



# Municipal Reporter

## Pennsylvania Municipal League Civility Pledge:

As a public servant, I hereby pledge to work daily to build a stronger and more prosperous community by advocating for civil engagement, respecting others – even during disagreements – building bridges to foster relationships and respecting different viewpoints while finding solutions for the betterment of my municipality.

**CIVILITY** EDITION





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# Municipal Reporter



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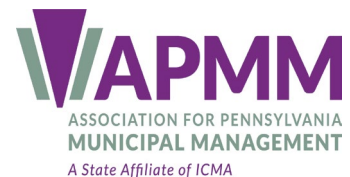
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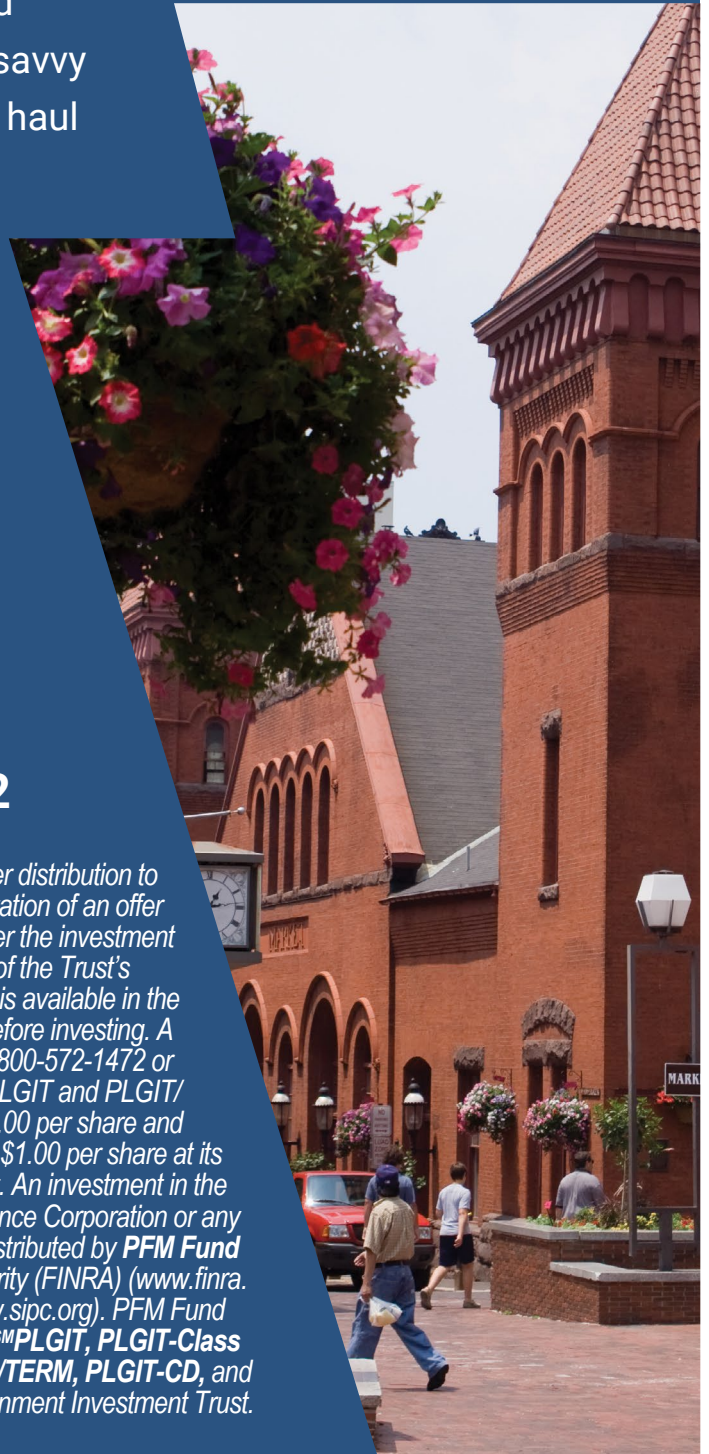
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# Our Mission

The Pennsylvania Municipal League strengthens and empowers effective local government through advocacy, education, and support for our members.

The League is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization established in 1900 as an advocate for Pennsylvania's 3rd class cities. Today, The League represents participating Pennsylvania cities, boroughs, townships and home rule communities that all share The League's municipal policy interests. Our Board of Directors oversees the administration of a wide array of municipal services including legislative advocacy (on both the state and federal levels), publications designed to educate and inform, education and training certification programs, membership research and inquiries, programs, and group insurance trusts.

We are continually monitoring the needs of our members and are committed to providing the commonwealth's municipalities with cost-effective programs and services required to meet the distinct needs of their communities.

The *Municipal Reporter* is a publication of the Pennsylvania Municipal League, the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners and the Association for Pennsylvania Municipal Management. It is published six times a year on a bimonthly basis. Opinions expressed by

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Original articles on subjects of interest to municipal officials are welcome, but subject to review by editorial staff. The publisher has the right to reject unsuitable advertising.

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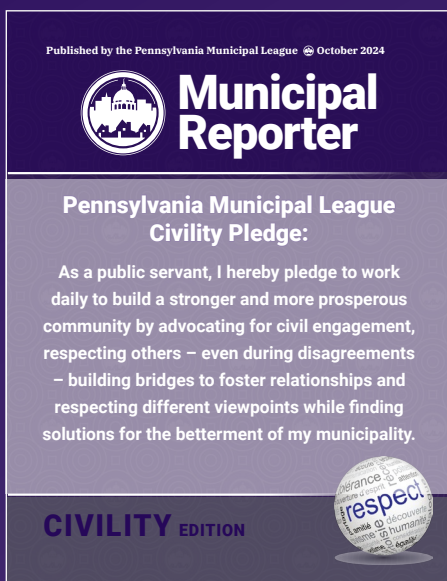


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# The League President's Message



DEREK SLAUGHTER  
MAYOR  
CITY OF WILLIAMSPORT



*It is with great honor and a profound sense of responsibility that I step into the role of president of the Pennsylvania Municipal League. As the mayor of Williamsport, I have witnessed the incredible impact that local governance can have on our communities, and I am excited to bring that experience to this esteemed organization.*

*Together, we represent the voices of our municipalities—each with its own unique challenges and strengths. In the coming year, my goal is to foster collaboration among our members, enhancing our collective ability to advocate for the needs of our communities. We will focus on pressing issues such as housing, infrastructure improvement and public safety, all while championing the importance of local leadership.*

*I am committed to strengthening our network, sharing best practices and providing resources that empower each municipality to thrive. By leveraging our collective expertise, we can create innovative solutions that benefit all Pennsylvanians.*

*Thank you for your trust and support. I look forward to working with each of you to ensure that our League remains a powerful voice for local government and a catalyst for positive change across our commonwealth.*

*Together, let's embrace the challenges ahead and celebrate the successes that come from our united efforts.*

*Here's to a great year!*

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek Slaughter". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Derek Slaughter  
Mayor, City of Williamsport

# The League Executive Director's Message

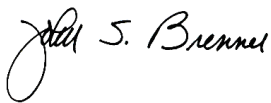
*In his book, "The Demon of Unrest," author Erik Larson chronicles the months, weeks and days prior to the fall of Fort Sumpter in 1861. Removed from the reality of the people and passions of 163 years ago, we can learn a great deal about how nation, states, communities and even families became divided to the point of a devastating Civil War. Hopefully, those lessons learned will help us make sure such a divide never leads to violence against our fellow citizens.*

*Civility very simply means that we treat each other with respect and dignity. Or as written in the Bible, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."*

*This issue of the Municipal Reporter focuses on civility. The League has stepped up our efforts to offer the [Civility Pledge](#), resources like the [Dignity Index and links to the Search for Common Ground](#). All with the same goal of local officials leading on this imperative to help bring our communities together when in these days and times, it's easy to begin to get pulled apart.*

*As local leaders, how we conduct ourselves during our public meetings and official roles matter. We can help set a higher standard. We can encourage professionalism and quality community leadership. We can do so by listening to each other. We can do this by working together to positively engage our citizens in their local government.*

Sincerely,



John S. Brenner



[JOHN BRENNER](#)



## Executive Director's Video Report







# Mark Your Calendar



## **PELRAS Fall Regional Workshop (West)**

**November 7**

RLA Learning and Conference Center  
Cranberry Township

## **2024 Sustainable PA Annual Conference**

**November 20 - 22**

Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center  
State College

**2025**

## **43rd Annual PELRAS Conference**

**February 26 - 28**

Hershey Lodge and Convention Center  
Hershey

## **2025 Annual APMM Conference**

**May 19 - 21**

Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square  
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## **2025 Municipal Leadership Summit**

**October 1 - 4**

Bayfront Convention Center  
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# Inside The League

*With fall in full swing, we would like to thank everyone that attended and participated in the Pennsylvania Municipal League's Annual Municipal Leadership Summit in Scranton. The Electric City was a terrific host, and we had the opportunity to see the absolute best that Scranton has to offer along with Mayor Paige Cognito's dynamic leadership. Scranton continues to impress and has received quite a bit of attention during the election season.*



**ABE AMORÓS**  
**DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -**  
**OPERATIONS – CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER**

