

Governors Go to Washington

by Todd Smith, Steve Gordon, & Jesse Weathington | Feb 28, 2018 | James Magazine | 0 comments



Governors from across the country convened in our nation's capital this week for the National Governors Association's annual Winter Meeting. This three-day meeting highlights the intersection of federal and state interaction. There is no one better suited than governors to know the broad effects, both good and bad, of decisions made by Congress and federal agencies upon states. It is a time when governors from across the political spectrum convene to discuss how they handle certain issues and circumstances with each other and with federal leaders.

While attending, Governors met with President Trump, Vice President Pence, federal agency heads, and congressional leaders. Chief among the issues highlighted for discussion were policies on infrastructure, workforce, the farm bill, and the opioid crisis. In true President Trump fashion, none of the meetings were more high profile than the one he held at the White House and opened to press outlets, during which he led a discussion with governors on securing schools from gun violence and gun control. The nation witnessed a genuine back-and-forth discussion between the President and the governors with varying views on how best to address these issues.

As it pertained to infrastructure, governors made sure to point out that any proposal must address transit systems, ports, airports, water resources, rail, broadband networks, and drinking water and wastewater systems, in addition to roads and bridges. This is particularly important to Georgia for projects like the Savannah Harbor Expansion and initiatives like a truck-only lane along a section of I-75. Of course, a key concern here is funding – and governors were quick to relay



concerns with funding and financing tools.

Workforce development was also highlighted. Governors made sure to discuss their efforts in this area. States are developing innovative models to strengthen their talent base and ensure their workers have the technical skills to succeed in the workplace. A prime example of this is the Georgia Department of Economic Development's Workforce Division, which administers the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor. WorkSource Georgia, the state's federally-funded employment and training system, is a key benefactor of these federal funds. At a local level, the Workforce Division provides WIOA funds and technical assistance to the Local Workforce Development Areas across the state. WIOA funds are allotted to dislocated workers, low-income adults, and youth, and are administered specifically through services geared toward helping disadvantaged citizens obtain meaningful employment.

The federal government is a critical partner in governors' efforts to end the opioid crisis. Governors made sure to discuss resources and flexibility for states in order to develop a strong public safety response with programs that help prevent new cases of addiction and expand access to treatment and recovery services.

These issues are, of course, only a few of those our nation's governors oversee in their respective states. Governors serve numerous roles for their state – protectors, business developers, and innovators just to name a few. They are receptive to help from the federal government at times, and dependent upon the federal government at others. And, yes, there are other times when governors are absolutely opposed to federal involvement.

There has always been and always will be this give-and-take relationship between the federal government and state government. Our nation's governors stand guard over this relationship and the Tenth Amendment. So, when you next cast a vote in a gubernatorial election, think hard about who you want standing guard.

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Following last week's resignation of Doc Elridge from the presidency of the Athens Chamber of Commerce, the group has tabbed former Georgia Power executive **Lenn Chandler** to serve as interim president. A one time member of the group's board of directors, Chandler has a long history of civic leadership in addition to his long career as an executive with the state's largest utility. As the Athens Chamber runs a nationwide search for a new president, tabbing Chandler to keep the ship steady has them **RISING...**



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