

Constantly Working on Transformation in the Legislature

By Senator Pete Campos

The legislative process can be frustrating even to those of us who are involved in it every day, which is why it is critical that we continue our efforts at legislative transformation.

My goal is to continue analyzing our system, to review and consider changes and to bring forward the best information and practices available so that we can have the finest legislative system possible.

My record of supporting legislative transformation is solid. In 1991, I worked to streamline the process used to recognize individuals who have reached a milestone, accomplished a particular feat or died. Rather than introduce those legislative sentiments as legislation, we now use certificates. Without this reform, hundreds and hundreds of additional pieces of legislation would be introduced each year.

From 1993 to 1996, as a caucus chair, I used my organizational skills to work closely with colleagues to frame legislative priorities; I met daily with legislators to address their needs; and I coordinated with the house of representatives on key legislation and on legislation important to the chief executive, the legislative leadership and individual legislators.

I have worked closely with key senate staff to revise the script for the presiding officer of the senate, making it more efficient for the lieutenant governor and those who preside over our proceedings to maintain decorum in the senate.

I have routinely conducted national policy scans to bring forth leading-edge issues and best practices in policies from across the country. I have worked on organization, protocol, decorum, bill consideration, consent calendars and similar issues that transform and improve the legislative process.

I have worked closely with other legislators and economists to develop revenue streams and mechanisms to fund major needs, including schools, prisons and behavioral health facilities. I have used dormant funding sources to fund projects like the ones for U.S. highways 54 and 84.

As co-chair of the Senate Rules Committee in 1999 and 2000, I worked closely with the late Senator Gloria Howes to make procedural changes that streamlined the way nominees to boards, commissions and cabinet departments are interviewed, evaluated and summoned for consideration of approval. We published a complete list of all boards, their composition and other details to assist the chief executive and senators with appointments.

My expertise has come partially from attending two extensive fellowship programs—the Toll and Flemming fellowships—and by honing my skills in conducting policy scans.

I am searching for ways to create a multimodal, sustainable transportation system and a solid capital outlay system. We must fully fund programmatic and building and infrastructure projects that are basic, and badly needed, and we must strengthen and develop funding streams to meet those needs.

Our system, while good, can be improved. We can work together to dedicate state resources to our critical needs. We have made many changes to improve our overall process. Further changes are inevitable, and I am dedicated to working on more procedural changes during the interim in preparation for next session. Then, I will continue in future years to help make the process better.