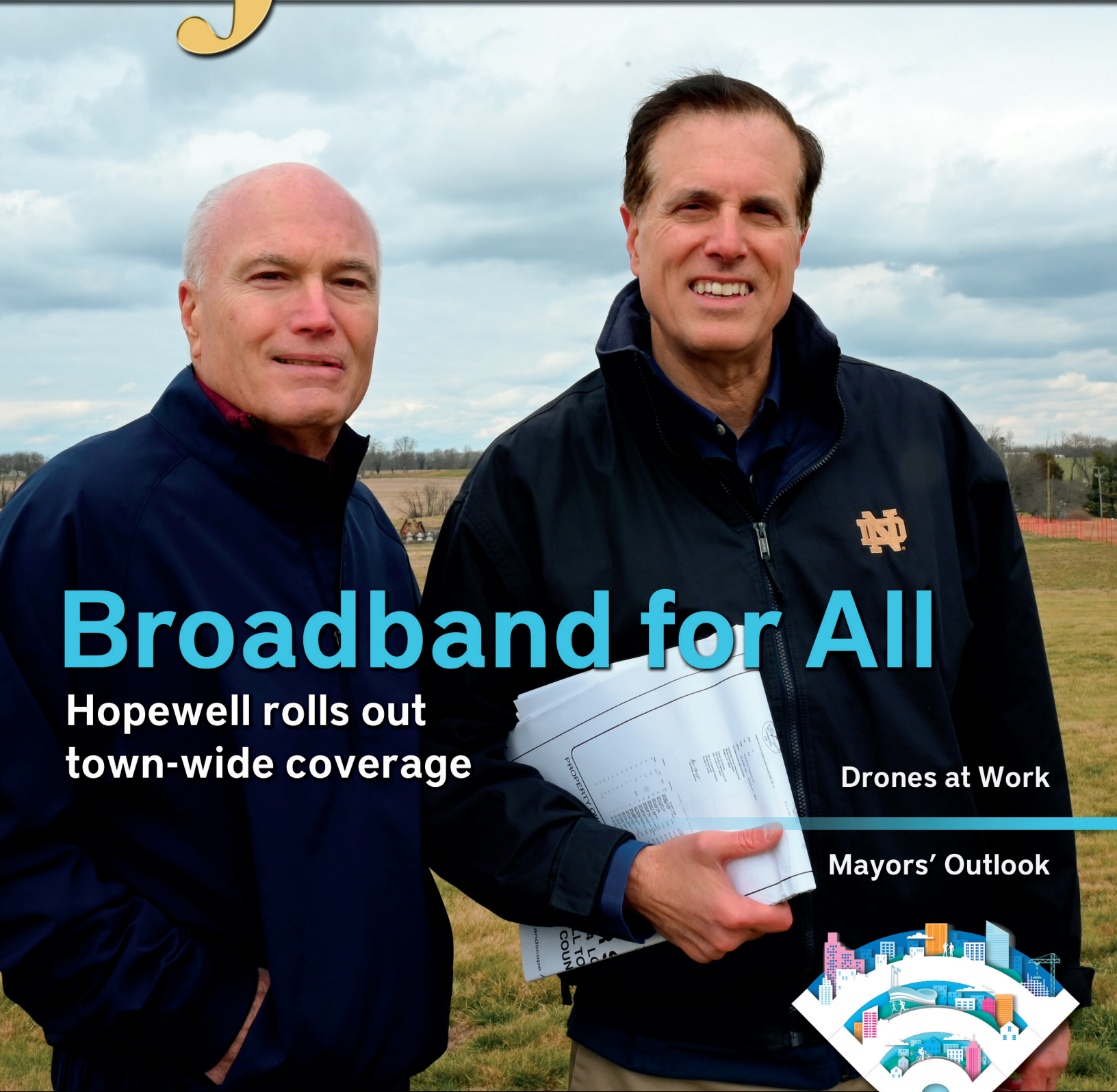




March 2023

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town-wide coverage

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Focus: Local Tech

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New Jersey Municipalities Magazine

