



NJLM President Mayor Paul  
Tomasko, Alpine

## President's Note:

Recently, the League held its first Legislative Committee Meeting for the year. Four committees—General Legislation; Intra Municipal Affairs; Tax and Finance; and Land Use, Environment & Community Development—review state legislation as it pertains to municipalities. Discussing the details and determining the most effective stances to protect local governments and the constituents they serve helps the League serve its members in the State House.

This is important work that is only possible with the cooperation of the 100-plus committee members, which include elected officials, professionals, and representation from affiliate and partner organizations. While not every mayor in New Jersey serves on the legislative committee, we are all able to make our voices heard in Trenton. Reach out to the League, subscribe to its newsletters, magazine, and newsflashes. Having an understanding of the hot topics and sharing your reactions can help ensure that municipal voices are heard.

For specific details, please [review the 2025 Legislative Guide](#) and begin or continue your advocacy work on the state level.

## Action List: February

1. [Complete OPRA Technology Survey](#). The recently enacted law to reform the Open Public Records Act includes a \$4 million state appropriation to provide grants to local governments. To advocate for the use of the grant funding, we need your help. Please take a few minutes to complete, or forward to the appropriate department, the League's OPRA Technology Assessment survey.
2. [Apply for All-America City Award](#). The National Civic League is accepting applications for their 2025 All-America City Award! This year's theme is "Strengthening Environmental Sustainability through Inclusive Community Engagement". Final applications are due by February 27, 2025.
3. [Nominate a Black heritage site for inclusion on the Black Heritage Trail](#). The New Jersey Department of State's New Jersey Historical Commission is seeking nominations for Black Heritage Trail sites. Applicants must first submit a letter of intent (LOI), a preliminary one-page letter that outlines your intention to apply for the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail program for the fiscal year 2025 cycle, to [NJBlackHeritageTrail@sos.nj.gov](mailto:NJBlackHeritageTrail@sos.nj.gov) by March 14, 2025. It should contain the proposed

site name, a brief description of the nomination, and the nomination's contact information (Name, organization address, email, and contact phone number). Additionally, it should include the proposed marker location address. Submissions must be submitted online.

4. LAST WEEK! [Enter the Show Off Your City Photo Contest](#). Municipalities are invited to send us photos of their tourist attractions, downtown areas, economic development initiatives, parks, city halls, community groups, and new projects. The winning photo will be featured on the cover of the April issue of *NJ Municipalities*, posted on the [League's Facebook page](#), website, and other League materials.
5. [Work on your Local Government Week plans](#). We invite you to join in with municipalities across the Garden State from April 7-13, for NJ Local Government Week. Through NJ Local Government Week, the League hopes to bring awareness to the role local government plays in achieving the best life for communities. Invite your schools, civic groups, businesses, and media to NJ Local Government Week activities for citizens of all ages. [Share your activities](#) with the League and use the hashtag #NJLocalGovt to share event reminders, updates, and interesting facts via Twitter and Facebook.
6. [Download the free special digital edition of NJ Municipalities Magazine](#) focusing on Affordable Housing, now available.

## Grants

The 2025 AARP Community Challenge grant is offering three different grant categories – Flagship Grants (maximum grant award of \$25,000), Capacity-Building Microgrants (maximum grant award of \$2,500), and Demonstration Grants (maximum grant award of \$25,000) open to government entities, IRS designated 501(c)(3),(4), and (6).

**Flagship Grants** are for projects that benefit residents, especially those over 50 years old, that create vibrant public places that improve open space, parks, and access to other amenities; transportation and mobility options that increase connectivity, walkability, bikeability, and access to public and private transit; housing options that increases the availability of accessible and affordable choices; increasing digital connections and enhancing digital literacy skills or residents; and supporting community resilience through investments that improve disaster management, preparedness, and mitigate.

**Capacity-Building Microgrants** will combine \$2,500 grants with additional resources, such as webinars, cohort learning opportunities, and AARP publications. The grant is for projects that benefit residents, especially those over 50 years old, that implement training programs and resources with support from [SBP](#) and using the [AARP Disaster Resilience Tool Kit](#); implementation of walk audit assessments to enhance safety and walkability in communities with support from [America Walks](#) and using the [AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit](#); implementation of bike audits to enhance safety and bikeability in communities with support from [League of American Bicyclist](#) and using the [AARP Bike Audit Tool Kit](#); and implementing education, simple home modifications and accessible safety solutions to

create and maintain lifelong homes with support from [RL Mace Universal Design Institute](#) and using the [AARP HomeFit Guide](#).

