

Benefits of VML membership

In these alarming times, I take comfort in all the encouraging signs I see from Virginia's local governments and leaders. Never has it been more vital that we stay connected through our shared membership in the Virginia Municipal League.

- VML President and City of Norfolk Council Member,
Thomas R. Smigiel, Jr.

Advocacy

Members can serve on VML's policy and legislative committees. In conjunction with VML's full-time legislative staff, the members of these committees determine the direction of VML's advocacy for the coming year.

Policy Committees – VML has 6 policy committees consisting of elected and appointed officials nominated by member localities. Each local government may nominate up to two people per policy committee, at least one of whom must be an elected official. The policy committees update the VML Policy Statements which are presented to the general membership for final approval each fall. These statements are used by the Legislative Committee to craft that year's Legislative Program (available under the "Advocacy" tab at www.vml.org).

Legislative Committee – The VML Legislative Committee is responsible for considering and developing legislative positions. The committee consists of 24 individuals holding local elective or appointed positions, all appointed by VML's President. The legislative committee presents the Legislative Program (available under the "Advocacy" tab at www.vml.org) to the general membership for final approval each fall.

VML Legislative Staff – Using the work of the policy and legislative committees as their guides, VML staff monitor legislation and advocate for member localities. Throughout the year, legislative staff attend committee meetings, confer with state officials, coordinate with stakeholders, testify on matters that affect localities, and participate on workgroups, boards, and commissions. When the General Assembly is in session, VML staff meet regularly with their Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) counterparts and member locality liaisons to coordinate and strategize advocacy actions.

While VML works to make it possible for you to do your jobs, you are the ones doing the jobs. I am proud to work on your behalf.

- VML Executive Director, Michelle Gowdy



Communications, Publications and Outreach

With more of life happening online these days, VML's communications team is working to provide more ways to keep our members informed. We continue to add video updates, forums, podcasts, and webinars to our library.

Website – VML maintains a robust website with resources, documents, information, forms and updates relevant to our members. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we've used our website to maintain a COVID-19 resources page. Please note: While VML is pleased to act as a public resource for most information, to better serve our member localities in the coming year, access to certain content on our site will be restricted to VML members only.

I just wanted to thank you for the COVID-19 resources page VML put up. It lays out current requirements so clearly. I've been contacted by public, reporters and a government official or two and I always share the link. It's a valuable resource.

- VML member



Newsletter – VML publishes an electronic newsletter to subscribers bi-weekly and more frequently during the legislative session or when critical information needs to be disseminated. Our members know they can count on VML to keep them informed.

Legislative Alerts – During General Assembly sessions, VML also sends email alerts and calls for action as time sensitive issues affecting our members come before the House and Senate. VML strives to ensure that our members know when, how and why their voices are needed to promote or resist legislation important to localities.



Magazine – For nearly 100 years, VML has produced a print magazine for our members. Originally called *Virginia Municipal Review*, VML's magazine, now called *Virginia Town & City*, is published 10 times a year. Each issue focuses on a specific theme of interest to our members. Additionally, the magazine highlights activities and achievements of our members, celebrates local government member pro-

motions, retirements and awards and spotlights the history and culture of our members.

Targeted Messages – VML sends updates, and information and opportunities to our members to be disseminated within the local government as deemed appropriate.

Presentations – VML staff typically travel to member localities all over the state throughout the year, to engage with local officials, staff and communities including activities such as presentations of awards to winners of various contests and/or achievements, Town Hall sessions, education and presentations of the legislative agenda to City and Town Councils. While we hope that we will be able to resume meeting in person soon, we will be offering these options virtually while restrictions on gatherings are in effect.

Events & Training

As we all adjust to the social limitations made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic, VML staff are committed to maintaining the benefits of VML events and training. In some cases, this will mean offering virtual sessions complemented by informational modules. In other cases, it may mean limiting the size and duration of smaller, in-person events as they become possible. Regardless, the events listed below will be offered this year in new and creative ways.

Newly Elected Officials Conference (twice yearly) offers timely and relevant training for newly elected, as well as, veteran officials. The event generally covering topics such as council manager relations; FOIA/COIA; understanding budget, finance, and local government investments.

Finance Forum (every winter) provides a deep dive into Virginia's fiscal issues utilizing Senior Legislative Service staff, subject matter experts, related state agency representatives and our partners. Participants of this popular forum typically include elected officials, managers and administrators, budget and finance staff, and legislative liaisons.

Local Government Legislative Day (held halfway through the General Assembly session) provides an opportunity for members to gather in Richmond, hear updates from VML and partner policy staff as well as administration members and often the Governor and other elected officials. The afternoon is available to go to the General Assembly and meet with delegations to provide input on pending legislation while the evening features a reception where delegates, senators and VML members have an opportunity to network and socialize. This event will be adapted to the changing times!



Annual Conference (every fall) brings together hundreds of individuals including local elected officials, appointed managers and municipal employees, state agencies, business entities who partner with localities, subject matter experts and others interested in local government in Virginia. This event also includes the election of officers and the adoption of the Virginia Municipal League Legislative Program.

Regional Meetings & Dinners (varies) are held throughout the state to provide local officials and staff opportunities to hear from VML's policy team about developments at the General Assembly, upcoming legislative issues, and new policies coming into effect. These also provide an opportunity to ask questions and make requests most pertinent to the locality.

Perks

Legislative Summary – Each year, the VML staff compile a legislative report including summaries of bills that are of interest to localities. The full report is distributed to members.

Publications – We are pleased to offer to our members resources such as the updated *Handbook for Mayors and Council Members*, the guide to the *Virginia Freedom of Information Act*, *Virginia Conflict of Interests Act* and the *Virginia Public Records Act*, and many other publications with information vital to serving in local government.

Partnerships – VML maintains active partnerships with a variety of organizations to provide benefits to our members. These organizations include the National League of Cities, Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA), VML/VACo Finance, GovDeals and the American Legal Publishing Corporation.

Classified ads – Job postings are free to members. Just choose “Classifieds” from VML's homepage at www.vml.org to post.

...and more!

About VML

Founded in 1905, the Virginia Municipal League (VML) is a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan association of city, town and county governments working together to improve and assist local governments through legislative advocacy, research, education, and other services. VML membership consists of 37 cities, 165 towns and 8 counties.

The VML Executive Committee is made up of 13 local officials representing various localities from across the Commonwealth. The Executive Committee meets quarterly and works in conjunction with the VML Executive Director to carry out the mission of the league.

More information about VML can be found at www.vml.org.

