



# **MUNICIPAL LOBBY DAY**

# Reach Out January 13, 2014



## **Legislative Advocacy 101**



A Guide to State Level Advocacy for Municipal Officials **LEGISLATIVE POLICY** 

### WVML

### WV Municipal League Legislative Policy

- 1. Legislation will be approved by the Legislative Committee only if it appears that enactment will benefit our members.
- 2. Eligible issues must be submitted from the municipal governing body.
- 3. The Legislative Committee will oppose all proposals which:
  - a. Impose additional costs upon WV municipalities (directly or indirectly) without providing new revenue to pay such cost.
  - b. Reduce revenue now received by municipalities- unless replaced from some source other than existing taxes.
  - c. Produce unfavorable regional or local legislation. It is essential that the municipalities of the state should act in unison on adverse legislation, and hence if only a portion of the members are affected by undesirable bills, these should be opposed as a matter of principle, or otherwise unfavorable legislation will be enacted piecemeal.
  - d. State interference at the Local level. The Legislative Committee will act in conformity with the spirit of home Rule and will oppose all measures involving attempts to have the state preempt the local authority of municipalities.
- 4. The Legislative Committee will take no position on legislation if one group of members is adversely affected and another benefited.
- 5. The Legislative Committee will take no position on bills where a clear consensus cannot be reached. In cases where no position because of a lack of clear consensus is taken, the staff will be instructed to communicate the concerns on both sides in their contacts with legislators.

### **Legislative Advocacy 101**

If you are to be respected, you must be both respectful and re- Stay Informed on the Issues spectable. Courtesy, integrity and knowledge of the issues can be, as in Bogart's timeless line, "...the beginning of a beautiful friendship..." between you and your State representatives. But even if differences in political affiliation, values or philosophy hamper the development of friendship, you can still have cordial relations with them. And a good relationship is essential to effective advocacy.

#### Get Personally Acquainted with Your Legislators

Bridges are built to bring us together. So, in a metaphorical kind of a way, all of us involved in local government are involved in the building of bridges - in bringing together all kinds of people, ideas and ideals. Build strong bridges to your state legislators. Never let them fall into disuse. If you haven't already done so, call their local offices. If you can, arrange to meet them there. If you can't, then ask to talk directly with them. Take an interest in them. Get to know their political philosophies. Don't wait until you need their support to contact them. It might be too late.

#### Get to Know Your Legislators' Staffs

Each state legislator in West Virginia represents a district that includes approximately 25,000 people. That's a lot of constituents to hear from and to serve. Obviously, they can't do it alone. They rely heavily on trusted and loyal aides to help them better serve. Frequently, you may be unable to talk directly with your legislator to express your concerns on a particular issue. Then, a call to the legislator's aide or other staff, whom you know and who knows you, is the next best thing. If the traffic is jammed on one bridge, it's good to have an alternate route at hand.

#### **Invite Your Legislators to Special Events**

The opportunity to meet and communicate with constituents is a valuable gift to any elected official. Invite your legislators and their staffs to local and regional meetings as guests or speakers. Also invite them to parades, town festivals or other events as guests or participants. Your hospitality will not be forgotten. And rarely will it go unrewarded.

#### Get on Your Delegation's Mailing List

Then you will receive newsletters and other communications from your legislator's office. This will help you to learn their feelings about issues that are particularly important to them. Effective communication depends more on careful listening than on brilliant rhetoric.

#### **Recognize Legislators' Problems**

You can try to hear all that they are saying, but you'll never hear all that they are hearing. Your legislators represent all of the constituents in your area - liberal and conservative, business and labor. Their duty is to represent all of the people to the best of their ability. There may be times when you think your legislators are on the wrong track, but they may have facts that are not available to you. Never threaten political or other consequences if the senator or delegate refuses to see an issue your way. Remember that you can disagree without being disagreeable.

#### Sav Thanks

Nothing grates more on a relationship than ingratitude. Remember to thank legislators regularly and publicly for their time, work, support and votes. Never discount the importance of a thank you; it can really make a difference.

The WV Legislature convenes for the regular legislative session every year. The 2014 Legislative Session began January 8th. Throughout the next 60 days the 81st Legislature is making important decisions that may have a direct impact on your municipality. You can't lobby what you don't know! Stay abreast of the issues through the local media and the League.

#### Use the League

Remember that your League staff will be informed of the critical issues and can assist you in your advocacy efforts. They can also assist in tailoring the information to explain what an issue might mean to your hometown.

