

IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

Please consult the League [Web Calendar](#)

- Feb 6- [21st Annual Mayors Legislative Day
Statehouse, Trenton](#)
- Feb 12 - [Ethics and Sexual Harassment-PNC,
Holmdel](#)
- Feb 23- [Executive Leadership Training for Mayors
and Council Presidents-Conference Center
at Mercer](#)
- Mar 6- [Budget and Audit Updates- Conference
Center at Mercer](#)
- Mar 13- [Pensions and Benefits Update-PNC,
Holmdel](#)
- Mar 15- [Women in Government-Princeton Marriott,
Plainsboro](#)

- ✓ Mayors and Council Presidents Training
- ✓ 2013 Municipal Directory
- ✓ Women In Government Day
- ✓ Weather Hotline
- ✓ Elected Officials Hall of Fame
- ✓ 2013 Scholarship Competition
- ✓ Energy Receipts Bills
- ✓ User Friendly Budget

FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Janice S. Mironov, President

Preserve Our Open Space and Farmland

A major 2013 priority and legislative goal this year for the League, for all of our mayors and municipalities, is incorporated in League Resolution No. 2012-04, "Supporting Sustainable State Funding for Preservation and Stewardship of Open Space, Parks, Farmland and Historic Sites in New Jersey." The Resolution seeks support for the establishment of a long-term dedicated source of state funding beyond the 2009 Bond issue to preserve open space and farmland in our State.

New Jersey has a long, successful and laudable history of preserving open space, parks and farmland. The New Jersey Green Acres program has helped to preserve over 650,000 acres of land and supported more than 1,100 park development projects over the past 50 years, and the State Agricultural Development Committee has preserved 200,000 acres of farmland over the past 30 years. Municipalities have been key partners and direct beneficiaries of these valuable state preservation programs.

Substantial unmet needs and significant worthwhile projects remain for land and water protection, farmland preservation and park development for the health and welfare of our communities and residents. Good land and environmental policy have long term beneficial results.

Continued Under "Presidents Message"

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PRESIDENT MESSAGE CONTINUED

There are more than 175 organizations around the state in the New Jersey *Keep It Green Campaign* to advocate for the renewal of state funding for the preservation and stewardship of New Jersey's natural recreational and historic treasures for generations to come. Underscoring the broad citizen support for this goal, it is noted that in the past 30 years no state ballot measure to fund open space preservation has been defeated. The NJ Senate Environmental Committee is beginning hearings this month on proposals to achieve this goal.

I will be sending out a Letter and Resolution shortly for your consideration and hopeful adoption by your municipal governing body urging our state officials to ensure action this year to put in place a sustainable state source of funding to build on and expand our critical Garden State preservation efforts.

MAYORS' AND COUNCIL PRESIDENTS' TRAINING OFFERED ONCE AGAIN!

-Contact Danielle Holland- Httut ext.118 or dholland@njslom.com

Due to overwhelming demand, the League will once again hold its special training program especially for Mayors and Council Presidents on February 23, 2013 at the Conference Center at Mercer! The Seminar features presentations from the Department of Community Affairs, a panel discussion with MCANJ and NJMMA, an Ethics presentation, and a panel discussion featuring five Mayors with varying levels of experience. For more information on this program visit the program link: <http://www.njslom.org/seminar-documents/2013-Feb-23-Leadership-Training.html>

2013 MUNICIPAL DIRECTORY

-Contact Dee Kotch ext.115or dkotch@njslom.com

The annual Municipal Directory will be mailed to all mayors the first week of March. There is no cost for this first copy. Additional print copies are \$25 each and PDF copies are \$49. Use it to keep in touch with your colleagues around the state.

SAVE THE DATE!!-

WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT "WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT DAY"

- MARCH 15, 2013

-Contact Lori Buckelew ext 112 or lbuckelew@njslom.com

The Women in Municipal Government Committee will be holding their 5th annual "Women in Government Day" on Friday, March 15, 2013 at the Princeton Marriott. For more Information on this program please click the following link <http://www.njslom.org/WIMG-Day-031513.html>

WEATHER HOTLINE FOR SEMINAR CANCELLATIONS

The League will announce emergency seminar cancellations via recorded announcement on our Weather Hotline: **609-695-3481 ext. 200** and post announcements on our website www.njslom.org after 6:00am on the morning of the meeting.

