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Los Alamos Fire Department Awarded International Accredited Status



From left: Assistant Chief Mark Sandoval, Fire Chief Doug Tucker, Battalion Chief E. Henry Ortiz and Accreditation Manager Norma Jean Valdez were in Chicago to receive the Accredited Agency plaque.

The Los Alamos County Fire Department has received Accredited Agency status with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) for meeting the criteria established through the CFAI's voluntary self-assessment and accreditation program. The Los Alamos Fire Department is one of 148 agencies to achieve Internationally Accredited Agency status with the CFAI and the Center for Public Safety Excellence, Inc. (CPSE).

The Commission on Fire Accreditation International is dedicated to assisting the fire and emergency service agencies throughout the world in achieving excellence through self-assessment and accreditation in order to provide continuous quality improvement and the enhancement of service delivery to their communities. The CFAI process is voluntary, and provides an agency with an improvement model to assess their service delivery and performance internally and then works with a team of peers from other agencies to evaluate their completed self-assessment.

Fire Chief Doug Tucker stated that the agency's achievement of Accredited Agency status "demonstrates the commitment of the agency to provide the highest quality of service to our community." Tucker also said, "We have been able to use the Commission on Fire Accreditation International's process as a proactive mechanism to plan for the future of this agency and locate areas where we can improve on the quality of the services we provide."

In 1997, Los Alamos Fire Department became one of the first five fire departments in the world to achieve Internationally Accredited Agency status. Today, Los Alamos is the only New Mexico fire department accredited by the CFAI.

Western Municipal Association Hears from Governors Association

"Be at the Table, or be on the Menu"

Western Municipal Association Chair Mayor Lou Ogden (Tualatin, OR) opened the annual WMA meeting with introductions. There was excellent representation from municipal leaders from the West. Ron Loveridge, NLC President (Mayor of Riverside, CA), also a western municipal leader, attended as well.

The keynote speaker was Pam Inmann, Executive Director of the Western Governors Association (WGA). The western Governors, the first western government association, first met in 1891. She noted that the west is unified by the need to present one voice to the federal government and to work on issues uniquely impacting the western states. Those issues historically include the need to negotiate with the federal government to manage the vast tracts of federal lands, and the other

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NMML Executive Director Re-Elected Chair of NLC Mutual Insurance Company

New Mexico Municipal League Executive Director William Fulginiti has been re-elected Chairman of NLC Mutual Insurance Company during its annual meeting in December. The company, domiciled in Vermont, operates out of NLC's headquarters in Washington D.C. He has been elected chair every year since the company's inception in 1986.

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NMML Director Re-Elected . . . continued from page 1

The company provides coverage for catastrophic claims incurred by self insurance pools in 27 states. The company provides re-insurance services to the New Mexico Self Insurers' Fund as one of its clients. The company provides worker's comp, general liability that includes policy coverage and property claims.

IRS to Hold Section 218 Workshop Webinar

The Internal Revenue Service Office of Federal, State and Local Governments (FSLG) will sponsor a free webinar about "Section 218 Agreements" on January 27, 2011. These agreements are voluntary agreements between governmental entities and the Social Security Administration to provide social security and Medicare coverage for groups of employees in addition to, or in place of, coverage by a public retirement system.

Among topics that will be discussed are the legislative history of Section 218, coverage rules, tax compliance issues and modifications to agreements. The webinar will also include an introduction to a new FSLG Self-Assessment Compliance tool designed for use by government entities.

For information about times and to register on-line, go to <http://www.visualwebcaster.com/IRS/7407/reg.asp?id=7407>. Enrolled agents may receive Continuing Professional Education credit for participating. For more information, contact Terry Welch, APR, Communications Specialist, Internal Revenue Service, (202) 283-9768.



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New Mexico's delegation to the 2010 NLC Congress of Cities in Denver.
 From left: Jim Chavez; League Treasurer Gloria Chavez; Dumas Slade, WH Pacific; League President Barb Wiard; Artesia Councilor Jose Aguilar; League President-Elect Matt White; Roswell Councilor Judy Stubbs; League Vice President Mary Homan; League Immediate Past President Dolores Connor; Bill Connor; League Intergovernmental Relations Director Regina Romero; Questa Administrator Brent Jaramillo; Questa Mayor Esther Garcia; and League Risk Services Director Ed Zedel.

Cities Invited to Apply for Training Program to Improve Police Interventions with Children and Teens

NLC and the Fred Rogers Company invite cities to apply for a no-cost training program that enhances community policing efforts and public safety by improving police interactions with children and teens.

Children are almost always present when police officers perform their duties. Encounters with police can make a profound impact on children. Children also can make officers' work much easier or harder and considerably safer or more dangerous. The Connecting Cops & Kids training program gives officers the tools they need to build trust among children and families in the communities they serve; increases their safety and effectiveness while on patrol; helps them promote greater cooperation and reporting of criminal activity; strengthens partnerships with social service agencies that work with the same youth officers encounter on a daily basis; and enhances officers' ability to improve public safety.