*In this version of Inside The League, we begin this column by profusely thanking Debbie Bitting, our Director of Communications, who just announced her retirement on October 17<sup>th</sup>. Debbie was with The League for more than 35 years. Her work ethic, ability to meet every single deadline and successfully manage two wonderful employees along with our publications in Communications is second only to her sincerity, kindness and overall goodness. The League cannot and will never replace her. We wish her the best in her much-earned retirement and send our unconditional love to her and her family. Kudos also to Pittston Mayor Mike Lombardo and Rick Villelo, Deputy Secretary for Community Affairs and Development at the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, for having made time to celebrate Debbie's service at The League during her retirement luncheon.*

*Debbie, you will be missed beyond words. Your professionalism, warmth and friendship will remain with us forever.*

*In honor of Debbie, I would be remiss if I did not encourage all of you to forward your success stories, profiles or initiatives in your respective municipalities for publication. We love hearing from you and would like you to send any relevant information, including photos, to me at [aamoros@pml.org](mailto:aamoros@pml.org). We would absolutely love to feature your municipality!*

*Lastly, we all know that election results will disappoint a considerable number of voters throughout the commonwealth, especially in your communities. Should you need technical assistance in turning down the temperature on political discourse, The League can help through its partnership with Search for Common Ground, an international peace building organization that has spent resources in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Texas and Ohio while addressing political violence. For more information, please be sure to reach out to The League or me directly at the same email address above.*

*Let us do our best to peacefully coexist with our neighbors from the end of the election to swearing in on January 21, 2025, and beyond.*

*From Inside The League,*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Abe Amorós".

Abe Amorós

# Q&A with League Leader

**Centrice Martin**  
**Manager**  
**Ferguson Township**  
**First Vice President**



***This Q&A feature section of the Municipal Reporter highlights an individual local leader who has been involved and engaged with their community and The League.***



Pennsylvania Municipal  
**League**

**Q: Manager, thank you for your service as manager of Ferguson. How did you get involved in local government?**

*Interesting fact here, my undergraduate degree is in Agricultural Business Management, and I have a master's degree in applied Youth, Family and Community Education. I spent several years in academia and a short time in the private sector before the assistant to the borough manager for community engagement position was posted which was a position funded equally by Penn State University and State College Borough. And honestly, the opportunity to develop, implement and facilitate community engagement programs aimed to motivate citizens to get involved, voice their concerns and ask their questions in a way that would influence the decision-making processes at the local level was very exciting to me at the time! I firmly believe that the power of a participatory process with citizen involvement can help shape local governance and influence the decision-making processes.*

**Q: What leadership advice do you have for other local leaders?**

*Be invested. Invest in understanding your community – remove the biased lens and research its history, its unique characteristics, needs, barriers, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses – with recognition that listening to an equal number of opposing views and similar views to your own is important. As leaders, we grow and collaborate with greater insight if we can embrace different viewpoints to help identify where and how to meet people where they are for a more fruitful conversation.*



Lean into and leverage your network of professional connections and associations; call those that can provide mentorship or experiences that offer lessons learned; remember to step out of the environment for a peaceful hike, hangout with friends or a spontaneous trip for a clear mind, and start fresh on Monday!

Foster open and bi-directional communication that is respectful and inviting to all citizens regardless of the political party. In today's environment, it is so important to recognize that. As local leaders, we are tasked with demonstrating how to value and uphold democracy with respect for all opinions and values. It is up to us to build bridges across political parties by cultivating trust which is reasonably feasible by making space for dialogue that focuses on matters that we can address through local leadership and civic engagement.

Learn and respect the form and structure of your local government. To cultivate strong leaders for the future of local government, it is paramount that elected and appointed officials as well as managers are allocating budgetary resources toward leadership development and training for a more informed, knowledgeable electorate.

Practice integrity, accountability and civility. Let's face it, we're going to make mistakes but it's important that we gracefully accept the unfavorable unintended outcomes and quickly pivot to figure out the best course of action. We're human and human error/mistakes are going to happen.

Lead with curiosity and empathy. Promote public participation. Collaborate with an open-minded and adaptive approach. Be deliberative, stay resilient and engage in ongoing self-reflection. Most importantly, share and celebrate success stories.

**Q: What has been your most rewarding experience as a municipal official?**

For me, it has been implementing the "Plan" I established for myself when I accepted the appointment to serve as the township manager. I can vividly recall the moment I answered the call from GovHR with an offer for the position on behalf of the board. With excitement, I tentatively accepted and explained that I would probably have questions but needed to take the weekend before beginning to discuss terms for employment. I went home and told my husband the good news and that I would be staying an evening, or two, at the Penn Stater to prepare a written 30-day, 90-day and one-year plan. And that is exactly what I did with a mindset of flexibility and adaptability. As part of the plan, the township had an organizational assessment done with a focus on the administration and finance and tax departments to identify which areas of operations would benefit with enhancements for increased efficiencies and updated workflows, processes, systems and such.

GovHR prepared an agreement with a defined scope of work that was approved by the board. The agreement included a recommendations report which was instrumental in the initial phase of assessing the organizational level of effectiveness, inter/intra communications, processes, culture and so on. The assessment report was key to developing, engaging and empowering the staff who were excited and embracing change to take ownership in the facilitation of the changing parts that were within their bailiwick. I provided guidance and support and as a decision-maker, helped to mobilize resources for meaningful organizational changes. To contextualize these changes, priority was given to updating the personnel policy manual, agenda software management, the township's financial enterprise resource management (ERM) system from onsite to cloud-based and streamlining the

recruitment process with an “Applicant Tracking System” and “Onboarding” module. Of course, there were challenges throughout the journey but that is to be expected, ultimately the reward is recognizing, sharing and celebrating with staff the wins and success stories. Driving meaningful, sustainable change within the inner workings of our local municipal operations is most rewarding because the vast influence, power and resources of our local government relies not just on the shoulders of the local officials/leaders but the effectiveness of the processes that are always in motion.

**Q: What has been the greatest challenge in your position?**

Well, while driving meaningful and sustainable changes within the local municipal operations is rewarding, it has also presented a few anticipated challenges. Most challenges come naturally as a result of some people’s resistance to change, which isn’t too surprising. Of course, time was invested to listen and encourage participation and suggestions to integrate employee-lead ideas into the change of the management process, but the encouragement of employee-lead ideas was for a duration of time understanding that the township was moving forward.

An example that comes to mind was a decision made shortly after my appointment. The employees would frequently use the township public works garage to do work on their vehicles or take equipment home. The township had a process that required employees to sign a waiver but as most of us understand, even though this waiver was not frowned upon at its inception 15-20 years ago, today is a different story. I consulted with various township partners on the matter before I engaged the public works union stewards and the Police Department Association Union President, both at separate times, for a discussion to listen to their immediate concerns and determine how the township and unions could

work together to ensure the communication offered an understanding. And that’s what happened. Notably, the process to engage and communicate on the matter was not a means for a delay, but rather a collaborative approach with a clear outcome. It’s probably not shocking that I wasn’t a popular person at that juncture and employee morale was hit. It’s those types of decisions that are possibly perceived as going against the grain or the “then” township’s status quo that cause challenges. But let’s face it – you can’t embrace the glory, praise and excitement of achieving goals without owning the responsibility that comes with often difficult decisions.

**Q: Thank you for serving on The League Board as First Vice President. How has your involvement with The League helped you and your community?**

Having a network to lean into for education, advocacy and training to learn how to navigate difficult challenges.

**Q: What advice do you have for people considering municipal government as a career?**

I believe most people with some level of skill and training can do the job BUT to be rewarded with intrinsic value and a deep sense of identity tied to the profession that naturally yields this unwavering commitment and dedication to public service is one which is regularly seeking self-reflection and finds balance in professionalism and authenticity in their leadership roles. I think the job requires you to show up, always value all residents’ opinions with an understanding that as a local leader, you must remain focused on public servant leadership and prioritize public safety and well-being of all residents. I’d say, too, that if you get the extraordinary chance to lead in local government then do more than just what’s expected, apply your strengths and implement change even in the

face of adversity. Remember that you don't know what you don't know and ask this simple and genuine question, "help me understand why..." to truly seek to understand before making a decision.

**Q: As a proud mayor, what would you say are some of Ferguson's greatest attributes?**

Ferguson Township residents benefit from access to a range of amenities accommodating various lifestyles. Driving from one end of the township to the other, residents will encounter natural preserves and conservation land, rural agriculture, a village district, medium density suburban development and approaching an urban setting abutting a major state university. Residents enjoy access to miles of hiking and wilderness trails through forested mountain settings, as well as close proximity to downtown shopping and retail corridors. Parkland and open space are abundant and the township boasts 13 parks ranging from natural, neighborhood and community parks to a regional park.

This diversity in lifestyle and land use requires the township to serve an array of needs and provide levels of service that match that diversity. Ferguson Township has been a thoughtful leader in prioritizing the safety of its residents via numerous public works projects and maintenance programs. Professional consideration is given to transportation networks to increase pedestrian, bike and vehicle safety. This commitment can be seen in park master plans, connecting parks to elementary schools and a sidewalk curb-ramp replacement program to ensure ADA accessibility throughout the township. Interwoven through residential neighborhoods

and connecting to parks, an extensive shared-use path provides transportation alternatives that are both safe and efficient. In 2022, Ferguson Township began participation in a bike sharing program and recently altered path rules to allow pedestrians and cyclists a safe alternative after dark.

