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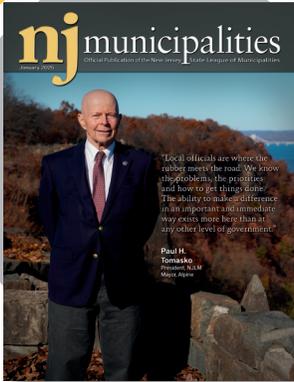
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## Addressing the Brain Drain & the Municipal Workforce

The League Conference this past November featured many firsts, not the least of which was the First Annual Career Networking Fair, in partnership with the Department of Community Affairs. I'm a bit biased, but I think it was a great success. Immediate Past President Bill Chegwidien immediately embraced the concept, which he described as building a "pipeline" of municipal workers for the future. League President Paul Tomasko has also embraced the pipeline, and you can expect to see the 2nd Annual Career fair this upcoming November.

This is critical because we have heard from you how difficult it has become to recruit and retain the municipal workforce of the future. We need municipal clerks, managers, finance officers, inspectors and so many more to make sure the public's work gets done. And we realize that getting that work done, day after day, requires innovation and outside-the-box thinking.

New Jersey's municipalities have confronted crisis after crisis, such as the 2008 financial crisis, Hurricane Sandy and a series of weather-related storms and, of course, the COVID pandemic and subsequent shutdown. All through crisis after crisis, the public's work was done, and it was done because leaders bring innovation to every aspect of local government operations.

For instance, in her article this month, Collingswood Borough Administrator Cassandra Duffey notes, "The most

successful municipalities think creatively as we all strive to balance costs and needs, with each municipality possessing its own unique strengths. Through innovative thinking, you can go beyond your budget to attract economic drivers and build strong communities. Understand your goals and harness your community's potential by leveraging partnerships and the voices of others. Continue to think creatively and build on your success (it won't happen overnight!) by using all the tools at your disposal."

In East Orange, creative thinking helps them meet goals. Mayor Ted R. Green, Mayor writes: "As companies across the nation question the value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, East Orange is not only embracing these principles but doubling down on them. We wholeheartedly believe that diversity and representation are not just ideals—they are imperatives for building trust, fostering community, and driving success. Our Police and Fire Departments are shining examples of how diversity can strengthen public safety, enhance community relations, and ensure that our city is a place where everyone feels valued and protected."

These innovations must continue and cannot be stopped because we don't have the workforce. That's why the "pipeline" will continue and grow, year after year. And I have no doubt that the next generation of municipal workers will rise to the challenge. Our challenge is to make sure that the next generation is in place. 📌

*Michael Cerra*

“All through crisis after crisis, the public's work was done, and it was done because leaders bring innovation to every aspect of local government operations.”

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# Doubling Down

Leaning into Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
in East Orange

Ted R. Green, Mayor, East Orange



Chief Phyllis Bindi at  
Warwick School

**A**s companies across the nation question the value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, East Orange is not only embracing these principles but doubling down on them. We wholeheartedly believe that diversity and representation are not just ideals—they are imperatives for building trust, fostering community, and driving success. Our Police and Fire Departments are shining examples of how diversity can strengthen public safety, enhance community relations, and ensure that our city is a place where everyone feels valued and protected.

East Orange is the safest it has been in decades. Violent crime is down 23%, shootings have dropped by 37%, and we've achieved an astounding 80% overall decrease in violence since 2003, marking the lowest crime rates since 1967. These milestones are not accidents; they are the result of intentional investments in public safety, strategic leadership, and a commitment to community-driven solutions.

**We understand that diversity is our strength. It is a moral obligation, an economic necessity, and the only solution for lasting progress.**

At the heart of this progress is our unwavering focus on ensuring that our public safety personnel reflect the rich diversity of the people they serve.

### Representation Matters

In East Orange, we are proud to say that our Police Department is one of the most diverse in New Jersey. Women comprise more than 25% of the force, with leadership roles held by our Police Chief, who also serves as the President of the Essex County New Jersey Association of Chiefs of Police, three captains, two lieutenants and 12 female sergeants. Overall, 80% of our officers are minorities. In our East Orange Fire Department, over 90% of our firefighters are African American, and 6% are women. These numbers are not just symbolic—they are transformative.

When residents see themselves reflected in the officers patrolling their streets, trust is built, and barriers are broken. Representation fosters understanding, empathy, and mutual respect. It is a testament to our city's commitment to equal protection

under the law and a rejection of discrimination in all its forms.

Similarly, our Fire Department is undergoing significant transformations, with renovations to three firehouses and the construction of a new fire headquarters underway. These investments in infrastructure

are matched by our investments in people. By prioritizing diversity and inclusion, we ensure that our public safety teams are equipped not only with the tools they need to respond to emergencies, but also with the cultural competency to serve a diverse community effectively.



