



INTERNATIONAL Legislators' Forum

International Legislators' Forum Constitution

ARTICLE 1. MISSION

The mission of the International Legislators' Forum is to convene lawmakers from the states and provinces of the Red River Valley and surrounding areas to discuss issues of regional concern, to share best practices and lessons learned, and to increase the efficacy and equitability of governance across the Great Plains.

ARTICLE 2. VISION

The vision of the International Legislators Forum is for the legislative bodies of the American and Canadian Midwest to serve the best interests of all residents of the Great Plains, being cognizant of the past while planning wisely for future generations.

ARTICLE 3. HISTORY

The International Legislators' Forum (ILF) grew out of the International Flood Mitigation Initiative, which developed agreements to mitigate flooding in the Red River Basin following the 1997 flood. However, through its annual meetings, the International Legislators' Forum has considered many other issues directly impacting 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, tourism, and other public policy issues. Since its beginning, the ILF has been convened and facilitated by Consensus Council, a Bismarck-based nonprofit specializing in bringing people together across differences.

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.

ARTICLE 4. PURPOSE AND FUNCTION

The function of the ILF will be to enhance the governance of its member jurisdictions by acting as a neutral, nonpartisan convening of legislators, providing an annual forum for a diverse, civil, and productive engagement among legislators of all political parties and ideological perspectives across state/province and international borders.

To that end, the ILF will, to the extent its resources allow:

A. Arrange and convene meetings as requested by legislators, executive officials, judicial officials, and commissions on interstate and interbranch cooperation, and their staff;

B. Promote more effective discussions concerning regional cooperation, the development of programs of mutual interest to adjacent member jurisdictions, and the solution of problems common to an area;

C. Gather, analyze, and disseminate information, including data on governmental policies, innovations, practices, legislation, transformations, and other items of interest to member jurisdictions;

D. Serve as a resource for affiliated organizations, legislative service agencies of the member jurisdictions, and the news media; and

E. Act as a catalyst for cooperation of member jurisdictions with foreign governments and their political subdivisions.

ARTICLE 5. MEMBERSHIP

The membership of ILF will comprise the states of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota of the United States, and the province of Manitoba of Canada, hereinafter referred to as member jurisdictions. Wherever the word “jurisdiction” or “jurisdictions” appears herein, it will be meant to reference a state or province as listed.

The membership of the ILF is not limited to only the 4 jurisdictions above, but may be open to adjacent provinces or states as approved by the steering committee.

Adding new member jurisdictions:

A potential new member jurisdiction may self-petition to join or be recruited by the steering committee of the International Legislators’ Forum. Approval of a new jurisdiction must take place at an official steering committee meeting (these may be virtual or in-person). The addition of a new jurisdiction requires the steering committee to reach consensus on approval, or, in the case of blocked consensus, a majority of steering committee members voting to approve.

New jurisdictions are allowed two steering committee members, one representing each major political party (US) or the government and opposition parties (CA).

ARTICLE 6. DUES

Section 1. Amount

As of January 1, 2023, individual jurisdiction dues shall be \$15,000 USD. Dues shall increase by 5% every third year. Amount of dues may be changed at any time by vote of the ILF steering committee, to go into effect before the next annual billing cycle of the ILF.

Section 2. Payment Deadline

Consensus Council will invoice each jurisdiction within the first month of the new calendar year. Jurisdictions are responsible for paying the dues amount in full no later than June 30th of that same year.

Section 3. Payment Responsibility

Each jurisdiction's legislature is ultimately responsible for including ILF annual dues in their legislative budget. Each jurisdiction may handle the responsibility of processing those fees differently, and it is the responsibility of the Consensus Council to coordinate with jurisdiction finance contacts as identified by the steering committee representatives of each state/province.

ARTICLE 7. DELEGATES

ILF respects and acknowledges the authority of state leaders to determine and appoint delegates to represent their jurisdiction. Because the ILF is founded upon values of bipartisanship and equal representation, all efforts shall be made to have a fully bipartisan slate of delegates at each annual ILF. In the United States, all efforts shall be made to divide delegate slots equally between House and Senate, and between political parties. In Canada, delegate slots should be divided equally between the government and opposition parties.

The following state/provincial leaders will be recognized as the appropriate authorities responsible for making such appointments:

Section 1. PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM: PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS

With the advice of the representing steering committee members, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (Government) and Leader of the Opposition are responsible for appointing 4 delegates each from their party to represent that province's Legislative Assembly, for a total of 8 delegates. They may also designate two alternates from each party.

Each Canadian province will send a delegation of no more than 8 Members of the Legislative Assembly, with two alternates in reserve.

The primary support contact for the International Legislators' Forum while working with the Canadian government is the International Relations Branch of the Government of Manitoba.

Section 2. FEDERAL SYSTEM: STATE GOVERNMENTS

With the advice of the representing steering committee members, the House Majority leader and House Minority leader are responsible for appointing 2 delegates each (from their own party) to represent that state's House of Representatives, for a total of 4 delegates. They may also designate one alternate from each party.

