



CALLED TO SERVE:25
ARKANSAS MUNICIPAL LEAGUE WINTER CONFERENCE

Jan. 15-17, 2025, Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock

events.arml.org

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This agenda is a work in progress and may change before the event.

Wednesday, January 15

11:30 a.m. ACCRTA Meeting, Arkansas Ballroom

1:30 p.m. Municipal Workers' Compensation Board of Trustees, Manning Room

1-5 p.m. Check-in Open, Osage Room

1-6 p.m. Exhibition Hall Open, Exhibition Hall

2:30 p.m. NLC Local Infrastructure Hub Popcorn and soft drink break, Exhibition Hall

3-4:30 p.m. General Session 1: Opening Keynote: 13 Ways to Kill Your Community, Governor's Hall IV

After a welcome from Magnolia Mayor and League President **Parnell Vann**, renowned author and speaker **Doug Griffiths** delivers a thought-provoking and entertaining keynote that challenges conventional thinking about community growth and success. Based on his bestselling book *13 Ways to Kill Your Community*, Griffiths will share practical insights and strategies to help Arkansas cities and towns overcome obstacles, embrace change and thrive in today's ever-evolving landscape. Don't miss this inspiring session to kick off the conference.

5-6 p.m. Delta Dental Happy Hour, Exhibition Hall

Unwind and mingle with fellow conference attendees, sponsors and exhibitors before our Opening Night Dinner. Members and guests will receive two drink tickets and the bar will take cash and credit cards. Don't miss this perfect opportunity to connect and have a great time!

6-8 p.m. JTS Opening Night Dinner with an American Fidelity-sponsored cocktail, Wally Allen Ballroom

Kick off the Winter Conference with live music, networking, and an exciting action station-style dinner with live cooking by multiple chefs. Each station will offer unique menu items that complement each other and cater to various dietary requirements. Guests can customize their meals with fresh toppings and ingredients while the **Rodney Block Project** sets the perfect tone for an evening of connection and celebration.

8:30-9:30 p.m. Stephens Dessert Reception, Capital Hotel

End the evening at the elegant Capital Hotel, where Stephens invites you to enjoy a delightful dessert reception filled with decadent treats and warm hospitality.

Thursday, January 16

7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Check-in Open, Osage Room

7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Exhibition Hall Open, Exhibition Hall

8:15-8:45 a.m. Voluntary Prayer Session, Fulton Room

Municipal officials and personnel are invited to gather and pray for national, state and local leaders.

7:30-8:45 a.m. Breakfast, Exhibition Hall

Start your day with a classic buffet breakfast featuring a spread of freshly baked pastries, fluffy scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, and traditional biscuits and gravy.

8 a.m.-5 p.m. Arkansas City Attorneys Association CLE, Drew Room

9-10:15 a.m. General Session 2: Called to Action, Governor's Hall IV

Celebrate the vital partnership between Arkansas' city and town leaders and their legislative champions. This session highlights shared priorities such as funding for water projects, cleaning up communities, economic development tools and supporting first responders—all through the lens of state and local collaboration. League General Counsel and Legislative Director **John Wilkerson** will provide actionable strategies to help municipal leaders strengthen relationships at the Capitol, amplify their voices and advocate effectively for their communities. This inspiring session sets the stage for the afternoon panel with the Speaker of the House and Senate Pro Tempore, offering a powerful reminder of the collective impact of state and local leadership.

10:30-11:20 a.m. Breakout Sessions & Newly Elected Training (See Below)

12-1:30 p.m. Awards Luncheon, Wally Allen Ballroom

We're excited to honor the exceptional efforts of Arkansas communities at the **ABPG Trendsetter City Awards**, the **EngageAR Volunteer Community of the Year Awards**, and those who will be receiving the **AML Lifetime of Service award** on behalf of their communities. Join us as we celebrate innovation, dedication and volunteerism over a delightful lunch featuring a savory chicken entrée, accompanied by seasonal vegetables and a flavorful side.

2-3:50 p.m. Breakout Sessions & Newly Elected Training (See Below)

3:30 p.m. Ritter Popcorn and soft drink break, Exhibition Hall

4-5 p.m. General Session 3: Called to Lead, Governor's Hall IV

Join the **Speaker of the House Brian Evans** and **Senate Pro Tempore Bart Hester** in a compelling conversation with League Executive Director **Mark Hayes** as they delve into their journey to leadership and the partnership between the State Capitol and Arkansas municipalities. Together, they will explore how local governments effectively communicate their needs to the legislature, ensure their voices are heard, and examine funding opportunities, grants and innovative solutions to support local government initiatives.

Dinner on your own

Visit some of central Arkansas' finest restaurants.

Friday, January 17

8 a.m.-5 p.m. Arkansas City Attorneys Association CLE, Drew Room

8-10 a.m. Wyndham Riverfront and Benihana Inspire Breakfast, Marriott Ballroom

Join us for a delightful new brunch featuring a special menu in the Marriott Ballroom. After conference closing remarks and important reminders by League Executive Director **Mark Hayes**, leave inspired by a powerful keynote address from the **Honorable Joyce Williams Warren**, whose personal journey and insights will energize and empower you for the road ahead. As Arkansas' first Black female judge and a trailblazer in juvenile justice, Judge Warren has transformed systems for children and families, strengthened adoption laws and improved child welfare services. Her groundbreaking achievements, including being the first Black graduate of the UALR William H. Bowen School of Law and the first Black law clerk for the Arkansas Supreme

Court, have earned her numerous accolades, such as the Arkansas Bar Association’s “Outstanding Jurist Award” and induction into the Arkansas Women’s Hall of Fame. Don’t miss this inspiring finale celebrating her extraordinary legacy and commitment to justice.

