

LEAGUE **lites**

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IMPORTANT DATES

- » WVML Annual Conference – July 31- Aug 2, 2023
Oglebay Resort
- » NLC City Summit – November 16-18, 2023
Atlanta, GA.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- » WVML Spring Board Meeting – May 11-12, 2023
Blennerhassett Hotel

Visit wvml.org/events for more info!

A PUBLICATION OF THE



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Message From the President

I've now served just over half my term, and I'm still grateful, still learning, and still excited to serve as I anticipate more great things for the League!

Our Mid-Winter Conference this past February was exceptional in many ways, and I want to thank our members who came out in large numbers. Attendance was in line with our previous conferences, which demonstrates our commitment to continue engaging with our State legislative body as a whole on the issues that affect our communities.

Every legislative session results in outcomes that members embrace, as well as those that members truly dislike. I just encourage members to be even more actively engaged with your representatives as a way to ensure more favorable outcomes.

You can view our *Legislative Recap on the League's website*, which highlights legislation from the session that benefits our municipalities. I believe that overall, there were more positive than negative outcomes in this session, including:

- **\$20M will be provided from the WV Department of Environmental Protection** – double the amount from last year – for demolition of dilapidated structures.
- **\$85M will be appropriated for grant matching opportunities** through the Governor's Civil Contingency Fund.
- For municipalities that still provide their **police and fire pension plans** in the alternative funding method, legislation passed that provides other opportunities to put their communities on a more stable financial footing.
- **Legislation passed for licensing reciprocity** regarding water and sewer operators. For operators who obtained licensing from another state, those licenses will now carry the same weight as licenses received here in WV.

Two of our upcoming legislative issues will be our **tax and fee policies** and **short-term vacation rentals**. So, my final word on our legislative efforts: *let's totally ditch passive participation!* Ongoing member involvement with the Legislature throughout the summer will undoubtedly lead to solid results. Summer's the time to engage your legislators at home on the

issues that matter to you!

Finally, I'm excited to announce that registration is now live for the League's Annual Conference, taking place July 31st thru August 2nd at Oglebay Resort in Wheeling! Be sure to visit the Events section of the League's website to find all the important information that you and your staff will need. I encourage all members who have an interest in serving on the board to start the process! And don't be shy – we showcase what League members have accomplished through the Allstar Community awards, so step up and let us know what you're doing! Best of all, the conference is always about forming vital and lasting relationships with folks who are going through similar experiences. I look forward to seeing you all there!

Mayor Tom Joyce
Parkersburg



WVML's 54th Annual Conference – It's Comin' Fast!



Note: We don't want anyone to miss out on what this conference offers! We understand that some small municipalities face cost constraints that may make the annual conference difficult to attend. If you are a Class IV Community and finances have kept you from registering, please reach out to League staff right away and we will work with you to ensure your participation.

Our annual conference is fast approaching! From July 31st – August 2, 2023, we'll convene at the beautiful Oglebay Resort in Wheeling, WV. Registration is ongoing, and we strongly encourage members from each of our municipalities to attend!

Why? We're so glad you asked! "There are lots of reasons," notes Travis Blosser, WVML Executive Director. "We've really expanded the coverage and workshop topics offered so that our conference focuses not just on the needs and interests of our elected public officials, but on the everyday demands confronting folks working in HR and finance – and really all levels of staff from all municipalities."

This year's workshops and overall program are designed for members to take in loads of practical information and engage in conversations that will enhance their approaches to everyday problem solving. Simply stated, "This is our once-a-year opportunity to come together and address important issues we all regularly face," says Susan Economou, Deputy Executive Director at the League.

From deep-diving into effectively preparing for congressionally-directed grants better known as

Earmarks, to learning ways to deal with the difficult subject of **Disaster Recovery**, to becoming more **authentic, influential, innovative, inspirational leaders and mentors**, to learning about **ADA Transition Plans** as it relates to our public right of way, and ... there's **SO much more** – we've got you covered!

