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January 18, 2019

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

I. State Issues:

a. Governor Addresses the State of the State

Tuesday, January 15, in Trenton, Governor Murphy delivered his [First State of the State message](#) to the Legislature and the people of New Jersey. His central message was focused on progress made and prospect to create more opportunities for economic improvement and for social progress. He called for 'a new approach that reaches deep into every community and puts growing and sustaining a thriving middle-class before anything, or anyone, else. ... Those who have been left out must be lifted up. Those who work hard must have their effort repaid. And those who are doing well should see a path to doing better.'

Noting the deficiencies of previous tax incentive programs, the Governor advocated for incentives for businesses that 'invest in their employees through skills development and training, and that cares about growing innovative and promising small and medium-sized companies. The Governor singled out Newark Mayor Ras Baraka and Plainfield Mayor Adrian Mapp for his plans to use the Opportunity Zone program to help realize their municipalities' potential.

The Governor recognized our State infrastructure needs, promising a continued commitment to fixing New Jersey Transit. He also noted the need to rebuild and

modernize of New Jersey's aging water infrastructure, citing the leadership of Newark Mayor Ras Baraka on this issue.

In the short term, the Governor hopes to see action on an increased minimum wage and recreational marijuana legalization.

The Governor stated, '...the more time I spend outside Trenton the more I learn that all answers do not come from Trenton.' Through the League, Mayors from all around New Jersey stand ready to help the Governor find the answers he needs to make the State a stronger and fairer place.

In the Republican response, Assembly Republican Leader Jon Bramnick specifically referenced the need to restore the 2% cap on interest arbitration awards.

Contact: Michael F. Cerra, Assistant Executive Director, mcerra@njslom.org, 609-695-3481, x120.

b. Municipal Property Tax Relief and the Next State Budget

On March 5, Governor Murphy is scheduled to present his Budget Address to the Legislature and the people of New Jersey. At that time, he will propose a State spending plan for the Fiscal Year that will begin on July 1. That proposal will be the basis for further discussions, and ultimate action, on that plan.

For too many years, for municipal officials, the presentation of a State Budget has been like being taken aboard a pirate ship, blindfolded, and forced to walk the plank. You need to be prepared for the worst, all the while silently hoping it turns out to be just a team-building exercise.

Holding on to that hope, we will see, on that date, if municipal taxpayers will be given the opportunity to enjoy the restoration of property tax relief funding that is rightfully theirs. With that in mind, it is not too soon to begin to talk to your representatives in the Legislature about what they can do in the upcoming budget deliberations to help you to better help the property taxpayers who you are sworn to serve.

Wharton Borough Administrator and Chief Financial Officer Jon Rheinhardt, who also serves as President on the Government Finance Officers Association of New Jersey, has produced a presentation, [State Aid \(Or Is It\)](#), that details the history of municipal utility taxes (Energy Tax Receipts) and the State's long-standing custom of diverting chunks of the proceeds to fund State-level programs.

If you are unfamiliar with the history, or in need of a reminder, State Aid (Or Is It) can give you the background you need to make the case for increased municipal property tax relief funding in the States next budget.

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njslom.org, 609-695-3481, x121.

c. Bill Preempting Municipal Control of Vegetation Management Likely Moving To Final Vote

[S-2505](#), known as the "Vegetation Management Response Act," could be scheduled for a

full vote before the Senate on January 31. Its Assembly companion, A-2558, has already been approved by the full Assembly. If approved by the Senate, the bill would then go to the Governor for his signature or veto.

The League opposes this bill as it would give electric utility companies complete discretion to clear, move, cut, or destroy vegetation growing in, near, or adjacent to the utility's right of way and without input from municipal officials. While we appreciate the sponsors' response to the recent storms which left hundreds in the state without power, this legislation takes too broad of an approach.

We urge our members to reach out to their Senators to express the concerns with the bill. Your legislator's contact information can be found using the [state's website](#), which breaks this information down by municipality. And, for more information on the implication of S-2505/ A-2558, please see our daily alert from [December 13](#).

Contact: Frank Marshall, Esq., League Staff Attorney, FMarshall@njslom.org 609-695-3481 x137.

d. NJ Supreme Court Orders Dismissal of Nearly 800,000 Municipal Court Matters

Yesterday, the State Supreme Court issued an [Order](#) dismissing certain older unresolved complaints on minor municipal court matters. This comes at the suggestion of a three-judge panel's [report](#) that was issued after hearing public comments in the fall of last year. Offenses such as minor motor vehicle offenses, penalty enforcement actions, and violations of local ordinances 15 years old or more have been dismissed.

The Administrative Office of the Court has developed a [website](#) to assist defendants wanting more information and to check the status of their possibly dismissed complaints.

In addition to the dismissal of these older cases the Court's Order also instructs the Supreme Court committee to examine whether the judiciary should consider offenses more than 10 years old and whether to expand the types of matters eligible for dismissal.