#### Read the League's Publications

The League's Legislative Bulletin is published throughout the Legislative Session and mailed each week to you. This is supplemented by Legislative analyses and Membership Alerts full of timely information on key municipal issues that are being considered by the Legislature.

#### Express Yourself

The time for listening and learning never ends. But, eventually, the time comes for talking. Because of who you are and because of the office you hold, you owe it to yourself, you owe it to your constituents and you owe it to your state representatives, themselves, to speak, honestly and forthrightly, on the issues affecting your municipality. Having carefully built and maintained the bridge, you can never fear to use it. Some may say that legislators have no time or inclination to answer their phones or read their mail, and that one single contact won't make any difference anyway. In most cases, these views are wrong. Thoughtful, factual, persuasive contacts can change legislators' minds and cause them to review their positions. Be sure to have accurate facts and good arguments about any issues you discuss with your legislators. Make sure you understand the particular bill in question.

#### Write Letters Carefully and Thoughtfully

Each letter you write should cover one bill and should reference the bill number in a separate line at the top of the page. Present your opinion logically and base it on facts. Emotional appeals do not influence votes, nor should they. The importance of personally contacting a legislator on time cannot be overemphasized. An eloquent letter does no good if it arrives after a vote. You may also fax or e-mail a letter or brief note to your legislator to get your position across in a short time frame.

#### Use the Local Media

Schedule meetings with the editorial board and staff of your local newspaper to discuss legislative issues and positions. Schedule sessions on local television and radio shows to discuss the issues and their impact on your municipality.

#### Attend Lobby Day

The League's Lobby Day is held each year during the Mid Winter Conference. This is an opportunity for municipal officials to visit with key legislators on crucial municipal issues that are being considered by the Legislature.

#### Invite your Legislators to League Functions

While legislators receive a written invitation to most League activities, the personal touch is always nice. Call your legislators and invite them personally to the League's Municipal Reception and the League Conference in August each year.

### Background

U.S. Census Bureau data of 2010 shows that 13.4% of West Virginia housing stock is vacant. Dilapidated, vacant and abandoned properties, whether residential or commercial, create costly problems for cities. They are a drain on city budgets; detract from the quality of life, as well as the economic opportunities of those living around them. They are an impediment to individual neighborhood redevelopment, and serve as a barrier to reducing crime. The decline of such structures impairs the value of private investments, creates an excessive and disproportionate expenditure of public funds, threatens the sound growth and the tax base of taxing districts in many areas across the state, and threatens the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

One recent daily sampling of properties listed by the State Auditor's office as being in the hands of the state for delinquent property taxes, detailed 7,855 properties, of which 3,329 were located inside municipalities or 43%. Many of these properties will show up on dilapidated, vacant or abandoned building lists within our municipalities.

### What We Expect From Our State Partners

Create a municipal task force comprised of representatives from the Development Office, the Auditor's Office, the Housing Development Fund and the WV Municipal League to identify and create a master list of all vacant, condemned and/or hazardous properties within municipalities to find solutions to abate or rehab these properties for economic development. Properties in the State's hands from tax sales are priority for rehab.

Require that mortgage loan services maintain vacant foreclosed properties, and that these entities are responsible for complying with municipal property maintenance codes with respect to vacant foreclosed properties.

Amend the statutory lien requirement on insurance proceeds for total loss to real property in favor of a municipality for the cleanup of the property to make the requirement applicable to all insurance companies (amending WV Code 33-22-2).

Create and adequately fund a vacant and dilapidated property removal and rehabilitation grant fund to be available to units of local government for the purpose of funding physical, administrative and legal costs of the lawful removal of vacant and dilapidated properties within their jurisdictions; possible tax incentives for rehab.

### Our Message

A public and corporate purpose is served by restoring these buildings to productive assets for the communities in which they are located. The goal of placing troubled properties into productive use for residents and communities as a whole is a shared goal, but there is a cost to convert vacant and abandoned properties from costly liabilities into productive assets. The first steps are to identify, prioritize and redevelop or abate. The entire state shares in the end result of improved health, safety and welfare of the public, improved tax values for neighboring properties, an improved tax base of the area previously blighted by such derelict buildings and a renewed tax base because of new investments or development.

