



## THE BRIEFING ROOM

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### **As State Sessions Wind Down, Communications Must Ramp Up**

As legislative sessions adjourn across the country, the political landscape is shifting—but that doesn't mean communicators can step back. In fact, this is when your work should accelerate.

The months after adjournment are when narratives are defined, credit is claimed, and unfinished business is teed up for next year. This “quiet” period is anything but—it's a strategic window to shape public perception, elevate allies, and translate policy into purpose.

At Cornerstone, we collaborate with government affairs teams to ensure legislative activity translates into lasting reputational value. This month's edition of *The Briefing Room* outlines how communicators can lead in this moment—by turning bills into stories, setbacks into momentum, and policy into public understanding.

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## Emerging Policy Themes: What's Hot, What's Next

Cornerstone's State Government Relations team—based in 15 states plus Washington, D.C.—has tracked the top issues debated in the statehouses where our team is on the ground. The themes below reflect some of the most prominent policy conversations happening in states, offering strategic insights for communicators and government affairs professionals preparing for what's ahead.

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### **Tax & Fiscal Policy**

States are recalibrating tax codes to boost competitiveness and respond to budget pressures—especially in advance of an election year.

→ Income tax cuts (MS, KY, OK, TX), property tax relief (IA, TX), grocery tax cuts (MS), revenue proposals (MD, NH), budget shortfalls (IL, CO, ME, NH).



### **Economic Development & Reshoring**

From reshoring incentives to infrastructure upgrades, states are positioning themselves to attract investment in data centers, advanced manufacturing, and logistics.

→ Data centers, broadband incentives (MS), film tax credits (KY), grid reforms (TX, SC), reshoring tools (GA, OK), corporate modernization (DE).



### **Healthcare & PBM Reform**

Healthcare costs, access, and transparency are in the spotlight—with growing scrutiny of

Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBM) and Medicaid systems.

→ PBM reform (MS, LA, IL), Medicaid work rules/funding (IA, NH, KY), 340B (KY, IL), rural care (IA), ambulance reimbursement (MS).



### **Education & School Choice**

States are reworking education funding, expanding school choice, and debating DEI programs, especially in K-12 and higher education.

→ Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) (TX), school choice (SC, NH), DEI rollbacks (IA, KY, NH), higher ed cuts (NH, CO), community colleges (IL), school safety (GA).



### **Energy, Environment & Infrastructure**

Energy policy is evolving fast—balancing clean energy goals, reliability, and environmental constraints like carbon capture and land use.

→ Carbon capture (LA), solar/storage (IL, LA), wind setbacks (OK), grid capacity (TX, SC), climate policy (MD), net metering (ME).



### **Tort Reform & Legal Liability**

GOP-led states pushed pro-business reforms to limit damages, curb litigation abuse, and streamline courts.

→ Tort reform (GA, OK, SC, LA), damages caps, litigation funding rules, business courts (OK).



### **Technology & AI Regulation**

States are starting to regulate AI and digital policy, especially in education, healthcare, and

consumer privacy.

→ AI oversight (IL, CO), internet privacy (ME), SaaS/digital taxes (MD), right-to-repair (ME).



### **Social Issues & Culture Debates**

Legislatures addressed trans rights, DEI, parental control, and homelessness—reflecting ongoing cultural and ideological divides.

→ DEI limits (IA, NH, KY), transgender rights (IA), cell phone bans (IA), parental rights (NH), panhandling laws (MS).



### **Government Modernization**

Internal reforms—from agency restructuring to judicial streamlining—aim to increase transparency and efficiency.

→ Agency modernization (TX, LA), hiring freezes (NH), redistricting (MS), business courts, NGO transparency.



### **Federal Uncertainty & Political Realignment**

Blue states are bracing for—and pushing back against—federal policy changes under this new Trump administration.

→ Immigration/LGBTQ protections (CO, DE), budget caution amid federal cuts (MD, NH, DE).

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**Adjournment Is a Strategic Window:  
What Communicators Should Do Now**

### **1. Define the Win—Before Someone Else Does**

If you don't frame the outcome, someone else will. Shape the story around who benefits and why it matters.

- Targeted social explainers (e.g., "What this tax cut means for you")
- Op-eds from trusted messengers like small business owners or parents
- Visuals and Q&As to simplify complex policy impacts

### **2. Localize the Impact, Always**

Policy is only powerful when it's personal. Tailor narratives to local stakeholders.

- School choice? Let parents and pastors explain it
- Carbon capture? Address it block-by-block, not statewide
- Child safety laws? Elevate teachers and families as advocates

### **3. Capture Implementation as a Moment of Influence**

Don't go quiet once a bill passes. Implementation is a critical moment to shape understanding—and build trust.

- Develop toolkits explaining "What this means for you"
- Tell early success stories from pilot areas
- Use local partners and visuals to walk people through changes

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## **Laying the Narrative Runway for Next Session**

### **Position Champions as Visionaries**

Elevate supportive lawmakers as forward-looking problem-solvers, not just vote-counts.

- Thank-you campaigns

- Profile pieces and LinkedIn spotlights

### **Turn Setbacks into Signals**

Stalled legislation? Use it as a springboard. Bring stakeholders together to co-create what comes next.

- Host roundtables or listening sessions
- Publish thought-leadership content
- Coordinate summer webinars on solutions
- Communicate why there is a sense of urgency to address this in next year's session

### **Build Literacy on Complex or Sensitive Issues**

Confusion breeds opposition. Make complex issues accessible—before your opponents define them.

- Replace jargon with plain language
- Use trusted local messengers over corporate spokespeople
- Combine storytelling and data for impact

### **Reframe on Your Terms**

The best communicators don't follow the narrative—they shape it.

- "Community benefits," not just compliance
- "Safety and dignity," not just regulation
- "Future-ready," not just infrastructure

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## **Final Takeaway: Communicate Like It's Already Session**

Just because the legislature has adjourned doesn't mean the story is over. This is your moment to:

- Cement your wins
- Reposition your losses