You should review this matter with your municipal prosecutor and municipal court administrator for more information and the potential impact the dismissal of these complaints will have on your municipality.

Contact: Frank Marshall, Esq., League Staff Attorney, FMarshall@njslom.org, 609-695-3481 x. 137

II. Federal Issue

a. Reminder to Bring to Your Constituents Attention

Due to the Federal Government shutdown, the NJ Department of Human Services distributed, to qualifying recipients, February Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (commonly known as Food Stamps) on January 17. On that date, the monthly allocation should have appeared on recipients' [Families First cards](#).

These credits will need to carry recipients through the entire month of February. Food budgets will need to be adjusted accordingly.

SNAP is a federal program administered by the Department of Human Services. It offers nutrition assistance to eligible individuals and families with low incomes. New Jersey has about 730,000 SNAP recipients.

Depending on some resolution in our Nation's Capital, this could be the last month of federal support for the program during the partial shutdown.

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njslom.org, 609-695-3481, x121.

III. League Conference Follow Up

a. Do Not Forget to Claim Your CEUs from the 2018 NJLM Annual Conference!

Attention Municipal Officials! Do Not Forget to Claim Your CEUs from the 2018 NJLM Annual Conference! Please go to [our website](#) to claim your credits.

b. The Conference App is Still Available!

Misplaced your printed Session or Exhibitor Program Guide? The app can still be [downloaded](#) in your app store to reference session details or view contact information for participating consultants and exhibitors. The app will be available for download through the end of this calendar year and remains available for accessing on your device as long as it is installed.

IV. Also of Interest

a. Bonding and Grants for Addressing Lead Hazards

League President Colleen Mahr, Mayor of Fanwood commented on the addressing of Lead Hazards saying, "Recent reports of the need to upgrade water infrastructure to address lead are unfortunately not unique. The League has, for years, worked to help municipalities find new means, and create new resources to address this vital issue. Many mayors have gone to extraordinary lengths to address lead in their communities, and we want all mayors to know the League stands ready to be a resource on this and all municipal issues."

Here are just some of the resources on this issue available from the League:

[PL 2018 Chp 114](#) permits special assessments and issuing bonds to replace lead water lines. For more details please see our [August 31, 2018, letter](#) regarding that and the [blog](#).

[post](#) covering the issue.

Since lead hazards take many forms, see our [Grant News and Information page](#) for grant information from the HUD [Office of Lead Hazard Control](#) and Healthy Homes.

More background and resources are available through the League [website](#) Search function or by calling the League office, 609-695-3481.

b. League Web and Email Updated to njlm.org

The League is excited to announce its website and email will be updated to www.njlm.org.

To achieve consistency with the very familiar NJLM logo, we are updating our web and email addresses to reflect njlm.org. On Friday, February 1, you will see a change in League staff emails, as new updated addresses are rolled out. Emails you send to njslom.org accounts will still be received by League staff. **But to ensure that you continue receiving correspondence from the League, please update your email settings and add njlm.org to your safe lists.**

As part of this process, you will notice that the League's new website address is www.njlm.org. Please update any bookmarks that you may have saved to reflect this change.

The change to www.njlm.org will establish a level of consistency and recognition with our very familiar NJLM logo. Creating a level of consistency is important so that the League membership and partners can easily recognize and rely on our communications.

c. Annual Survey

We here at the League would like to know what you thought about our services provided throughout the last year. The [survey](#) should take less than 5 minutes to complete.

We at the League thank you for taking the time to let us know how we are doing.

d. The Innovation Challenge Program

Last year, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA) launched a 21st Century Redevelopment Program that would provide planning grants for communities to re-channel commercial and retail properties that are vacant and/or underutilized. The new Innovation Challenge Program is now accepting applications for the second time, providing municipalities with funding that would contribute to the economy of such communities that are undeveloped or presents to have underutilized properties. The second round of funding is up to \$500,000 and would allow for grants up to \$100,000 for each eligible county or municipality.

[The Innovation Challenge Program](#) is a state program that only allows for New Jersey local or county government, a municipal partnership representing a combined population of 25,000 or more; and, a regional partnership representing at least a population of 100,000 or more to participate.

Applications will be accepted up until the total program allotment has been

exhausted, or Friday, January 25, 2019, at 5:00 p.m. (whichever is sooner).

e. Community Solar by Municipalities Webinar

Wednesday, January 23, 2019 - 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Municipalities play a key role in promoting community solar. This webinar will focus on municipal engagement of local stakeholders in creating momentum for developing community solar projects.

Speakers include Ariane Benrey, NJ Board of Public Utilities, and Ron Reisman, Solar Ombudsman, Sustainable CUNY. To attend, fill out the [registration form](#).

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New Jersey State League of Municipalities

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