



Using Oversight to Effect Change

**Council of State Governments West
Legislative Oversight Working Group**

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Levin Center at Wayne Law**

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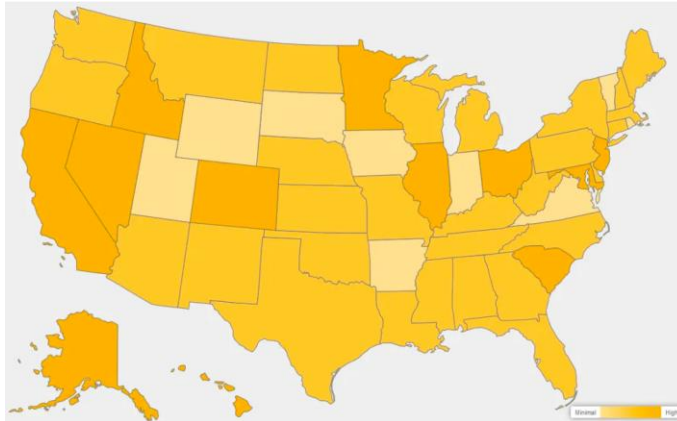
Levin Center at Wayne State University Law School



- Oversight Training
- Research and Reports
- Conferences and Events
- Student Activities

Checks and Balances in Action: Legislative Oversight across the States

Study by Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies



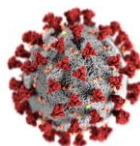
<http://stateoversightmap.org/>

Upcoming Levin Center Report



State Legislative Oversight of Emergency Contracts Related to COVID-19: Three Case Studies

November 2020



Who Investigates

- Committees
- Select Committees
- Individual Legislators



How Are Investigation Topics Chosen

- Committee jurisdiction
- Leadership concerns
- Scandals, events, news, problems
- Reports
- Constituents
- Whistleblowers, advocacy groups
- Legislator concerns



Course of an Investigation

- Fact-Finding
- Written Product
- Hearing
- Followup



Investigative Partners

- Committee and Personal Staff
- State Auditor
- Legislative Support Organizations
- Other Committees or Legislators
- State Agencies
- Outside Groups





Constitutional Basis of Legislative Investigations

“A legislative body cannot legislate wisely or effectively in the absence of information.”

--McGrain v. Daugherty (1927)

“It is the proper duty of a representative body to look diligently into every affair of government It is meant to be the eyes and the voice, and to embody the wisdom and will of its constituents.”

--Trump v. Mazars (2020)

Investigations help produce informed decisions on:

- Legislation
- Regulations
- Appropriations
- Procurements

Examples of Investigations

- Pension funds
- Prisons
- Foster care
- Disaster response
- Lobbying disclosures
- Contract mismanagement
- Infrastructure



Power of a Phone Call



- Legislator phone calls and emails are returned.
- Questions can trigger research.
- Attention can trigger reflection, reconsideration, change.
- Oversight can have as much impact as legislation.

Measuring Good Oversight



- Quality of the Investigation
- Credibility of the Inquiry
- Level of Bipartisanship
- Policy Impacts



Legislative Oversight

- Investigations can find the facts.
- Investigations can bridge divides.
- Investigations can produce change.

2019 Levin Center Training of Pennsylvania Oversight Committee





Thank You, CSG!

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