With the advice of the representing steering committee members, the Senate President Pro Tempore and Senate Minority leader are responsible for appointing 2 delegates each from their party to represent that state's Senate, for a total of 4 delegates. They may also designate one alternate from each party.

Each American state will send a delegation of no more than 8 legislators. The International Legislators' Forum will work with each state's Legislative Council or Legislative Research Council to secure participation from the House and Senate leaders who make delegate selections.

ARTICLE 8. STEERING COMMITTEE

Section 1. Membership and appointments

Each participating jurisdiction must identify two of its participating delegates as members of the ILF steering committee. These individuals must be prepared to take a leadership role in

representing their jurisdiction's interests in the ILF, planning for future events, and upholding the mission of the ILF.

The steering committee must be bipartisan and bicameral: therefore, the two appointed members must not be from the same political party or (US) the same branch of the legislature. It is highly recommended that steering committee members have previous participation in the ILF. Steering committee members shall be appointed by the same legislative leadership identified in Article 7, with heavy weight given to the recommendations of new members made by retiring or outgoing steering committee members.

If a steering committee member is retiring at the end of a term, or must resign before a term is finished, he or she will work with the appropriate Majority or Minority leader to identify a replacement, approve that person, and introduce that contact to the facilitators of the International Legislators' Forum.

Section 2. Terms

Appointments to the steering committee should happen between the close of the most recent Forum and the start of the new calendar year. Terms shall be 2 years, with a limit of 4 consecutive terms. No steering committee member shall serve more than 8 years.

Section 3. Authority

The steering committee shall have the authority to do the following:

- Set jurisdictional dues
- Approve annual budget
- Fundraise and seek sponsorships
- Guide the creation of the ILF agenda
- Approve the ILF agenda
- Make suggestions on delegate appointments
- Solicit and approve participation from neighboring jurisdictions
- Assist in identify and recruiting potential speakers, guests, and dignitaries
- Approve minutes, notes, and records
- Ensure participation and attendance of full slate of delegates from own jurisdiction

Section 4. Duties

Steering committee members have a duty to support the International Legislators' Forum through active participation. Expectations of steering committee members include

- Regular participation in steering committee meetings and in-person attendance of ILF
- Active communication with colleagues to ensure full participation from each province/state
- Solicitation of external sponsorship to meet the annual budget
- Advocating for participation in ILF and timely payment of jurisdictional dues
- Guidance of ILF planning and agenda creation
- Timely notification to ILF facilitators if member's term must end early

Section 5. Voting and Quorum

The International Legislators' Forum conducts all business using the consensus model of decision-making. The ILF/Consensus Council facilitator shall facilitate all meetings but is not a participating decision maker.

In the event that consensus cannot be reached or is blocked, the steering committee may default to majority voting in accordance with Robert’s Rules of Order.

A quorum will consist of a simple majority of steering committee members (5 out of 8 possible attendees). Remote participation is permitted.

Section 6. Meetings

The ILF steering committee has three required meetings per year: a pre-Forum meeting in person at the beginning of each Forum; a virtual debrief/planning meeting within 6-10 weeks after the Forum; and a virtual winter planning meeting to finalize the next year’s Forum.

There are also several ad hoc meetings throughout the year, particularly for the upcoming host jurisdiction, to discuss sponsorships, topics, speakers, and attendees. Members are expected to be prompt in responding to scheduling inquiries so as to ensure good attendance at every meeting.

Section 7. Absences

If a steering committee member misses more than one-third of meetings with no notice, or more than half of meetings with excused/announced absences, that member will be deemed non-participatory. A warning will be issued to the member and their legislative supervisor, followed by a conversation on how to support increased attendance. If attendance does not improve, or the legislator feels it best to step down from the steering committee, the member’s seat will be vacant and the steps in 8.1 will apply.

ARTICLE 9. ANNUAL CONVENINGS

The International Legislators’ Forum is an annual, in-person convening. Should global events transpire to prevent in-person gathering, the Forum may be conducted virtually. Member jurisdictions shall rotate hosting responsibilities each year, according to the following pattern: North Dakota, Manitoba, Minnesota, South Dakota. This rotation may be altered in the event of adding new member jurisdictions.

For context, North Dakota hosted in 2022, Manitoba in 2023, Minnesota will host in 2024, and South Dakota will host in 2025.

The two steering committee members from the upcoming host jurisdiction will nominate a site/city for the next ILF to take place. It will be the responsibility of Consensus Council to coordinate all logistics of the in-person meeting in that jurisdiction, with the support and direction of the steering committee as needed.

Adopted October 11, 2023 by the ILF Steering Committee

Manitoba

MLA Len Isleifson, Progressive Conservative Party
MLA Ian Bushie, New Democratic Party

Minnesota

Sen. Paul Utke, Republican Party
Rep. Dave Lislegard, Democratic–Farmer–Labor

North Dakota

Sen. Sean Cleary, Republican Party
Rep. Gretchen Dobervich, Democratic-Nonpartisan League

South Dakota

Sen. Reynold Nesiba, Democratic Party
Rep. Hugh Bartels, Republican Party