# Conservative Digest

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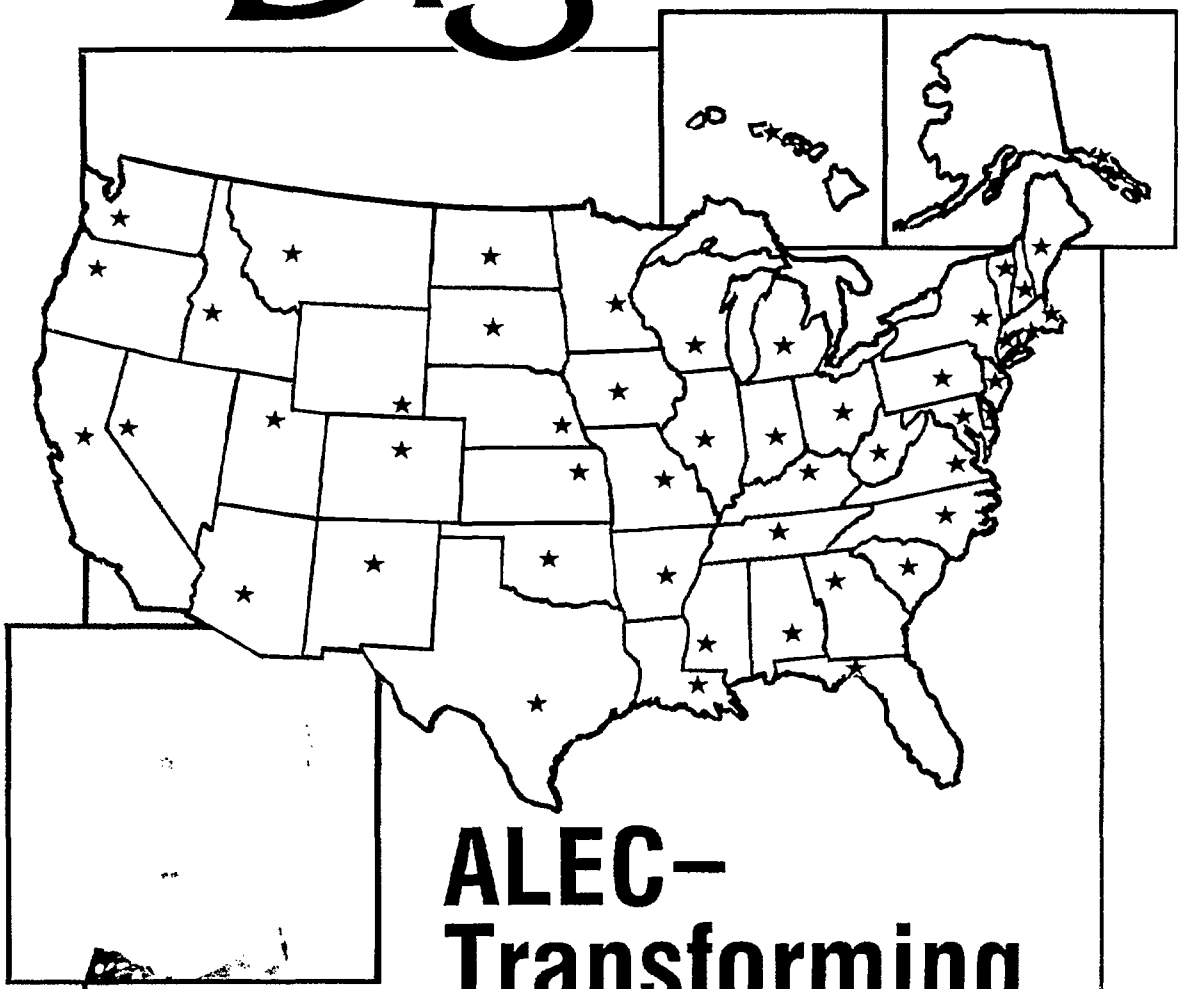

## ALEC— Transforming State Politics

Kathy Teague, Executive Director, American Legislative Exchange Council

## Idaho, the 21st Right to Work State

## Candy Wrappers, Beer Bottles and Abortions

## The Conservative Broadcasting System?

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# in the United States

ment. Conservatives have a long list of amendments that they would like to see pass out of Congress and go to the states for ratification, including the Balanced Budget Amendment, the Presidential Line Veto Amendment, the Prayer in School Amendment, the Right to Life Amendment. But unless the structure and the network are there in the states to ratify these amendments, there will be a great deal of frustration. It would be practically impossible ever again to get amendments like that passed out of Congress and submitted to the states.

