



CALLED TO SERVE: '25
ARKANSAS MUNICIPAL LEAGUE WINTER CONFERENCE

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

For questions, please email events@arml.org

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

Friday, January 3 at 5 p.m.: Deadline to register online and receive a registration refund. All registrations following this deadline must happen on-site.

Wednesday, January 15, through Thursday, January 16: On-site registrations will be accepted for \$400 for members and \$450 for non-members.

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.

Doug Griffiths grew up on a ranch outside a small town where he learned the value of hard work, critical thinking skills, and the value of community. That background led him into politics, but he insists he has since been through rehab and is fully recovered. His experience in politics gave him a deep understanding about how to move people and to get things done. He deliberately retired from politics in January 2015, after serving for 13 years, to return to his passion for community building. Griffiths has an Executive MBA, and Honors B.A Philosophy Degree, as well as his Bachelor of Education, all from the University of Alberta, where he has taught community and municipal leadership courses for elected officials and administration. He has supported, guided and inspired hundreds of communities to create effective change. Whether through speaking and presentations, or through advising and consulting, he is dedicated to helping communities across North America find their own pathway to success.

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

Join us for happy hour sponsored by Delta Dental, where attendees, exhibitors and sponsors can network. 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 accept 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, Wally Allen Ballroom

Kick off the Winter Conference at the JTS Opening Night Dinner with live music, networking, a signature spritzer presented by sponsor **American Fidelity**, and an 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.

8:15-9:30 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

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

Thanks to the **City of Little Rock** for sponsoring our breakfast! Enjoy a classic buffet breakfast featuring a spread of freshly baked pastries, fluffy scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, and traditional biscuits and gravy.

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.

8:30 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 Senate Pro Tempore and Speaker of the House, 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** and the **EngageAR Volunteer Community of the Year Awards**. The Arkansas Municipal League will also present its **Life Membership Award**. Join us as we celebrate innovation, dedication and volunteerism over a delightful lunch.

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

3:30 p.m. Ritter/Right Fiber Popcorn Break, Exhibition Hall

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

Join the Senate Pro Tempore **Bart Hester** and Speaker of the House **Brian Evans** in a compelling conversation with League Executive Director **Mark Hayes** as they delve into the partnership between the State Capitol and Arkansas municipalities.

Dinner on your own

Visit some of central Arkansas' finest restaurants.

Friday, January 17

8:30 a.m.-3:40 p.m. Arkansas City Attorneys Association CLE, Drew Room

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

After conference-closing remarks and important statutory reminders by League Executive Director **Mark Hayes**, leave inspired by a powerful keynote address by the **Honorable Joyce Williams Warren**, whose personal journey and insights will energize and empower you for the road ahead. Don't miss this inspiring finale celebrating her extraordinary legacy and commitment to justice.

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. At the time of her retirement in 2020, Judge Warren had presided over juvenile and domestic relations cases for over 37 years, earning her the distinction of being one of the two longest-serving juvenile division judges in Arkansas at the state level and the longest-serving Black judge at the state level in Arkansas. She serves on the boards of several organizations, and is a member of the Arkansas Judicial Council; the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; the American, Arkansas and Pulaski County Bar Associations; the Arkansas Association of Women Lawyers; and the W. Harold Flowers Law Society. Even in retirement, she continues her dedication to helping children and families in many ways, one of which is by serving as a Judicial Consultant to ZERO TO THREE: National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families. She and her husband, James M. "Butch" Warren, have three adult children, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

The Arkansas Passport game prize will be awarded, but you must be present to win!

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

Thursday, January 16, Breakout Sessions

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

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.

Cyber Resilience: Planning, Funding and Lessons Learned

Join League IT Director **Jeff Melton**, Fayetteville Interim Chief of Staff **Keith Macedo**, Fort Smith Chief Information Officer **James Gentry** and Springdale IT Director **Mark Gutte** 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 cyber incident on city operations, including payroll systems, and gain actionable insights and best practices to strengthen your city's defenses and incident response plans.

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.

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.

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**, Municipal Vehicle and Municipal Property Program Director **John Wells**, Arkansas Division of Emergency Management Director **AJ Gary** and Jonesboro Fire Chief **Martin Hamrick** 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.

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

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.

Where Money Meets Opportunity: Unlocking the Power of Winning Federal Grants (50 minutes)

Learn how local leaders of small and mid-sized cities are turning small ideas into big impact through the National League of Cities (NLC) Local Infrastructure Hub bootcamps, a free, online training program helping cities win federal funding. This session highlights success stories from cities that have developed winning federal grant applications that have funded transformative projects and offers practical insights to help overcome the challenges of your community’s infrastructure needs. Speaker **Candis Pizzetta**, a leadership, education, advancement and development expert, walks you through the simple steps needed to join this free training program.

Foundations of City Planning and 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**.

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.

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. Third Round

Grants 101: Unlocking Opportunities for Small Cities

Join League Senior Grants Counsel **Caran Curry**, League Grants and Legal Assistant **Dylan McCleod**, and Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District Executive Director **Patrecia Hargrove** 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 learn the fundamentals of contracts.

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.