**Q: What programs or practices has Ferguson implemented to address this edition's topic of "Civility?"**

The township has traditionally upheld an unwritten expectation that prioritizes respect and civility among all elected officials. And for staff, the personnel policy manual includes a code of conduct policy though it is vague and discretionary as to how it has been applied. The township is currently preparing a code of conduct to be adopted by resolution for elected officials, appointed officials and staff which I anticipate will be adopted at the first December meeting. The code of conduct communicates shared values such as honesty, respect, excellence and integrity as well as other priorities such as: 1) Tone at the Top 2) Expectations 3) Records and Communications and so on. The code of conduct will be provided to every elected official, appointed official and staff member to sign. We are very excited to implement this so all Ferguson Township members can interact internally and externally with shared values.

I'm also excited to share that Ferguson Township is coordinating to have DEIB training lead by The League's Deputy Executive Director – Operations and Chief Diversity Officer, Abe Amorós for staff and elected officials. □





# Business Leaders Network



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## The Importance of Civility in Politics: Rediscovering Common Unity

BY MAYOR KENDY ALVAREZ, LEWISBURG BOROUGH

In an era where the political divide seems more expansive than ever, the concept of civil discourse may feel antiquated, like a relic of a bygone era. Yet, if we look closely at what democracy truly requires to thrive, civility is not just an optional practice—it is a foundational principle. Civility in politics is essential for understanding, progress, and ultimately, for ensuring that our governance reflects the values and needs of the people it serves.

The role of an elected official in today's climate demands more than simply winning votes or advancing policy. It requires fostering an environment where every voice is heard, respected and understood, even when we don't agree.

### Civility: More Than Politeness

When we talk about civility in politics, it's important to clarify that we aren't just advocating for politeness. Civility goes deeper than surface-level courtesy. It involves a genuine commitment to understanding other perspectives and a willingness to engage in meaningful conversations with people who may not share our views. Civility is about finding a way to disagree without dehumanizing the other person. It is the practice of engaging with respect, even when our opinions diverge.

This kind of discourse is vital for the health of our democracy. Without it, our institutions are weakened by distrust and division. When politicians and public figures resort to name-calling, personal attacks or dismissive language, they are not just undermining their opponents—they are undermining the very fabric of democracy, which relies on diverse perspectives to function effectively.

### Rediscovering Common Unity

One of the most profound lessons I've learned as a mayor is that the word "community" has at its root a powerful concept: common unity. Too often, our political conversations focus on what divides us—ideology, party affiliation, background or experience. But when we take the time to look deeper, we realize that there is far more that unites us than divides us.

The key to civil discourse is recognizing this common unity. In every community, whether rural or urban, progressive or conservative, people care about their families, their safety, their livelihoods and their futures. As leaders, it is our job to create spaces where these shared concerns can be addressed, even if our proposed solutions differ. When we frame our discussions in terms of what unites us rather than what divides us, we lay the groundwork for productive, solution-oriented conversations.

### The Role of Elected Officials in Modeling Civil Discourse

Elected officials have a unique responsibility to model civility. As public servants, we are the stewards of our democracy, and how we engage in dialogue sets the tone for how our communities engage with one another. When elected officials demonstrate civil discourse, it sends a powerful message to constituents that disagreement doesn't have to mean discord.

In my role as mayor, I've witnessed how civil discourse can turn what could be a contentious public debate into a constructive dialogue. When people feel heard, they are more likely to listen. When we make space for respectful questioning and genuine listening, we create an environment





where ideas can be shared, explored and refined. This isn't about avoiding hard conversations or pretending that differences don't exist. Rather, it's about engaging those differences in a way that promotes understanding and progress.

## The Challenges of Polarization

Of course, practicing civility is not always easy. In today's highly polarized political environment, it can feel as though the loudest, most confrontational voices dominate the conversation. Social media, for example, amplifies extreme views, creating an echo chamber that discourages thoughtful, respectful discourse. Add to this the growing sense of distrust in political institutions, and it becomes clear why so many people feel disconnected from civil conversations.

But it's precisely in this challenging context that civility becomes even more critical. The more polarized we become, the more we need to lean into civil discourse. By doing so, we don't just preserve the dignity of our interactions—we help rebuild the trust that is essential for a functioning democracy.

## Practical Steps Toward Civility

The question then becomes: How do we foster civil discourse in today's political landscape? The answer lies in simple, yet profound, steps:

1. Listen first. Too often, we engage in conversations waiting for our turn to speak rather than truly listening. Listening is the foundation of understanding. By making a concerted effort to listen without preparing a rebuttal, we can begin to understand the concerns and motivations behind different viewpoints.
2. Focus on issues, not individuals. Personal attacks shut down dialogue and shift focus away from the issues at hand. By keeping conversations centered on the policy or the problem rather than the person, we allow for a more productive exchange of ideas.

3. Create structured spaces for dialogue. Town halls, community forums and bipartisan committees can provide a framework for civil discourse. These spaces give people the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations under the guidance of respectful moderation.
4. Model transparency and openness. As public officials, we need to be transparent in our decision-making processes. By explaining our reasoning and being open to feedback, we foster trust and encourage more civil engagement from the public.

## Conclusion: Committing to Civility

In our roles as public servants, we are faced with the daily challenge of balancing competing interests, navigating diverse perspectives and making decisions that affect the lives of those we serve. But as we engage in this important work, we must remember that civil discourse is not just a tool—it is a responsibility. It is what allows us to govern with integrity, to make decisions that are informed by a full understanding of the issues, and to lead communities that are stronger, more united and more resilient.

As we move forward, I encourage all of us, both as elected officials and as members of our communities, to commit to fostering civil discourse. By focusing on what unites us, we can transcend the divisions that threaten our democracy and build a future rooted in understanding, respect, and common unity. Because at the end of the day, civility isn't just good politics—it's the foundation of a healthy, functioning democracy. □



## Civility and Decency

BY ABE AMORÓS, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - OPERATIONS – CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICER, THE LEAGUE

During my college years, I came across a powerful quote which resonates with me to this very day: “You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist.” That simple statement came from Indira Gandhi, India’s first female prime minister.

By the time you read this, Election Day may have passed. Naturally, one group of voters was disappointed with the results. Given this reality, there may be instances of greater disagreement which could manifest itself in some form of political violence. This unfortunate reality isn’t limited to physical violence. It can take the form of verbal abuse or intimidation in any form.

We must all find ways to lower the temperature in our civil discourse, especially after one of the most

polarizing elections in the history of our nation.

The first step in lowering the temperature is sincerely wanting to understand another person’s viewpoint. Allow yourself to be open to communicating. At the end of the day, we have more in common than not. Once we begin talking and actively listening to people with a sincere intention to understand, we begin to chip away at facades.

This allows for genuine and constructive dialogue.

It begins with respect. Not only respect for the other person but for his, her or their perspectives and thoughts on certain topics.

Since the spring, The League has been consistently collaborating with Search for Common Ground, an international, non-

governmental organization that works to end conflict to build healthy, safe and just societies. Pennsylvania is highlighted under the Resilient States Project which also includes Wisconsin, Ohio and Texas.

I relish opportunities to share this message with others as an example of how, even during the most tumultuous times, we can set aside differences to focus on those very same things: civility and decency.

For any municipality to participate in this effort between Election Day and the swearing in on January 21, 2025, please contact me at [aamoros@pml.org](mailto:aamoros@pml.org) or at 717-887-1840.

Together, we can work to resolve our differences with respect and civility. ☐

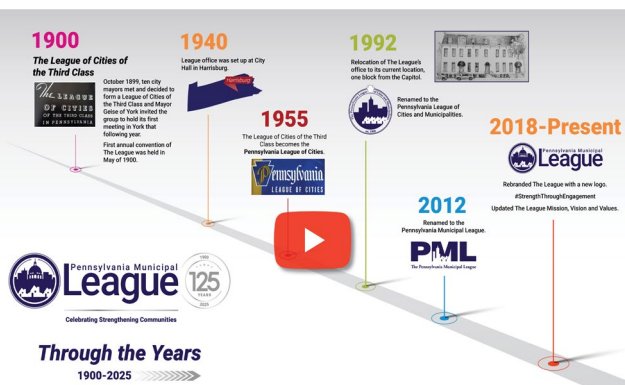


# Pennsylvania Municipal League



**Celebrating Strengthening Communities**

**Next year is a big milestone for The League! We will be celebrating 125 years of strengthening communities and we have exciting events planned so stay tuned...**





## What Does Civility Look Like in Practice?

BY WILL FULLER, STATE LEAD, PENNSYLVANIA RESILIENT STATES PROJECT

**It's no secret that we live in polarizing times.** Our current political discourse seeks to convince us that our differences are too great to overcome. In such a climate, how do we transform what divides us into what binds us more closely together? How do we demonstrate the truth: that almost three quarters of Americans believe we have a responsibility to connect with people who are different from us (*More In Common*, 2023)?

Research and experience continually show that [local officials offer a counterpoint to the rampant polarization in politics](#). The reasons for this are many. Local officials often ground politics in local solutions instead of abstract ideas. They hold deep and broad community relationships and work regularly across the aisle with colleagues who hold different policy views for the good of the communities they serve.

