

Public Diplomacy – Case Study California

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Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am so pleased to be here today in beautiful Brussels, Belgium. Surrounded as we are in this historic city by thousands of polyglot diplomats, civil servants and officials of international organizations and companies, it seems the perfect place to address the topic of this workshop. I would like to thank the Forum of Federations and REGLEG for providing this opportunity to talk with all of you about the issue of public diplomacy in regions with legislative powers. I, of course, will be discussing my own region, the State of California.

I would like to begin my remarks by introducing my office, the California Senate Office of International Relations, its establishment, duties and mission. Then I will speak more broadly about issues of public diplomacy in the State of California, including its perceived importance, structures to support its implementation, civil society participation and legislative trends with respect to global issues.

In the mid-1980s, as globalization crawled out of its nascence and, through technological innovation and increased trade, began to evolve into the concept as we know it today. The California Senate saw a tremendous increase in the number of international officials coming to visit for purposes of education, information sharing and economic development. So, in 1987, my office was established by the administrative Rules Committee of the Senate in order to provide a clearinghouse for information and a locus for assistance conducive to the furthering of strong economic and cultural ties between California and the world's nations. My office primarily was charged with assisting representatives of foreign governments, businesses, journalists and academic institutions in their official visits to the Senate, thereby ensuring that proper protocols are observed and that visitors leave with a positive impression of California. Every year, our office arranges substantive programs for approximately 700 visitors from over 80 different countries with a wide range of policy issues being addressed, from educational standards to water supply sustainability to transparency in government.

As international interest on the part of our Senators grew, so did our list of duties. It is also our job to assist with Senate projects that further mutual cooperation and understanding, and greater trade and investment opportunities between California and other nations. These projects include seminars, trade missions, sister state relationships, public policy-related study tours and other visitor and information exchange programs.

Through our missions abroad, we endeavour to facilitate interaction between our State Senators and their foreign counterparts so that they may develop a broader policy base from which to make crucial decisions related to California's economic and social well-being.

Additionally, our office now provides staff support required to maintain the Senate's California International Relations Foundation, a not for profit public benefit corporation, that was established in 1991 to assist in hosting substantive programs for international delegations visiting California. This foundation is wholly funded through private sector donations and allows the Senate to host international visitors in a manner befitting the Senate and our State as a whole without expending state funds. Through this foundation, the Senate has been able to expand its efforts to promote closer educational and cultural ties by administering the first state-supported high school exchange program between California and Japan. We also are proud to offer an annual fellowship for the professional development of selected parliamentary and legislative staff from developing democracies. The purpose of the three-week fellowship is to provide the selected staff member a broadened perspective and specialized training in his or her field of work. We see it as an important step towards the goal of strengthening the durability, representation and public access of legislative bodies worldwide.

Our office has worked closely with state business promotion and economic development officials in order to develop a symbiotic relationship whereby foreign government officials visiting the Senate can have access to state officials intimately involved in directing California's economy. Likewise, international business officials visiting through the various agencies can benefit from our office's ability to arrange meetings with Senators and Senate staff who have a hand in developing legislation related to international trade and who have substantial knowledge of business opportunities in their districts. In November of 1999, our office collaborated with state business promotion officials and the Northern California World Trade Centre to put together a trade mission to Egypt, which resulted in one of the participating businesses obtaining a 7.3 Million Dollar USAID funded contract with an Egyptian client. We have found that the merger of legislators and private sector representatives on these types of trade missions can offer a "value added" aspect to our foreign hosts.

Above all, it is our office's mission and intention to make known the California Senate's commitment to promoting political, economic, educational and cultural relations between California and countries around the world; truly in short, to conduct the Senate's public diplomacy efforts. I hope you have gathered from the information just presented that the California Senate places a high priority on our international connections.