At the heart of the program is a series of professionally-produced documentary videos that serve as jumping-off points for discussions. Using a flexible curriculum, the program builds on expertise both in child development and the day-to-day reality of police work, having been developed by The Fred Rogers Company in collaboration with the Boston, New Haven, and Pittsburgh police departments, the National Center for Children Exposed to Violence, and the Child Witness to Violence Project.

In recognition of the program's impact in Greater Pittsburgh, where it has been extensively piloted, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing is supporting a series of local training sessions in communities across the nation. Trainings will be held at 14 sites, as well as online, at no cost to participating cities or their police departments and officers. Follow-up support will be provided for local trainers interested in facilitating additional workshop.

For more information, go to <http://www.fci.org/cops-kids/index.html>

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Republicans Face Obstacles in Redistricting

By Daniel C. Vock, Stateline Staff Writer

If there is any state where the power to draw political district lines is well understood, surely it must be Texas.

It was in Texas, after all, where Democratic state legislators fled the Capitol and later the state in 2003 to stall a controversial Republican redistricting plan. The Democrats ultimately relented and the Republicans passed their unusual “mid-decade” map. Partly as a result, the GOP gained six congressional seats in the next election.

As another round of redistricting gets underway this year, Texas Republicans sit in an even stronger position. They hold bigger majorities in both chambers of the state Legislature than they did in 2003, and they continue to control the governorship. What’s more, thanks to its fast-growing population, Texas will get four more seats in Congress. Where those new districts will go — and what kind of candidates will be likely to win them — is largely up to Republicans to decide.

Republicans will get to enjoy the spoils of electoral success in many parts of the country this year as states redraw political boundaries for the U.S. House of Representatives as well as for state legislatures. In November, voters put the GOP in charge of 29 governorships and boosted Republican numbers in state legislatures to the highest level in a lifetime. As a result of electoral gains, Republicans picked up control of all the levers of the redistricting process in Alabama, Indiana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

But even in Texas, Republican exuberance has its limits. While the party in control clearly has the advantage, the messy, complicated and often self-serving nature of the redistricting process can dilute that leverage. Politicians naturally want to draw maps that benefit their party, but they also want to create politically safe districts for themselves. And those two goals don’t always fit together.

That’s a common situation in the 37 states that let state legislators draw their own districts, says Ferrel Guillory, director of the Program on Public Life at the University of North Carolina. “Incumbents like to stay incumbents,” Guillory says. “Frankly, that’s going to be another limitation on what Republicans can do. They may want to draw more Republican districts, but there may be some Republican legislators who don’t want to lose their voters.”

The limits of power

There are other considerations that will complicate matters for Republicans in Texas, as well as many other states. One of them is that many rural districts where Republicans have done well are losing population. Meanwhile, growth is occurring predominantly in large metro areas, which tend to be more politically competitive.

In North Carolina, for example, growth in the counties containing Raleigh, Wilmington and Charlotte all outstripped the state average. That means they will likely gain clout under the next legislative map. The real fight in drawing new districts, Guillory says, will be within those metropolitan areas. North Carolina law requires districts to stay within county boundaries as much as possible. That means Mecklenburg County, the home of Charlotte, may have to

compete with suburban counties in its orbit, such as Union and Cabarrus counties, for new legislative seats.

In Texas, Kel Seliger, the Republican chairman of the state Senate’s redistricting committee, says some Republican legislators representing rural areas may be in for trouble. In the Texas Panhandle, the mostly rural region where Seliger lives, Republicans now control all six state House districts. Seliger suspects the area will have only four or five House seats in the next election. The new map could force two or more sitting Republican House members to face each other in a primary in 2012.

Ironically, the supersized majorities resulting from last fall’s elections also pose problems for Republicans. In some states, the GOP may be at its high-water mark in terms of control of the legislature. Republican freshmen who won in November naturally will want safer districts for future elections but doing that for all of them may prove an unrealistic goal.

Consider state House District 134 in Texas, a swing district on the west side of Houston near Rice University. The newly elected state representative there is Sarah Davis, a Republican who narrowly beat a Democratic incumbent who had won convincingly just two years before. As Rice political science professor Robert Stein explains, it would be natural for Davis to want to tweak her district lines to make her own reelection a safer bet. But it would be difficult to find more Republican voters in her area to help her future bids.

The federal factor

Perhaps the biggest wildcard facing GOP plans for Texas and many other Southern states is that the Obama administration must approve their new maps, both for congressional and state legislative districts. Since 1965, Section 5 of the federal Voting Rights Act has required that the U.S. Department of Justice sign off on any major changes to elections procedures for states and other jurisdictions that had especially bad histories of racial discrimination.