Local officials have an opportunity not only to effectively address community issues, but to model leadership in confusing and tense times. Through their words and actions, local officials can lower the “chilling effect” of polarization and encourage their communities to choose to move forward together.

**So, what does building local resilience and civility look like in practice?**

- First, be intentional about building and maintaining relationships with trusted messengers across a wide range of leaders – spanning political affiliations, faith traditions, industry sectors and communities. We know that the most toxic polarization (known



as **affective polarization**) is driven not by what we think of “them,” but what we think they think of “us.” Seek to cut through those assumptions through relationships.

- Second, normalize bridge building efforts in your community, making them a priority for you and your stakeholders. Make opportunities for and amplify moments of coming together across differences. As leaders, what you water grows; what you neglect withers.

- Third, be aware of your words and actions. Model values, refrain from polarizing or dehumanizing language, and take care to lift up accurate information.

Lastly, **consider getting involved with Common Ground USA**. In Pennsylvania and elsewhere, our team has been working to identify and activate key leaders – educators, faith leaders, business owners, farmers,

veterans and others – who hold different perspectives but want to create a place of belonging, a place where they can rise above the forces that seek to drive us further apart.

**You can join that work right now with one small step.**

Consider hosting a [Love Anyway Feast](#), participating in our [All We Share](#) campaign, or consulting our [resource on crisis response](#) to prepare for navigating this contentious season.

The work of civility is our collective responsibility. Through small actions, local officials can build a more united and understanding community. □





## Civility as a Pillar of De-escalation in Law Enforcement

BY JOHN STRING, CO-FOUNDER OF ASPIRANT CONSULTING GROUP, LLC

In recent years, the role of law enforcement has come under heightened scrutiny, with public trust at risk amid broader conversations about police reform. Central to these discussions is the role of civility in law enforcement—specifically, how officers' behavior during public interactions can significantly shape individual



outcomes and community perceptions. Civility, which encompasses respect, courtesy, and professionalism, is not just a moral obligation but an essential strategy for de-escalation in tense situations. It has become clear that maintaining civility, particularly during high-pressure encounters, can serve as a powerful tool for preventing conflict, improving officer safety, and strengthening the relationship between police and the communities they serve.

### The Link Between Civility and Procedural Justice

At the heart of the civility argument is procedural justice, which suggests that people's perceptions of authority are more influenced by how they are treated during an interaction than by the outcome itself. Research shows that when individuals feel respected and heard, they are more likely to comply with officers and view the interaction as fair, even if the outcome is not in their favor. Civility, as part of procedural justice, enhances perceptions of fairness, increasing legitimacy and compliance.

This connection between civility and procedural justice is crucial in the context of de-escalation. When officers remain calm, professional, and respectful, it communicates to citizens that they are valued and that their concerns are being taken seriously. This is particularly important in communities that may already have low levels of trust in law enforcement due to historical grievances or recent incidents of perceived misconduct.

### Civility in Practice: De-escalation Techniques

De-escalation techniques are now a critical part of many law enforcement training programs and use of force policies, and we can find the concepts of civility within many of these. Officers are trained to use verbal and non-verbal communication to reduce tensions, such as speaking calmly, avoiding aggressive postures, and showing empathy for the individual's situation. These actions are all manifestations of civility, demonstrating respect and a willingness to listen before resorting to force.

For example, in many high-tension situations—such as responding to a domestic dispute or a large crowd—a professional approach can help lower emotions and allow for dialogue. Research into procedural justice suggests that when officers engage respectfully and explain their actions, the perceived fairness of the encounter increases, which can be essential for de-escalation.

### Civility, Officer Safety, and Public Perception

Civility in law enforcement not only benefits the public but also plays a significant role

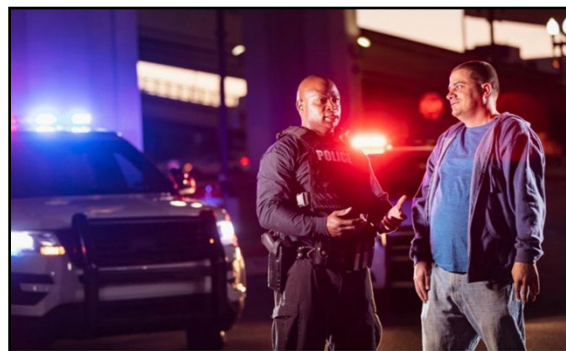


in ensuring officer safety. Officers who approach situations with respect and calmness are less likely to provoke aggressive responses, thereby reducing the likelihood of confrontations turning violent. When individuals perceive that they are being treated unfairly or disrespectfully, they are more likely to resist authority, leading to dangerous situations for both the officer and the individual involved.

Moreover, civility in law enforcement interactions contributes to long-term public perception of the police. In an era where body cameras and social media can quickly bring negative encounters to light, maintaining civility is not just about individual interactions but about shaping the overall narrative of a police department's relationship with its community. Positive, respectful interactions help build a bank of goodwill that can protect departments from broader public backlash when incidents do occur.

## Building Civility Through Training and Leadership

To cultivate a culture of civility within law enforcement, police departments must prioritize it at all levels. Leadership plays a critical role in setting the tone for what is acceptable behavior among officers. Departments



that recognize civility in officer's actions and emphasize procedural justice in their policies are more likely to foster respectful and effective interactions with the public.

Training programs are integral to this effort. Many police academies now include de-escalation techniques as part of their core curriculum, teaching officers to prioritize communication and patience over force. This training focuses on recognizing situations where an individual's emotions or mental state might escalate an encounter and how to respond civilly to keep the situation under control. For instance, understanding verbal judo—a technique that involves using one's words to influence the behavior of others—can be a key skill in ensuring that officers maintain control without aggression.

In addition to training, law enforcement agencies must foster a culture of accountability where instances of incivility are addressed and

officers are encouraged to reflect on their interactions. Leadership can play a significant role by modeling civil behavior and ensuring that officers understand the long-term benefits of maintaining professionalism, even in challenging situations.

## Conclusion: Civility as a Strategic Tool

Civility is far more than just a soft skill; it is a strategic tool that enhances both the effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement. By treating individuals with respect, officers can de-escalate potentially dangerous situations, foster greater public trust, and ultimately perform their duties more safely and effectively. As public expectations of law enforcement continue to evolve, civility will remain a crucial component in building and maintaining strong community relations.

For municipal leaders, supporting law enforcement agencies in promoting civility through training, leadership, and policy is essential for reducing conflict and building resilient communities. In the end, civility is not only a reflection of the values of law enforcement but also a testament to the broader commitment to justice, fairness, and public safety. □



Aspirant Consulting Group





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## Recovery from Disaster, Be Prepared

SUBMITTED BY ELIZABETH HENRY, TRUSTS MEMBER SERVICES MANAGER

Daily stories of survival, heroism and hope after Hurricane Helene are beautiful acts of civility in light of the destructive path of this storm. These stories of civility that we are reading about include a person rescued from rushing floodwaters by a pulley system, mule teams carrying food and supplies to stranded residents, volunteers clearing roads to ensure safe routes for needed fuel, food, water, and emergency supplies, assistance to evacuate residents, clearing of mud and debris from local businesses, and the shared stories continue. As clean-up progresses through the mountains of mud and debris, the patience of many volunteers and residents will be tested due to the lack of running water, electricity, cellphone service, and day light, yet the stories of civility are still and will continue to be published daily.

In the days and weeks following a natural disaster, picking up the pieces may be very daunting. As your community looks to you, the municipality, for answers to help them cope with the trauma and devastation left behind, you most likely will be trying to recover yourself. Preparing your entity ahead of time with an action plan is the best solution for the municipality and your residents.

The initial damage reporting starts with your entity. Recognize the key players within your municipality and have duties in place for when it is safe to evaluate the destruction. Appoint an Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) as the main point of contact for damage assessment. This individual needs to go out into the community and assess the damages to residential areas, infrastructure and businesses. Document and photograph everything; damage, location, recommendations to repair or replace.

The EMC responsibilities include:

- **Planning and preparation**  
Developing and maintaining emergency management programs, including disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation
- **Communication**  
Coordinating and providing training on emergency management, and communicating incident information with the public/press
- **Resource management**  
Gathering resources from the community for emergency response, and managing grants and contracts

- **Leadership**  
Providing leadership and guidance, and representing the entity
- **Technology**  
Assessing emergency preparedness and availability of technologies, and training others on their use
- **Action planning**  
Devising action plans with a team to minimize damage, injuries, and deaths

All information from the initial damage report needs to be tracked for the Finance Director to develop damage reports. These reports should include: details of the incident, location of the damage, extent of the damage, resources needed to respond, and a situation report. Also include the hidden expenses; employee time and rate, including overtime with rate, equipment and hours used, materials/purchase of supplies/retails with receipts. Additionally, consider a map with codes to the damaged site.

Once the residential and municipal damage reports have been completed the municipality submits the reports to their county emergency management/public safety office. At this point

the county collects all damage reports from their municipalities and submits them to the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) at [PEMA](#) in Harrisburg. PEMA will review the damage reports to determine if the damage was severe enough for the Governor to request a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) with FEMA.

