



# COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Gaylord National Hotel, National Harbor, MD

NOTE: You must have a name badge to attend any meetings, sessions and receptions.

## TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 24, 2026

5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. | **Welcome Reception** | Woodrow Wilson Lobby

## THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 26, 2026

**MEETING ROOM: Woodrow Wilson D**

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | **Breakfast** | **Woodrow Wilson A**

9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. | **Agenda Overview, Ice Breaker, and Approval of Minutes**

**Chris Barron, Committee Chair**, Communications Director, Washington State Employment Security Department

1. Overview of Agenda
2. Ice Breaker
3. Approve Minutes: [View October Meeting Notes](#) | [View September Meeting Notes](#)
4. Thank you to our 2025-2026 Committee Leadership Team:

2026 Comms Leadership Team



Chair  
Chris Barron (WA)  
[chris.barron@esd.wa.gov](mailto:chris.barron@esd.wa.gov)



Vice Chair  
Jessica Smith (CO)  
[jessica.smith@state.co.us](mailto:jessica.smith@state.co.us)



Vice Chair Nominee  
Jonathan McNair (AL)  
[jonathan.mcnaire@labor.alabama.gov](mailto:jonathan.mcnaire@labor.alabama.gov)



Past Chair  
Diane Watkins (DC)  
[diane.watkins@dc.gov](mailto:diane.watkins@dc.gov)

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. | **NASWA Updates**

**Scott B. Sanders**, President and CEO, NASWA

10:00 a.m.–10:45 a.m. | **Legislative Discussion** | **Policy Trends & Communications Strategies**

Join us for a conversation introduced by NASWA's Board Chair, Cami Feek, Commissioner of the Washington State ESD, on how states are navigating today's evolving policy landscape. Exchange insights on pending state-level legislation and emerging policy trends affecting your agency, and share your best practices and questions on effective public affairs

communications. Commissioner Feek will also share her perspective on how NASWA helps to facilitate collaboration among states on key policy issues.

- **Cami Feek, Board Chair**, *Commissioner, Washington State Employment Security Department*

10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | **Beverage Break**

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | **Workgroup Updates**

**Workgroup & Resources Updates** – Need Members!

- **Onboarding Workgroup: Larry Parker (NC)** – Lead
- **Outreach Workgroup: Erin Turbitt (WY)** – Lead
- **Resources Workgroup: Dawn Dove (SD)** – Lead
- **AI Workgroup: Laura Leonard (NC) | Patrice Kendrick (TN)** - Lead
- **Award Workgroup: Cher Haavind (CO)** – Lead

11:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. | **NASWA's New Messaging Strategy**

NASWA is evolving how it communicates its value to members and stakeholders. This session will provide an inside look at our updated messaging strategy—highlighting what NASWA offers and how we're making it clearer and more impactful. We'll also share progress on the website refresh, designed to improve usability and better showcase resources and services. Join us to learn what's ahead, why it matters, and how these updates will enhance member engagement.

- **Michelle Marshel**, *Director of Communications and Events, NASWA*

11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. | **Hosted Lunch | Woodrow Wilson A**

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. | **Washington, DC Spotlight**

The District is leveraging its sports and entertainment ecosystem to create opportunities, foster community impact and fuel economic growth. Learn how their coordinated messaging to stakeholders has amplified these efforts, resulting in positive outcomes for businesses, residents, and the local economy.

- **Diane Watkins, Committee Past Chair**, *Chief Strategy Officer, DC Department of Employment Services*
- **Benjamin Fritsch**, *Director of Communications, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, District of Columbia*

3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. | **Beverage Break**

3:15 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. | **Excellence in Communications Award Nominations | Showcase**

All nominees are invited to share a brief presentation of their award submissions. Bring examples to share in the form of a presentation, links, or handouts. (5-minute max).

**State Nominee**

- **Tom Colombo (AZ)**: Unemployment Insurance IT System Communication and Change Management Strategy

- **Jessica Smith (CO):** Colorado's WOTC Public Awareness Campaign
- **Diane Watkins (DC):** Building Trust Through Community: DC Paid Family Leave Awareness Initiative
- **Grace Johnson (NE):** UI Document Revisions
- **Chris Cannon (TN):** FOCUS: A New Vision for Tennessee's Workforce
- **Chris Barron (WA):** Employment Security Department website redesign

*Presenting virtually:*

- **Loree Levy and Kelsey Howard (CA):** Faster, More Accurate Unemployment Benefits: EDD's Weekly Wage Reporting Tool Campaign
- **Nicolas Ruggiero (MA):** On the Job with Secretary Jones

Please email your presentation materials to [Lisa Fitz-Coy](mailto:lisa.fitz-coy@wsn.wa.gov) to be added to the agenda.

#### 4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. | Day One Highlights and Tomorrow's Focus

**Chris Barron, Committee Chair,** *Communications Director, Washington State Employment Security Department*

## FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 27, 2026 MEETING ROOM: Woodrow Wilson D

#### 7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. | Breakfast | Woodrow Wilson A

#### 9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. | Day 2 Welcome

**Chris Barron, Committee Chair,** *Communications Director, Washington State Employment Security Department*

#### 9:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | State Roundtable

**Chris Barron, Committee Chair,** *Communications Director, Washington State Employment Security Department*

A roundtable discussion involving updates from each state present (5-minute max). Bring examples to share in the form of a presentation, links, or handouts. Choose one of the following questions:

- What areas do you need additional support in?
- What resources, tools, or advice would help make your work more efficient and/or effective?

#### 10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. | Beverage Break

#### 10:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. | Preparing for Administrative Transitions

**Cher Haavind,** *Deputy Executive Director and Chief Communications Officer, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment*

During this session, learn how communications teams can effectively prepare for and navigate state-level administrative transitions.

**11:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. | Strategic Goals Discussion**

**Chris Barron, Committee Chair**, *Communications Director, Washington State Employment Security Department*

- SUMMIT Communications Breakout Topics
- Virtual Meeting Topics

**11:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Wrap-up and Adjournment**

**Chris Barron, Committee Chair**, *Communications Director, Washington State Employment Security Department*

**Upcoming Association Year 2026 Meetings**

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**June Board & Committee Meetings**

*Administration & Finance Committee  
Board of Directors  
Employment & Training Committee  
Unemployment Insurance Committee*

June 2-4, 2026  
Seattle, WA

**Fall Communications Committee Meeting**

September 15, 2026

Milwaukee, WI

SUMMIT dates: Sept 16-17