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## January 15, 2021

- I. State Issues
- II. Federal Issues
- III. 2020 Annual League Conference
- IV. Also of Interest

**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.

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### I. State Issues

#### a. COVID-19 Update

This week's COVID-19 news from Trenton centered on the expansion of the vaccine roll-out to include individuals over the age of 65 and 16-64 with certain medical conditions. The Governor issued an Executive Order addressing changes to the 2020-21 school year adapting to the challenges posed by COVID-19. Below is more in-depth information on the vaccine, Executive Order, unemployment, and data.

#### COVID Data

For January 15, 2020:

- 5,490 new positive cases for a total of 550,299 confirmed cases

- 67 new confirmed deaths for a total of 18,229 confirmed deaths
- The rate of transmission is at 1.11
- 9.63% positivity rate as of January 11
- 564 cases linked to 111 school outbreaks since August
- 310,595 vaccine doses have been administered, including 273,335 first doses and 37,079 second doses. 54% have been Moderna and 46% Pfizer.

## **Vaccine Information**

Earlier in the week, the Governor [announced](#) that effective January 14, individuals older than 65 and individuals between the ages of 16 and 64 with medical conditions [defined by the Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) will be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for persons 16 years of age and older under the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization and the Moderna vaccine is recommended for individuals 18 years and older. Not all sites administer both vaccines, so it is important the individuals check with their vaccination site before scheduling a visit.

Individuals who are pregnant and those in an immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant are also eligible but should follow CDC guidance and first discuss vaccination with their medical provider before receiving the vaccine. In addition, smoking is included as a risk factor on the CDC list of high risk conditions and individuals 16-64 with a smoking addiction are now eligible for the vaccine.

Individuals who are providing paid or unpaid health care services, like essential caregivers (i.e. an adult child caring for their elderly parent with severe neurological disorder in their home instead of a nursing facility) are currently eligible for the vaccine as health care workers.

Vaccinations are also available to individuals who live, work, or are being educated in New Jersey. Some county-operated sites may restrict vaccination at their locations to those who work, live, or are being educated in their county. However, the State is encouraging all vaccination sites to make appointments available to all eligible individuals.

Residents of group homes and long-term care facilities are currently eligible for a vaccine and permitted to schedule an appointment at an open vaccine location. The vaccination of individuals in high-risk, congregate care settings such as nursing homes, assisted living residences, IDD group homes, etc. is expected to take weeks. Doses for these settings have already been reserved in the State's allocation. These efforts are primarily driven by the Federal Pharmacy Partnership LTC program (Walgreens/CVS) that is prioritizing vaccination in skilled nursing facilities/nursing homes and assisted living residences first. Those in other congregate care settings are a priority but may not have been contacted by the pharmacy program or Department of Health on their status yet.

The state continues to encourage the general public to [pre-register for eligibility for the vaccine online](#). Individuals will be permitted to input their personal, contact, health insurance, and demographic information. Those who are immediately eligible based on screening questions will be able to schedule an appointment. A consumer call center will be activated shortly and will assist individuals without internet access in scheduling appointments, and will assist in answering general inquiries and questions. Please note that during peak times, there may be capacity issues that result in a message to try later. We ask that you share this information with your community.

## Executive Order

Since our last update, Governor Murphy has issued the following COVID-19 related Executive Order:

[Executive Order 214](#), which waives graduation assessment requirement for high school diplomas, removes student growth objectives from teacher evaluations, and extends the service time limitations for those in the process of becoming a certified teachers for the 2020-21 school year.

## Unemployment Information

The Department of Labor [announced](#) for the week ending January 9 the initial weekly unemployment claims total 21,833, a 4% increase from the prior week. Under the expanded CARES Act, 460,000 claimants currently collecting Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), plus 80,000 claimants collecting Extended Benefits (EB), are eligible for an 11-week extension, and are seeing no interruption in benefits. There was a delay in running the new Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program last week but the Department of Labor hopes to process the newly available federal \$300 supplemental unemployment benefit over the weekend.

**Contact:** Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, [lbuckelew@njlm.org](mailto:lbuckelew@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x112.

## **b. League Urges Legislature to Act in Response to Federal Court Decision**

On December 30, 2020, the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey issued a ruling in [Rosedale and Rosehill Cemetery Association v. Twp. of Readington](#), in which the court invalidated the New Jersey Cemetery Act (N.J.S.A. 45:27-25, et seq), finding the Act violated principles of the United States Constitution. The Act, among other things, granted a municipality the power to consent to the establishment or enlargement of cemeteries within its borders.

The court stayed its decision for 30 days to allow the New Jersey Legislature time to act to amend the Act to be in line with the decision. The League is actively making efforts to alert legislative leaders of this issue and have urged them to adopt corrective legislation in accordance with the federal court's decision that ensures this important municipal control is restored. We have also requested that the Attorney General's office seek additional time from the court, to provide the Legislature with adequate time to act.

