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## October 30, 2020

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**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.

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### I. State Issues

#### a. COVID-19 Update

Today Governor Murphy announced that there were 2,089 new positive cases and an additional 7 confirmed deaths resulting from COVID-19. To date, there have been 236,523 confirmed cases, and 14,546 confirmed deaths. The rate of transmission is at 1.26, and spot positivity as of October 25 was 6.54%. While the Governor did not state that a rollback and/or additional restrictions were imminent, he did describe the current rise in cases as a “second wave” and continued to urge residents to socially distance, wear masks, and continue hand hygiene. The State continues to ask residents to download and use the new [Covid Alert NJ](#), the State’s exposure notification smart phone app.

Since our last update, Governor Murphy issued the following COVID-19 related Executive

Orders:

[Executive Order 191](#) extending the declared public health emergency by an additional 30 days. As a reminder, a declared public health emergency expires after 30 days unless renewed.

[Executive Order 192](#) requiring employers, including public sector employers, follow health and safety protocols to protect their in-person workforce. The order goes into effect on November 5 at 6:00 a.m. For more information, please see the League's recent [blog post](#).

On Monday, the Governor [announced](#) the state's COVID-19 vaccination plan was submitted to the CDC on October 16. The plan calls for an all-of-government approach to a wide-scale vaccination program with the goal to vaccinate 70% of the adult population in a six-month period. Currently there are several vaccines in Phase 3 clinical trials but some of the vaccines will require a two-dose regimen, 21 to 28 days apart. The Department of Health has a COVID-19 Vaccination webpage that includes [FAQs](#), [the COVID-19 Vaccination Plan](#), and an [executive summary](#) of the plan.

On Tuesday, the Governor updated the list of states and territories subject to the [Travel quarantine and advisory](#) to include 41 states and territories. While Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware now meet New Jersey's travel advisory criteria, due to the interconnected nature of the region and mode of transport between New Jersey and the three states, a 14-day quarantine is not reasonable in all instances. Non-essential travel to and from these states, however, is highly discouraged at this time.

For the week ending October 24 the New Jersey Labor Department [announced](#) 27,201 new unemployment applications. This was a 5% decline in new unemployment claims.

As a reminder, the Governor recently announced that Halloween activities can go forward with local [guidance](#) provided by the New Jersey Department of Health to local officials, schools, outside organizations, and businesses. Please see our recent [blog post](#) for more information on the Halloween guidance.

**Contact:** Mike Cerra, Executive Director, [mcerra@njlm.org](mailto:mcerra@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x120.

## **b. Hospital Property Tax Subsidy Bill Held from Vote**

After making their way through committee last week, [A-1135](#) and the Senate Committee Substitute for [S-357 and S-624](#) were scheduled yesterday for a vote before the full Assembly and Senate. However, the legislation was removed from the voting session agenda.

For those who have been following this legislation, you know that the League has maintained opposition to these bills. This legislation stems from a tax court decision which brought to light how the business model for modern hospitals does not comport with the original public policy reasons for exempting non-profit hospitals from property taxes. While the League is supportive of a legislative solution to the issue, we do not believe that these bills provide a proper solution.

While we are glad the bills were removed from yesterday's agenda this only temporarily halts their progress. Progress still needs to be made to ensure appropriate legislation is adopted.

We urge our members, especially those hosting non-profit hospitals, to continue to reach out to [your legislators](#) and to the Governor's office, expressing how this issue impacts your community's taxpayers.

**Contact:** Frank Marshall, Esq., Associate General Counsel, [fmarshall@njlm.org](mailto:fmarshall@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x137.

### **c. 2019 Senior Freeze Deadline Extended**

The filing deadline for the 2019 [Senior Freeze Program](#) has been extended from November 2 to December 31, 2020. If your residents have questions on the program they can call the Property Tax Reimbursement Hotline at 1-800-882-6597. As a reminder, the Senior Freeze Program reimburses eligible senior citizens and disabled persons for [property tax](#) or [mobile home park site fee](#) increases on their [principal residence](#). To qualify, applicants must meet all the [eligibility requirements](#) for each year from the [base year](#) through the application year (the current application year is 2019).

**Contact:** Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, [lbuckelew@njlm.org](mailto:lbuckelew@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x112.

### **d. Governor Rejects Unfunded Body Camera Mandate**

Since it was first introduced in 2014, the League has expressed concerns with legislation meant to require law enforcement officers to wear body cameras. Specifically, under the provisions of this bill, every State, county, and municipal law enforcement officer would have been required to wear a camera that electronically records audio and video while acting in the performance of his or her official duties. The legislation presumed that the cameras could be funded by forfeiture funds "received by the Attorney General as instrumentalities of crime."

We raised our concern about the insufficiency of forfeiture funds to cover municipal costs, first with the sponsors, and then at each step the bill took through the legislative process. Finally, when it, as S-1163, passed both Houses earlier this year, we brought that concern to the Governor.