Volume 100 | Issue 3

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NEW JERSEY MUNICIPALITIES (ISSN 0028-5846) is published monthly (except July, August and September) by the **New Jersey State League of Municipalities**, 222 West State St., Trenton, NJ 08608. PHONE: 609-695-3481, FAX: 609-695-0151, WEBSITE: www.njlm.org, EMAIL: njm@njlm.org. Periodicals postage paid at Trenton, NJ 08608. Postmaster send address changes to NEW JERSEY MUNICIPALITIES, 222 West State St., Trenton, NJ 08608. Print subscription rates (nine months) \$30.00; League members \$25.00; foreign \$46.00. Single copies: League member officials, \$6.00; others, \$8.00; foreign, \$27.00. For additional subscription information visit njlm.org/subscriptions. Publication No. 380460.

NEW JERSEY MUNICIPALITIES serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information on municipal affairs for the public officials of New Jersey. The views expressed and the data presented by contributors and advertisers are theirs and are not shared by the League, unless specifically stated.

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“While the technology has been invented and demonstrated, it’s local governments who will determine the success of the smart city concept.”

Maximizing Creative Destruction

An ancient proverb attributed to Plato says, “Necessity is the mother of invention.” Jumping ahead thousands of years, Harvard economist Joseph Schumpeter popularized the term “creative destruction.”

Regardless of the century, innovation usually prevails, as newer tools and strategies replace old ones due to necessity, and often a crisis. Something we’ve witnessed and continue to experience as we move further and further away from the pandemic. We’ve had no choice but to change how we worked, how we delivered our services; the normal we return to is a very different normal than 2019.

We’ve seen the need to do more with less push tech forward. The 2008 Recession helped to usher in 3G technology. The drive to overcome challenges with innovation also helped the smart cities concept to seep into communities all over the world.

Are we on the cusp or another economic downturn, hopefully short and manageable? I don’t know. But if yes, it’ll be another opportunity for greater broadband access across the state. Perhaps with 5G, other advancements we are just beginning to imagine will also come along.

And that’s where governments come in. While the technology has been invented and demonstrated, it’s local governments who will determine the success of the smart city concept.

Sure you can build a better mouse-trap, but for that innovation to make a difference, it’s local governments who are the smart adaptors constantly managing technology to meet the needs of local officials and employees as well as residents.

This month, we look at how Hopewell Township in Cumberland County is working to secure a broadband plan that reaches 100% of the community.

Notes Mayor Paul Ritter, “As mayor, I am committed to closing this deeply harmful digital divide. Not for some families, not for most businesses. For everyone. To me and our entire governing body, a broadband plan that reaches anything less than 100% of our community is no plan at all.” (page 6)

Technology is also helping municipalities do their day-to-day business more efficiently and safely. Local IT managers note in an outlook column this month (page 28), that municipalities are fighting to utilize technology to provide better customer service and are focused on embracing change to move forward on online payments and more.

The recovery effort may be the strongest tech driver as APRA funding comes to many smaller communities. These funds are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve local technology infrastructure. Please stay in touch with the League to learn more about how to ensure those funds stay in New Jersey and reach your community. 📶

Michael Cerra

PS: Save the date for the One Day Mini-Conference, June 14.
For more information, visit www.njlm.org/seminars.