2013 SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

-Contact Michael Darcy ext.116 or mdarcy@njslom.com

In January, the League mailed information to all mayors concerning the Annual Louis Bay II Future Municipal Leaders Scholarship Competition. League Past President Chuck Chiarello of Buena Vista Township chairs the Scholarship Competition and Deputy Mayor Dan Coranoto of Hampton Township also serves as a judge. This popular competition is open to all high school juniors and seniors throughout the state. The top three winners each receive \$1,000 scholarships from the League.

Mayors play an integral role in the success of this program because your office publicizes its availability, judges the local entries, and distributes the checks and certificates supplied by the League. You should publicize the scholarship to your local schools and establish your judging committee. Your local winning entry must be submitted to the League office by April 2, so we can announce the three statewide winners by May 3.

ELECTED OFFICIALS INDUCTED IN LEAGUE HALL OF FAME

-Contact Michael Darcy ext 116 [or mdarcy@njslom.com](mailto:mdarcy@njslom.com)

The League will induct new members into the Elected Officials Hall of Fame during the 21st Annual Mayors Legislative Day February 6, 2013 at the State House Annex in Trenton. This honor is reserved for those governing body members, active and retired, who have served 20 years in elected municipal office. There are currently 429 inductees in the Elected Officials Hall of Fame. Congratulations to our most recent members! See the list below and the 2013 Hall of Fame page for more information at www.njslom.org.

This year's inductees are as follows:

Mayor Peter C. Elco, Absecon City

Mayor Paul H. Tomasko, Alpine Borough

Councilman George M. Warr, Barnegat Light Borough

Alderman Paul Nevadomski, Boonton Town

Mayor John Sanford, Branchburg Township

Committeeman Cosmo Laurella, Deerfield Township

Alderman James A. Visioli, Dover Town

Mayor J. Christian Bollwage, Elizabeth City

Councilperson Sharon Shutzer, Freehold Borough

Councilwoman Leslie G. Hamilton, Hardyston Township

Deputy Mayor George H. Beatty, Hope Township

Councilman Douglas E. Witte, Sr., Lake Como Borough

Councilman Emeritus Elmo Mengucci, Lopatcong Township

Mayor Michael Fressola, Manchester Township

Mayor Joseph E. Wolk, Mount Ephraim Borough

Councilwoman Barbara Shafer, Neptune City

Mayor Harry L. Wynat, Jr., Phillipsburg Town

Councilman at Large Salvatore Mione, Rahway City

Councilwoman at Large Nancy Saliga, Rahway City

Mayor Fred A. Henry, South Amboy City

Committeeman C. Edman Budd, Southampton Township

Committeeman Charles M. Gross, Stillwater Township

Mayor Michael A. Kovacs, Washington Township (Warren)

Mayor Shing-Fu Hsueh, West Windsor Township

ACTION NEEDED TO ADVANCE RESTORATION OF ENERGY RECEIPTS BILLS

--League President, Mayor Janice S. Mironov of East Windsor Township

If you have not yet done so, please contact your State legislators and urge them to support Assembly Bill A-2753/Senate Bill S-1923. These are the bills that would require certain energy tax receipts to be paid directly to municipalities. This bill would assure local property taxpayers compensation for hosting transmission facilities and lines that allow gas and electric energy corporations to serve customers and conduct business in our Garden State. The State has not yet restored the \$331 million in municipal property tax relief funding, which was diverted between 2008 and 2010. Passage of this initiative would do so, bringing each municipality back to the 2007 Energy Tax Receipts/CMPTRA funding level and adjusting that amount to account for inflation.

In our December 18 letter (<http://www.njslom.org/letters/2012-1218-energy-taxes.html>), we included a link to a Sample Resolution supporting these bills. We urge you to ask your governing body to enact the resolution and go on record in support of A-2753/S-1921. The Legislature and the Administration will have to focus on this issue, if we demonstrate widespread support for these bills.

Please act now. Please urge your State Senator and your two Assembly Members to co-sponsor A-2752/S-1921.

