

NEW MEXICO
MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

The Municipal Reporter

A Publication of the New Mexico Municipal League

Fall 2023



Fall Colors in New Mexico

NEW MEXICO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

New Mexico Municipal League



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Municipal Reporter

Fall 2023

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For any questions or comments about this newsletter, or to submit content for publication, please contact Alison Nichols at anichols@nmml.org

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President's Message

Dear members,

I begin my term as New Mexico Municipal League President with excitement and gratitude, and a big thank you for entrusting me with this important role. I'm honored to serve the League and municipalities around our state. My experience as a Las Cruces city councilor, as well as my experience in other roles – as a public health advocate, former small business owner, and mother to three amazing humans – have shown me how important it is to support vibrant, healthy, safe communities where our families can thrive. I look forward to working with all of you to achieve those goals for all of our communities, through advocacy in the legislature, education and knowledge-sharing, and collaboration and networking.



I'm fortunate to be able to serve as President with the support of an incredibly capable, dedicated executive committee. I want to especially recognize our immediate past president, Mayor Pro Tem Mike Miller of Portales, for his support and mentorship over the past year.

A few days after stepping into the president's role, we held our first of two strategic planning sessions, convening a small group to discuss what success looks like for the organization, goals for the next one to three years, and the value and benefits that we want to provide to members and other stakeholders. The session was productive and thought-provoking – thank you to those who participated! The sessions will inform a comprehensive three-year strategic plan for the League. This plan will serve as a roadmap, outlining our vision, mission, goals, and priorities. It will help us make informed decisions, allocate resources effectively, and measure our progress. It will also serve as a guide for those who step into leadership roles in coming years. To ensure that our strategic plan is inclusive and representative of the diverse needs and perspectives of our members, we will be reaching out to you for your input and feedback. We want to hear your ideas, your concerns, and your vision for the League.

In addition to defining our strategic priorities, I also want to make sure we are fully engaging the talents, skills, and perspectives of our younger elected officials and staff, by actively encouraging and supporting participation of newer members in our training events, policy committees, subsections, and legislative activities. Making sure we engage the newest generations of city officials and staff helps us ensure that our organization stays relevant and effective. We are fortunate that our experienced members continually share their extensive knowledge with newer, younger members. I also see value in strengthening our peer networks, where members at similar professional stages can support each other's growth and development while expanding their professional networks. As a newer elected official, I've found tremendous value in building professional relationships with more experienced colleagues, as well as with my peers – I hope that many of you, as well, benefit from connections and support from other League members.

Thank you again for the trust you have placed in me as your President. I look forward to working closely with all of you over the next year and beyond to support our communities. Please reach out to me with your ideas, concerns, and suggestions – or just to say hello!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tessa Abeyta".

Tessa Abeyta, NMML President

Councilor, City of Las Cruces

Municipal League News

Save the Date(s)!

Newly Elected Officials Training: January 9, Santa Fe

We invite all newly-elected municipal officials to join us for a one-day orientation. Begin your public service journey effectively and confidently, with an overview of Municipal League and Self-Insurers' Fund resources, as well as fundamental topics in local governance, such as parliamentary procedure, Open Meetings Act compliance, and ethics in local government.

Municipal Officials Leadership Institute (Level I): January 10-11, Santa Fe

The Municipal League's Municipal Officials Leadership Institute (MOLI) provides municipal leaders with the knowledge and tools for effective leadership, through a two-part series (Level I and Level II), covering topics such as forms of municipal governance, municipal revenue and taxes, parliamentary procedures, social media use and communications, risk management, and more.

More details and registration information coming soon!



UPCOMING EVENTS

For a full list of events, please refer to the Municipal League website

November 13-17

DFA Local Government Division Budget Workshop*
Virtual

November 29 – December 1

Government Finance Officers Association Meeting
Albuquerque

November 30 – December 1

New Mexico City Managers Association Meeting
Albuquerque

November 30 – December 1

New Mexico Municipal Attorneys Association Meeting
Albuquerque

December 6-8

New Mexico Law Enforcement Conference
Albuquerque

January 5

New Mexico Airport Managers Association Meeting
Albuquerque

January 9

Newly Elected Officials Training
Santa Fe

January 10-11

Municipal Officials Leadership Institute
Santa Fe

February 6

Aviation Day
Santa Fe

February 8

Municipal Day
Santa Fe

*In partnership with the Department of
Finance and Administration

Municipal League News & Events

Municipal League Holds Annual Conference in Farmington

The Municipal League held its 66th Annual Conference from August 29 – September 1 at the Farmington Civic Center, with attendees from across the state coming together for a packed week of workshops, subsection meetings, community service, League business, networking, and exploring Farmington.