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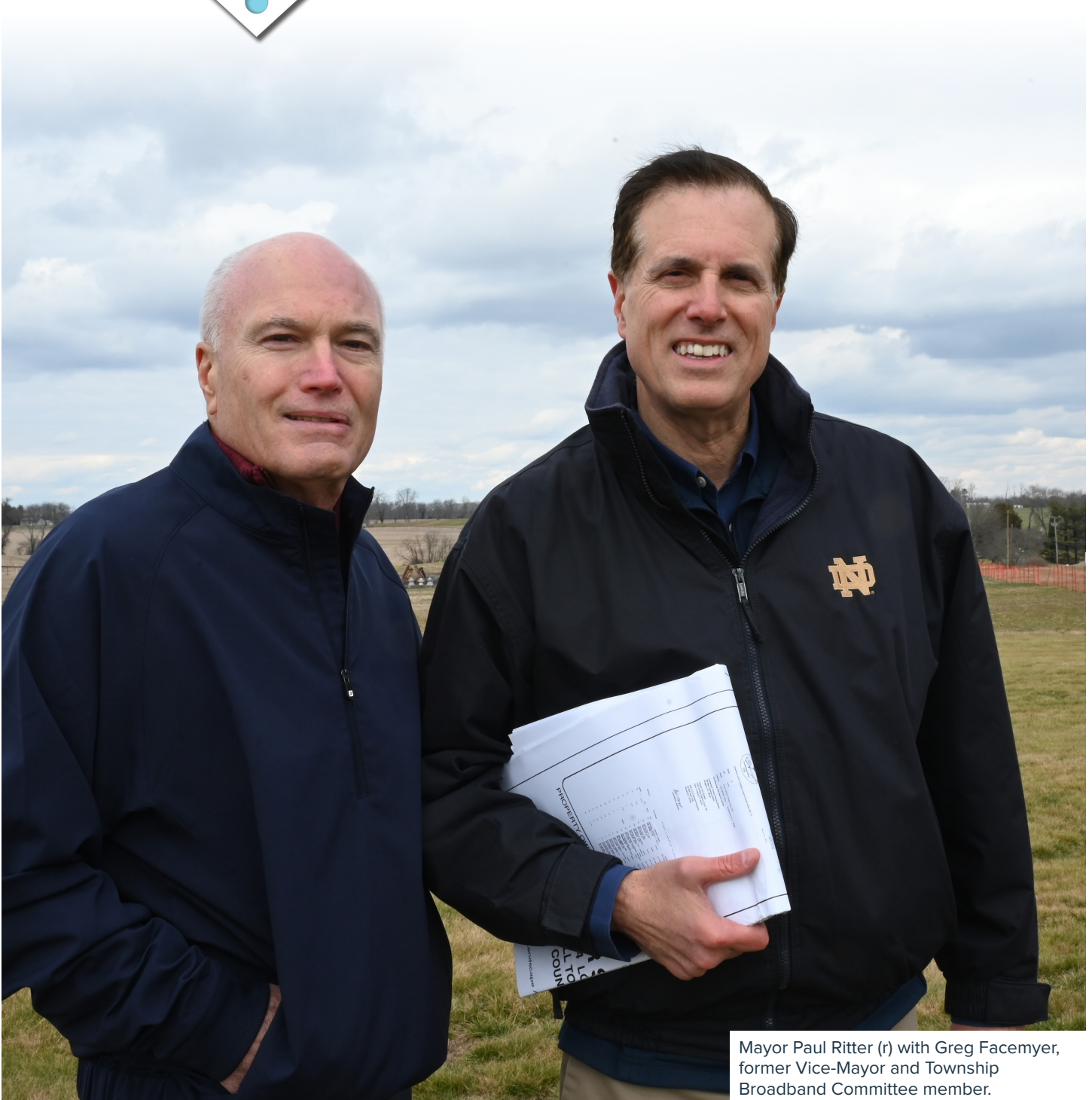
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Mayor Paul Ritter (r) with Greg Facemyer, former Vice-Mayor and Township Broadband Committee member.

Broadband for All

Hopewell Township helps develop the roadmap for connecting 100% of New Jersey

Three years ago, a once-in-a-century pandemic changed the world and forced our lives online, virtually overnight. Remote work, school, shopping, health care, and more were made possible by robust high-speed broadband networks that answered the call, even as usage soared to new peaks driven by online classes, video meetings, and streaming entertainment.

But even in a highly connected state like New Jersey, some residents still lacked access to fast, reliable home internet service that could handle the abrupt shift online, especially in rural areas. In Hopewell Township (Cumberland County), 7% of our families, friends, and neighbors were unserved and cut off from the vital digital lifelines that kept the rest of us on the job, in class, and connected to each other.