I believe the State of California as a whole also places a high priority on masterfully nurturing its global relations, and with seriously good reason. Consider these facts about California: California has a diverse population of approximately 36 million with many of the largest immigrant communities outside of their own countries residing there; there are over 129 languages spoken in the Los Angeles Unified School District alone; California is the second largest exporting state in the US with exports in 2007 valuing 134 billion

dollars; California is the largest recipient of foreign direct investment in the US with foreign controlled companies employing almost 550,000 workers in 2005; California has an international reputation as a centre for advanced university studies and dominates the industries of the future, including information and bio technologies; California has a strategic location with major port facilities, including the Los Angeles and Long Beach port complex which accounts for 40% of all trade entering the US; California is the largest agricultural producer and exporter in the US with over 350 different crops grown there; California culture has been disseminated throughout the world because of Hollywood; and finally (our most favourite statistic) were it a stand-alone country, California would rank in the top eight largest economies in the world. All of this data points to California as a significant and important participant in world trade and international affairs. California has force on the global level that is beyond its state designation.

Now I ask you, given that extraordinary list of statistics, would we not be absolutely crazy to ignore the implications of neglecting to acknowledge and invest in our relationships around the world? Successful public diplomatic efforts are crucial to maintaining and fostering California's prosperity. It is also the best way to serve our diverse citizenry through searching out the best public policy knowledge, practices and achievements from around the world to bring them to bear in California, while sharing our expertise and experiences with others.

Officials in California realize that so many issues of great import to the state - - health and welfare, a clean environment, public safety, sustainable energy sources - - are no longer impacted only by domestic concerns. Borders are devolving for a myriad of reasons and in ways that can't necessarily be controlled by democratic government. It is estimated that one-eighth of the air pollution hovering over the metropolis of Los Angeles comes all the way from China. Outsourcing of parts of the service-related economy is concerning in the context of citizens' privacy and local job creation. It is estimated that the social networking website MySpace has over 100 million users in 15 different languages and in January 2008 alone, nearly 79 million users had made over 3 billion video views on the video sharing website YouTube. Access to information for the average person is unprecedented and increasing. In this global context, collaborative and cooperative relations with other parts of the world are the only logical way for a government to work through these challenges to best serve its constituency.

Unfortunately though, while a majority of officials recognize that a robust policy of public diplomacy is essential, the state's efforts in this arena are often disjointed. I would speculate that this is partly a function of how large the state is and the complexity of the levels of government. It also may be attributed to the fact that the state has no constitutional authority or jurisdiction in the international arena. Therefore, there is little related statute or structure that is permanent and reliable. I would venture that the region as a whole doesn't specifically define public diplomacy and therefore implementation is scattered. I call as an example the approach taken to international relations strictly on the executive and legislative levels of the state. There is some coordination between the Governor's Office and the Legislature on particular visits to the state by foreign officials

and some overseas travel. However, there is no overarching policy and no formalized interaction, such as regularly scheduled meetings, to coordinate on projects. The Governor's Office has typically structured their international relations staff based on the interests of the individual administration. In the previous Governor's administration, there was a "Secretary for Foreign Affairs" position created. That person was responsible for all internationally related work. Governor Schwarzenegger's office has a protocol office, which deals with logistics and protocol for incoming visitors, and policy and advance staff who work on issues and overseas travel. The Assembly, the other house of the California Legislature, likewise, has typically had an international relations structure that depends on the current leadership. At times, the Assembly has had no office responsible for these issues; at other times, they have had a Speaker's Office of Protocol which responds directly to the Speaker.

I would postulate that the Senate has the most institutionalized structure for public diplomacy, given that our office is a bipartisan service office under the Rules Committee. It has stability and longevity, being in existence since 1987 and through the leadership terms of soon-to-be five Presidents pro Tempore. The Senate has defined public diplomacy as relationship-building, placing emphasis on maintaining consistency, continuity and trust. For isn't the definition of public diplomacy truly building the base and means to achieve goals through negotiation, friendship and mutually acceptable solutions to common challenges? Our office offers a stable "one-stop" service-based approach to the more than 120 Consulates General in California and official visitors from abroad to assist them in accessing the Legislature and California government in general. We stay in touch with the consular corps in California through annual mailings and invitations to events that we hold in Sacramento. We try to ensure that they understand they have a point of contact in Sacramento that will be responsive and honest. We use a variety of policy tools, all non-binding of course, such as resolutions, task forces, sister state relationships, and legislative exchange programs to build our friendships and connections with other regions around the world. The California Senate passed its first sister state resolution in 1983, and we now have 25 sister state and intergovernmental agreements with other regions that have spawned various projects, such as a biotechnology conference with New South Wales, Australia. We have also developed long-lasting legislative exchange agreements on issues of mutual interest, including a ten-year staff exchange with Germany and an eleven-year exchange with the Region of Umbria, Italy, that started with common need to share information on seismic technology and emergency response management. We are always trying to identify new areas of possible collaboration and have more recently instituted an exchange with Iceland in the area of geothermal and other sustainable energies, and with Spain to discuss border issues with Morocco that parallel our own experience with Mexico. All these endeavours add value to our State's effort to remain a world leader in innovation, both in the economic and public policy realms.

