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July 31, 2020

- I. State
- II. Federal
- III. 2020 Annual League Conference

Municipal Clerks: Please forward to your Mayor, Governing Body and Department Heads.

To assist in providing guidance and information we have created a [COVID-19 resource page](#). We will continue to update the page as we get pertinent information and include announcements in our Daily Updates.

I. State

a. COVID-19 Update

Today Governor Murphy announced that there were 699 new positive cases and an additional 10 confirmed deaths resulting from COVID-19. To date, there have been 181,660 confirmed cases, and 13,923 confirmed deaths. There are also 1,875 probable deaths associated with the virus.

The rate of transmission (RT) increased to 1.35. The Administration anticipates that this number will rise in the coming days. The Administration continues its objective to keep that number below 1.0.

The Governor issued no new Executive Orders this week.

Earlier this week, the Administration issued an [updated travel advisory](#) asking persons traveling from 36 States or territories to self-quarantine for 14 days.

According to the US Department of Labor, over 1.4 million people filed initial

unemployment claims last week. The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development reported an additional 28,063 initial unemployment claims for the week ending July 25.

The Governor also announced that the U.S. Census Bureau is ending their door-to-door canvassing a month earlier. As of today, New Jersey's Census response is at 64.7%. We strongly encourage you to [urge your citizens to respond to the Census](#).

See the League's [COVID-19 page](#) for all our resources and communications.

Contact: Michael F. Cerra, Executive Director, mcerra@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x120.

b. Coronavirus Relief Bond (CRB) Bill on Governor's Desk

Yesterday the Senate passed, by a vote of 26-14, [S-2475/A-3971](#), which authorizes the issuance of "coronavirus relief bonds" (CRB) by municipalities and counties. The legislation permits municipalities to issue bonds for the loss of revenue and/or unanticipated expenses directly attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic with appropriate safeguards and Local Finance Board oversight.

A one size fits all solution is not the best approach toward addressing revenue shortfalls and increased expenses municipalities are facing as result of COVID-19. Current options available to municipalities may work for some municipalities but for most they will create long term financial problems. Local governments need the flexibility that S-2475/A-3971 provides to limit the impact on property taxpayers.

Please contact the Governor's office expressing support of S-2475/A-3971.

Contact: Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, lbuckelew@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x112.

c. Senate and Assembly Each Approve Different Measures to Expand Events on Preserved Farmland

Yesterday, the Senate voted on and approved a bill, opposed by the League that seeks to greatly expand the number and type of events that can be held on preserved farmland. [S-2714](#) allows the owners of preserved farmland to host, by right, a number of special occasion events such as music, food, and other festivals, car shows, and weddings, all without municipal review, oversight or even prior notification.

We believe that this legislation circumvents the objectives of the State's successful farmland preservation efforts, in which public dollars have been committed to permanently preserve prime agricultural lands throughout the Garden State. At the time such easements were bought and paid for, it was not allowed nor anticipated that these preserved farmlands would be used for the kind of nonagricultural activities this bill seeks to permit.

On the same day in the Assembly, a similar measure, [A-2773](#), was voted on and approved. A-2773 is similar to S-2714 but instead would create a three-year pilot program in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem counties, allowing preserved farmlands to host special occasion events. While A-2773 allows these events it also provides further protections for residential properties adjacent to the

preserved farmlands, not found in the Senate bill.

While S-2714 and A-2773 have passed in the Senate and Assembly, respectively, they are not companion bills. As such, the other house will have to take up and approve a bill similar to those passed yesterday before the measure can be sent to the governor for action. As far as we can tell, neither bill currently has a companion in the other house.

We will be sure to keep you updated on this legislation as it advances.

Contact: Frank Marshall, Esq., Associate General Counsel, fmarshall@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x137.

d. Governor Announces Additional CARES Act Funding Available to Small Businesses

On Tuesday, Governor Murphy [announced](#) that an additional \$15 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding has been made available to New Jersey small businesses struggling with the pandemic. The funding is in addition to the \$100 million the NJ Economic Development Authority is currently administering through other programs to COVID-19-impacted businesses. The \$15 million will go towards a third round of grants which offers small businesses up to \$10,000 to assist them through the pandemic.

Contact: Frank Marshall, Esq., Associate General Counsel, fmarshall@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x137.

e. BPU Updates NJ Solar Transition FAQ Page

The Board of Public Utilities (BPU) this week released an update to the [New Jersey Solar Transition Frequently Asked Questions page](#). This page provides public answers on an ongoing basis to questions that the BPU staff received about New Jersey's Solar Transition.

As a reminder, the Clean Energy Act of 2018 mandated the closure of the Solar Renewable Energy Certificate (SREC) program upon the attainment of certain power generation milestones. These milestones were met in April 2020. Since then the BPU has been working with stakeholders on a transition program. SRECs have been used by many municipalities, school districts, and other government entities to help facilitate the installation of solar panels on their buildings on property.

Contact: Frank Marshall, Esq., Associate General Counsel, fmarshall@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x137.

II. Federal

a. Washington Gridlocks on COVID Response

As July ends with 14 million Americans unemployed, Congress and the White House have failed to reach agreement on legislation that would extend enhanced benefits, ending

today, for those who, because of COVID-19, find themselves out of work.

With a 9.5 percent Second Quarter GDP loss putting the economy on track to shrink by 32.9 percent in twelve-months' time, Congress and the White House have failed to reach agreement on legislation that would provide enhanced support to small businesses and consumers.

And with fears of how the virus and the resulting economic decline will impact August property tax collection rates, coupled with already increased expenditures and declining revenues, Congress and the White House have failed to reach agreement on legislation that would provide a lifeline to municipalities in New Jersey, and across the Nation.