In response, on October 19, Governor Murphy [conditionally vetoed](#) the bill and sent it back to the legislature with recommended changes. The Governor noted, "...the funding mechanism provided in this legislation is insufficient to support the bill's mandate. As recently as August 2020, the forfeiture fund account identified in this legislation to fund this endeavor contained less than \$2 million, ... The Department of Law and Public Safety estimates that initial deployment of nearly 26,000 cameras could cost up to \$55.8 million ... This estimate includes equipment acquisition, an annual licensing fee, and maintenance and storage. Even after acquisition, ongoing maintenance and storage costs would be incurred."

Therefore, Governor Murphy, "... recommended changes (to) make the mandate to wear body worn cameras subject to the limit of funds appropriated or otherwise made available for the bill's purposes."

We thank the Governor for his conditional veto. Should the legislature accept those conditions, we will monitor the implementation of the new law to ensure that any required

municipal costs will be covered by revenues, other than local property taxes.

**Contact:** Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, [jmoran@njlm.org](mailto:jmoran@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x121.

### **e. Best Practices Submission Deadline Extended**

The Division of Local Government Services announced that the deadline to submit the 2020 Best Practices Inventory has been extended to the close of business Thursday, November 5.

For more information on the Best Practices Inventory please see the [September 25 Dear Mayor letter \(item I. f\)](#).

**Contact:** Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, [lbuckelew@njlm.org](mailto:lbuckelew@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x112.

### **f. Division Issues Local Finance Notice on Recent Tax Collection & Tax Appeals Legislation**

The Division of Local Government Services issued [Local Finance Notice 2020-25](#) explaining recently enacted legislation pertaining to property tax collection, tax appeals refunds, and the waiver of interest and lien enforcement for certain delinquent water and sewer utility payments during emergency circumstances. For more information on this Local Finance Notice please see our [October 26 blog post](#).

We suggest you review this Local Finance Notice with your Tax Collector and Chief Financial Officer to determine the impact on your municipality.

**Contact:** Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, [lbuckelew@njlm.org](mailto:lbuckelew@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x112.

## **II. Federal Issue**

### **a. Federal Election Rumor vs. Reality Page Posted**

To provide citizens with factual information, as they vote and await election results, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is continuously posting updates on its [2020 Election Security Rumor Control](#) webpage.

With foreign governments and other bad actors seeking to disrupt the democratic process, you might want to direct concerned citizens to this #PROTECT2020 site. CISA states, "This webpage is for people with questions about the security of their vote and preemptively debunks potential areas for disinformation. You can [learn more about mis- and disinformation](#) from CISA's [Countering Foreign Influence Task Force](#)."

**Contact:** Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, [jmoran@njlm.org](mailto:jmoran@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x121.

## III. 2020 Annual League Conference

### a. 5 Reasons to Register & Attend the 105<sup>th</sup> League Conference

In a year filled with change, the 105<sup>th</sup> Annual League Conference-presented virtually, maintains the continuity of more than 100 years of great events. The Virtual Conference offers some practical points that make attendance easy and efficient.

1. **Easy Commute:** Whether you're in your office or at home, you can login and attend the Virtual Conference with no extra travel time needed.
2. **Cost Effective:** In a year where budgets are tight, the virtual event continues the League's commitment to a high value experience at the lowest cost of any League Conference in the nation. And this year, you save on hotels and associated fees, too.
3. **Healthy:** Public health is a major concern for your residents and municipal employees. A virtual conference ensures that you can control your exposure and stay safe.
4. **Education-Friendly:** Need continuing education units? The Virtual Conference is the place to go, [with many credit hours offered](#).
5. **Interactive Exhibitors:** Searchable listings, product information, and video chats allow attendees to have one-on-one contact with more than 100 vendors.

[Visit the Conference online](#) to view the current schedule and to register today.

## IV. Also of Interest

### a. "Get Covered New Jersey" Insurance Open Enrollment

Governor Murphy recently announced that New Jersey residents will be able to enroll in [Get Covered New Jersey](#) starting November 1, 2020, and through to January 31, 2021, extending six weeks longer than it was last year.

Get Covered New Jersey is a new healthcare marketplace operated by the state, instead of the federal government's healthcare platform Healthcare.gov. The state launched its own marketplace to provide better affordable healthcare coverage that is specific to New Jersey's citizens' needs. Plans offered under Get Covered NJ include the essential health services required under the [Affordable Healthcare Act \(ACA\)](#). Residents who enroll in the plan will have access to different kinds of subsidies and other financial help to accommodate their budget; they may also qualify for the state's public health program [NJFamilyCare](#), which is offered through Medicaid generally at significantly lower-cost or free healthcare coverage.

Residents can now begin browsing health plans and prices and determine what they may qualify for and diverse financial assistance available to them by visiting [Get Covered New Jersey](#).

For more information on the benefits of the new marketplace and the plans' qualifications, subsidies, and assistance, visit [Get Covered NJ website](#) or reach their customer service at 1-833-677-1010.

**Contact:** Ciara Bradley, Legislative Administrator, [cbradley@njlm.org](mailto:cbradley@njlm.org), 609-695-3481 x128.

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