For more information please see the League recent [blog post](#).

**Contact:** Frank Marshall, Esq., Associate General Counsel, [fmarshall@njlm.org](mailto:fmarshall@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x137.

## **c. Local Finance Notice Issued on Municipal Budget Appropriations for Volunteer Fire Companies and Fire Districts**

On Monday, January 11, the Division of Local Government Services released [Local](#)

[Finance Notice 2021-02](#), which announced the increase on the annual cap on funds a municipality may appropriate for use on its volunteer fire companies and boards of fire commissioners. For CY 2021/SFY2022 and CY 2022/SFY2023 the cost of living adjustment (COLA) is 1%. Therefore, the maximum annual contribution that is permitted is \$156,604.

As a reminder, any municipality with more than three or more fire companies or boards may appropriate an additional \$50,000 annually for each fire company or board.

We suggest you review this Local Finance Notice with your Administrator and Chief Financial Officer.

**Contact:** Andrew LaFevre, Legislative Analyst, [alafevre@njlm.org](mailto:alafevre@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x116.

#### **d. DLGS Announces Length of Service Awards Program CPI Annual Adjustment**

In [Local Finance Notice 2021-01](#), the Division of Local Government Services announced a Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAPs) award increase and the annual cost of living adjustment to the maximum award amounts.

The increase in calendar year 2020 (for use in CY 2021) is 0.8% for municipal (November) and 2.6% for fire district (February) LOSAPs.

Adjustments to the maximum LOSAP contribution are calculated annually based on changes in the Consumer Price Index. The amount of the increase cannot exceed the amount calculated by multiplying the current contribution by the inflation percentage.

**Contact:** Paul Penna, Legislative Analyst, [ppenna@njlm.org](mailto:ppenna@njlm.org), 609 695-3481, x110.

## **II. Federal Issues**

### **a. President-Elect Biden Announce \$1.9 Trillion American Rescue Plan Proposal**

On Thursday evening, President-Elect Joe Biden delivered a [speech](#) where he proposed a \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan. Among the major elements of the proposal is \$350 Billion for state and local governments.

Components of President-Elect Biden's [American Rescue Plan](#) include:

- Support for communities that are struggling in the wake of COVID-19 by providing support for the hardest-hit small businesses, protecting the jobs of the first responders, transit workers, and other essential workers we depend on.
- Mounting of a national vaccination program, containing COVID-19, and safely reopening schools, including setting up community vaccination sites nationwide, scaling up testing and tracing, eliminating supply shortage problems, investing in high-quality treatments, providing paid sick leave to contain spread of the virus, addressing health disparities, and making the necessary investments to meet the

president-elect's goal of safely reopening a majority of K-8 schools in the first 100 days.

- Delivering immediate relief to working families bearing the brunt of this crisis by sending \$1,400 per-person checks to households across America, providing direct housing and nutrition assistance, expanding access to reliable childcare and affordable healthcare, increasing the minimum wage, extending unemployment insurance, and giving families with kids and childless workers an emergency boost this year.

The proposal requires congressional approval and 60 votes for consideration in the Senate. Speaker Nancy Pelosi and incoming Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer promised swift consideration.

**Contact:** Paul Penna, Legislative Analyst, [ppenna@njlm.org](mailto:ppenna@njlm.org), 609 695-3481, x110.

### **b. Presidential Inaugural Committee Announces Activities**

On Wednesday, January 20, President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris will be sworn in as the next President and Vice President of the United States. The scaled-back inaugural activities will include a National Day of Service and COVID-19 Memorial Event.

#### **National Day of Service**

A National Day of Service will be held on Monday, January 18, in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For more on the Day of Service or to sign up, please visit the National [Day of Service website](#).

#### **COVID-19 Memorial Event**

A memorial to remember and honor the lives lost to COVID-19 in cities and towns across the country will be held on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. The Committee is asking local elected officials to light up public buildings (in light amber if possible). To confirm your participation, please complete the registration [form](#) provided by the Inaugural Committee.

**Contact:** Paul Penna, Legislative Analyst, [ppenna@njlm.org](mailto: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 105<sup>th</sup> 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.

## IV. Also of Interest

### a. Campaign Contribution Notice

The New Jersey Division of Elections has requested we share the following information for the attention of Municipal Clerks. Questions and inquiries for additional information on campaign contributions should be directed to the Division of Elections at 609-292-3760 or reference New Jersey Elections law, P.L. 1975, c. 70.

"No holder of a public office or position shall demand payment or contribution from another holder of a public office or position for the campaign purposes of any candidate or for the use of any political party."

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