Outgoing League president Mayor Pro Tem Mike Miller of Portales and Mayor Nate Duckett of Farmington welcomed attendees and kicked off the general session with guest speaker Matt Lehrman, who discussed how communities can prioritize conversation over conflict. Workshops covered topics including economic development and outdoor recreation, mental health in the workplace, alternative responses to substance abuse and homelessness, crisis communications, and more. During the past presidents' luncheon, attendees heard House Speaker Javier Martinez and Minority Floor Leader Ryan Lane discuss their legislative priorities, civility and respect in the legislature, and finding balance amidst the stress of the legislative cycle. Leadership guru Shannon Norris-Parrish addressed the crowd for the closing session.

At the Annual Business Meeting, delegates voted on open Executive Committee and Board positions.



Mayor Nate Duckett welcomes conference attendees to Farmington



Incoming Board members Jack Torres (Treasurer), Gordy Hicks (Member at Large), Guadalupe Cano (Member at Large), Mike Miller (Past President), Gregg Hull (Vice President), Tessa Abeyta (President), Lynn Crawford (President Elect), and Jim Maynard (Member at Large)

The City of Farmington hosted several fun-filled events, including an evening of music, magic, and fire dancers at the Farmington Visitors Center overlooking the Animas River; a fun run/walk along the city's beautiful river trails; and a downtown "block party," complete with a museum reception, live musical performance from the Redneck Tenors, a DJ, mechanical bull, and more.

The Municipal League Board and staff extend a huge thank you to Farmington elected officials and staff, as well as to speakers, sponsors, volunteers, and attendees – you made the 2023 Annual Conference a success!

See you next year in Clovis!



Attendees warm up before the fun run/walk along the Animas River



Magician Cody Landstrom entertains the crowd at the welcome reception



Risk Services Director Clinton Nicley, Executive Director AJ Forte, and League President-Elect Tessa Abeyta enjoy the welcome reception

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING ELECTION RESULTS

Delegates voted to elect the following League members to the Executive Committee and Board:

President-Elect: Lynn Crawford, Mayor, Ruidoso

Vice-President: Gregg Hull, Mayor, Rio Rancho

Treasurer: Jack Torres, Mayor, Bernalillo

Directors-at-Large: Gordon Hicks, Mayor Pro Tem, Socorro; Guadalupe Cano, Mayor Pro Tem, Silver City; James Maynard, Mayor Pro Tem, Cloudcroft

Congratulations to all!

Thank You, Mayor Pro Tem Miller!

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Miller of Portales passed the League president's baton to Councilor Tessa Abeyta of Las Cruces on October 1. Mayor Pro Tem Miller will serve in the role of immediate past president for the next year.

During his term as president, League board members and staff benefitted from Mayor Pro Tem Miller's extensive knowledge of local government issues, as well as his years of experience working with the state Legislature. We are grateful for his many years of public service, and continued dedication to the League.



Meet the League's 2023-2024 Executive Committee!

President

Tessa Abeyta, Councilor, Las Cruces

Councilor Tessa Abeyta grew up in Los Alamos and graduated from New Mexico State University as a first-generation college graduate with a degree in Government. Over the past 14 years, she has served in various roles in Las Cruces and beyond to help improve lives in the community and across the state, including serving as a city councilor beginning in 2020. As a city councilor, she has fought for issues that relate to child welfare, health, and social services. In addition to her role on the council, she also works statewide as a public health advocate.

Tessa is a proud single mother of Elliot and Luca (age 15) and Persephone (age 10). Tessa loves Las Cruces and has chosen it to be home for her and her family.