We do encourage you to invest the time to develop an emergency management program, which includes disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation for the unexpected event(s). If the program is implemented, constituents of your community will appreciate the preparedness by supporting and engaging with civility. □

For further information on PennPRIME, contact:

Elizabeth Henry  
Trusts Member Services Manager  
[ehenry@pml.org](mailto:ehenry@pml.org)  
717-236-9469, ext. \*250

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**50 THINGS ANYONE CAN DO  
TO MAKE US STRONGER  
TOGETHER**

You care about this country and you're worried about it. This year you've been afraid that the problems are too big. Here are **50 things** anyone can do to increase American strength and resilience in the face of these problems.



# Municipal Leadership Summit Wrap-up

**SUBMITTED BY MARY COSTIK, LEAGUE MEETING MANAGER AND  
AMANDA LANE, LEAGUE DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - MEMBERSHIP**

The 125<sup>th</sup> Annual Municipal Leadership Summit was truly one for the ages. With nearly 350 attendees, including exhibitors, sponsors, and members of the Business Leaders Network, the event saw a marked increase in participation, demonstrating the continued relevance and importance of this gathering.

The Summit kicked off with a thought-provoking keynote from William Fuller of Search for Common Ground. His session, "Transforming Conflict into Collaboration: Why Local Officials Just Might Save the World," addressed the rising polarization in Pennsylvania and emphasized the unique role local officials play in fostering healthy pluralism and rebuilding institutional trust.

Welcoming attendees to this milestone event was The League's Executive Director, John Brenner, followed by opening remarks from League President Doug Baker, Mayor of Franklin; PSATC President John J. Jablowski, Jr., Wilkes-Barre Township Councilmember; and PA Career Fire Chief's President Chief Thomas O'Donnell from Norristown. Additional local perspectives were shared by Scranton Mayor Paige G. Cagnetti and Lackawanna County Commissioner Matt McGloin. The Commonwealth was represented by DCED Deputy Secretary Richard Vilello, with a special video message from Lt. Governor Austin Davis. A patriotic tone was set with a beautiful performance of the National Anthem by the Scranton High School and Scranton West High School choirs, while the Tobyhanna Army Depot conducted a formal presentation of the colors.

Throughout the Summit, participants engaged in a variety of sessions. Highlights included a "Leadership Presentation on Equity in Urban-Core Redevelopment" by Marimba Milliones of the Hill Community Development Corporation. This year's training tracks offered valuable insights on Community Development and Infrastructure, Public Safety, and Municipal Finance.

Friday morning's keynote was delivered by former U.S. Congressman Charlie Dent, whose presentation explored navigating Washington, D.C. amid a polarized and unpredictable political climate.

The Awards Breakfast on Saturday morning was a celebratory moment, where Mayor Salvatore J. Panto and Mayor Danene Sorace were honored with The League's Distinguished Service Award. Additionally, Brown Plus received the Community Partnership Award in recognition of fostering cooperation between corporate leaders and local government officials, strengthening civic engagement and promoting economic competitiveness.

At the PSATC Annual Banquet, Commissioner Dennis Arthur, Sr. of Tinicum Township was welcomed as the new association president. Attendees enjoyed a fun-filled Monte Carlo-themed event after the banquet, where many tested their luck and hit it big!

Saturday afternoon featured a unique tour of the Lackawanna Coal Mine and the Anthracite Museum, offering attendees a glimpse into Pennsylvania's rich industrial history.

Thanks to the generosity of attendees and the success of the Richard J. Schuettler Center for Municipal Development's Silent Auction, this year saw record-breaking contributions to the Center. The nonprofit continues to grow in its mission to equip local elected and appointed officials with the knowledge and leadership skills needed to tackle the challenges of their roles.

We are already looking ahead to next year's Summit, which will be held in Erie, Pennsylvania, from Wednesday, October 1 to Saturday, October 4, 2025. Mark your calendars!

A special thank you to the vendors, sponsors, and Business Leaders Network members for their support of the Summit. The list of sponsors can be found on The League's website under the Municipal Leadership Summit tab. We encourage everyone to engage with these partners and thank them for their continued generosity.

Lastly, we want to extend our appreciation to the Lackawanna County Visitors Bureau, the outstanding volunteers from Mayor Cagnetti's office, and Wilkes-Barre Township Councilmember John J. Jablowski, Jr., for coordinating exceptional evening events.

We look forward to seeing everyone in Erie next year! ☐







# PSATC President's Message



DENNIS ARTHUR  
COMMISSIONER  
TINICUM TOWNSHIP



**[firstclasstownshipa.org](http://firstclasstownshipa.org)**

*It is my great honor to be elected the president of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners (PSATC).*

*For 100 years, PSATC has been at the forefront of community service, tirelessly working to improve the lives of Pennsylvania's citizens. This remarkable achievement is a testament to the vision and dedication of our past leaders, including Tommy Giancristoforo, James McGinn, Larry Patterson, and Dr. Lee Janiczek among many others who have guided our organization through the decades.*

*As we celebrate this significant milestone, we not only look back on our history but also forward to the promising future that lies ahead. With your continued support and commitment, I am confident that we can lay the foundation for another century of service to our communities.*

*I am excited to build upon the initiatives started by John Jablowski in the past year. By enhancing our communication and fostering closer collaboration among our members, we can further strengthen our organization.*

*I invite each of you to join me in this journey. Your ideas, your energy, and your dedication are the fuel that will propel PSATC into its next decade of excellence. Let us work together to ensure that our organization remains as relevant and impactful in the future as it has been in the past.*

*Thank you for your trust and support. Here's to PSATC – 100 years strong and looking forward to 100 more!*

*Sincerely,*

*Dennis R. Arthur Sr.*

*Dennis Arthur*

## PSATC's 2024 Annual Business Meeting

The PSATC Annual Business Meeting was held in conjunction with the Municipal Leadership Summit on Friday, October 11. The membership voted to approve the slate of officers for 2024-2025 which includes: President Dennis Arthur, Tinicum Township; First Vice President Todd Miller, Crescent Township; Second Vice President Dean Villone, Lower Allen Township; Third Vice President Kip McFatridge, Upper Moreland Township; and Secretary/Treasurer Richard Saraceni, Ridley Township.

Member officials also voted to approve a Bylaws change that will allow the Executive Committee to hold up to two virtual meetings a year. This will provide the Executive Committee with the flexibility to meet online and vote if a matter arises that cannot wait until the next scheduled in-person meeting. League Executive Director John

Brenner presented outgoing President John Jablowski with the plaque for his leadership.

Finally, Elizabeth Henry, Trusts Member Services Manager, provided an overview of the U•COMP unemployment compensation program of which PSATC is a founding member. Dennis Arthur, Tinicum Township, and Tony Taliani, East Deer Township, are U•COMP Trustees representing PSATC.

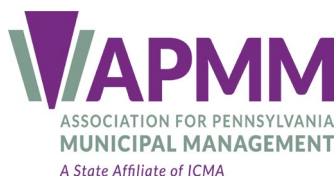




# APMM President's Message



**DAN SANTORO**  
**MANAGER**  
**CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP**



**APMM.net**

*This message may come as a surprise to some members of APMM who may not be aware that David Pribulka, who was set to serve as president this year and assumed the role at our May conference in Bethlehem, has recently accepted a position out of state. As a result, he has stepped down from his role as president. According to our APMM bylaws, the first vice president steps into the role of president to complete the remainder of the term.*

*David's leadership will be greatly missed, not only for his active involvement in APMM over the years but also for his invaluable contributions as a colleague, friend, and exceptional local government manager in Pennsylvania. We are deeply grateful for his service to APMM, and we wish him the very best in his new endeavor.*

*I am honored to step into the role of president earlier than anticipated and look forward to continuing the work of my predecessors, including immediate Past President Amanda Serock. APMM is making great strides, and I am excited to further our initiatives and advance the profession. We are fortunate to have a wealth of knowledge among us, and it is through collaboration and reliance on you that we can continue to elevate the standards of municipal management in Pennsylvania. As I transition into this role, I kindly ask for your patience as I familiarize myself with the responsibilities ahead.*

*I would also like to highlight the outstanding event many of us had the privilege to attend from September 21 to September 25 in Pittsburgh—the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) Annual Conference. The conference was a tremendous success, offering invaluable opportunities to network with colleagues, learn from others' experiences in local government, and share best practices. With over 3,000 professionals from around the world in attendance, it was truly a rewarding event.*

*I would like to extend special recognition to the local host committee, particularly its co-chairs, Denise Fitzgerald, and Kevin Flannery, for organizing an exceptional series of local events. Their efforts, along with appearances by local icons like the Pirate Pierogies and Iceburgh, helped create a conference with a uniquely Pittsburgh flair. Hosting the ICMA International Conference in our home state was a significant honor, and the host committee did an outstanding job. We should all be proud of their efforts.*

*I look forward to serving APMM as we continue to promote and advance professional municipal management.*

*Sincerely,*

**Dan Santoro**

**We're thrilled to announce two exciting conferences for 2025!  
Mark your calendars and keep an eye out —  
registration will be opening soon!**

- **Executive Development Conference**

Dates: February 6-7, 2025

Location: Omni Bedford Springs Resort

Prepare for two days of dynamic leadership development in an inspiring setting.

- **2025 Annual Conference**

Dates: May 19-21, 2025

Location: Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square

Don't miss our premier event featuring cutting-edge industry insights and unparalleled networking opportunities.

