

February 10, 2017

**RE: WEEKLY UPDATE**

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**I. State Policy Issues**

**a. Recap of Legislative Day**

On Wednesday, Mayors from across the State convened at the League's 25th Annual Mayors Legislative Day. Topics discussed included affordable housing, reimbursement for Transportation Trust Fund projects pension, health benefits funding, and property tax relief.

League President Albert Kelly, Mayor of Bridgeton, began the day by outlining his priorities as League President which includes reforms to the current regressive property tax system; to fully restore the energy tax receipts; to tie the Interest Arbitration Cap to the property tax levy cap; for the Administration and Legislature to meet us in the middle of the room and enact a reasonable, rational and achievable housing policy; and recognize it is municipal government where the most innovative and creative governing gets done.

Mayor Kelly then asked key Christie Administration leaders to discuss their priorities for the coming year.

Department of Community Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Chuck Richman discussed the status of affordable housing, including the significant amount of financing from DCA for affordable housing, a fact often overlooked.

The Commissioner also brought Mayors up-to-date on the Department's efforts to address homelessness, particularly regarding initiative to end homelessness for veterans.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bob Martin focused on DEP's efforts in regards to water infrastructure, storm water management and the MS4 permitting process. The Commissioner also encouraged municipalities to seek financial assistance from the [New Jersey Environmental Infrastructures Trust](#).

In response to a question, the Department of Transportation (DOT) Chief of Staff John Case indicated that the methodology to determine TTF grant priorities was the same as previous years and that local aid was expected to go out in June.

Elizabeth Connelly, Commissioner of the Department of Human Services (DHS) – the largest and most diverse Executive Branch Department – spoke about the effort to provide 'three generation services' to the citizens and families most in need of a hand up. She complimented Mayor Kelly, and all who joined him, in the successful push to make New Jersey a player in the

Federal Department of Agriculture's SNAP Pilot program, which will give needy New Jersey families better access to fresh and healthy foods. The Commissioner highlighted areas where DHS works in tandem with DCA and stated her hope the Department could work more closely with New Jersey Mayors to address social service needs and remedy problems, as they emerge first in New Jersey municipalities..

The program then moved to the presentation of certificates to the new class of inductees into the League's Elected Officials' Hall of Fame. These dedicated men and women have completed at least two decades of service to their fellow citizens in elected local office.

This was followed by a lively legislative policy roundtable discussion, moderated by Politico New Jersey writer Matt Friedman. The panel included Senate President Steve Sweeney, Senate Republican Leader Tom Kean, Assembly Speaker Vince Prieto and Assembly Republican Leader Jon Bramnick. These State-level leaders were joined by League First Vice President, Mayor Jim Cassella of East Rutherford, Second Vice President, Mayor Colleen Mahr of Fanwood and Third Vice President Jim Perry of Hardwick.

The Mayors engaged the Legislators on a diverse range of issues important to municipalities, including affordable housing, TTF funding and reimbursements as a result of the shutdown, the upcoming expiration of the 2% cap on interest arbitration awards at the end of 2017 and support for the ongoing efforts of the Administration and Legislature to address drug addiction.

**Contacts:** Michael Cerra, Assistant Executive Director, [mcerra@njslom.com](mailto:mcerra@njslom.com), 609-695-3481 x120.

## **b. DEP Green and Blue Acres Funding Availability**

The [Green Acres Program](#) has protected over half a million acres of open space and provided hundreds of outdoor recreational facilities in communities around the State, with the help of public and private partners.

For recreation and conservation purposes, the Green Acres, Farmland, Blue Acres, and Historic Preservation Bond Act of 2007 has authorized millions for acquisition of land in the floodways of the Delaware River, Passaic River or Raritan River, and other individual streams. Properties (including structures) that have been damaged or are at risk of becoming damaged caused by storms or flooding, are eligible for acquisition. Applications for this latest funding round are due to the Green Acres program by **February 15, 2017**. Applications are available at: [www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/pdflaunch.html](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres/pdflaunch.html) or to learn more about this program and for other useful links please visit [http://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/blue\\_flood\\_ac.html](http://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/blue_flood_ac.html).

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## **II. Federal Policy Issues**

## **a. Don't Let Federal Tax Reform Weaken Local Finance**

As the 115th Congress kicked into full gear, the National League of Cities (NLC) took the campaign to preserve the tax exemption for municipal bonds national. In a joint effort with the Municipal Bonds for America Coalition, NLC and over 300 cities, public utilities and associations sent a letter to U.S. House and Senate Leadership, House Ways & Means Committee Members, and Senate Finance Committee Members that underscores the importance the financing tool represents for cities.

The timeliness of this effort cannot be overstated. As the Congressional Republican caucuses met in Philadelphia, last week for a policy summit, conversations on tax-reform were held. House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady on Tuesday said, "Tax reform is truly one of those once-in-a-generation opportunities. We are committed to seizing it in a bold way."