As a reminder, in the middle of May, the House of Representatives passed the \$3 trillion HEROES Act. That bill includes a \$375 billion 'Coronavirus Local Fiscal Relief Fund.' Two-thirds of the funding would be appropriated within 30 days of the bill's enactment. The final third would need to be delivered during the Federal government's next Fiscal Year, between April 15 and May 3, 2021. The Tax Foundation – an independent national research organization – estimates that, over two years, New Jersey municipalities and counties could receive about \$8.6 billion.

Since then, more than two million Americans have been infected by the virus. Close to 60,000 have died. And, as of the end of June, 34,800 New Jersey public employees have joined the ranks of the unemployed.

On Monday, U.S. Senate Majority Leadership introduced the HEALS Act - an eight bill package that would spend about \$1 trillion in total. The package, which would provide no direct support to municipalities, looks to relieve the pressure on local budgets in two ways.

First, it includes \$105 billion in education aid, \$70 billion of which would be dedicated to K-12 schools. Two-thirds of that \$70 billion would be directed to schools meeting 'minimum opening requirements' for in-person instruction.

Second, the bill would make changes to the \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), which was established in the \$2.2 trillion March CARES Act, allowing indirect local recipients of CRF resources to use their 'sub-allocations' to cover revenue losses. States and other direct CRF recipients would be able to use the funds to close revenue gaps only if, and after, they reallocate at least 25 percent of their total awards to other local governments, within their jurisdictions.

One of the HEALS Act bills would also provide strong protections for local governments, businesses, hospitals, schools, and universities from coronavirus related liability claims. In addition to disagreements over the total level of deficit spending needed to support the economy, and the levels to be dedicated to individual programs, major sticking points include the need for any level of help for states and municipalities, and the liability lawsuit protection issue.

Negotiations continue as do the public health and economic impacts of the virus. We will do our best to keep you posted. In the meantime, it would be helpful for you to contact Senators Menendez and Booker and your Representative in the House, as pressures will mount to reach a compromise.

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x121.

b. Census Bureau Expands NJ Door-to-Door Contacts

Yesterday, census takers from the Trenton Field Office began personal contacts with non-responding households in their areas. On August 6, they will be joined by representatives from the Newark, Parsippany, and South Plainfield Offices. And soon, census takers from the Egg Harbor, Jersey City, and Toms River Offices will begin to cover the rest of our State.

A complete count is critical in every municipality, and for every citizen you serve. Please encourage your constituents to cooperate in this effort, which, like much of what governments do, has been complicated this year, by the Coronavirus. But what is complicated, need not be compromised.

Please let your citizens know, that if they haven't yet responded by mail or on-line, they can expect a knock on the door or a ring on the bell. They can learn how the face-to-face census process will work, and, importantly, how to recognize a legitimate census bureau employee, as well as how to avoid scammers at the [United States Census 2020 webpage](#).

The League is constantly updating our own [2020 Census Information page](#).

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x121.

c. Portal Bridge Replacement Project Progress

On Monday, NJ Transit's Board of Directors approved a project development agreement with Amtrak, moving the Portal Bridge replacement project one step closer to a start. The project, which is expected to cost \$1.8 billion, is now scheduled to begin in 2021 either in the late Spring or early Summer.

As previously reported, in May, the Federal Railroad Administration awarded NJ Transit and Amtrak \$91.5 million for the project. And in June, the Federal Transit Administration qualified the project for an additional \$766.5 million. In addition, the State of New Jersey has committed to spend \$600 million for the local share, which will be funded through the Transportation Trust Fund.

Contact: Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, jmoran@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x121.

III. 2020 Annual League Conference

a. Delegate Registration

[Delegate registration](#) will open on August 1. We encourage everyone to preregister online and have their conference credentials mailed to them in advance. This avoids delays and lines onsite in Atlantic City.

b. League Code of Conduct

The League intends to maintain a welcoming professional atmosphere in all aspects of the Annual League Conference. To that end, conduct that violates the [League Code of](#)

[Conduct](#) is not tolerated by the League, anyone who witnesses it, or is subjected to it. Everyone who participates in the Annual League Conference is required to adhere to this code.

c. Conference Center Preparations

We are busy making arrangements for this live event including education and exhibits with the full expectation that by November the State will permit important gatherings of government officials like the Annual League Conference. The League is taking measures along with our partners at the Atlantic City Convention Center and all related service providers to follow CDC and NJDOH guidelines to create a safe and healthy conference. A healthy conference environment is our top priority for 2020 and with that, we are dedicated to providing an educational, informative, productive, and collaborative conference. Sanitization protocols that comply with CDC guidance are ready for public spaces, meeting areas, food service, and transportation. Venue layout will take into account social distancing, and preregistration will eliminate waiting lines.

d. Unauthorized Hotel Reservation Services

Every year there are unauthorized firms soliciting housing and hotel reservations from attendees at the Annual League Conference. We assure you that the only firm authorized to handle our conference housing reservations is AC Central Reservations. This information is on the top of the official conference housing form sent to all municipal clerks and posted on [our website](#).

Using unauthorized reservation services creates real problems for you and the conference as a whole. You cannot be assured your credit card information is secure and your room reservation may not actually be made. Using unauthorized services means your room will not be part of the official conference housing block so you won't get emergency housing information (which happened in both 2011 and 2012), nor will there be adequate shuttle bus services to your hotel.

As always, the League is available to answer your questions on any aspect of the annual conference and we strive to make your participation both enjoyable and highly productive.

Contact: Michael F. Cerra, Executive Director, mcerra@njlm.org, 609-695-3481 x120.



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