**Stay tuned — registration details are coming soon!**



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MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT

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# Legislative Status Report STATE



PREPARED BY AMY STURGES, LEAGUE DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – ADVOCACY – [asturges@pml.org](mailto:asturges@pml.org)

KAITLIN ERRICKSON, GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS MANAGER – [kerrickson@pml.org](mailto:kerrickson@pml.org)

*All legislation can be found on the General Assembly's website:*

[legis.state.pa.us](https://legis.state.pa.us)

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## Legislative Update

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### **Compromise Achieved on Post-traumatic Stress Injury for First Responders!**

As the 2024-25 Legislative Session opened, Post-Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI) for First Responders legislation was introduced as Senate Bill 365 (Bartolotta) and House Bill 1632 (O'Mara). This concept has been introduced in at least two prior sessions and has circulated nationwide in many state legislatures. Rather than oppose the bills outright, our goal entering this session was to achieve a compromise so that the legislation would provide a fair benefit to first responders needing assistance at a fair and sustainable cost to local governments. Both bills, as introduced, would have resulted in an uninsurable cost for local governments which, in the end, would not have helped first responders in need.

This legislation amends the Workers' Compensation Act. Under the Act, a first responder can currently make a claim for a post-traumatic injury. The legislation lowers the bar for a first responder to prove a claim and receive workers' compensation benefits by removing the requirement to show abnormal working conditions.

For most of the session, HB 1632 was the vehicle for this relaxed benefit. We met with the sponsor of the bill, as well as the Chairman and staff of the House Veterans Committee. We also provided language to mitigate the costs. Having researched other states that enacted a PTSI benefit, we modeled much of our language after Virginia which required first responders to have experienced a qualifying traumatic event and capped payments to 52 weeks. We also requested the infinite look back for claims be changed to events occurring after enactment of the legislation.

In May 2024, HB 1632 was close to passage with no compromise language when Philadelphia stepped in and was able to negotiate a few important changes to the bill. Passing the House, HB 1632 included a list of qualifying traumatic events that a first responder filing a claim would need to point to as being sustained during the course and scope of employment and as causing the injury. HB 1632 also required diagnosis by a licensed psychiatrist or psychologist; and it cut off the





infinite potential of retroactive claims by applying the look back period to injuries occurring no more than five years before the effective date of the bill.

As the bill arrived in the Senate, the local government associations discussed with Senate staff further necessary amendments. We provided them with five priority issues which included a benefit cap and several language clarifications to ensure the relaxed benefit provided in this legislation would not bleed into other areas of the Workers' Compensation Law. We continued to work with the Senate staff on language and in early October the Senate picked up its version of the bill and amended it with the language of HB 1632 and added a 104-week cap on benefits and the clarifying language we requested. With these additional amendments, The League and PSATC were able to take a Neutral position on the bill. The Senate passed SB 365 on October 9 and sent it to the House. In the final week of voting session, the House moved SB 365 through Committee and passed it finally on October 23.

As SB 365 goes to the Governor for enactment the following provisions are included:

- Defines first responder (Police, Fire and EMS personnel) and clarifies that they actively respond to emergency calls;
- Provides a list of five qualifying traumatic events and provides a first responder must establish that the PTSD was the result of undergoing one of the qualifying

events in the course and scope of employment as a first responder;

- Caps the benefit at 104 weeks;
- Requires a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist to make the diagnosis of PTSD;
- Requires a claim to be filed no later than three years after diagnosis;
- Limits injuries to those occurring no more than five years before the effective date of the benefit;
- Prohibits this benefit for injuries suffered as a result of personnel actions;
- Clarifies the changes made to the Workers' Compensation Law under the bill do not apply to other areas of the Workers' Compensation Law; and
- Provides an effective date of one year from enactment.

We know this legislation is still an unfunded mandate on local government and taxpayers. However, we believe we have mitigated the costs substantially while still providing first responders with an easier path to PTSD benefits. We thank our members who communicated with their House and Senate members over the years about this mandate and the need to find a fair, affordable compromise. Finally, we also thank the Delaware Valley Trust and Campbell Durrant, P.C. for their guidance on amendment language throughout this lengthy process.

## 2024 Adopted Resolutions

The League is a member-driven organization relying on member municipalities to help develop policies that meet the present needs of local government. Our annual [resolutions process](#) provides every League member with the opportunity to participate in, and shape, The League's legislative agenda.

During the 2024 Municipal Leadership Summit, the voting delegates for The League's Resolutions Committee and Annual Business Meeting met for a final discussion and vote on the proposed 2024 Resolutions. All nine resolutions were adopted and will be integrated into the 2025 Policy Statement.

Please view and read the adopted 2024 Resolutions [here](#). The subjects of the adopted resolutions are listed below.

1. 2020 Policy Review
2. Adoption of NLC's 2024 Municipal Policy and Federal Action Agenda
3. Park Protected Bike Lanes
4. COVID Heart and Lung Benefit for Police

5. Commonwealth's Responsibility to Pay Stormwater Fees
6. State Funding for Local Government Cybersecurity
7. Prohibition of Ghost Guns
8. Regulation of Skill Games
9. Equity, Fairness, Inclusion and Justice

## Pennsylvania Housing Survey

As you may know, the Shapiro Administration signed Executive Order 2024-03 in early September, directing



Source: PADCED

**Take the Housing Survey**

DCED and DHS to develop a strategic housing plan for the state. The report is due to be completed by fall 2025. Please find the Executive Order [here](#).

DCED has created a housing survey to begin collecting data and public input. Please feel free to share this survey with any colleagues, staff, or community members.

## Enacted Legislation

### Act 99 of 2024

#### House Bill 1730

**Signed: October 16, 2024**

**Effective: 60 Days**

[Act 99](#) amends Title 9 (Burial Grounds) clarifying that municipalities are not classified as cemetery companies, thereby exempting them from the requirement to register with the State Real Estate Commission.

### Act 110 of 2024

#### Senate Bill 765

**Signed: October 16, 2024**

**Effective: 60 Days**

[Act 110](#) amends Title 8 (Boroughs and Incorporated Towns) making several updates to the Borough Code: authorizes the appointment of a partnership, limited partnership, association or professional corporation as borough manager; prohibits surcharging an elected or appointed official who acted in good faith on the written opinion of the borough solicitor; permits the civil service commission to reorganize within 30 days of the first Monday in January of even-numbered years; and removes the requirement that a preliminary budget be prepared at least 30 days prior to the adoption of the budget.

## Bills on the Governor's Desk

### Main Street Act Grant Extension

[House Bill 450](#) (PN 418), introduced by Representative Freeman, would amend the Main Street Act authorizing DCED to extend the duration of grants for the administrative costs associated with hiring a Main Street Manager for an additional period of up to five years, for a total of 10 years.

### Vacancies and Vancancy Boards

[House Bill 2160](#) (PN 3411), introduced by Representatives Christina Sappey, would amend the First Class Township Code regarding vacancy boards and the filling of vacancies.

- If a majority of seats on a governing body are vacant, the Court of Common Pleas shall fill the vacancies upon petition from the remaining board members or fifteen registered voters;

- If a resignation would preclude the majority of a board from accepting the tendered resignation, the resignation is effective the second business day after being tendered;
- If a governing body convenes to fill a vacancy, the proceedings may be ended after 15 days instead of the current 30 days, if the seated members vote to disband because they cannot fill the vacancy; and
- A vacancy board chair may not vote for themselves to fill any vacancy.

## Elected Officials Salary Increases

[House Bills 2265](#) and [2288](#) (PNs 3437 and 3444), introduced by Representatives Kyle Donahue and Jim Marshall, would increase the maximum compensation for Borough and Second Class Township elected officials respectively. The increase would be based on the municipality's population as outlined in the bills. Both bills provide the option to receive compensation on a per-meeting basis based on attendance. House Bill 2265 would also provide an updated maximum compensation for borough mayors.

These bills were introduced to create uniformity with the salary increases implemented in the recently updated First Class Township Code.

## Salaries for Fire and Ambulance Personnel

[Senate Bills 1132](#), [1133](#) and [1134](#) (PNs 1580, 1581 and 1582), introduced by Senator Rosemary Brown, would amend the First Class Township, Second Class Township and Borough Codes. The bills would lift the current caps on the amount of revenue generated from the special purpose fire and EMS taxes that can be spent on salaries. In any calendar year, a governing body may waive the spending cap. □

## House and Senate Session Days 2024

### House

November 12-13

### Senate

November 13-14

\*reminder - session dates are subject to change



# Legislative Status Report FEDERAL

**NLC** NATIONAL  
LEAGUE  
OF CITIES  
CITIES STRONG TOGETHER

## How Cities' Infrastructure Projects Change Lives

BY BRITTNEY D. KOHLER, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE, NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

CO-AUTHORED BY NLC INTERNS ATIYA CHIPHE DAMION DESHIELD AND JACK SIRIANNI

People are the reason America's cities, towns and villages are busy rebuilding our infrastructure. With [over 2,100+ locally-led federal infrastructure rebuilding projects started with federal and local funding](#), many great projects are changing lives – making us safer and removing barriers. Every day your community's residents use your city's infrastructure, but infrastructure is what actually makes everything else our residents want to do possible.

