



## **Technology and Innovation Caucuses: Why, How, and Getting Started**

### **Why form a tech caucus?**

The technology industry is a key driver of job creation and economic growth in the United States, employing nearly one in twenty workers and accounting for over 7.5 percent of U.S. GDP. Average wages for tech industry workers are more than double the national average and continue to rise.

Technology underpins and propels every sector of our economy. Companies in the technology industry are at the forefront of innovation in information technology, biotechnology, telecommunications, e-commerce, advanced clean energy, smart infrastructure, cyber-security, and so much more.

Technology companies form a national industry with potential for growth in every state. In fact, a new wave of innovation is sweeping across the nation, creating new jobs and opportunities for millions of Americans. Innovation and startup culture are of course at the heart of traditional technology hubs like Silicon Valley, Boston, Austin, New York, and Seattle. But the entrepreneurial spirit is also being embraced in cities across the country, from Provo to Pittsburgh and Minneapolis to Miami.

This presents a major opportunity for lawmakers who want to take a leadership role in ensuring that their state is at the forefront of innovation. The first step in becoming a champion of technology and entrepreneurship is working with your colleagues to create a Technology and Innovation Caucus.

### **What has been done in other states?**

Legislators in several states have already formed Technology and Innovation Caucuses. In states as diverse as California, Texas, and Massachusetts, technology champions have seen the benefits of working with a structured group to discuss the issues that matter most to a strong innovation economy.

Each state has a unique political environment, and Technology and Innovation Caucuses can be formed to reflect that. Legislators in California and Massachusetts have created more formal structures for their caucuses and take official positions on legislation, while Texas' caucus serves a convening role to facilitate discussions on tech issues and share ideas for future legislation.

### **Explore existing tech caucuses**

- **California:** [CA Tech Caucus](#)
- **Massachusetts:** [Massachusetts Tech Hub Legislative Caucus](#)
- **Texas:** [Innovation and Technology Caucus of the Texas House](#)

## **How to form a tech caucus**

### *Ensure the caucus is in compliance with state ethics rules*

The first and most important step in establishing a tech caucus is working with an attorney who knows your state's ethics rules to ensure that you are in compliance at every point. If you do not already have an attorney in mind, TechNet is more than happy to help you navigate the rules and regulations to ensure compliance.

### *Recruit members*

Once you understand all of the relevant laws and regulations, it is time to start recruiting your legislative colleagues to your caucus. In most states with established tech caucuses, members have been excited to join and recruiting has not been difficult. In fact, in some instances we have seen an overflow of interest.

### *Network with other tech caucuses*

As you move towards the establishment of your Technology and Innovation Caucus, TechNet can put you in contact with chairs and members of established caucuses, so that you can network and share best practices. In particular, [Assemblymember Evan Low](#) (Co-Chair of the California Tech Caucus) and [Representative Dwayne Bohac](#) (Chair of the Innovation and Technology Caucus of the Texas House) have expressed interest in working with legislators who want to establish caucuses in their own states.

### *Connect with industry*

The tech industry is eager to interface with legislators to address relevant policy issues and concerns. Tech caucuses can serve as a useful platform for policymakers and industry to work together to grow the tech industry and the state's economy. Established caucuses have hosted weekly lunch series and occasional bill pitch nights and have served as a convener for briefing sessions, roundtables, tech tours, and other collaborative events to make sure that industry and policymakers are working together in the best interests of the state.

### *Next steps*

The TechNet team is ready to discuss and help in any way we can. Please contact TechNet's Vice President of State Policy and Politics, Andrea Deveau, at [adeveau@technet.org](mailto:adeveau@technet.org) or (805) 234-5481.