

League President's Legislative Priorities



L league President Jim Perry, Committeeman in Hardwick Township, will focus attention on a number of League priorities for the upcoming year. Some of the items listed below may sound familiar—municipal property tax relief, the number-one concern for our property taxpayers, remains the League’s top priority.

Seizing upon the intense focus on membership engagement by Mayor Colleen Mahr, the League’s Immediate President, President Perry has directed the League to survey its membership to identify the major issues for municipalities. From there, President Perry will appoint special committees, each priority committee will be chaired by a League Vice President and the committees will reach out to Legislators and Legislative staff to help craft consensus solutions to these issues.


While our survey results were not finalized at press time, we can anticipate the prioritization of several, unaddressed policy matters, all of which are keys to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our municipalities; and all of which will benefit our citizens and taxpayers, including the following.

 **RESTORATION OF MUNICIPAL PROPERTY TAX RELIEF**


Due to rising costs and population growth, municipalities often need to spend more in successive years in order to maintain services and programs at a steady level. New Jersey’s two main formula-driven general municipal property tax relief programs are the Energy Tax Receipts Property Tax Relief program (Energy Tax) and the Consolidated Municipal Property Tax Relief Act program (CMPTRA). Though often referred to as “State Aid” programs, both are actually revenue replacement programs, intended to replace property tax relief funding that was, formerly, generated through taxes assessed and collected, specifically, to fund municipal programs and services.

In 2007, the State distributed \$1.631 billion to New Jersey municipalities. Last year, municipalities shared in only \$1.428 billion. If the 2007 total had been adjusted for inflation (as required by statute), then municipalities, statewide, could


have provided residents with \$1.957 billion of relief.

 **AFFORDABLE HOUSING REFORM**

The Executive and Legislative branches have abdicated their responsibilities on this issue and municipalities are confronted with a dysfunctional, costly and inefficient court process. Many towns have or will settle with litigants, but new tools to help municipalities meet reasonable requirements need to be authorized; and the Executive and Legislative branches must reengage on this issue immediately and ultimately develop a reasonable, rational statewide housing policy.

 **OPIOID EPIDEMIC**

The League will continue to advocate for intergovernmental cooperation on this menace. That will have to involve federal, state, and county governments listening to and working with local officials on strategies and programs designed to prevent the spread of the epidemic, to effectively treat current victims, and to address the burdens that inflict our families and other caregivers.

 **PATH TO PROGRESS**

Senate President Sweeney’s NJ Economic and Fiscal Policy Workgroup issued a report that will begin the discussions on how we can address some of our State’s chronic budgetary problems. Further public employee pension and benefit programs reforms must be pursued. Civil Service laws and regulations, which often hamstring local shared services efforts, need to be reformed. And consolidation of some school district administrative functions should be considered.



RECREATIONAL CANNABIS

Municipal governments must be given the power, the personnel, and the revenues that will be needed to address concerns that will be created by this new industry. We are reasonably confident that State level policy makers will ensure that the new law and regulations will address State level issues. This will continue to be our focus as we anticipate a statewide referendum on legalization in November.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We look forward to advancing initiatives that will assist local development and redevelopment efforts. Policies that give municipalities the ability to allow local Main Street businesses to flourish are essential.

For example, municipalities should be able to permit neighborhood restaurants to provide patrons with alcoholic beverages, on a limited basis. Also, we must guard against State laws, which would inhibit municipalities from encouraging economic development by entering into Payment In Lieu of Taxes agreements, with willing business partners.



FEDERAL LEVEL ACTIONS

We need to focus Congress on America's need for major investments in our aging infrastructure. And we need the people in Washington to see the National significance of our region's needs.

The Gateway Project, which will not happen without Federal cooperation, must be fast-tracked. We also need to focus the Federal Executive Branch on local needs, including local rights to regulate the use of the public's rights-of-way.

Over the course of the next year, your League of Municipalities will continue its robust advocacy for policies that will allow you to better serve your hometowns. We need all local officials to join in these efforts. Our citizens

expect and deserve to have all their elected officials, at all levels of government, working together to address clear and present needs, and to together build a better future for our children, and our children's children. 🇺🇸

The Town Crier

Legislative Backgrounder

Recent Topics on the Blog:

- *Stop - Work Order Violations of Prevailing Wage Act*
- *Governor Freezes Most Transitional Aid*
- *Process for Global Settlement of Opioid Cases Proposed*

Stay up-to-date on legislation effecting your municipality

The League's Legislative Blog provides detailed information on bills and in-depth bill histories.