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## Doubling Down in East Orange

### Innovative Approaches to Public Safety

Our commitment to innovation has been pivotal in creating safer streets and stronger community bonds. Programs like the Police Explorers introduce young people to careers in law enforcement, bridging gaps between youth and officers. The East Orange Safe Haven Police Athletic League and mentoring programs foster trust and provide safe spaces for recreation and growth.

One of our most forward-thinking initiatives, the ARRIVE Together Initiative, pairs police officers with certified mental health screeners to respond to behavioral health crises. This program ensures that residents experiencing mental health challenges receive compassionate, expert care while reducing the potential for escalation. It is a model of community-focused policing that prioritizes humanity and dignity.

### A Commitment to Equity Amid National Retreats

As the national conversation around DEI evolves, many organizations are scaling back their efforts.

## Engaging the Community

Public safety in East Orange is not a one-way street. It is a partnership between the city and its residents. Our Police Department's partnerships with the East Orange School District, the Department of Recreation & Cultural Affairs, and the Mayor's newly formed Street Engagement Team exemplify this collaboration. Together, we have created safe spaces for youth, fostering mentorship, recreation, and personal development.



New East Orange Police Department officers swearing in.



East Orange Police Department Breast Cancer Walk.

East Orange is taking the opposite approach. We are leaning in because we understand that diversity is our strength. It is a moral obligation, an economic necessity, and the only solution for lasting progress.

While others question the value of these initiatives, we see the evidence every day in our schools, our streets, and our neighborhoods. A diverse and inclusive city is a thriving city. It is a city where public servants understand the communities they serve, where youth see their potential reflected in leadership, and where innovation flourishes because of, not despite, our differences.



### The Way Forward

As we continue to build on our achievements, we invite our residents, partners, and stakeholders to join us in this journey. East Orange will remain a city that values inclusion, celebrates diversity, and prioritizes equity. Through strategic investments, innovative programs, and a steadfast commitment to

community engagement, we will ensure that our city remains a beacon of progress and a model for others to follow.

In East Orange, we know that a safe city is a thriving city. And a thriving city is one that supports all its residents, celebrates their contributions, and builds a future where everyone has a seat at the table. 📍

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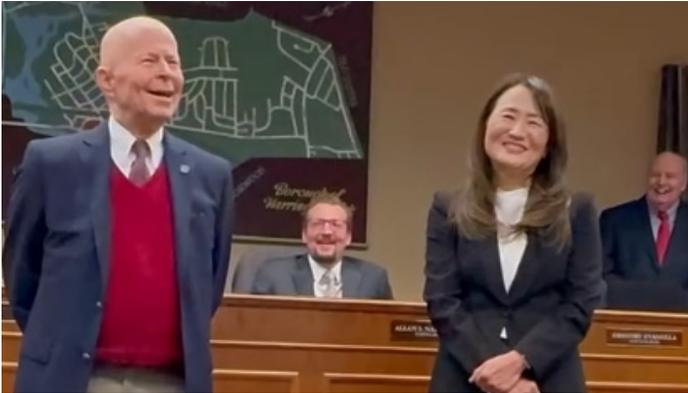
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# nj NOW

## NJLM On the Move

### Reorganization



NJLM President Paul Tomasko performed the swearing-in ceremony for Harrington Park Mayor Joon L. Chung during the town's reorganization in January.

### First 2025 Legislative Committee Meeting

The members of the 2025 League Legislative Committee met for the first time in January, ready to review bills of interest to local government and determine League legislative responses.



NJLM President Mayor Paul Tomasko welcomed members of the Legislative Committee to the first meeting of 2025.



League General Counsel Emeritus Bill Kearns is recognized for his service to the committee.



New League Legislative Analyst Erin Knoedler was introduced to the membership.

### NJ Chamber Walk to Washington 2025

The 84th Annual NJ Chamber of Commerce's trip to Washington, D.C., ran in February attracting movers and shakers from around the Garden State.



NJLM President Mayor Paul Tomasko of Alpine attended the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce's Walk to Washington. Shown here with Morris County Surrogate Heather J. Darling, gubernatorial candidate Bill Spadea, NJLM 3rd Vice President, Long Hill Deputy Mayor Guy Piserchia, and NJLM Immediate Past President Mayor Bill Chegwidan of Wharton.



VP Piserchia, State Senator (District 21) and gubernatorial candidate Jon Bramnick, and President Tomasko.



President Tomasko, Rep. LaMonica McIver (District 10), and VP Piserchia.



President Tomasko with Rep. Josh Gottheimer (District 5 and gubernatorial candidate).

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