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Nine states must secure the approval of the Justice Department for their statewide maps: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. Another seven states must submit maps that affect certain counties or townships: California, Florida, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina and South Dakota.

This year marks the first time that a Democratic president will be in power when the sign-off happens. What that wrinkle will mean for the approval process is still unclear. In 2001, the Justice Department under President George W. Bush rejected legislative redistricting plans in Arizona, Florida and Texas on the grounds that they reduced the ability of minorities to elect their candidates of choice. A few years later, Democrats attacked the agency for how it handled the Texas Republicans' controversial mid-decade map. The Justice Department's staff attorneys concluded that the 2003 plan would lead to backsliding in congressional representation for blacks and Hispanics, but politically appointed superiors overruled them and approved the plan anyway.

Gerald Hebert, a lawyer who worked in the Justice Department from the Nixon administration through the Clinton administration, says that episode was the first case of political interference in the process that he can remember. Hebert, now the executive director of The Campaign Legal Center, a group that focuses on campaign finance and ethics, says the analysis of whether maps protect the voting power of minorities is typically pretty straightforward.

The agency plugs the latest Census data into the current maps and determines how many districts have a big enough minority group to elect their own representative. The agency compares those results to the results of the same analysis for the new map that has been submitted. If the new map has fewer minority districts than the old map, the agency rejects the new map.

Another test is more subjective, Hebert says. That test is to ensure that proposed district changes are not being done to discriminate against a racial or ethnic minority. But even the first test may be open to more interpretation as the nation grows more diverse, with immigrants settling not only in cities but in suburbs and exurbs, too.

In Texas and in many other states, legislators will have to accommodate the growing Latino population. They also will have to take into account the migration of African Americans from urban centers to the suburbs, says Justin Levitt, a professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. "Texas is probably going to be the location of the trickiest legal issues," Levitt says, "but I think the changing demographics across many of the covered areas (that have to get Justice Department approval) are going to force people to take a real hard look."

A hard look from the feds is what Seliger, the Texas senator, is expecting. "It's not unreasonable to suspect (there might be more scrutiny), because it's an Obama Justice Department," Seliger says, "and ours are delegations nominated by Republicans."

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regional issues of water quality, drought and water availability, pollution, energy, natural resources, transportation, and climate.

Governor Otter of Idaho is the current Chair of the Western Governors' Association (WGA). He has a strong policy of achieving consensus positions and meaningfully involving key partners, like the Western Municipal Association. The WGA recognizes the need to work with the 5,300 municipalities in the west. Given the challenges facing the west, and considering the difficulty of communicating with thousands of western cities, working with regional organizations like the Western Municipal Association is critical. In a warning to western cities, counties, and the states, Inmann repeated the old saying, "Be at the table, or be on the menu."

A continuing WGA project with major implications for the entire West is the development of new sources of alternative energy. The WGA has received a large federal grant to find the best sources of alternative energy in the West, and plan new or expanded transmission lines to bring the energy to market. Interestingly, the most problematic part of developing new energy is planning and building new transmission lines. In the past two years, the WGA has assessed the most promising new alternative energy sources. The WGA has invited the Western Municipal Conference to participate in the first transmission line planning session on January 11. The WMA Coordinator will attend the meeting and report back to the western state leagues.

Inmann also especially urged the WMA and municipalities to support the Secure Rural Schools Funding in Congress. Secure Rural Schools Funding is critical to funding schools. Although schools are generally administered by counties or the state, education is a critical issue for every city resident. Secure Rural Schools is essentially a way of compensating rural school districts for the loss of revenue from federal land and economic activities on federal land (logging).

In an earlier meeting between WMA leaders, Inmann and her staff, she offered to include WMA in the development and approval of WMA policy positions as they arise.

Sam Mamet, Colorado Municipal League Director asked what WMA could do in Washington D.C. in March when NLC holds its annual Congressional Cities Conference. Inmann said that the WGA has a lobbyist in Washington that can work with WMA on strategic issues. WMA Chair Lou Ogden said that before we go to Washington, the group should determine an appropriate set of issues working with the state municipal league directors. There was general agreement. Last year WMA Chair Ogden attended the Western Governors Association annual meeting to establish a working relationship. There was general agreement that he should also attend this year.

NLC Policy Committees leaders from the west reported on western issues:

- FAIR (Finance) - Need to help get the feds to act on marijuana issues. They currently, "have their heads in the sand."
- TIS (Transportation) - There will be a "big show" for the transportation bill. The big issue will be the cost. The committee invites comments from western states on specific transportation issues.
- HD (Human Development) - The key issues are education reform and helping returning veterans.
- PS (Public Safety) - Immigration is the key issue.




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