President-Elect

Lynn Crawford, Mayor, Ruidoso



Since moving to Ruidoso in 2006, Mayor Lynn Crawford has been civic-minded and continuously involved in the betterment of the community. He served on the Ruidoso Village Council for six years prior to being elected mayor in March of 2018.

Over the years, Lynn has honed his skills as an entrepreneur. Lynn and his wife, Traci, opened The Dream Catcher Café and Catering Company in Ruidoso. He also serves as the General Manager of the Ruidoso Jockey Club and RJC Catering, which is owned and operated by 400 independent members. Previously, Lynn owned a video business and a mechanical business that specialized in electrical service, plumbing and construction. He also spent time working as a catastrophe adjuster for major insurance companies.

Lynn has two daughters, Amanda, an attorney in Dallas, and Cadyn, a doctor in Corpus Christi. He is also the proud grandfather to three adorable grandbabies.

Vice President

Gregg Hull, Mayor, Rio Rancho

Mayor Gregg Hull was elected as mayor in April 2014 via a runoff election to a four-year term. He was re-elected in March 2018 and again in March 2022, to four-year terms. Gregg has called New Mexico home for over thirty years, with most of those years spent raising his family with wife Carrie, in Rio Rancho.

Having owned and operated a successful business for over a decade, Gregg's experience in creating long-term jobs and making a payroll has been a huge asset to Rio Rancho. Gregg has always seen the need to implement innovative solutions to continue moving Rio Rancho forward. With his experience as a dad, grandfather, husband, business owner, and more – Gregg has taken on the role of Mayor and served his community honorably.

"Public service is a calling and something I don't take lightly. With a growing community, we continue to need steady and hardworking leadership. Carrie, the kids, and I love Rio Rancho and we want to continue to give back to the community that blessed us with so many great opportunities."



Treasurer

Jack Torres, Mayor, Bernalillo



Mayor Jack Torres was honored to be elected mayor of the Town of Bernalillo in 2010. He was re-elected in 2014, 2018, and 2022. Since that first election he has been an active member of the League, serving as District 8 Director, Director at large, and most recently as Treasurer. He has also served on Policy and Resolutions Committees as well as advocating and testifying before legislative committees. He also serves on several regional boards including Metropolitan Transportation, Rio Metro and MRCOG Executive Board.

Jack is a native of Bernalillo, graduating from Bernalillo High School in 1975 and Harvard University in 1979. Has been married to Anna for 40 years and has helped raise four sons and loves time spent with grandchildren. He is retired from a career as a small businessman.

Municipal League News

Immediate Past President

Mike Miller, Mayor Pro Tem, Portales

Mayor Pro Tem Michael (Mike) Miller is a life-long resident of Portales, New Mexico where he graduated high school and earned a BBA from Eastern New Mexico University.

Mike has always been dedicated to bettering his community and began his lobbying career doing just that. In 1985, while Fire Chief for the City of Portales, Mike also served as Chairman of the New Mexico Department of Health's EMS Advisory Committee. It was during this time that Mike lobbied for legislative resources to meet the needs of fire and EMS organizations.

In addition to his work in city government, Mike also served as County Manager in Roosevelt County for five years prior to starting his own consulting business, Professional Directions in 2002.



Mike continues to work in his community by serving on the Portales City Council where he holds the position as Mayor Pro Tem. Mike also serves on the Board of the New Mexico Municipal League Self Insurers' Fund. Mike is a member and served on the Board of Directors of the New Mexico Amigos, the Official Goodwill Ambassadors of the State of New Mexico.

Mike and his wife, Julie, have one daughter, Michelle, who resides in San Angelo, TX. In his spare time Mike enjoys golf and spending time with his dog Penny and his grand-dogs Ellie and Ivan.

New Mexico Fire Departments Convene for Annual Conference



The New Mexico Fire Service Conference (NMFSC) was held in Ruidoso from September 29 through Sunday, October 1, with over 200 registrants and 42 exhibitors. Attendees represented over 70 departments and other entities from within New Mexico.

The NMFCA welcomes newly elected Board Members:

President: Kevin Hope, Fire Chief – City of Artesia

President Elect: Timothy "TJ" Cathey, Fire Chief – City of Portales

Director I: Diane Queener, Fire Chief – City of Texico

Director III: John Gabaldon, Fire Chief – Village of Los Lunas

Thank you to all who attended and to the NMFCA Board/Planning Committee!