That wasn't acceptable then and it's not acceptable today, even with lockdowns behind us. Major aspects of modern life have moved online for good, including access to government, health care scheduling and services, banking, travel planning, and more. Families and businesses that continue to lack affordable, dependable high-speed broadband access will find almost everything they need to do harder, more expensive, and often simply out of reach.

As mayor, I am committed to closing this deeply harmful digital divide. Not for some families, not for most businesses. For everyone. To me and our entire governing body, a broadband plan that reaches anything less than 100% of our community is no plan at all.

Broadband partnership

That's why, after careful study and a rigorous open-bidding and review process, my team and I decided to

enter a groundbreaking partnership with Comcast that will leverage their reliable network and significant investment as well as the power of federal grants under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) to get the job done quickly, affordably, and most importantly, comprehensively—across all of Hopewell Township.

Under this agreement, federal

grants and private investment will provide more than half the necessary funds and work can begin urgently and immediately, focused on businesses and homes in our community that remain unserved by reliable, high-speed broadband. All executed by an experienced, on-the-ground private sector operator that can build out the necessary infrastructure and



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operate the resulting network going forward, creating long-term, high-pay, high-skill jobs and putting us on track to cover 100% of our community by early 2024.

Pursuing 100% connectivity means immediately focusing scarce resources on the areas of greatest need.

Our partner has a long track record of advancing broadband in our state, including recent investments of more than \$1 billion in technology and infrastructure. They have also worked hard to advance digital equity and support the communities it serves, investing nearly \$20 million worth of cash and in-kind contributions in more than 190 local non-profits over the last three years.

There are few investments a community can make with the kind of direct payoff in quality of life,

Covering Costs

Ensuring community coverage means addressing both the cost of access and helping non-digital natives navigate and understand the benefits of using the internet in their daily lives.

While the cost of high-speed broadband can be daunting for some of our neighbors, the federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP, www.affordableconnectivity.gov/) now offers a \$30 monthly credit towards high-speed internet service and can also provide funds in many cases to support the purchase of a desktop, laptop, or tablet computer.

When combined with one of the low-cost plans offered by most major internet providers, the ACP credit will often cover the entire monthly cost of high-speed broadband for most low-income families!

access to services, educational opportunities, and local jobs that ensuring comprehensive access to quality high-speed home broadband delivers. It's even expected to drive a boost to home values across the Township since many potential purchasers are simply unwilling to close on a property that lacks reliable high-speed internet access.

Above all, expansive broadband service marks a necessary commitment to equity, fairness, and the core Hopewell value of leaving no one in our community behind. Pursuing

100% connectivity means immediately focusing scarce resources on the areas of greatest need. And then following through with additional resources and tools to ensure that people with new access to broadband actually subscribe and get all the benefits of connected life.

Taking down barriers

We must also work to address other barriers to adoption like lack of digital skills and uncertainty about the value and benefits of subscribing to internet at home. Our provider partner has pioneered these techniques for more than a decade through its Internet Essentials program, deploying digital ambassadors, online skills training, and extensive partnerships with outreach groups like the Boys and Girls Club, the National Urban League, and Older Adults Technology Services to help everyone see the value of getting online—and learn what to do when they get there. It's another benefit to our community from partnering with an experienced private sector operator.

Every town and jurisdiction in New Jersey will face challenging and complex decisions on how to get the most out of the American Rescue Act's broadband funding to close the digital divide in their communities. In Hopewell Township, we are excited about the partnership we have chosen to accomplish this essential obligation and priority. 📶

Lunch & Learn

March Webinar: USDA Rural Development Grants

Jane Asselta, New Jersey State Director for Rural Development at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), will discuss the USDA Rural Development Programs available to public entities, non-profits, residents, and businesses.

March 16, 2023 at 12 noon

**To register, scan code or visit
www.njlm.org/USDALunchLearn**



CELEBRATE NJ LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK



▲ PHOTOS FROM 2022 NJ LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK ▲

NJLM invites you to join municipalities around the Garden State April 16-22, to engage citizens while celebrating the work of local government.