### **LOBBY DAY FOLLOW-UP REPORT FORM**

#### FOLLOW-UP REPORT FORM – LEAGUE LOBBY DAY - WV STATE CAPITOL

Your Name:		Date:
Title:	Mun	icipality:
Name of member of WV Leg	islature you visited (or staff)_	
(Check response that applies	for issue discussed)	
Issue - Continued Support f Buildings	For Legislative Action to Con        Supports League's post        Leaning toward League        Position unknown/unde        Leaning against Leagu        Against League's posit	e's position ecided e's position
6. Follow-up needed from Le		Additional materials
Generate phone calls/le 7. Other comments:	etters from League members	

Please complete this form for each visit and return it to the League staff.

(Date)

(Legislators Name, State Capitol Room Number and Street Address)

Dear (Senator/Delegate/Staff Member):

I would like to thank you for meeting with me on behalf of the City of \_\_\_\_\_\_ and the West Virginia Municipal League on January 13th. I appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns on municipal issues.

Your willingness to serve our state, our community and our citizens is greatly appreciated. I have found there isn't anything we cannot accomplish as long as we have the spirit of cooperation and compromise. Our communities are constantly struggling to maintain a strong economic base while keeping basic services to citizens in place without placing undue hardship on them financially. I truly believe West Virginia municipalities are the backbone of our State. We must preserve the authority of municipal governments in every instance and work to improve upon such if our State is to continue growing financially and thus, prepare us for the future.

Thank you for your time and I hope that you will consider supporting our municipal issues. If I can ever provide you with additional information or offer my municipal perspective, please don't hesitate to contact me at (insert phone number) or our Executive Director, Lisa Dooley at 304-342-5564. The League and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name) (Position)

cc: WV Municipal League

### West Virginia Municipal League West Virginia Municipal League **Municipal Lobby Day** January 13, 2014 **It's All About Strong Cities**



SORRY I MISSED YOU. I STOPPED BY TO TALK WITH YOU ABOUT THE LEAGUE'S LEGISLATIVE AGENDA I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS **OPPORTUNITY TO INVITE YOU TO OUR MUNICIPAL** RECEPTION TONITE FROM 6:00 P.M. TO 7:30 P.M., CHARLESTON MARRIOTT HOTEL, SALONS A&B. PERHAPS THEN WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO DISCUSS SOME OF OUR PRIORITY ISSUES OR YOU MAY CONTACT ME AT YOUR CONVENIENCE.

NAME/TITLE:	
MUNICIPALITY OF:	
PHONE:	

BELOW IS OUR LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY FACING MUNICIPALITIES DURING THE 2014 LEGISLATIVE SESSION. I AM AVAILABLE ANYTIME TO SPEAK WITH YOU ABOUT THIS ISSUE.

**Continued Support for Legislative Action to Combat Dilapidated, Vacant and Abandoned Buildings** 

**Municipal Lobby Day** January 13, 2014 **It's All About Strong Cities** 



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NAME/TITLE:\_\_\_\_\_

MUNICIPALITY OF:\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE:\_\_\_\_\_

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304-342-5564

PHONE:\_\_\_\_\_

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Continued Support for Legislative Action to Combat Dilapidated, Vacant and Abandoned Buildings



wvml@wvml.org



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Representing <u>17 senatorial districts</u>, the Senate is comprised of 34 members - 24 Democrats and 10 Republicans. Senators serve four-year terms with half of those seats up for election every two years.

#### Senate Leadership

President of the Senate Jeffrey V. Kessler President Pro Tempore: Larry J. Edgell Majority Leader: John R. Unger II Majority Whip: William R. Laird IV Minority Leader: Mike Hall Minority Whip: Clark S. Barnes



ame	Party	District	Address	Email	Phone
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	Nancy Peoples Guthrie	Democrat	36	Room 206E, Bldg. 1 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E. Charleston, WV 25305	nancy.guthrie@wvhouse.gov	(304) 340-3156

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m Kinsey	Democrat	19	Room 200E-C, Bldg. 1 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E. Charleston, WV 25305	timothy.kinsey@wvhouse.gov	(304) 340-3155
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and the second s	Don Perdue	Democrat	19	Room 215E-A, Bldg. 1 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E. Charleston, WV 25305	don.perdue@wvhouse.gov	(304) 340-3269
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Ş	John Shott	Republican	27	Room 6R-A, Bldg. 1 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E. Charleston, WV 25305	john.shott@wvhouse.gov	(304) 340-3187
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Ģ	Stephen Skinner	Democrat	67	Room 217E, Bldg. 1 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E. Charleston, WV 25305	stephen.skinner@wvhouse.gov	(304) 340-3248
(Cal	Randy E. Smith	Republican	53	Room 223E, Bldg. 1 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E. Charleston, WV 25305	randy.smith@wvhouse.go∨	(304) 340-3396
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