2023-2025 NM Fire Chiefs Association Board of Directors: President Kevin Hope (Artesia), Director John Gabaldon (Los Lunas), Director Justin Drumm (Clayton), Immediate Past President James Salas (Dexter), Director Mike Cherry (Quay Co.), President-Elect TJ Cathey (Portales), and Director Diane Queener (Texico).



Outdoor exhibits at the Fire Service Conference



Attendees (including the smallest ones) enjoying the NMFSC Linda Gaume Jaramillo Memorial Golf Tournament

Municipal League Members Address Benefits, Challenges of Electric Vehicle Charging and Fleet Electrification During Panel Discussion at Statewide Transportation Symposium

As part of the Governor's Transportation Symposium, held on October 16 in Albuquerque, municipal leaders discussed their cities' progress towards widespread EV charging and fleet electrification, as well as some of the challenges to broader electrification of infrastructure and fleets.

Mayor Ravi Bhasker of Socorro, Albuquerque Chief Operations Officer Kevin Sourisseau, and Taos Town Manager Andrew Gonzales participated as panelists, with League Executive Director AJ Forte moderating the discussion.

Mayor Bhasker discussed Socorro's progress in installing EV chargers, noting that supply chain constraints have made it more challenging for the city to purchase components – especially transformers – needed to install charging stations. In Taos, Mr. Gonzales shared that the town has bought EVs for its fleet, including a Ford F-150 Lightning for its police department, and encouraged updates to procurement policies to facilitate local government purchasing of EVs, as well as sufficient chargers for municipal fleets. Mr. Sourisseau also discussed Albuquerque's goals to increase the number of EVs in the city fleet, citing limited options for lower-priced EVs as a challenge. For example, many EV models from large foreign automakers like Honda and Toyota are not on the statewide price agreement, leaving mostly higher-priced EVs as options.

Other panels at the symposium covered topics including legislative pathways to transportation electrification, preparing the workforce for an EV future, and public-private partnerships for EV charging.



Albuquerque Chief Operations Officer Kevin Sourisseau, Taos Town Manager Andrew Gonzales, Socorro Mayor Ravi Bhasker, and League Executive Director AJ Forte discuss local EV charging and electrification



New Mexico Self Insurers' Fund Helpful Contacts

New Mexico Self-Insurers' Fund: Helpful Contacts

- If an employee is injured on the job, please fill out a Workers' Compensation form (found on the website) and submit to Workcomp@nmsif.org
- If vehicles or equipment need repairs after an incident, please fill out the Loss form (found on the website) and submit to Liabilityclaims@nmsif.org
- If you receive a tort claim, asserting damage from the member's action, please forward it to Liabilityclaims@nmsif.org

*For forms and more information for NMSIF members, please visit our website:
www.nmml.org/161/Insurance*

Contact us by phone at (505) 982-5573 with any questions

Legislative Corner

New Mexico Municipal League 2024 Legislative Priorities

The Second Session of the Fifty-Sixth Legislature will begin at noon on January 16, 2024. League members and staff began preparing for the legislative session over the summer, identifying key legislative priorities through the League's policy process, and meeting with legislators and other stakeholders to share municipalities' concerns.

The Municipal League Board of Directors approved the League's 2024 legislative priorities at its October 6 meeting, directing League staff to focus on several key items relating to local public safety, infrastructure, and taxation. Legislation during the 2024 session, like all 30-day sessions, will be limited to bills with budgetary impacts, as well as those on the governor's "call" or legislative agenda.

The list of legislative priorities is not exhaustive, and the League assesses bills throughout the session for support or opposition. League staff sends out a weekly legislative bulletin during the session to update members on how priority bills are faring, identify new bills with potential municipal impacts, and request League member assistance to support or oppose bills.

Legislative Priorities



Support for Statewide Emergency Medical Services

The Municipal League supports additional, much-needed funding for the state's chronically underfunded emergency medical services (EMS). The state's EMS fund currently receives approximately \$2.8 million annually. High-quality EMS service is critical for communities across the state, providing lifesaving interventions, transportation to healthcare facilities, and support for disaster response, as well as for the state's growing outdoor recreation industry.