SHOWCASE the hard work of local governments and value residents receive by highlighting programs and services

COORDINATE community service and volunteering events with local organizations to cross-promote NJ Local Government Week.

SHOW-OFF your citizens' view of the community with photography showcases and contests that can serve as a feeder program for your entries to the League's Show Off Your Municipality photo contest!

Publicity tips and strategies as well as links to a sample press release and resolution and a downloadable NJ Local Government Week logo are available at www.njlm.org/njlocalgovt.



NJ LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK
APRIL 16-22
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League Mourns Tragic Passing of Dwumfour, Heller



Councilwoman Eunice Dwumfour



Councilman Russell Heller

New Jersey's local governments were hit hard by two murders in as many weeks of elected officials. The League and its Executive Board deeply mourn the loss of Sayreville Councilwoman Eunice Dwumfour and Milford Councilman Russell Heller.

Councilwoman Dwumfour, the first Black person elected in Sayreville, was murdered in front of her home on Feb. 1. The 30-year-old's death is still under investigation. She is survived by a daughter and husband, Pastor Eze Kings.

League President Mayor Ray Heck of Millstone Borough noted, "This senseless action against a fellow public servant draws all of us closer as we pray for comfort to her family and the community during this difficult time. We hope for a swift investigation and capture of this ruthless person so the community of Sayreville can heal and get closure. On behalf of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, we send our sincere condolences to Mayor Kilpatrick, the governing body of Sayreville, her family, loved ones, and the Sayreville community.

Mayor Kilpatrick and the Council invited the community to a memorial for Councilwoman Dwumfour on February 8.

Councilman Russell Heller, 51, was the victim of a murder-suicide perpetrated by a former co-worker in the parking lot of his PSE&G office in Somerset County on February 8. He is survived by his parents, both former council members for the borough, and a daughter who he co-parented with his ex-wife, Terri Retallick Heller.

"Though this attack was targeted and isolated, this is the second time in as many weeks that a municipality has suffered a tragic and heart-breaking loss of a fellow public

servant," noted President Heck. "On behalf of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, we send our sincere condolences to Mayor Henri Schepens, the governing body of Milford, Councilman Heller's family and loved ones, and the Milford community."

Milford Mayor noted on the borough's website, "As Mayor of the Borough of Milford, on behalf of the Borough's Council, employees, professionals, and residents, I wanted to express the profound loss our community is experiencing with the death of Russell Heller. Russell, a lifelong resident of Milford Borough, was an exemplary member of the Borough's Council and Commissioner of the Borough's water, sewer, and public works departments. His intellect, devotion, wit, and friendship will be missed by all. Our thoughts and prayers are with Russell's family." 📌

League President Meets with NJSACOP



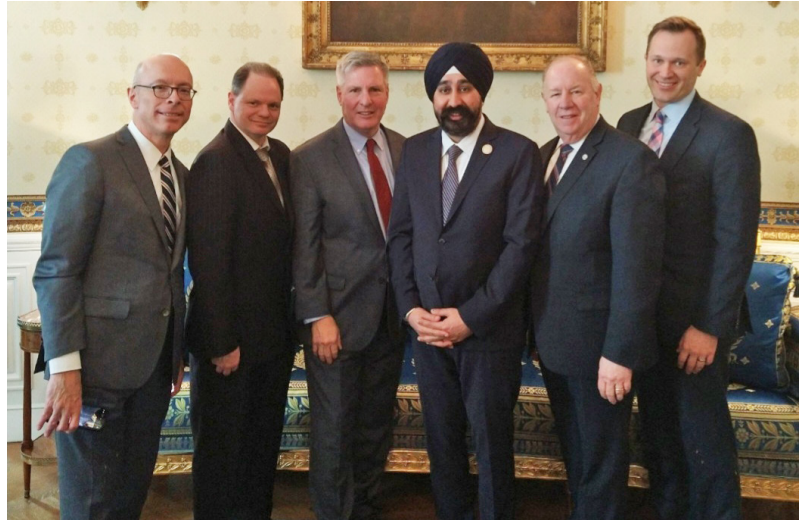
League President and Mayor Raymond Heck of Millstone met with representatives of the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police (NJSACOP) at League headquarters in Trenton. Shown l. to r., Keith M. Bendul, Bendul & Assoc.; League President Mayor Heck; NJSACOP President Chief Thomas Dellane, Stafford Township Police Department; and NJSACOP 3rd Vice President Chief Keith A. Germain, Barnegat Police Department.

