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What is the League?

One of our distinguished past presidents very aptly described the Alabama League of Municipalities as this state's "Community of Communities." In a very real sense, the community spirit that vitalizes each city and town in Alabama finds expression in the structure and the activities of our municipal organization. The League is a composite of the concerns, problems and goals of its 450+ municipalities. It has demonstrated repeatedly throughout its more than 90-year history that the unified voices and the collective actions of dedicated municipal officials, working through the League, are a compelling force in articulating the concerns, solving the problems and achieving the goals of its individual member municipalities.

The League was organized in 1935 as a voluntary association of about 100 member municipalities. Through the years, its voluntary membership has more than quadrupled. Its staff operation has become vastly more capable of meeting the ever-growing needs of municipal officials and personnel for legal and technical assistance and for information services during a period of revolutionary urban growth and change. Still, the League has retained the same basic objectives that motivated its founding more than 90 years ago:

- To conduct continuing studies of the legislative, administrative and operational needs, problems and functions of Alabama's municipal governments and to publish the results of these studies for the benefit of member cities and towns.
- To maintain a staff capable of finding answers to legal and administrative questions asked by elected officials and personnel of member municipalities.
- To hold conferences and meetings at which views and experiences of municipal officials and personnel may be exchanged.
- To encourage in the people of Alabama a sympathetic appreciation of the duties, responsibilities and rights of both municipal government and its citizens.
- To work to secure enactment of legislation, at both the state and federal levels, that will enable all cities and towns to perform their functions more efficiently and effectively.

Organization of the League

As an organization, the League consists of the executive director, president, vice president, and a board of directors made up of five to seven elected municipal officials from each of the state's congressional districts. In addition, the League has an executive committee composed of all active past presidents of the League which serves as the League's nominating committee. Officers and members of the board of directors are elected by the voting delegates at the League's annual convention.

The Legislative committee and standing committees established by the board of directors are charged with the review and development of League policies and goals which encompass a broad spectrum of issues affecting municipal government. The chair and vice chair of each of these standing committees are elected annually at the convention. Committee members are selected by the respective committee chairs to provide representation from each congressional district and to ensure representation of cities and towns of all sizes on each committee.

Besides developing policies and goals for the League, the standing committees are responsible for reviewing national municipal policy developed by the National League of Cities (NLC). Committee members, through our League representatives on NLC committees, may suggest amendments to the national policy during NLC's annual Congress of Cities.

League Committees

Standing committees of the League meet annually with resource advisors to review existing League policy and recommend adoption of revised goals and recommendations in the respective areas of each committee. The Legislative committee meets

before each Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature to consider the recommendations of standing committees and to develop the League's legislative program.

The Legislative committee also carefully studies proposed legislation which may prove harmful to municipal government. While the legislature is in session, the committee may meet to assess the progress of the League program and to review potentially dangerous legislation. The committee has the additional duty of meeting at the annual League convention to review resolutions prepared for submission at the annual business session and to receive suggested resolutions from individual delegates.

Participation in NLC

Since 1935, the Alabama League has been a member of the National League of Cities (NLC), our national counterpart. Members of our League are thereby entitled to participate in the annual Congress of Cities where national municipal policy is formed and educational programs are conducted. Our members may become direct members of NLC if additional benefits and assistance are desired from the national organization. Throughout the years, Alabama municipal officials have been extremely active in NLC.

Individual Services to Members

Individual service to member municipalities, on a day-to-day basis, is one of the most important functions of the League. These services include research to help local officials make decisions in the performance of their many duties; legal opinions from the League's attorneys; publication of the League's magazine, *The Alabama Municipal Journal*; distribution of *This Week from the League*, a weekly electronic newsletter; distribution of the *Statehouse Advocate*, ALM's weekly legislative e-bulletin when the legislature is in session; and publication of booklets and information bulletins to better enable officials and personnel to perform their duties. In addition, the League has an extensive website – almonline.org – as well as an official presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The League has filed *Amicus* briefs ("friend of the court" briefs) in cases affecting our cities and towns and serves as a resource for municipal attorneys, prosecutors and judges. League staff and officers frequently appear before state agencies and legislative committees to testify on rules, regulations and proposed legislation affecting our members.

