

NGA Chair Hosts Seattle Institute on Employing People with Disabilities

WASHINGTON—As part of Delaware Gov. Jack Markell's National Governors Association (NGA) Chair's Initiative, [*A Better Bottom Line: Employing People with Disabilities*](#), the governor, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard are hosting an institute for state policymakers today and tomorrow. The institute will focus on the employment challenges that affect individuals with intellectual and other significant disabilities. It also will examine the role that both state government and business can play in facilitating and advancing opportunities for individuals with disabilities to be gainfully employed in the competitive labor market.

"Every governor wants to be the 'jobs' governor," said Gov. Markell. "I chose this initiative because governors need to be the jobs governor for all people in our states. This institute is designed to allow states the opportunity to discuss best practices for public and private employment of individuals with disabilities."

The yearlong initiative has been providing governors and other state policymakers with better policy options to assess the environment in their state and strategies designed to support this population. In the fall, Gov. Markell was joined by Gov. Daugaard for a roundtable discussion with experts from government, academia and businesses to frame the issues around employment for individuals with disabilities. During NGA's Winter Meeting, sessions focused on the initiative and governors heard from members of the business and disability community.

“It’s an honor to host Gov. Markell and Gov. Daugaard here in Seattle for an in-depth conversation about improving employment prospects for workers with disabilities,” said **Gov. Inslee**. “Our businesses and our economy are made stronger by leveraging the skills and expertise of all our workers, and we can do more to help both public- and private-sector employers do just that.”

Following morning discussions about best practices in states, attendees will discuss employing people with disabilities as a state workforce strategy with ResCare CEO Ralph Gronefeld. Meeting attendees will listen to a keynote address from Horst Haussecker, Senior Principal Engineer and Director, Experience Technology Lab, Intel Labs, before heading to Microsoft for a panel about lessons learned from businesses. The panel will include: Senior Director of Accessibility Jennie Lay-Flurrie, Microsoft Customer Partner Advocacy; Corporate Center Diversity Affairs Director Colleen Fukui-Sketchley, Nordstrom, Inc.; Co-Founder Scott Hatley, Incight; and Senior Marketing Manager, Daniel Hubbell, Microsoft Accessibility group.

“Hearing from members of the business community is imperative to this discussion,” said **Gov. Daugaard**. “Success depends on the shared passion and commitment that we see across so many diverse sectors. Together, we can make a difference.”

Gov. Markell hosted a similar institute in Pittsburgh with **Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett** earlier this month.