The CSG 2017 Toll Fellows class, comprises 42 of the nation’s top officials representing all three branches of state government, was honored for its dedication to leadership and service during the CSG National Conference on Saturday, Dec. 16.

“I wish everyone in America could see this class of Toll Fellows. You can’t help but come away seeing how committed they are with very little personal award,” CSG Executive Director/CEO David Adkins said.

Adkins shared feedback from a Toll Fellow who described the training program as “an experience I will never forget.” Adkins added, “they are a class we will never forget as well.”

The Toll Fellowship, named for CSG founder Henry Wolcott Toll, is a six-day, five-night intellectual boot camp that has been in operation for more than 30 years. This year’s program was held Aug. 25-30 in Lexington, Kentucky. The program's agenda included a lineup of dynamic sessions designed to stimulate personal assessment and growth, while providing networking and relationship-building opportunities.

Michael Beschloss, award-winning historian and best-selling author, gave the keynote address for the Toll Fellow graduation ceremony. Beschloss, who The New York Times Book Review has called “easily the most widely recognized Presidential historian in the United States,” has authored nine books.

During his keynote, he shared insights into the minds of historical leaders and shared advice for today’s leaders. Beschloss outlined what he viewed as the three essential qualities of leadership: Guts, persuasiveness and the ability to work with the other side.

“We want a leader who can make tough decisions, but also have the persuasiveness to get people to go along with your decision,” Beschloss said. “I have never seen a successful president in history who wasn’t able to work with the other side or understand how someone could have different views.”

Beschloss wrapped up his keynote address by calling for optimism and hope, and by recognizing the important role of nonpartisan organizations like CSG.

“CSG has been an enormous asset to this country for decades,” Beschloss said. “Working to bring people together from different parties and views to ensure the public will is essential.”