### Infrastructure Changes Lives

Congress' [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#) was one of the first federal infrastructure bills to create programs where smaller and mid-sized cities had a good chance of getting direct federal infrastructure grants. The United States is a nation of small towns, but smaller places often found federal funding out of reach. Yet, now [more than 1,000 small communities](#) like [Mount Rainer, MD](#), [Seaford, DE](#), and [Beatrice, NE](#), stepped up and are now using federal grants to improve their communities for their

residents. We're also seeing projects in [328](#) mid-sized hub cities like Broken Arrow, OK, [New Haven, CT](#), and [Waterloo, IA](#), and [68](#) major cities like [Detroit, MI](#), [Charlotte, NC](#), and [Atlanta, GA](#). Here are five of the great ways that local infrastructure projects are changing lives.

### Saving Lives on Our Roads

America's communities lose [100](#) residents each day on our roads. Now, hundreds of communities of all sizes across the country are breaking ground on [Safe Streets projects](#) that will save more lives in communities like [Biddeford, ME](#), Williston, ND, [Pocatello, ID](#), and [Sturgis, SD](#).

Safe Streets projects are going to [793 places](#) that had never received a federal transportation grant before. Additionally, the [Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity \(RAISE\) grants](#) continue to invest in life-saving investments. With West Virginia ranked among the worst in the nation for road deaths, [Charleston, WV](#), took action locally with



a RAISE grant to update their busy Capitol Corridor's 15 intersections, adding 3.5 miles of shared-use path, improving street lighting, and making crosswalks more visible. [Charlotte, NC](#) is making their roads safer with a RAISE grant after [two pedestrians were killed](#) in the same spot on Christmas Day and New Year's Eve.

*As more local safety projects move forward, the [latest data](#) shows lives being saved.*

### **Rebuilding Main Street, USA**

For many cities and towns, their Main Street is not just a road; it's a hub for their residents with clusters of businesses, services and restaurants that center their community. [Beatrice, NE](#), is reclaiming their main street by rerouting a state highway to create more activity for local businesses and outdoor space in the heart of the community. In [Covington, KY](#), a disadvantaged and isolated area is getting reconnected with a RAISE grant to widen sidewalks and install a pedestrian bridge over the Ohio River. [Pascagoula, MS](#), is redesigning two of their central streets to reduce injury-causing accidents and foster small downtown businesses by expanding sidewalks and repairing wastewater infrastructure with their RAISE grant. [Burlington, VT](#), is home to the Church Street Marketplace and its many small businesses benefiting from a pedestrian-friendly downtown built with their RAISE grant.

### **Combating Disasters Before They Strike**

Nationally, towns are dealing with consequences of wildfires, tornadoes, and flooding, but they are fighting back. After wildfires devastated [Ukiah, CA](#), they used the [Forest Service's Community Wildfire Defense grant](#) to do controlled burning, which clears brush and significantly reduces the damage of future wildfires. After a tornado with 200 mph winds ripped through [Mayfield, KY](#), they are rebuilding a more resilient community with a RAISE grant from their roads and sidewalks to their sewers. [Athens, TN](#) is making the switch from traditional diesel buses to electric buses with the [Clean School Bus Program](#) to limit their kids' exposure every day to exhaust pollution. [Flagstaff, AZ](#) is decreasing their fire risk by removing flammable underbrush and using it to fill up "wood banks" for local indigenous communities who struggle with the cost of firewood to heat their homes in the winter.

### **Keeping Kids Safe**

Because of the IIJA, students are going to be safer as they walk and ride to their homes and schools. After [two elementary school students](#) were struck by vehicles, [Wilmington, DE](#), is using a Safe Streets grant to design safer sidewalks and prevent future tragedies. [Notus, ID](#)—a town of 609 people—is prioritizing students' safety near their high school by tackling worst-condition streets and sidewalk projects using a RAISE grant. After two Carson High students were hit by cars in a four-day span, [Carson City, NV](#) is using a Safe Streets planning grant to gather the full view of data—even using drones to assess drop-off traffic flow—to adjust their infrastructure protections in the school zone. [Seguin, TX](#), is investing to make biking safer around their schools with their Safe Streets Grant and education like their [annual bike rodeo](#). In [Atlanta, GA](#), their Westside Thrive project is not just [building safer bike lanes](#), but the community is doing [bike education](#) to encourage young riders.

### **Removing Road Blocks and Risks**

[Over 12,000 American cities and towns have railroads coming through and 65% of all rail incidents](#) in the last decade occurred within city boundaries, and often towns are being cut in two regularly by blocked tracks and countless derailments. In [Wellington, KS](#), trains block the main streets 40% of the day and several derailed. Now, the [Railroad Crossing Elimination Program \(RCE\) grant](#) will eliminate their blocked crossing problems and reconnect the town by building an overpass. [Fairfield, OH](#), is eliminating the deadly congestion caused by rails crossing in the heart of their city after 18 crashes and 8 deaths in the last 30 years by building an overpass with their rail grant. [Waterloo, IA](#), is using a Reconnecting Communities grant to relocate a train yard that blocks kids getting to school and is situated next to a disadvantaged community that is dealing with severe rates of asthma and disabilities. Moving the rail yard should improve the air quality and solve a daily challenge for residents. □





# Public Finance

## A BETTER BALANCE

### PLGIT'S FOCUS ON SECURITY AND GROWTH PROVIDES STABILITY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

BY PAUL ROBINSON, INSTITUTIONAL SALES AND RELATIONSHIP MANAGER,  
PFM ASSET MANAGEMENT LLC

The world of finance and investment is in a constant state of change. Interest rates rise and fall, local and economic health improves and declines, technology has expanded the world of investing and made transactions faster with each passing month. At PLGIT, we're well aware of the effect this has on local governments.

For more than 40 years, PLGIT has anticipated this kind of change – and has responded with its own new products and systems. But this kind of change wouldn't be possible without a firm foundation of safety and service.

In this article, we review several of the changes that have come about in the last decade, and examine core principles that remain the foundation for our growth and longevity.

#### **Evolving with Local Governments**

As of June 30, 2024, more than 3,250 local governments, municipal authorities, and schools have invested over \$11 billion total assets in PLGIT programs. PLGIT continues to evolve, keeping pace with change by adding products and services as technology improves and as those Investors' needs grow.

Over the last several years, PLGIT has added the following to its menu of Investor offerings:

#### **Online money management**

Two years ago, PLGIT replaced its existing online portal with *Connect*,

which kept all the tools from the previous portal that made working with your municipality's PLGIT accounts easy, and added several upgrades, functions, and design improvements. Those enhancements include more rapid access to current yields, better access to more data, an enhanced transaction module, and much more to enable local government staff to streamline financial operations.

*Connect* has seen rapid adoption by participants and continues to offer increased efficiency, reporting options and security. 89% of all ACH transactions processed in PLGIT in 2023 were completed online through *Connect*.

#### **Enhanced security**

In August of 2018, PLGIT extended multi-factor authentication (MFA) to its online portal. MFA is an industry leading practice for verifying the identity of a user. While no process can completely eliminate online security threats, MFA employs multiple methods for determining a user's identity and is viewed as one of the best available ways to protect confidential information.

#### **Expansion of new products**

The signing of Act 10 of 2016 removed outdated constraints placed on municipal investors, enabling them to seek higher earnings on the funds they invest on behalf of taxpayers. Act

10 gave municipal investors a greater range of investment vehicles that offer increased diversification and the potential for more competitive yields, including:

- Commercial paper
- Negotiable certificates of deposit (CDs)
- Bankers' acceptances
- Insured Bank Deposit Reciprocals

As a result, PLGIT expanded their PLGIT/PRIME and PLGIT/TERM shares to incorporate Act 10-eligible investments and take full advantage of Act 10's additions to local governments' individual codes.

PLGIT also created new products to meet the needs and changing practices of local government managers:

PLGIT/PRIME is a variable rate investment portfolio rated AAAm\* by S&P Global Ratings. This option requires no minimum balance and no minimum initial investment. This option limits redemptions or exchanges to two per calendar month. PLGIT/PRIME was formed with permitted investments that can allow investors to take full advantage of Act 10 investments.

PLGIT/Reserve-Class Shares are an option created in 2020 through the combination of the PLGIT/PLUS-Class, PLGIT/I-Class, and PLGIT/ARM investment options.\*\* They offer an option with liquidity but limited

services enabling investors who have a limited investment policy with a way to potentially increase their interest earnings over PLGIT-Class. PLGIT/Reserve-Class shares carry no waiting period prior to redemption, but redemptions are limited to two per month. The increased yield potential versus PLGIT-Class makes PLGIT/Reserve-Class Shares an attractive option for funds like short-term reserves. Again, investors may want to weigh this option against PLGIT/PRIME, which offers the potential for a higher yield.

**\*\*PLGIT/ARM** now still exists as a program for investing any proceeds from a tax-exempt bond issue among PLGIT's current lineup, and includes arbitrage rebate tracking and reporting with the program.

## A Solid Foundation

These changes would not have been possible without PLGIT's commitment to the following strict rules of safety and service – the same rules that PLGIT established when it was created:

**Safety** - At PLGIT, our primary objective has always been to preserve the safety and liquidity of our Investors' funds, and one way in which we focus on safety is by using multiple layers of oversight to maintain the highest quality products and practices.

**Use professional advice** - PLGIT's investment adviser and administrator PFM Asset Management LLC (PFMAM), specializes in investments for local governmental entities around the country including local government investment pools like PLGIT.