**Demonstration Grants** are for projects that benefit residents, especially those over 50 years old, that encourage replication of promising local efforts. The categories are enhancing pedestrian safety with safer streets and sidewalks; expanding high speed internet (broadband) access and adoption; reconnecting communities divide by infrastructure as highlighted in [AARP's Before the Highway](#); and implementing housing design competitions that enable greater choice in housing using the [AARP Housing Design Competition Tool Kit](#).

## INFORMATION

It is strongly recommended that you review the [examples of previously funded AARP Community Challenge projects](#) by category.

For more information, please see AARP's [interactive frequently asked questions](#) or theirits [Frequently Asked Questions document](#).

## DUE DATE

Applications must be submitted through the [application portable](#) with all pertinent information by March 5, 2025,



League staff and Mayors from around the state prepare for Gov. Phil Murphy's State of the State Address.

## NJLM: State of the State Gathering

NJLM President Mayor Paul Tomasko of Alpine and 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President Deputy Mayor Guy Piserchia of Long Hill were joined by Past Presidents Mayor Albert Kelly of Bridgeton, Mayor William Pikolycky of Woodbine, Mayor Tim McDonough of Hope, and Mayor Janice Kovach of Clinton Town prior to the Governor's final State of the State address held in January.

## Educational Opportunities

### Budgeting for Elected Officials.

February 22, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Conference Center at Mercer. Creating and approving a feasible budget is one of the most important tasks of an Elected Official. It is also one of the most complex and time-consuming tasks. To aide in this endeavor, the League has created a special half day program geared towards Elected Officials to help them in understanding the Municipal Budgeting Process. The day will be broken into four parts that include; budget law overview, what is budgeting and why it is important, history of state aid and other issues, and planning for the future.

## **A Quick Review of Budget and FAST Updates**

February 26, 2025, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at Your Computer A review of Budget and FAST Updates, including Financial Automation Submission Tracking Solution (FAST), recent Division of Local Government Local Finance Notices, and recent policies and regulations, also an update on CY 2025 budget issues and any legislation that may affect them, as well as a review of current issues affecting finance officers.

**CEUs:** CMFO/CCFO-1.5 Bud; CPWM-1.5 Govt; RMC-1.5 Fin; QPA-1.5 Off Admin; CPA-1.5 Fin; NJCLE-1.8; PACLE-1.5; RPPO/RPPS-2.0 M/S

## **Meet Your Executive Board: Mayor Elsie Foster**

After replacing the prior mayor who resigned in December 2022, Mayor Foster was elected to a full four term in November 2023. Previously, Foster served as Council Chair for the Department of Public Safety, which oversees the Fire Department, First Aid Squad, Police Department, Office of Emergency Management, and Community Response Team. Earlier, she was Council Liaison to Recreation and Arts, Finance, Department of Public Utilities, Economic Development & Planning, and Health & Welfare. She served as Borough Council President for nearly 10 years.



Mayor Elsie Foster, Highland Park

Mayor Foster is a champion of business development in Highland Park. She actively recruited a new supermarket, Super Fresh, to replace a grocery store that left town in March 2023. Super Fresh opened in fall 2024. Mayor Foster has also helped to welcome over a dozen new businesses in the last year.

A passionate advocate of community development, she has actively recruited new members of the Highland Park Human Relations Commission, the Public Information Committee, the Highland Park Arts Commission, and other Borough boards, committees, and commissions. She regularly visits monthly senior luncheons at the Highland Park Community Center, consults with the Mayor's Area Faith Leaders Group, and attends major events at local houses of worship.

Mayor Foster also oversees the Mayor's Teen Advisory Council, which has raised thousands of dollars for the Highland Park First Aid Squad and Highland Park Fire Department over the past two years. Foster is the Director of Consumer Affairs and Weights & Measures, for Middlesex County.



Inclusive park designs was featured on the cover of the February issue of the League's official magazine.

## Write On!

Is this the year that you'll write an article, news item, or opinion column for *NJ Municipalities* magazine? We're now seeking submissions for our April (due February 26) and May (due March 15) issues. See the [author's guidelines](#) for more information. Submit your queries, news items, op-eds, or articles for *NJ Municipalities* magazine [by email to Amy Spiezio](#).

Are you and your team [subscribing to NJ Municipalities](#)? Inspire your local government work by reading and building a library of the League's magazine in print or online. [View a sample of the magazine](#).

## Support the League's Magazine

If your municipality has recently used a vendor and feel that their services would benefit other municipalities, [email Tasneem Kapadia](#), Advertising Manager, with their details so she can send them information about the League's magazine. Advertising in *NJ Municipalities* magazine promotes their services and could benefit other towns.

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