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December 18, 2020

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Municipal Clerks: Please forward to your Mayor, Governing Body and Department Heads.

To assist in providing guidance and information we have created a [Covid-19 resource page](#). We will continue to update the page as we get pertinent information and include announcements in our Daily Updates.

I. State Issues

a. COVID-19 Update

Today Governor Murphy announced that there were 3,975 new positive cases and an additional 44 confirmed deaths resulting from COVID-19. To date, there have been 423,226 confirmed cases and 16,216 confirmed deaths. The rate of transmission is at 1.03. Since August, there have been 428 cases linked to the 98 school outbreaks.

The State continues to ask residents to download and use the new [Covid Alert NJ](#), the State's exposure notification smart phone app.

Since our last update, Governor Murphy issued no COVID-19 related Executive Orders.

On Tuesday, the first COVID-19 vaccination was administered in New Jersey. The federal government has allocated 76,050 first doses to New Jersey for the first tranche of the

Pfizer-BioNTech (ultra-cold chain) vaccine, which began arriving at acute care hospitals Monday morning. New Jersey will roll out COVID-19 vaccines in phases in accordance with the [Interim COVID-19 Vaccination Plan](#). The Department of Health has created a [COVID-19 Vaccination webpage](#) to provide resources and updates.

Today the Governor also announced the state is scheduled to open six vaccine “mega sites” in January to administer the vaccine to frontline health care workers who are part of Phase 1A. It is anticipated that these sites will also be used for Phase 1B, essential workers, before moving to Phase 1C, adults 65+ with high risk medical conditions. The sites are Meadowlands Complex, Rockaway Townsquare Mall, New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center, Moorestown Mall, Rowan College and Atlantic City Convention Center. The state is currently working on opening over 200 satellite vaccination sites.

On Thursday, the Department of Labor [announced](#) 16,368 new applications for unemployment, a 3.8% decrease from the prior week.

Contact: Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, lbuckelew@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x112.

b. Cannabis Legislation on Governor’s Desk

Yesterday, both the Assembly, by a vote of 49-24-6, and the Senate, by a vote of 23-17, approved [S-21/A-21](#), which is the enabling legislation, legalizing, and regulating the adult recreational use of cannabis pursuant to passage of the constitutional amendment this past November. It is anticipated that Governor Murphy will sign the legislation shortly.

Contacts:

- Mike Cerra, Executive Director, mcerra@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x120.
- Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, lbuckelew@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x112.

c. Hospital Property Tax Subsidy Bill Headed to Governor

After advancing through Senate and Assembly committee hearings, yesterday both houses voted to approve [A-1135/S-624 & S-357](#), sending the measure to the Governor’s office for his action. While the League is supportive of a legislative solution to the issue of how the business model for modern hospitals does not comport with the original public policy reasons for exempting non-profit hospitals from property taxes, we do not believe that these bills provide a proper solution.

We still remain concerned about the threshold issue of the legislation’s questionable Constitutional standing and the fees remain below the amount of the property taxes these entities would be assessed if they were taxed fairly. Please read the [League’s letter of opposition](#) submitted to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee for more information on this legislation and additional details on the League’s concerns.

We urge our members, especially those hosting non-profit hospitals, to reach out to the Governor’s office, expressing how this issue impacts your community’s taxpayers, and asking him to veto A-1135/S-624 & S-357.

Contact: Frank Marshall, Esq., Associate General Counsel, fmarshall@njlm.org, 609-695-

3481 x137.

d. Senate Passes PFRS 20 and Out Legislation

On Thursday, the Senate unanimously passed [S-1017](#), which permits a PFRS employee who is enrolled before or after the bill's effective date to retire, regardless of age, upon attaining 20 or more years of service credit and would allow that employee to receive a retirement allowance equal to 50% of the member's final compensation. This benefit will expire after two years after enactment. The Assembly companion, [A-2562](#), now awaits consideration by the Assembly Budget Committee.

As we previously [reported](#), the League, along with the New Jersey Association of Counties, view this legislation as an enhancement of benefit at a time we can least afford it. The public safety unions are pushing this legislation in response to what they believe is a misinterpretation of the 1999 law and argued that the cost will be offset by the healthcare savings.

Funded by property taxpayer dollars, county and municipal governments across the State spent \$1,038,351,129 in 2020 to subsidize the PFRS, while PFRS members contributed approximately \$348,439,976 to the defined benefit plan. In other words, property taxpayers will have financed over 70% of PFRS in 2020, while PFRS members will pay 30%. Since these additional costs will be borne by taxpayers, the League opposes this legislation.

