



➤ BORDER LEGISLATIVE ACADEMY

On September 18 and 19, CSG West hosted the Border Legislative Academy (BLA) in Mexico City. Although this was the third year of the program, it was the first time it was convened in Mexico and it immediately preceded the 32nd Border Legislative Conference (BLC). By hosting the programs concurrently, graduates of the BLA were able to extend their stay to participate in the BLC and engage in substantive policy discussions.

The 2019 class was welcomed by Senator Michael Von Flatern of Wyoming, current Chair-Elect of CSG West, and kicked off with an overview of the binational relationship provided by former Ambassador Antonio Garza who served as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico from 2002-2009, and Ambassador Andrés Rozental who served in various diplomatic positions on behalf of the Government of Mexico, including as Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1995-1997; Deputy Minister of Foreign Relations from 1988-1994; Ambassador to Sweden from 1983-1998; and the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations in Geneva from 1982-1983.

CSG West Director, Edgar Ruiz, opened the program the next morning by introducing Scott Raecker, Director of The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University. The center is dedicated to improving civility and developing ethical leaders throughout the world. With extensive experience as a state legislator and a professional focused on ethics and civility, Scott shared ways to help build a culture of excellence and ethics that is motivated by integrity, fairness, respect and accountability.

The morning continued with an overview of the similarities and differences of state legislative institutions along the U.S. – Mexico border. A primary difference is that U.S. state legislatures are bicameral while states in Mexico have unicameral legislatures. Dr. Alvaro Lopez Lara of the Autonomous Metropolitan University – Xochimilco campus provided an overview of state legislative institutions in Mexico and shared insights identified by his research. Following this presentation, CSG West Director, Edgar Ruiz, shared information about U.S. legislatures, including information on the





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professionalization of legislative staff, session periods, term limits, and the initiative process.

The afternoon session provided an overview of key cross-border institutions, initiatives, and the complexities of governing along the border. This conversation was led by Dr. Calixto Mateos-Hanel, Acting Director of the North American Development Bank (NADBank), and Dr. Everard Meade, Faculty Director of the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego. The session aimed to provide the class with a better understanding of important cross-border government institutions with jurisdiction along the border region, as well as exposing participating legislators to useful tools and tips to help navigate the nuances of governing along the border region.

The life of a state legislator moves at a very fast pace for the duration of their term and it's important that they know where they can go for fact-based, unbiased research and information that will enable their understanding of cross-border concerns and viable solutions. To provide information on available public policy resources, Erik Lee, Executive Director of the North American Research Partnership, joined Dr. Meade on a conversation with attending participants.

Concluding the day's sessions, Luis Ramirez, President of Ramirez Advisors International, joined Mr. Lee to share success stories from this dynamic border region. Both have been actively engaged in the work of fostering greater cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico, allowing them to share their unique insights and examples of projects brought to fruition thanks to the dedication and effectiveness of key stakeholders working collaboratively with those who can provide financial resources.

The goal of the BLA is to provide participating legislators development training to improve their knowledge of key stakeholders and government institutions with jurisdiction along the U.S.-Mexico border region; promote a better understanding of the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico; build relationships between border state





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legislators; and develop more effective legislators in support of strengthening state legislatures. It is the goal of CSG West that participants return to their states with greater knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the unique challenges and opportunities of the U.S. – Mexico border region.



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