Key 2024 Legislative Session Dates

January 2 - January 12:
Legislation may be prefiled

January 16: Opening day (noon)

January 31: Deadline for introduction of legislation

February 15: Session ends (noon)

March 6: Legislation not acted upon by governor is pocket vetoed

However, EMS services, especially in rural areas, face significant financial challenges, with capital costs high and rising.

The League supports directing 10 percent of health insurance premium tax revenue to the EMS Fund for local EMS services to cover costs of supplies, equipment, vehicles, and other operational needs.



Funding for Water Infrastructure Projects through the Water Project Fund

The Municipal League supports fully funding Water Project Fund projects that have been vetted and meet Water Trust Board requirements. The New Mexico Finance Authority estimates \$135 million in available funding for water projects in 2024, and has received approximately \$275 million in project applications.

The Water Project Fund is a key funding source for local governments to implement critical water-related projects, including flood prevention, water conservation and treatment, and watershed restoration and management. The League supports leveraging record state revenues to invest in communities' critical infrastructure and natural resources.



Expansion of Workers' Compensation Coverage for First Responders

The Municipal League supports expanding workers' compensation for first responders, recognizing the risks that law enforcement, firefighters, and others take to serve and protect their communities. The League supports including breast, lung, and prostate cancers as presumptive occupational diseases for firefighters, entitling them to workers' compensation benefits if they are diagnosed with these conditions. The League also supports establishing hearing loss as a presumptive occupational condition for law enforcement officers.

The League believes that first responders deserve adequate coverage when diagnosed with conditions linked to their service.



Coverage of Public Safety Radio Network Fees for Local Public Safety Agencies

The Municipal League supports ongoing funding to cover public safety agencies' fees for the state's Public Safety Radio Communications network. Reliable, interoperable communications are critical for public safety across New Mexico, and providing a sustained funding source for subscription fees will encourage adoption of the statewide network. Currently, public safety agencies must pay monthly service fees of \$20 to \$30 per radio to the Department of Information Technology, which can be prohibitive, especially for smaller agencies.

The Municipal League supports an appropriation to DoIT to cover fees for municipal, county, and tribal public safety agencies that provide law enforcement, fire, medical, or other emergency services.



Elimination of Improper Tax Administration Fee on Local Governments

The League supports eliminating an improper "fee" on local governments charged by the Taxation and Revenue Department (TRD). Regulatory fees must be structured to cover only "reasonably necessary" costs of service; however, the current fee structure is not based on any actual assessed costs. Further, the fee generated over \$50 million for the state's general fund in FY22, while TRD's entire general fund budget was \$65.3 million, meaning that fee revenue represents nearly 80 percent of the agency's general fund budget. It is extremely unlikely that administration of local government taxes accounts for nearly 80 percent of TRD's general fund expenditures.

League Legislative Contacts

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Legislative Corner

Local Decision-Making Under Threat: State Preemption on the Rise

State preemption of local authority has been expanding across the country, in recent years, with state legislatures increasingly willing to limit or override the decision-making power of local governments.

Preemption refers to the use of state laws to nullify a local ordinance or authority. Preemption can take various forms, including prohibiting local governments from enacting certain laws, setting standards that local governments must meet, or directly enforcing specific policies at the local level. According to the National League of Cities, the number of preemption bills in state legislatures more than doubled between 2019 and 2021.

Preemption of local authority can show up in many policy areas. One common type of preemption limits how cities can raise and spend revenue. For example, in 2022, New Mexico legislators introduced a bill that would have prevented local governments from enacting new GRT rates for five years – a clear infringement on local governments' authority, and ability, to raise revenue.

Planning and zoning is another area where local governments often see preemption attempts. Some state legislatures have restricted local governments' ability to zone for affordable housing, for example. Other areas where state legislatures have attempted to curtail local authority include laws relating to minimum wage, sick leave, short-term rentals, ride-sharing services, broadband, and environmental regulations.

Preemption can have a number of detrimental impacts on local governments. **These laws undermine local self-governance by limiting the ability of local governing bodies to make decisions that are most appropriate for their communities, and to be responsive to citizen needs.** Preemption can also introduce unsuitable "one-size fits all" approaches into local policymaking, without accounting for the diversity of local needs and conditions. Additionally, preemption often takes the form of unfunded mandates that place administrative and financial burdens on local governments.

