

News

Representative Harold M. Love, Jr., President-Elect of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, Tells How His Rise Could Affect the Nation

By Michael A. Grant, J.D.

Tennessee Rep. Harold M. Love Jr., the next president of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL), served as host to the NBCSL's recent conference held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in downtown Nashville. The Representative of Tennessee's 58th legislative district, Love is now president-elect of the NBCSL. He will be sworn in as president next December 2025 in Washington, D.C.

"One thing that I have thought about when it comes to leading NBCSL once I'm sworn in is to continue some of the work I'm doing now as president-elect. And one of the main focal points that I have been charged with by the current president is to establish a series of regional quarterly meetings."

Love says the NBCSL will begin holding in-person meetings throughout the year instead of one

annual meeting, a strategy envisioned by current president, Alabama Rep. Laura Hall, and assigned to Rep. Love.

"The benefit is that we can address issues a lot faster than to wait for the annual conference at the end of the year. Most legislators are in session part time and the issues that we have to address happens in many states and affects constituencies that we represent

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from voting rights to educational attainment to affordable housing and health issues," he said. "And so, to have regional meetings on a quarterly basis will allow us to respond faster collectively and that's the strength

of NBCSL. We are a collection of caucuses from across the country...We work in silos, but it does help when we have an organization that can galvanize us and make us aware of issues that are moving from state to state. So much happens from January through November that we now can no longer wait to convene."

Love has been groomed for national leadership since his youth. His father, the legendary Harold Love Sr., served in the Tennessee state house for nearly 30 years. His mother, an educator, taught math for 10 years and acted as director of the federal government's local Upward Bound program for 47 years at Tennessee State University. She passed away one year after retirement.

Love praises on both of his parents who taught him how to serve others. All of their efforts resulted in his finally being elected after three unsuccessful attempts to hold



Michael Grant, former president of the Nashville Branch of the NAACP and the National Bankers Association, congratulations Tennessee Rep. Harold Love on his election as the next president of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators.

public office. According to Love, who earned a master's degree from Vanderbilt University in Theological Studies and a doctorate from Tennessee State University in public policy and who is also senior pastor at Lee Chapel AME Church, received some sage advice from his mentor, the Rev. Sonnye Dixon: "Do the work for the community outside of elected office. Then you will be able to continue this work after you are elected."

From that, Love said there are many paths to public service and to elective office.

"I know some people who worked for individuals and for campaigns and then ran for elective office the first time and won. That was not my case. Even though I worked in my father's campaign, even though I was fairly active in my community, I did not win until my fourth time running," he recalls. "It was in that space that Rev. Dixon said to me, 'I know you want to do well. I know you want to help your community. Put that to work outside the office. And then if you get in the office then you've done well. But even if you don't get elected, you still engaged in helping to shape policy.'"

There are many ways to serve, Love says. "We

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