On January 14, the Times of Trenton published my guest opinion column on this legislation. You can access that on the internet at http://www.nj.com/times-opinion/index.ssf/2013/01/opinion_energy_taxes_belong_to.html. Please feel free to share this op-ed with your taxpayers to better explain what is at stake in pushing for the restoration of our municipal energy tax receipts.

CREATING A MEANINGFUL BUDGET FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND THE PUBLIC

*-Contact Jason R. Martucci, Division of Local Government Services,
Jason.Martucci@dca.state.nj.us*

Mayors throughout New Jersey face the challenge of helping constituents understand their efforts to contain costs and control property taxes. The Division of Local Government Services recognizes that the current municipal budget format is not readily understandable for the average citizen, nor does it serve as an effective strategic planning document for elected officials.

As part of a larger transition to electronic budget reporting, the Division is committed to the 2013 implementation of N.J.S.A. 40A:5:48, the “user-friendly budget” law. This statute requires the promulgation of a user-friendly budget form for municipalities¹ that serves as a plain language summary of the adopted budget, yet also provides more detailed statistical information “for the public’s understanding of the local unit’s fiscal matters and condition²”. The Local Finance Board is proposing rules to implement the user-friendly budget for municipalities, rules incorporating pre-proposal input from local government stakeholders.

The municipality will electronically submit required data from the current and prior budget years to the Division on an Excel spreadsheet platform. User-friendly budget information will be grouped into categories such as fiscal health indicators, property tax data, collective bargaining agreements, health benefits, revenue, appropriations and staffing. Much of the information will be similar to that included in the standard municipal budget but in a different format. Certain areas, for example debt, property taxes, personnel and health benefits, will require more detailed disclosure. In turn, the Division will convert the submitted data into a concise visual format through means such as charts and graphs. The user-friendly budget itself will be data formatted and displayed by the Division on its website.

We offer below select examples of how the user-friendly budget offers elected officials and the general public a more vivid fiscal picture.

Debt, surplus and property tax assessments/collections are grouped together as “fiscal health indicators”, providing a snapshot of a municipality’s fiscal health and overall financial sustainability. The amount of debt that a municipality guarantees on behalf of other entities various projects is often overlooked but critical to understanding a municipality’s total debt picture; a factor rating agencies increasingly emphasize when formulating municipal bond ratings. For those municipalities with a bond rating, they offer taxpayers a readily apparent indicator of their municipality’s creditworthiness.

Residential taxpayers are often unclear about the impact each type of tax levy has on their pocketbook. The user-friendly budget breaks down property taxes on the municipal, county, school and fire district levels by tax rate, tax levy and what the average residential taxpayer pays toward each. The

¹ Municipalities, counties, local authorities and fire districts are subject to the user-friendly budget statute. The Local Finance Board is beginning the implementation process with respect to municipalities.

² N.J.S.A. 40A:5-48(b)

public can view what portion of a local purposes tax levy increase is due to exceptions to the two percent levy cap. With a greater number of taxpayers wanting to know more about tax abatements or exemptions awarded by their municipality for redevelopment, the user-friendly budget provides the number of projects receiving abatements or exemptions; the revenue earned from PILOT agreements; the otherwise taxable value of those projects.

The user-friendly budget will demonstrate with greater detail and clarity the impact of employee health benefits. A substantial component of most municipal budgets, current and prior year medical and prescription drug coverage costs are given a dedicated input sheet. Annual health benefit costs for employees, elected officials and retirees are broken down by coverage tier (single, parent & child, employee & spouse/partner and family). To show how the recent public employee health benefit reforms have decreased the cost of municipal employee benefits, the recipients' premium contribution is deducted from the employer healthcare cost.

The Division invites mayors to review and comment on the proposed user-friendly budget rules published in the December 17, 2012 New Jersey Register. Through the vehicle of a user-friendly budget, mayors will possess a valuable tool with which to craft public policy and demonstrate to constituents the fiscal challenges facing their communities. Local elected officials will be able to readily reference information, compare their municipality to others and spot opportunities to lower costs and share services with other local units. Moreover, the public will have a clearer view of what municipalities are doing to save taxpayer dollars, and how circumstances not entirely controlled by the municipality impact local property taxes.