"There's also the opportunity throughout the conference to engage not just with colleagues, but with our **vendors**, who help sponsor our conference and keep us supplied with the most advanced products and services that fit the diverse needs of our communities," adds Beth McCoy, Member Services Specialist.

The annual conference is highlighted by an **Awards Dinner**, which takes place on the first full day together. We can't stress enough how meaningful, uplifting and inspiring this event is for everyone!

Of course, our **Annual Business Meeting** takes place on our last afternoon together, and it's during this meeting when our incoming president, Mayor Randy Barrett (Winfield) will take over the gavel from our current president, Mayor Tom Joyce (Parkersburg).

And we always make ample room for pure socializing and fun! Thursday night's **Hootin' and Hollerin' Backyard BBQ Event** will feature great country music and some amazing BBQ!

Check out our full agenda and register on our events page at www.wvml.org/events. Space is limited, so be sure to register ASAP! **We look forward to seeing you very soon!**

New Online Resources Are Here

Governor Justice released information on the launch of two new websites earlier in the year.

The websites are www.Grants.wv.gov and www.infrastructure.wv.gov and are the first of this kind of resource in West Virginia for one to apply for grants all in one location.

- **Grants.wv.gov** - This is a new resource aimed to keep up-to-date information about grant opportunities and programs available across the entire state of West Virginia.
- **Infrastructure.wv.gov** - The federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provides historic investment in United States infrastructure. About 60% of this funding is considered formula or directed funds that will have specific federal requirements. The remaining 40% will be competitive grants which will have their own set of federal priorities/requirements.

Additional resources are provided on each website that can help you with grant writing tips and training materials.

Both websites will help build the improvement of West Virginia's distribution of grants and infrastructure funding.



2023 Legislative Wrap-Up

We have wrapped up the 2023 Legislative Session. Tax policy was once again in the forefront of the Legislature's agenda and although some bills limiting revenues for cities were introduced, the focus was for the most part on state-wide tax policy rather than local tax policy. There were a couple of bills addressing B&O tax exemptions introduced, they did not gain much traction and did not make it out of their committees of origin.

Some bills of note this year:

- A House bill to reinstate driver's license suspensions for delinquent municipal court payment plans got through committee, but ultimately got sidelined on the House floor. This is the most support we have seen for this initiative since the law was changed three years ago and we plan to work this initiative again next year.
- The DEP's dilapidated property program was funded at \$20M for the upcoming year – double last year's amount.
- The large PEIA bill that passed this year was aimed at reforming the state plan but brought unexpected increased premiums to the non-state plan.
- A bill allowing reciprocity for other state's water and sewer operator licenses may help with recruiting employees for those jobs.
- A bill allowing the State Auditor to create a registry and qualify people and entities that can bid in tax auctions may help reduce the number of bad actors contributing to delinquent properties.
- A bill raising the threshold for which real property must be auctioned made it through the Senate but ran out of time on the House side.

Our full legislative wrap up of bills impacting municipalities is available on our website.

Although several bills diminishing our revenue streams and preempting local authority did not pass this year, we expect that they will be refiled in the 2024 Legislative Session and with the state having sorted out its own tax reform, we anticipate they will once again turn their attention to us. It is to our advantage to continue to investigate reforms or alternatives to the B&O tax that we can propose to the legislature rather than relying on them to develop a plan for us.

Likewise, the subject of short-term vacation rentals heated up late in the session with some very strict preemption on municipalities. We will be working with you during the year on proposed legislation related to short-term rentals that will more equitably address the needs of both property owners and municipalities.

Thank you to everyone who answered our alerts with emails, texts, and calls, and to those of you who work to educate your delegation about your city, town, or village throughout the year. Although the 2023 Session is in the books, it is important that you continue to stay engaged with your Senators and Delegates year-round. Keeping your delegation informed on the issues you are facing and the successes you are having throughout the year gives us a definite advantage when advocating for municipal issues during the 60-day session.



View these articles and more at wvml.org

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