



AMERICAN BENEFITS  
COUNCIL

## NEWS RELEASE

February 27, 2019  
NR 2019-4

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### Council launches state, local policy initiative

*Bipartisan team of former federal, state lawmakers to lead effort*

WASHINGTON, DC – The American Benefits Council today formally launched [the State Law Project](#) to address growing activity by states and localities in the employee benefits arena. The initiative is co-chaired by former U.S. representatives Lynn Jenkins (R-KS) and Earl Pomeroy (D-ND).

“As an organization representing over 220 of the nation’s largest employers sponsoring comprehensive benefits for workers, retirees and families, the Council is uniquely positioned to address the priorities of large multi-state companies,” said Marianne McManus, incoming chair of the Council’s board of directors and director of benefits at IBM.

In recent years, states and localities have increasingly enacted laws requiring employers to meet certain requirements regarding health and retirement plans as well as paid leave programs. Many of these well-intentioned efforts complicate the sponsorship and operation of employee benefit programs by national employers. An integral part of the State Law Project will be to work closely with Council members and others that have extensive state advocacy programs.

“The Council has long sought to balance the desire of states and localities to serve their residents’ interests with the needs of multi-state employers for a federal framework to offer comprehensive national benefit programs,” said Council President James A. Klein. “The recent acceleration of state action requires even greater advocacy. The Council is committed to engaging in this important dialogue at every level of government, in every possible venue,” Klein added.

Earl Pomeroy and Lynn Jenkins, two highly respected former lawmakers with expertise in employee benefits, one Republican and one Democrat, who both held senior positions in state government before serving in Congress, will co-chair this important effort. They bring knowledge, insight and a commitment to Americans' health and financial security to this initiative to help state and federal officials identify their appropriate roles in formulating employee benefits policy.

"Just like Congress, states and cities have a legitimate interest in the well-being of their citizens. But we want to steer them away from big-government measures that unintentionally threaten a company's ability to deliver consistent benefits protection to those who need it, wherever they live or work," said Jenkins, who served in Congress from 2009 to 2019 and previously was Kansas State Treasurer.

"With increasing gridlock in Washington, federal policymakers have given states and localities a free hand to legislate. But for 45 years ERISA's federal framework has been the bedrock of our nation's employee benefits system. State efforts that erode ERISA will undermine employer-sponsored health and retirement benefits covering millions of Americans," said Pomeroy, senior counsel at Alston & Bird, who served in Congress from 1993 to 2011. Prior to his congressional service, Pomeroy was North Dakota Insurance Commissioner.

"In addition to our bipartisan co-chairs, we are proud that Dirk Kempthorne has agreed to serve as a senior advisor to this initiative. Dirk is a former governor of Idaho and senator from that state and was Secretary of Interior prior to serving a distinguished tenure as president of the American Council of Life Insurers. He understands state and federal government and he understands employee benefits. We are fortunate to be able to draw upon his wise counsel," Klein said.

"I know firsthand of American Benefits Council's balanced and practical approach to problem-solving and I am pleased to be associated with this worthy effort," Kempthorne said.

For more information on the State Law Project, or to arrange an interview with Klein, contact Jason Hammersla, Council vice president, communications, at [jhammersla@abcstaff.org](mailto:jhammersla@abcstaff.org) or by phone at 202-289-6700 (office) or (202) 422-4652 (cell).

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*The Council is a public policy organization whose members include over 220 of the world's largest corporations, as ranked by Fortune and Forbes. Collectively, the Council's members either directly sponsor or administer health and retirement benefits for virtually all Americans covered by employer-sponsored plans.*