Session Description: The past year has brought a flurry of federal criminal justice legislation, including a sweeping reform bill, the First Step Act and the Juvenile Justice Reauthorization Act. Immigration, border security and implementing disaster legislation have also received a lot of attention. Learn the details of these important issues and laws, as well as what’s around the bend for the rest of 2019 in Congress.

Biographies

Jessica E. Hart
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Jessica Hart is the Intergovernmental and Public Liaison for the United States Department of Justice. Ms. Hart accepted this Presidential Appointment in January of 2018. In this role, Ms. Hart serves as the primary liaison between the Department and state and local governments. She also communicates with various interest groups on behalf of the Department. She advises and briefs Department leadership and facilitates Department leadership meetings and outreach. Additionally, she works to strengthen communication and provides expertise on Department resources, policies, and activities on behalf of the Department between other federal agencies and the White House.

Before joining the Department of Justice, Ms. Hart started her career practicing law at Bracewell & Giuliani LLP in Houston, Texas. She practiced commercial litigation and worked on a large range of litigation matters, regulatory enforcement, and internal investigation actions. Ms. Hart joined the United States Senate in the Office of Senator Ted Cruz in March of 2015 as the Regional Director for Southeast Texas. As regional director, she managed a region of approximately 8 million constituents. In this role, she served as surrogate for Senator Cruz to elected officials, CEOs, boards, organizations and coalitions. She also provided Senator Cruz and senior staff advice regarding how a potential law would affect the Senator’s key stakeholders.

Ms. Hart graduated top of her class from Baylor Law School, where she also served as managing executive editor of the Baylor Law Review and was elected law school class president all three years of
She attended undergrad at the University of Texas where she double majored in Finance and Business Honors Program with a minor in government.

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Susan Parnas Frederick joined NCSL in 2000 and holds the position of Senior Federal Affairs Counsel and Committee Director for the NCSL’s Law and Criminal Justice Committee. She also staffs NCSL’s Executive Task Force on Cybersecurity. In her role as Senior Federal Affairs Counsel, she advocates on behalf of states before Congress and develops successful strategies to address federal legislation with state impact. Her major issues of concentration include criminal justice, cybersecurity, immigration and constitutional law. She is also NCSL’s advocate on judicial issues and recommends appropriate U.S. Supreme Court cases for amicus involvement to NCSL’s Officers.

Before coming to NCSL, Ms. Parnas Frederick was a Senior Legislative Counsel at the National League of Cities covering fiscal policy issues, Deputy Town Attorney for the Town of Herndon, Virginia, and an attorney in private practice in Alexandria, Virginia. She received her B.A. from the University of Virginia and her J.D. from the American University, Washington College of Law.

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Lucia Bragg has been a Policy Specialist for NCSL since early 2017, covering a range of issues from criminal justice and disaster recovery to education and workforce development. Before that, Lucia served as Director of Research for US Senator Patrick Leahy’s 2016 re-election campaign in Vermont and spent two years as a Legislative Analyst for Leonine Public Affairs in Vermont. Before graduating Middlebury College in 2014, Lucia completed internships in the offices of Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin as well as each member the Vermont delegation - including Senator Leahy, Senator Bernie Sanders, and Congressman Peter Welch.