Tax-exempt municipal bonds are the backbone of state and local government finance and are key to a vibrant national economy. NLC is committed to continue the fight to preserve the ability to finance in a cost-effective manor while supporting the idea of a comprehensive tax reform package that works to benefit municipalities.

Last November at our Annual Conference, we adopted a Resolution on this matter. We have already contacted all those who represent our State, in Congress. Now, they need to hear from you.

Tax-exempt municipal bonds are an essential and irreplaceable tool, used by municipalities to finance the construction and maintenance of Main Street infrastructure. Tax-exempt municipal bonds finance nearly two-thirds of the nation's core infrastructure. Approximately \$1.7 trillion in infrastructure investment over the last decade was financed with tax-exempt municipal bonds.

Despite proven success as a financing tool that drives development, while saving local governments interest costs, tax-exempt municipal bonds could be capped, diminished or dismantled as a pay-for under federal tax reform. As Congress considers comprehensive tax reform during the next session, New Jersey municipalities must stand strong in defense of municipal bonds.

One way to ensure support for tax-exempt municipal bonds is to increase membership of the Congressional Municipal-Finance Caucus. Founded in March 2016 by Representatives Randy Hultgren of Illinois and Dutch Ruppersberger of Maryland, the Caucus is fighting for local governments' ability to independently finance projects to keep their communities strong. We need your help to grow the Caucus. Click [here](#) to send a letter to your member of Congress today urging them to join the Congressional Municipal-Finance Caucus and protect the tax exemption for municipal bonds. By becoming a member of the Caucus, your member of Congress can join our fight to protect municipal bonds.

**Contact:** Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, [jmoran@njslom.org](mailto:jmoran@njslom.org), 609-695-3481 x121.

## **b. FCC Seeks Comment on Wireless Facility Siting in the Right of Way**

On December 22, 2016, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) released a notice seeking comment on “potential Commission action to help expedite the deployment [of] next generation wireless infrastructure by providing guidance on how federal law applies to local government review of wireless facility siting applications and local requirements for gaining access to the right of way.” A copy of this notice can be found [here](#).

We are pleased to let you know that the FCC granted the motion of our national affiliate, the National League of Cities (NLC), and the new initial commenting deadline is now **March 8, 2017**, with a reply comment deadline of **April 8, 2017**. This extension gives us valuable time to gather information from municipalities on what the situation is in their communities.

**This is a very important regulatory proceeding that will affect local government authority. Strong and factually based comments are necessary as a counterweight to proposals that would limit home rule.**

Additionally, the League and the National League of Cities need local governments to provide input on the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) recent the December 22, 2016 notice. [Please consider responding to this brief survey provided here.](#)

For background on this issue, please click [here](#), for a white paper written by the League’s Bureau of Municipal information.

**Contact:** Michael Cerra, Assistant Executive Director, [mcerra@njslom.org](mailto:mcerra@njslom.org), 609-695-3481 x120.

## **III. 2017 League Salary Survey**

The League is conducting its biannual compilation of wages and salaries paid to mayors, governing body members and other key administrative personnel, including police officials. We are writing to request your response to a survey to help us gather this data. In order to use the data that you so generously take the time to provide, we request your response no later than **April 12, 2017**.

**You may find and complete the survey in 9 minutes by** clicking here. If you would prefer to print a copy of the survey to complete by hand, you may do so by clicking here.

**Contact:** Taran B. Samhammer, Advertising Manager, [tsamhammer@njslom.org](mailto:tsamhammer@njslom.org), 609- 6953481 x124

## **IV. Also of Interest**

**a. Ready To Run – March 10 and 11**

Now is the time to sign up for the annual **Ready to Run® Campaign Training for Women** hosted by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. Ready to Run® is a bipartisan program for women, who want to run for office, work on campaigns, get appointed to office, or learn more about the political system. It's all happening March 10-11 on the RutgersNew Brunswick campus, including special pre-conference sessions for women of color. Get the details [here](#)

**b. Recognize Law Enforcement for Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma Award**

This year the New Jersey Governor's Council on Mental Health Stigma is recognizing Law Enforcement Professionals that have provided effective supports, services or programs that reduce the ways in which society stigmatizes people with mental illnesses. The 2017 Ambassador Awards will honor people, institutions and endeavors whose work best exemplifies how communities encourage understanding and acceptance of adults and children whose lives are affected by mental illness. **Nominations will be accepted until February 20, 2017**, click here to download form

**c. Office Space Available at the League Building**

Please share this information with your friends, colleagues and others.

The League has first class office suites and singles available in its headquarters building at 222 West State Street, Trenton. The Roebling Mansion has shared conference rooms and kitchen facilities while being just steps away from the State House. It is a perfect location for firms that seek a Capital City address. <http://nj-njslom.civicplus.com/260>

To discuss taking a tour please contact Michael Darcy at the New Jersey League of Municipalities, 609-695-3481 ext. 116 or [mdarcy@njslom.com](mailto:mdarcy@njslom.com).

Sincerely,

Michael J. Darcy, CAE  
Executive Director