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Virginia Municipal League Members,

As President of the Virginia Municipal League, I want to take a minute and acknowledge that in these alarming times I take comfort in all the encouraging signs I see from Virginia’s local governments and leaders. If we felt that we were resilient, strong and adaptable before this crisis hit, now we *know* it! We are greater than the sum of our parts.

Never has it been more vital that we stay connected through our shared membership in the league. To this end, your VML Executive Committee and staff have been working hard to provide information both to you – our members – as well as to state leaders. We know that as orders are issued and guidelines are published, it can be frustrating to see gray areas and unanswered questions for localities. I truly believe that these are the result of a fast-changing situation that requires quick action at the state level and not a disavowal of local considerations. Rest assured; we are working on getting those answers and are keeping the concerns of local governments at the forefront of conversations with state and federal officials. Last week, along with VML staff and Executive Committee members, I participated in conversations with Senator Kaine and the Governor and will continue to talk with officials on local issues.

Moreover, we don’t miss an opportunity to remind state and federal leaders that localities are the first responders and the hardest hit economies! The National League of Cities has been working closely with us to monitor the various federal stimulus packages and the impacts on Virginia’s localities. Recent discussions with the Department of Housing and Community Development included how to ensure that the necessary funding reaches all localities of all sizes.

VML’s [COVID-19 Resources page](#) is a compilation of various resources for our localities. It is being updated continually so please check it often as we bring clarity to the questions local government leaders are grappling with. If you have items to add, please let us know.

Finally, a quick word on our upcoming policy committee meetings: The Governor has told us to stay home, so we will meet virtually in the coming months and we will assess other events as needed.

While the times are uncertain, I am absolutely certain that we will look back on this time with pride in our shared purpose and ultimate success. As VML’s Executive Director Michelle Gowdy observed in her recent [message to our members](#): “While VML works to make it possible for you to do your jobs, you are the ones *doing* the jobs!”

I can think of no more capable, dedicated and passionate local government leaders that I would rather share the burden of this work with. It is an honor to be your VML President at this – or any – time. Thank you!

Thomas R. Smigiel  
VML President

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