New Jersey Delegation Visits Washington for U.S. Conference of Mayors Meeting

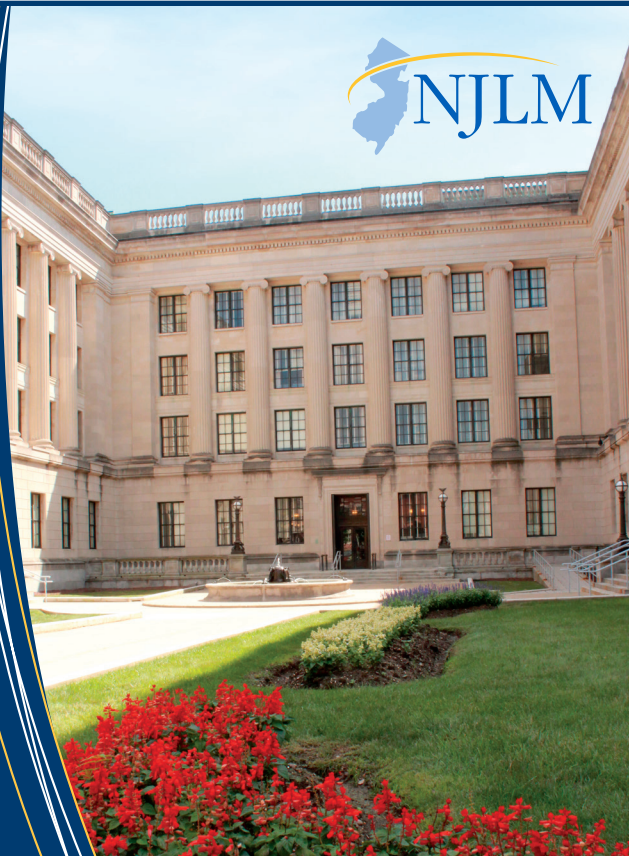
A delegation of New Jersey mayors headed to Washington, DC, in January to attend the United States Conference of Mayor's Winter Meeting. Topics discussed included the American Rescue Plan, COVID-19, reducing gun violence, immigration, police reform and racial justice, and election security and safety.

The New Jersey delegation included Mayors Ted Green, East Orange; Sam Joshi, Edison Township; J. Christian Bollwage (League Past President), Elizabeth; Jeffrey Martin, Hamilton Township (Mercer; League Executive Board Member); Ravi Bhalla, Hoboken; Timothy McDonough, Hope (League Past President); Alberto G. Santos, Kearny; League President Raymond Heck, Millstone Borough; Brian Wahler, Piscataway (League Past President), and Adrian Mapp, Plainfield.

League Past President Mayor J. Christian Bollwage of Elizabeth was named a Trustee of the organization while League Past President Mayor Brian Wahler of Piscataway was named a member of the Advisory Board. 



At work in Washington, DC, (l to r) Mayor Alberto G. Santos, Kearny; Mayor and League President Raymond Heck, Millstone Borough; Mayor and League Past President Brian Wahler, Piscataway; Mayor Ravi Bhalla, Hoboken; Mayor and League Past President J. Christian Bollwage, Elizabeth; and Mayor and League Executive Board Member Jeffrey Martin, Hamilton Township (Mercer).

INVITES YOU TO ATTEND

The 28th Annual Mayors' Legislative Day

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

The State House Annex
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