnipeg and Gimli, Manitoba; St. Paul and Moorhead, Minnesota; Brookings and Pierre, South Dakota; and Fargo, Bismarck and Grand Forks, North Dakota.

The Legislators Forum grew out of the International Flood Mitigation Initiative (IFMI), which developed agreements to mitigate flooding in the Red River Basin following the 1997 flood. However, through its annual meetings, the Legislators' Forum has considered many other issues of a much broader range that have directly impacted the region. These discussions have addressed water quantity and quality, regional energy production and transmission, renewable fuels, human and animal health and food safety, methamphetamines, rural access to health care, broadband technology, outmigration and immigration, the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), tourism and other public policy issues.

Over the years, the delegates have found that their jurisdictions have mutual concerns and similarities (even across an international boundary) and that programs and efforts that originate in one jurisdiction to deal with public policy issues can be useful in other jurisdictions.

The discussions during the annual meetings have transcended politics and ideology and have been practical and common sense in their approaches. Additionally, the delegates have formed long-lasting friendships that have enabled them to stay in touch and to help each other deal with their shared challenges.