The League has also established a number of special programs for member municipalities. Some of these programs are operated directly by the League while others are privately held companies whose products or services are endorsed by the League. Any League member city, town or instrumentality of the League member may contract for any or all of these services at very competitive rates.

League-Operated Programs

Over the years, ALM has created a number of programs and services to aid municipalities. In many cases, these programs save Alabama's cities and towns a substantial amount of money each year.

- Since 1942, the **Municipal Revenue Service** has collected unpaid and escaped delinquent insurance license taxes from insurance companies doing business in Alabama's municipalities.
- The **Municipal Workers Compensation Fund, Inc.** (MWCF) was established in 1976 to provide workers compensation insurance to municipalities, housing authorities, utility boards and other city and state agencies.
- The **Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation** (AMIC) was founded in 1989 as a mutual insurance company that writes all lines of insurance and is owned by its member municipalities. In 2018, AMIC endowed a historic municipal law chair at Samford University's Cumberland School of Law to ensure that future lawyers are educated in municipal law and that issues affecting municipalities receive sound scholarly research.
- In 2002, AMIC and MWCF created a joint **Loss Control Division** to provide additional staff and expanded services at a much-reduced cost to their members. The Loss Control Division has 11 dedicated staff members and offers a variety of services, including on-site risk management reviews, an Employee Practices Law Hotline, a DVD Safety Library, online training courses via LocalGovU, regional and training programs on a number of loss prevention topics as well as exclusive, state-of-the-art training such as the SKIDCAR defensive driving program and the Firearms Training System (FATS).
- The **Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation** (AMFund) was created in 2006 to assist Alabama's municipalities with refinancing existing debt and funding local projects and purchases through cost-effective financing.
- The **Alabama Association of Municipal Attorneys** (AAMA) and the **Alabama Municipal Judges Association** (AMJA) are open for membership to municipal attorneys, prosecutors and judges and provide joint legal training twice a year.

- In January 2015, ALM launched **League Law**, an online legal research system allowing subscribers to search selected Alabama and federal cases affecting municipalities, including summaries of Alabama Attorney General's opinions, Ethics Commission opinions and Alabama and federal court opinions.
- In late 2015, ALM launched **Municipal Intercept Services** (MIS), a program designed to allow local governments to recover a portion of monies owed from an individual's State tax refund through the Alabama Department of Revenue.
- ALM's **Economic Development Academy** was launched in 2021.It is specifically designed to educate and engage municipal officials on the essential elements and phases of economic development while highlighting their vital role in economic initiatives and projects within their communities.Using a collaborative municipal team approach, participants convene four times throughout the year to complete assignments and develop strategies to enhance economic development in their communities.
- In 2022, ALM and **Alabama Communities of Excellence** (ACE) formalized a long-standing partnership where ACE officially became a program under the ALM umbrella.The ACE program offers a systematic approach with the necessary technical resources and tools to help Alabama's small cities and town promote growth and prosperity by focusing on their distinctive assets and resources.ACE provides technical assistance to select communities with populations ranging from 2,000 to 18,000 in an effort to strengthen long-term economic success.

League-Endorsed Programs

- **Cable Television Franchise Management Service** – This League-endorsed program provides technical assistance to municipalities relating to cable television franchise management.
- **Model City Ordinance Review Program** – This program uses the expertise of law students working through the Alabama Law Institute to revise municipal ordinances.
- **CGI Streaming Video** - Founded in 1988, CGI's products and services for Community Image Marketing have been used by over 2000 communities in North America! All of CGI's programs are offered at NO COST to municipalities, and are specially designed to streamline communication and strengthen communities. The League continues to look for even more programs to benefits its member municipalities. Besides saving money for our members, all of these programs contribute to the operation of the League and help keep membership dues down.
- **IT in a Box** - In April 2019, ALM partnered with Sophicity, now part of VC3, to offer "IT in a Box" which provides cities and towns in Alabama with state-of-the-art information technology tools supported by experienced, highly skilled IT professionals.
- **Alabama First Responders Benefits Program** - Firefighters are community heroes. The Alabama First Responders Benefits Program was created for cities and counties within the State of Alabama to help care for our 20,000+ firefighters and their families. Under Article 1, Chapter 30, Title 36, Code of Alabama 1975, firefighters throughout the State of Alabama are entitled to an enhanced cancer and disability coverage program provided by their municipality, county, public entity or fire district for both Career Paid and Volunteer Firefighters. The Alabama First Responders Benefits Program provides multiple options for both career and volunteer firefighters, and beneficiaries or dependents of volunteer firefighters who die of cancer, and is a way to further protect our community heroes.
- **American Fidelity Assurance Company** - The public sector is constantly evolving, with expectations changing as rapidly as the technology. American Fidelity Assurance offers the latest trends in employer benefit solutions and builds custom recommendations for your organization. American Fidelity specifically focuses on helping the public sector overcome benefits administration challenges.