**Q:** What about reapportionment?

**Teague:** As you know, the states draw of the lines of the congressional districts and their own state legislative district boundaries. We will do that again starting in 1990.

It's very important that work be done *now* to insure that when 1990 rolls around, we have a more balanced representation of conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, in the states than we have now. Right now, officially, Republicans control only 33 state legislative bodies out of 99, and that's not a very good track record.

The goal by 1990 should be to have conservative control of at least one House in every state. But to do that, a lot of work is going to have to be done and a lot of attention and money are going to have to be focused on state elections.

**Q:** How will ALEC help focus attention?

**Teague:** Some of the former board members of ALEC formed a new PAC last year called ALEC-PAC, whose purpose is to concentrate on state elections. It will train, recruit and fund candidates, but more importantly, it will communicate to the conservative movement and to the business community and business PAC's the key targeted candidates, key targeted seats.

In the 1984 elections, there were 5,966 state legislators elected. Corporate PACs spent about $90 million on congressional races and probably less than $4 million on state races. As for conservative issue PAC's, I don't have any statistics, but I dare say they spent probably 90 percent of their funds on Congressional races, and perhaps 10 percent—which would be generous—on state races.

One of the major projects that ALEC-PAC will undertake for the '85 elections in New Jersey and Virginia and the '86 elections will be to obtain and publish vote ratings of the legislatures.

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**Q:** Will ALEC-PAC be working in specific elections?

**Teague:** ALEC-PAC will also target key state legislative races, meaning races in states where a net gain for conservatives of two or three or four seats in either the House or Senate could completely change the control of that particular legislative body. With 6,000 or so legislators being elected every two years, you can imagine how someone who wants to donate money would be perplexed.

ALEC-PAC targeted about 50 races in 1984 and circulated that list so that individuals, conservative PAC's and corporate PAC's that really wanted to make a difference in the states could do so by contributing to those races. ALEC-PAC had a success rate of about 85 percent on those targeted races.

**Q:** What is the most effective weapon of the liberals at the state level?

**Teague:** The most effective lobby in the state legislatures is the National Education Association. The NEA budget this year is $96 million and that doesn't count the money that their state federations raise and spend.

Many people are deceived by believing that the National Education Association lobbies only for education-related legislation, but they don't. They oppose right to work laws, they oppose balanced budget resolutions, they support comparable work bills, they get involved in just about every piece of major legislation in the state legislature.

They are very well organized, extremely well funded. Can you imagine how many conservative organization budgets we would have to put together to get $96 million a year?

The nicest thing that I can say about the NEA is that they recognized in one of their reports a few years ago that ALEC is "the most dangerously effective organization in the states". Because not only do we publish conservative model bills—we actually send them to our members who then introduce them and get them passed into law.

Now, I want to emphasize that we don't lobby. No one on our staff ever goes in and testifies. It's a matter of putting the right information in the hands of dedicated, conservative lawmakers to get the job done.

**Q:** What is ALEC's single most effective tool?

**Teague:** Without a doubt, our members, those state legislators. That's what really makes ALEC unique. All of what we do is focused on America's 7,500 legislators, and particularly our members. They are the men and women who understand how the state legislatures work, they understand how the process works, they understand how to get bills passed and how to get bills killed. They are very effective politicians, and we work with them and we provide them with all the backup that they need.

And of course I would have to mention the 60,000 individuals, the hundreds and hundreds of companies and foundations who generously, year after year, maintain and support what we do here. They understand how important those legislators are, how they are out there willing to do battle but only if they're provided with the right information. Without our contributors, we would not be able to do anything. CD



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