



**Robert J. Thompson
Eastern Leadership Academy**

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

Robert J. Thompson Eastern Leadership Academy

August 24 - 28, 2025

The Hotel Monaco - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

AGENDA

Sunday, August 24

4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Arrival, check-in, registration

Hotel Monaco: 433 Chestnut St, Philadelphia, PA 19106

Check into the hotel and stop by our table just past the lobby to pick up your badge and folder for the week.

6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Welcome Reception

Location: Vapor Pavilion, Stratus Lounge, Hotel Monaco rooftop

To get to Vapor, take the black elevators to the 10th floor and you will see the entrance to Stratus. From there, either take the stairs or there is a gold elevator on the 10th floor that will take you up to Stratus.

9:00 – 11:59 p.m.

Hospitality Suite

Monday, August 25

8:00 – 8:45 a.m.

Buffet Breakfast

Location: Johannesburg North

9:00 a.m. – noon

Navigating Roadblocks

Location: Johannesburg South

Speaker: Mitzi Johnson, former Speaker of the House, Vermont

In practicing leadership, poor outcomes are often a result of diagnostic failures. This session is an introduction to two diagnostic tools – mapping perspectives and identifying anticipated losses – and how to use them to lead strategically. Being a successful leader requires deep listening, negotiating to navigate loss, and learning how and when to disappoint people at a rate they can withstand. We will work to strengthen diagnostic muscles to analyze why attempts fail or succeed, and how to make progress on your toughest issues.

Noon – 12:20 p.m. **Break**

12:30 – 1:00 p.m. **Lunch:** Johannesburg North

1:00 – 2:00 p.m. **Lunch Speaker**
Location: Johannesburg South

Speaker: Anne Larson, Deputy Program Director, Behavioral Health, CSG Justice Center

2:00 – 2:20 p.m. **Break**

2:20 – 4:30 p.m. **Stress Management: Essential Strategies to Boost Calm and Confidence**
Location: Johannesburg South

Speaker: Dr. Mary Anderson, clinical psychologist and author

Participants will learn science-based strategies and skills to help them improve their stress management, so they can be consistently high-performing in the short term and sustainably high-achieving in the long term. Clinical psychologist and author Dr. Mary Anderson will lead an interactive session demonstrating actionable techniques to effectively strengthen self-talk and optimize self-care, specifically tailored to enhance coping with stressful situations and busy schedules, to boost calm and confidence.

6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. **Reception and Dinner**

PJ Clarke's at the Curtis
601 Walnut St, Philadelphia, PA 19106

9:00 p.m. – midnight **Hospitality Suite:** Room 1016

Tuesday, August 26

*****2025 Class president nominations will be collected all day*****

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. **Buffet Breakfast:** Johannesburg North

9:00 – 11:30 a.m. **Skills Sessions: Connecting Across the Political Divide**
Location: Johannesburg South

Speaker: Seth Pendleton, Partner, KNP Communications

Participants learn a common-sense approach to defusing hostile questions and giving positive, simple, and memorable information

11:30 – 11:45 a.m. **Break**

11:45 – 1:15 p.m. **Social Media Fundamentals: Tactics and Strategy**
Location: Johannesburg South

Speaker: Matt White, Partner, KNP Communications

Now that so much political communication is taking place online, social media plays an increasingly critical role in connecting with constituents. This hour-long session will cover everything you need to know on how to use Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram confidently and effectively. Guidance will range from big-picture goals for online presence to specific tactics for crafting a compelling profile and tailoring messages for the right platform to reach your target audience. Which elected officials are doing it best? Who should you be following? What's the best way to connect with journalists? How can you engage commenters, use hashtags, and not fumble an attempt at a meme? This session will answer those questions and more.

1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. **Lunch:** Johannesburg North

2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. **Public Service Leadership: Building a Culture of Excellence**
Location: Johannesburg South

Speaker: Scott Raecker, former Iowa legislator, director of The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center at Drake University

How do public servants build a culture of excellence that embodies clear communication, negotiation, integrity, respect, and accountability? Scott Raecker draws on 14 years of experience in the Iowa legislature and 19 years as a professional focused on development of ethical leadership and civility to help current legislators navigate the sometimes-uncertain terrain of lawmaking and governing.

Free Afternoon and Evening: dinner on your own

Venture out into the city, explore a museum, walk around Old City, and/or sample the Philadelphia restaurant scene.

There's plenty to do in the City of Brotherly Love, and we don't want to coop you up in the hotel for the whole program, so take some new-found friends and get out there! The concierge desk can advise on restaurants and make reservations.

9:00 p.m. – Midnight **Hospitality Suite:** Room 1016

Wednesday, August 27

8:00 – 8:45 a.m. **Buffet Breakfast:** Johannesburg North

9:00 – 11:00 a.m. **Skills Session:** Power and Microaggressions
Location: Johannesburg South

Speaker: Tania Richard, antiracism educator and consultant

As public debate becomes increasingly heated and polarized, this workshop will provide tools and strategies that legislators and staff can use when engaging with constituents, stakeholders, and each other on challenging issues, while remaining authentic to their values and positions. Tania will assist ELA fellows in recognizing, preparing for, and responding to difficult or sensitive interactions in order to reach a respectful, productive outcome.

11:00 – 11:15 a.m. **Break**

11:15 – 12:30 p.m. **Lunch and Campaign Speeches for 2025 Class President**

Location: Johannesburg North

**Ballots will be collected as you exit the room.*

12:30 – 3:30 p.m. **Legislative Negotiation Workshop: Strategies to Overcome Impasse to Build Agreement**

Location: Johannesburg South

Speaker: Naseem Khuri, adjunct assistant professor of international negotiations, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University

Through participation in interactive exercises and discussions, participants will explore strategies to overcome impasse and build agreement in negotiation settings.

4:40 p.m. *Meet in the lobby for walk to closing dinner*

***NOTE: Business attire – 2025 class photo will be taken at the venue**

5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Reception

Location: Carpenters' Hall, 320 Chestnut Street

Carpenters' Hall is a treasure in historic Philadelphia. It hosted the First Continental Congress in 1774 and was home to Franklin's Library Company, The American Philosophical Society, and the First and Second Banks of the United States. Join your colleagues for a reception, closing dinner and “graduation” ceremony in this unique space.

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Graduation Dinner and Presentation of Diplomas

Speakers:

- Deputy Speaker Pro Tempore Bob Godfrey, Connecticut
- Daykia Hunter-McKnight, 2024 ELA Class President

9:30 p.m. – Midnight **Hospitality Suite:** Room 1016

Thursday, August 28

8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Breakfast

Location: Johannesburg South

*****Please complete your survey and hand to CSG East staff before leaving!*****