10:30 a.m. Municipal Health Board of Trustees Meeting, Manning Room

Newly Elected Training

Designed to help you hit the ground running in your new position, these three sessions are tailored for newly elected officials. League staff will address three critical aspects of municipal leadership, offering actionable advice on what to do—and what not to do—in your role. After completing the Civilpedia section of the ACE Hub, bring your questions to these sessions and take advantage of this opportunity to connect with fellow newly elected peers.

10:30-11:20 a.m. Municipal Finance for Newly Elected Officials

Gain a solid understanding of best practices for managing your city’s finances effectively. Led by attorney **Blake Gary** and League Chief Financial Officer **Cindy Frizzell**, this session focuses on the essentials of municipal finance, including budgeting, accounting software and the public purpose doctrine.

2-2:50 p.m. Municipal Government for Newly Elected Officials

Build confidence in leading and managing your city’s government. Join **Blake Gary** to explore the fundamentals of municipal governance, including yearly planning, council meeting procedures and the role of precedent in decision-making.

3-3:50 p.m. Human Resources for Newly Elected Officials

Navigate common HR challenges with clarity and confidence in this session led by League Legal and Inquiry Counsel **Caleb Alexander-McKinzie** and League Chief Human Resources Officer **Tracey Cline-Pew**. Topics include personnel management, record-keeping and payroll essentials.

Breakout Sessions

10:30-11:20 a.m. First Round

Cyber Resilience: Planning, Funding and Lessons Learned

Join League IT Director **Jeff Melton**, Fayetteville IT Director **Keith Macedo**, Fort Smith IT Director **James Gentry** and Hot Springs IT Director **Jeff Winter** to learn how large

cities can secure funding and strategically allocate resources to mitigate cybersecurity risks and prepare for potential incidents. Discover the real-world impacts of a cyberattack on city operations, including payroll systems, and gain actionable insights and best practices to strengthen your city's defenses and incident response plans.

Grants 101: Unlocking Opportunities for Small Cities

Join League Senior Grants Counsel **Caran Curry** for a session designed for small cities without dedicated grant writers. Learn about grants available to your community and gain practical, step-by-step guidance on writing successful grant applications—even with no prior experience. Empower your city to secure funding for vital projects and initiatives. Leverage volunteers and fundamentals of contracts.

First Amendment Auditors 2.0

Building on the foundational session from the 2024 Winter Conference, League General Counsel **John Wilkerson** and Cave City Mayor **Jonas Anderson** will dive deeper into the challenges posed by First Amendment Auditors. Following the day-of interactions, you'll explore proactive measures city leadership can take to prepare for and respond to these encounters effectively. Participants will learn best practices for policy development, staff training and community engagement, ensuring their cities are equipped to uphold public transparency while maintaining order and protecting municipal operations.

Leadership and Ethics: Guiding with Integrity

Join League Executive Director **Mark Hayes** for an insightful session on the principles of ethical leadership. Discover how integrity, accountability and strong decision-making can empower municipal leaders to navigate challenges, inspire trust and lead their communities with confidence and purpose.

2-2:50 p.m. or 2-3:30 p.m. Second Round

NLC: Local Infrastructure Success Stories (50 minutes)

Discover how small and mid-sized cities are turning plans into progress through National League of Cities (NLC) Local Infrastructure Hub boot camps. This session highlights success stories from cities that have developed winning grant applications to fund transformative projects, offering practical insights and inspiration for your own community's infrastructure needs.

Strengthening Cybersecurity for Smaller Cities: Resources, Grants and Best Practices (50 minutes)

Join League IT Director **Jeff Melton** and Cave City Mayor **Jonas Anderson** to explore the unique cybersecurity challenges smaller cities face and discover solutions through resources like the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP), the League's "Good, Better and Best" practices, and grant-funded training from Forge Institute and Ninjio. Gain a clear understanding of the Cyber Response Board, notification procedures, Beazley insurance coverage, and effective strategies for responding to and recovering from cyber incidents.

Foundations of City Planning & Zoning (90 minutes)

Discover how planning commissions play a vital role in shaping community growth by managing city planning, zoning and subdivision control. Gain practical insights into effectively navigating planning procedures, and learn actionable advice and best practices from experts **James Walden**, **Jim von Tungeln** and **Juliet Richey**.

Beyond Civility: Conflict Management Workshop (90 minutes)

Become equipped with essential skills to navigate differences and foster mutual understanding. Focused on conflict de-escalation and effective strategies for both in-person and online discourse, this session's leaders **Shana Chaplin** and **Aaron Keith Kennard** will emphasize practical techniques for meaningful engagement. Participants will assess their approach to civility, gain tools to improve conversations, and actively practice these skills through hands-on exercises designed to build confidence and competence in managing conflicts.

3-3:50 p.m. Disaster Preparation & Recovery Semester Kickoff

In an ever-changing world where natural disasters can strike unexpectedly, being prepared is key to minimizing the impact and maximizing recovery efforts. Join League Senior Grants Counsel **Caran Curry** and a panel of Arkansas experts who will highlight the intricacies of disaster preparedness and recovery, provide an overview of the upcoming spring ACE Hub Disaster Preparation & Recovery series, and provide tips and templates necessary to effectively manage disaster-related efforts.