## Invest in the safest permitted products

- PLGIT invests solely in investments permitted by the codes governing local governments and schools in Pennsylvania. These investments include products like U.S. Treasury Bills/Notes, short-term debt of highly rated federal agencies, appropriately collateralized certificates of deposit and time deposits in banks, the newly permitted Act 10 products, and others.

**Seek a stable net asset value** - As a local government investment pool, PLGIT has always sought to maintain a stable net asset value of \$1.00 per

share in its portfolios for each dollar invested by shareholders. As shares are purchased and redeemed by Investors, dividends are reinvested, and the PLGIT trading staff monitors the market and buys and sells permitted investments from national broker-dealers and government agencies to keep PLGIT's assets in line with the shareholders' investments.

**Service** - For an organization to be responsive, it must have a good understanding of who and what it represents. PLGIT continues to maintain a high level of outreach into the Commonwealth, conducting dozens of educational programs each year, attending more than 30 statewide conferences and more than 70 county functions on an annual basis.

**Guided by its Investors** - PLGIT is owned and overseen by its Investors just as it was when it was founded. Unlike other institutions, every local government or school that invests in a PLGIT-pooled fund participates in the Trust. But it goes much further than that: PLGIT Investors from the PMAA, the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB), the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS), the Pennsylvania Municipal League (The League), the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Commissioners (PSATC), the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), and others sit on the board, set the investment objectives and make decisions about new products and services.

To learn more about how PLGIT's expanded products and services can benefit your municipality, contact your PLGIT representative.

*Paul Robinson works with public entity investors in the eastern part of Pennsylvania. He can be reached at [robinsonp@pfmam.com](mailto:robinsonp@pfmam.com).*

## Sources:

*\*S&P Global fund ratings are based on analysis of credit quality, market price exposure and management. According to Standard & Poor's rating criteria, the AAAM rating signifies excellent safety of invested principal and a superior capacity to maintain a \$1.00 per share net asset value. However, it should be understood that the rating is not a "market" rating nor a recommendation to buy, hold or sell the securities. For a full description on rating methodology, visit [S&P Global's website](http://S&P Global's website).*

## Important Disclosure Information

*This information is for institutional investor use only, not for further distribution to retail investors, and does not represent an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy or sell any fund or other security. Investors should consider the investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses before investing in any of the Trust's portfolios. This and other information about the Trust's portfolios is available in the current Information Statement, which should be read carefully before investing. A copy of the Information Statement may be obtained by calling 1-800-572-1472 or is available on the Trust's website at [www.plgit.com](http://www.plgit.com). While the PLGIT and PLGIT/PRIME portfolios seek to maintain a stable net asset value of \$1.00 per share and the PLGIT/TERM portfolio seeks to achieve a net asset value of \$1.00 per share at its stated maturity, it is possible to lose money investing in the Trust. An investment in the Trust is not insured or guaranteed by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other government agency. Shares of the Trust's portfolio are distributed by U.S. Bancorp Investments, Inc., member FINRA ([www.finra.org](http://www.finra.org)) and SIPC ([www.sipc.org](http://www.sipc.org)). PFM Asset Management is a division of U.S. Bancorp Asset Management, Inc., which serves as administrator and investment adviser to the Trust. U.S. Bancorp Asset Management, Inc. is a direct subsidiary of U.S. Bank N.A. and an indirect subsidiary of U.S. Bancorp. U.S. Bancorp Investments, Inc. is a subsidiary of U.S. Bancorp and affiliate of U.S. Bank N.A.*



**pfm asset management**



**Municipal Reporter** ♦ 37



Pennsylvania Municipal  
**League**

## Business Programs



**PELRAS**  
Public Employer Labor Relations  
Advisory Service

**PELRAS** provides specialized training through the Annual Training Conference, legal counsel, and a bi-monthly newsletter addressing all areas of personnel management and labor relations.



**MUA**  
Municipal Utility Alliance  
Electricity Procurement Program

The **MUA** was created in 1997 to sponsor utility related initiatives that provide budgetary and administrative savings to participating municipalities. The MUA is a separate entity within PML, and the PML Board of Directors also acts as the Board for the MUA. The MUA Electricity Procurement Program utilizes cooperative purchasing to lower the impact of any increases in the cost of electricity. Through an RFP process, the MUA selected Constellation Energy as the supplier for electricity services.



**GrantFinder powered by EfficientGov** is a real-time, online searchable database of more than 7,400 eligible grants for which local governments may apply. This searchable database tracks federal, state, foundation and corporate grants available to municipalities and local non-profits.



**L3P**  
Local Public  
Procurement Program

**Local Public Procurement Program:** This service simplifies the purchasing process via assistance with commonwealth contracts, a quarterly contracts checklist, and information on a variety of statewide cooperative purchasing opportunities.



**Pennsylvania Local Government Investment Trust:** This member-owned and operated investment trust, established exclusively for local governments, offers eight distinct investment options, cash management services, and a procurement card rebate program. A representative from PML serves on the PLGIT Board of Trustees.



**U-COMP**  
Unemployment Compensation Trust

**U-COMP** was founded in 1985 as a trust to provide group unemployment compensation coverage for public entities in Pennsylvania. Program membership is open to all classes of municipalities and authorities. The program was developed to assist public entities in lowering their unemployment and to provide affordable rates for Members. Members have the opportunity to receive annual dividends. U-COMP has a third-party administrator, Experian Employer Services, who provides unemployment education, representation at hearings, and assistance with the completion of forms from Labor and Industry.



**PennPRIME**  
INSURANCE TRUSTS | A Service Program of The League

**PennPRIME Insurance Trust** was founded by municipal managers for Pennsylvania municipal entities. Whether your entity seeks property insurance, liability coverage, workers' compensation coverage or a full slate of risk management services, PennPRIME offers custom-tailored solutions designed specifically for you. We give our members the best benefits, tools, resources, training and services they need to make their municipal entity succeed. We are specialists in your corner.



**Amazon Business:** The Amazon Business Associated Accounts Program is now available to all League members, offering a robust platform to consolidate and optimize your purchasing processes while maintaining control over individual buying needs. By joining this program, you will gain access to a suite of benefits designed to simplify your procurement tasks and reduce costs significantly. We encourage all members to take advantage of this valuable program designed to support your operational needs and financial strategies.

**PML.org**





# 2024 SUSTAINABLE PA CONFERENCE

Join us for the 2024 Sustainable PA Conference as we explore the theme 'Assessing and Addressing Resiliency.' Together we will discover solutions, connect with leaders, and drive strategies for a sustainable future, as well as shape resilience in Pennsylvania and beyond—don't miss out!

 **\$325**

 **NOVEMBER 20-22, 2024**

 **PENN STATER**  
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**STATE COLLEGE, PA 16803**

## What to Expect:

- ✓ Expert speakers from diverse sectors such as government agencies, higher education, industry leaders and municipal peers
- ✓ Interactive workshops and sessions focused on resiliency
- ✓ Networking opportunities with professionals and advocates in the municipal sector
- ✓ Exhibits featuring sustainable products and services
- ✓ AM and PM breaks, lunch, and two receptions included
- ✓ Tours of sustainable facilities in State College and Ferguson Township

**We hope to see you there!**

Contact Bailey Rocco, Sustainability Coordinator at [brocco@pml.org](mailto:brocco@pml.org)



2024

## November Classes



### ACC 105:

Status of Accessibility Codes for PA

November 6- Virtual

12pm-1pm

\$20

1 CEU



### Basics of Residential Construction Drawings

November 19 - Virtual

9am-Noon

\$60

3 CEU's



### BCO Lunch & Learn

November 8 - Virtual & In Person

11am-Noon

\$20

1 CEU



### Residential Mechanical 2021 Update

November 19, 2024

8:30am-Noon

\$60

3 CEU's



### Residential Mechanical Academy

November 12-14 - Virtual

\$360

18 CEU's



### Residential

Rentals Bed & Breakfast

November 20 - Virtual

8:30am-Noon

\$80

4 CEU's



### Floodplain Lunch & Learn

November 18 - Virtual

11am-12pm

FREE

1 CEU



### BCO Exam

November 26 - Virtual

10am-Noon

\$95



[www.PAConstructionCodesAcademy.org](http://www.PAConstructionCodesAcademy.org)



If you or anyone in your municipality/organization are having trouble receiving the *Municipal Reporter*, League Link, Legislative Locator or any other communications from The League, there is an easy fix.

Simply **whitelist the Mailerlite domain- mlsend.com** and you will be able to receive communications from us as part of your member benefits. Please share this information.

# — Community — Heart & Soul®



**Bringing residents together to  
identify what matters most.**



**Learn more about  
our \$10K grants.**



Image: Rustbelt Mayberry Photography

**"With Community Heart & Soul we're able to communicate with  
people and ask them how they want to get involved. They  
ultimately feel valued and that their opinion matters  
on how we run the city."**

**—Michele Bannon, Mayor, Carbondale, Pennsylvania**

**Visit our website at [www.communityheartandsoul.org](http://www.communityheartandsoul.org)  
or call us at 802.495.0864 to learn more.**



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With all the tasks that challenge you on a daily basis, we understand that risk management is only one of the many responsibilities on your “to do” list.

That’s why **PennPRIME** is here to help you manage the risk, even when you can’t.

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