One of our most valuable resources in California is our human capital. While there are many large non-profit organizations operating in California, such as the World Affairs Councils and the World Trade Centres of America, that do a good job of engaging the public in discussion and involvement regarding international issues, we at the State

Senate try to do our part as well. The Senate's foundation, which I mentioned earlier, is a private-public partnership that relies on input from a board of private sector officials who lend advice, guidance and support to the Senate's international activities. The first state-sponsored high school exchange program also grew out of a Senate delegation's visit to Japan. During that visit, then-US Ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale told a delegation of Senators that the true imbalance between the US and Japan stemmed not from a disparity in trade, but a disparity of understanding, with Japanese students studying in the US at a 10-1 ratio of US students in Japan. One of the Senators returned to author a piece of legislation initiating a California-Japan exchange program that has now successfully sent over 400 California students for a three-week summer program in Japan. As a result of another Senate delegation, this one to Brazil, the California-Brazil Partnership was envisioned and developed by the Senate and the two Consulates General of Brazil in California. It brings together government, academia and business officials in quarterly meetings to pursue increased communication and collaborative projects between California and Brazil. A major focus of the meetings and following delegations has been climate change issues and alternative energies, including ethanol. Furthermore, our office puts together programs for visiting international delegations on a regular basis that engage speakers from all corners of California's civil society - - educational and non-profit organizations, business associations, media, lobbying groups and health care providers to name a few. Honestly, it is often difficult to convince the general populace of the value of public diplomatic efforts and devoted resources given that we are a state and not a nation. We often receive negative press coverage on our trips abroad, but we feel that it would be foolhardy for California's future not to try to educate and include our citizenry on the way of the future, which is increasing international engagement on the part of non-nation state actors.

Finally, I would like to talk a little bit about actual policy and how it's affected by our public diplomacy efforts. There has definitely been a trend in the last 15 years in the California Legislature toward more proactive work on international issues. In the 1993-94 legislative session, the most recent session for which we have a full bill registry online, there were only a handful of bills regarding international subject matter. However, each of the last couple of sessions have seen upwards of 200 bills introduced with some international component - - agricultural marketing, Sudan divestiture, mad cow regulations, human trafficking, outsourcing, global warming, and on and on. We also have seen an increase in committees that deal with international issues. California was, in fact, the first state legislature to have a select committee specifically dedicated to the issue of trade agreements and their impact on state legislative prerogatives. California considers itself to be at the forefront of progressive laws regarding labor and the environment, and was frustrated by increasing intrusion due to imposed regulations such as NAFTA's Chapter 11. Unfortunately, this select committee is dormant right now for lack of an interested chair. Overall though, the insight and exposure that our Senators and Senate staff receive through missions abroad and interaction with visiting fellows, consular officials and short-term visitors encourages, guides and engages their interest in and knowledge of crucial international issues.

Given the lack of a defined policy, lack of coordination among various branches and the revolving door nature of protocol offices and committees dedicated to international issues, I would have to generally agree that California conforms with Professor Earl Fry's assessment in the Global Dialogue's booklet that state governments "journey into the realm of US foreign affairs has been sporadic and largely devoid of long-term vision and institutional continuity." However, I would also argue that all is not bleak – there are definite bright spots in the picture and progress being made. I think the California Senate Office of International Relations offers one possible model for overcoming those issues and pursuing state diplomatic efforts that are marked by stability, coherence and dedication.

I would like to conclude by inviting any of the participants present to please contact me or Shannon Shellenberg, my Deputy Director who assisted with my preparation for the conference and whom you have met during the early introductions, at any time for follow-up questions or if we can be of assistance with any foreign visits to California or any international matter pertaining to the California Senate.

I look forward to a continuing discussion on the importance of public diplomacy to the constituent parts of federated nations.

Thank you for your time and attention.