The Legislative Function

In every session of the Alabama Legislature since 1935, the League has served as the guardian and the voice of municipal interests. This is a vitally important function, since Alabama municipalities are creatures of the Legislature and are dependent upon it for their powers and their very existence. League legislative programs through the years have produced over hundreds of general acts which directly benefit municipal government and its citizens. Cities and towns in Alabama now receive many millions of dollars annually in state-shared revenues as a direct result of the League's legislative efforts. In addition to working for passage of League legislative proposals, the League staff continuously monitors and reports on all types of legislation, at both the state and federal levels, which may affect cities and towns.

Training Programs

Over the past years, the League has worked closely with the University of Alabama, Auburn University, Jacksonville State University, the University of North Alabama, Faulkner University and other educational institutions and groups to sponsor training programs for municipal officials and employees. In 1987, the League, in cooperation with the College of Continuing Education at the University of Alabama, established the John G. Burton Endowment for the Support of Municipal Programs. The fund honors the League's first president and the "Father of Municipal Education in Alabama." This perpetual fund, to which municipalities, individuals and corporations may contribute, is used to increase training programs and opportunities for municipal officials and employees.

In 1994, the League established the Elected Officials Training Program for elected municipal officials. This voluntary program was the second in the nation and provides elected officials an opportunity to receive continuing education training. Upon obtaining 40 credit hours of training, the elected official will be presented with the designation of **Certified Municipal Official** (CMO). Several years later, due to the program's popularity, an Advanced CMO Program was established. In 2015, the League introduced a new training level, the Emeritus level, which recognizes meritorious continued participation in League training programs, events and service.

In 2024, the Alabama Municipal Official Training Act was signed into law. The Act requires that all mayors and councilmembers complete 10 hours of training annually during their first term in office beginning January 1, 2025, regardless of whether the official has previously served as a mayor or councilmember. The bulk of the training hours can be satisfied by attending League sponsored or endorsed training conferences or events including, but not limited to, the ALM Convention ALM Municipal Leadership Institute, ALM Advocacy Day, ALM orientation sessions, ALM CMO regional training, ALM congressional luncheons, NLC Congressional City Conference and NLC City Summit. However, officials who are not able to attend the in-person conferences and training can satisfy the training requirements by attending and completing online training webinars offered by the League in partnership with the Alabama Community College System (ACCS).

Publications and Communications

The League publishes a quarterly magazine, *The Alabama Municipal Journal*, prepared by the staff which provides timely information on the operation of city and town governments. *The Alabama Municipal Journal* is mailed to all elected officials and to top administrative and legal personnel of member cities and towns. Members of the Legislature also receive the magazine as well as the Alabama Congressional Delegation, sister leagues throughout the country, subscribers and friends. The total circulation of *The Alabama Municipal Journal* is approximately 4,500.

The League provides a weekly e-newsletter, *This Week from the League*, that informs and updates members on meetings, training and other items of importance. The League also provides a *Legal Updates* e-blast on important legal information.

As mentioned earlier, the League's *Statehouse Advocate* is electronically transmitted weekly to each member municipality when the Legislature is in session. In addition to these regular publications, the League staff prepares numerous books, information bulletins and special reports on specific subjects of interest to municipal officials and maintains a presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

The League staff continually attempts to keep the public and the news media informed about issues affecting municipal government in Alabama and to promote the objectives of the League and its member municipalities.

Conclusion

As the foregoing notes indicate, the League is a multi-purpose organization, the goals of which are to promote more efficient and effective government for the citizens of Alabama. The League is a tremendous resource for municipal officials and personnel. Municipal officials are urged to take advantage of these resources, to call on the League staff whenever necessary and to attend as many educational programs, seminars and conventions as possible. The rewards will benefit you as municipal officials and the citizens that you have been elected to serve.