Please contact your Assembly representative and urge them to vote no A-2562.

Contact: Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, lbuckelew@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x112.

e. Tax Incentive Legislation Moving Quickly

Late on Wednesday, it was [announced](#) that Governor Murphy, Senate President Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Coughlin reached an agreement on reforms to the tax incentive programs.

According to the [announcement](#), the agreement "includes annual caps, strong compliance standards, groundbreaking tools to support the innovation economy, and robust labor protections."

[A-4/S-3295](#) was considered and approved by both the Assembly Appropriations Committee and Senate Budget Committee today. Both bills are scheduled for a full vote of the Senate and Assembly on Monday.

The legislation includes the following:

- "Historic Property Reinvestment Act" providing tax credits for part of the cost of rehabilitating historic properties in this State.
- "Brownfields Redevelopment Incentive Program Act" providing tax credits to compensate developers of redevelopment projects located on brownfield sites for remediation costs.
- "New Jersey Innovation Evergreen Act" auctioning tax credits for cash, which will

be used to invest in innovation as a catalyst for economic growth and to advance the competitiveness of the State's businesses in the global economy.

- "Food Desert Relief Act" providing tax credits in order to incentivize businesses to establish and retain new supermarkets and grocery stores in food desert communities.
- "New Jersey Community-Anchored Development Act" providing tax credits to anchor institutions to incentivize the expansion of targeted industries in the State and the continued development of certain areas of the State.
- "New Jersey Aspire Program Act" providing tax credits to encourage redevelopment projects by covering certain project financing gap costs.
- "Emerge Program Act" providing tax credits to encourage economic development, job creation, and the retention of significant numbers of jobs in imminent danger of leaving the State.
- "Main Street Recovery Finance Program Act" providing grants, loans, and loan guarantees to small businesses.
- "New Jersey Ignite Act" a public-private partnership providing start-up rent grants to collaborative workspaces to support the early months of an early stage innovation economy business's rent at the collaborative workspace.
- "Economic Development Authority Integrity and Protection Act" to create an Office of the Economic Development Inspector General, which will operate independent of the oversight or management of the EDA, and to require employment of Chief Compliance Officer to manage the Division of Portfolio Management and Compliance in the EDA.

We will be providing you with a more detailed analysis of the legislation.

Contact: Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, lbuckelew@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x112.

II. Federal Issues

a. Federal Update – State and Local Aid Excluded From COVID Relief Legislation

Congress continues to negotiate the details of a \$900 billion COVID relief package, which will be attached to the \$1.4 trillion omnibus spending package that funds the government through September. The current funding bill expires at midnight tonight and given the time and lack of agreement, a brief government shutdown may occur.

Aid to state and local governments is currently not included in the bill. Among the remaining sticking points are FEMA funding, which some senators view as backdoor funding for state and local governments, and efforts to limit the Federal Reserve's ability to restart pandemic relief.

The broad outline of the COVID relief bill includes \$600 stimulus checks to many individuals, a \$300 increase in weekly unemployment benefits, and \$325 billion for small business relief.

Congress is expected to stay through the weekend to complete these critical funding

measures. While disappointed in the lack of funding for state and local governments, we will continue to monitor and report as details emerge.

Contact: Paul Penna, Legislative Analyst, ppenna@njlm.org, 609 695-3481, x110.

III. 2020 Annual League Conference

a. Print Your CEU Certificates from the 2020 NJLM Virtual Conference

The tracking system from the 2020 NJLM Virtual Conference is now open. To print your certificates visit the [Tracking System webpage](#).

The system will be available until **May 1, 2021**.

b. It's Not Too Late!

We hope that the NJLM Virtual Conference allowed you to look back and forward on the challenges of the day, be it the COVID-19 pandemic, social and restorative justice, or how to balance the competing interests in preparing for your 2021 budget. While we hope to be back in-person in Atlantic City in 2021, the virtual conference offers a unique benefit. The content of the approximately 80 programs and 145 virtual exhibitor booths will be available on-demand through October 31, 2021.

Anyone who is registered can simply log in to [the Conference website](#) to view any of the programs or visit any of the exhibitor booths. And for those who did not attend, it's not too late. We will continue to [accept registrations](#) for access to the Conference site. Those who register now will not be able to apply for CEUs but will have full access to all programs and exhibit booths. And please continue to visit the exhibitors who chose to support the 105th Annual Conference by stopping by their booths. You can contact exhibitors directly with any questions or comments by simply using the "Request Information" button on each booth. This will generate an automatic email to the exhibitor and they will contact you with a reply.

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