Preemption is not a partisan issue. Across the country, and in New Mexico, preemption attempts have come from both sides of the political aisle. However, as a 2017 NLC report points out, preemption efforts often concern politically divisive issues.

While New Mexico has not seen as many of these attempts as most other states, the 2023 session saw several preemption bills introduced (see examples in sidebar), and based on national trends, local governments in the state can expect to see more of these attempts in future legislative sessions.

In general, local leaders should ensure that they are educating legislators about the importance and value of local decision-making, including maintaining accountability, access, and transparency for residents and ensuring appropriate, effective policies for each community.

As with all legislation affecting municipalities, the Municipal League will carefully analyze any preemption bills and inform members of potential impacts. The Municipal League believes that effective, informed policy-making and local decision-making go hand-in-hand, and that local governing bodies and the state legislature should be partners when it comes to fostering safe, healthy, and vibrant communities.

Examples of Local Preemption Bills in 2023 New Mexico Legislative Session

Note: none of these bills passed the legislature

- **House Bill 241: Construction of Certain Dwelling Units.** Prohibits a county, a municipality, or the state from issuing a building permit for the construction of multifamily dwelling units consisting of twelve or more units where less than fifty-five percent of the total units are owner-occupied.

- **House Bill 425: Additional Housing Dwelling Units.** Requires that local zoning authorities accommodate the construction of one additional dwelling unit for each lot within a single-family zoning district regardless of lot size.

- **House Bill 430: Local Gov't Fuel Retailer Regulation.** Restricts local governments' authority to regulate fuel retailers and related transportation infrastructure.

- **House Bill 431: Local Gov't Utility Svc. Restrictions.** Restricts local governments' authority to impose utility service restrictions.

New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority:



**Your Partner in Housing
New Mexico**



INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING AVAILABLE



Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) & Rural Infrastructure Program (RIP)



Dona Ana MDWCA RIP 00028 Wastewater System Improvements

Loan and Grant Funding Available for Planning, Design and Construction Projects

CWSRF

Program Eligibility:

- Centralized Wastewater Collection and Treatment Projects
- Energy Efficiency at WWTP's, including solar
- Stormwater Projects
- Landfills
- Water Conservation
- Emerging Contaminants

*Interest Rates from 0-0.01%

*Year Round Application

APPLY NOW ➔



*No obligation to apply

RIP

Program Eligibility:

- Water
- Wastewater
- Solid Waste
- Projects

*1% Interest Rate

*Quick Funding

*Year Round Application

APPLY NOW ➔



*No obligation to apply

Contact us



NMENV-cpbinfo@state.nm.us



505-469-3365



<https://www.env.nm.gov/construction-programs/>

SLFRF Guidance

The Department of Finance and Administration can provide assistance to local governments related to **management and expenditure of federal State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF)** monies. This funding must be obligated by December 2024, or it will revert. DFA is also reaching out to communities to check the status of their SLFRF funds, and asks municipalities to provide an update on progress spending the funds, by sending their most recently completed compliance report.

Municipalities can contact **LeAndra Garcia, Grants Management Supervisor, Federal Grants Bureau** (Leandra.garcia@dfa.nm.gov) with any questions or to set up a time to discuss their SLFRF funds, or to share their latest compliance reports.

From the Archives: New Mexico State Record, December 27, 1918

Municipalities League Recommends Legislation

That cities be allowed to levy extra taxes up to ten mills with the approval of the state's tax commission, and five mills without such approval will be recommended by the New Mexico league of municipalities to the legislature. A special levy of three mills in addition to levies provided for in the statutes is now permitted.

The league at a recent meeting in Albuquerque declared in favor of bond elections at the call of city authorities. There was recommended the investigation

of the conditions surrounding the federal aid road law, which shuts out towns with a population of over 2000 from the benefits of federal aid.

Changes in present laws so that cities may collect their own road taxes and spend them, and that villages may change their boundaries on their own motion, and that occupation tax laws may be made more specific and that boards of aldermen may elect mayors to fill vacancies, will be recommended.



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