



January 10, 2025 | [nclm.org](https://nclm.org)

## The Recap

Dear League Members,

With the new year, we here on the League's Government Affairs team join city officials statewide in welcoming new faces in state government. There are many to get to know: Governor Josh Stein and his agency leaders, House Speaker Destin Hall, Senate Minority Leader Sydney Batch, and newly-elected Cabinet officials, all of whom have been recently sworn in to office.

Our work to connect with these officials began right after the election. Notably, we met with Treasurer Brad Briner, who we believe will bring fresh ideas on everything from how the pension system is managed and governed to how the Local Government Commission supports local governments. Briner's office will also administer a \$100 million loan program for local governments in areas affected by Helene. We are encouraged in our early conversations with the Treasurer and his staff about this critical program, and we hope to share more details with you very soon.

In the meantime, now that members of the N.C. General Assembly have been sworn in, it's time for you to connect with them before their Long Session gets underway Jan. 29. If you have not done so already, here is how we suggest you do this outreach.

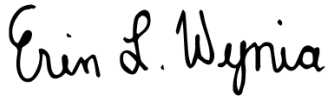
1. **LOOK UP YOUR LEGISLATORS.** The election brought new state representatives and senators to Raleigh. If you don't know their names, you can [look them up here](#) or ask our Grassroots Associate Whitney Murphy ([wmurphy@nclm.org](mailto:wmurphy@nclm.org)) for assistance.
2. **SCHEDULE A CONVERSATION.** Call your legislators' offices and ask about the best way to reach them. Most will have a preference for either talking by phone or an in-person meeting when they're back home over the next few weeks. Office info for House members is [here](#), and the list of Senate members' contacts is [here](#).
3. **PICK THREE TOPICS TO DISCUSS.** Whether it's an issue that we anticipate coming before legislators this session—like the downzoning law discussed below—or an important local issue for your city, pick no more than three topics to bring up. Give concrete examples of how the issue affects your town, and have a specific ask for the legislator's assistance.

There are other steps we encourage you to take at the start of the legislative session as well.

1. If your city developed a legislative agenda, please share it with our team by emailing it to Whitney ([wmurphy@nclm.org](mailto:wmurphy@nclm.org)).

2. Pay attention to local bill filing deadlines (more below in this newsletter). Legislators will need your request far in advance of those deadlines.
3. Make sure your city casts its vote on the League's legislative goals, following the directions in this newsletter.
4. [Register](#) for Town & State Dinner, the League's preeminent event that will bring together elected city officials and senior staff together with their legislators over a dinner in Raleigh on Feb. 26. Registration details are below, and don't delay. We expect this event to sell out!

Erin Wynia



Director of Government Affairs

---

## Downzoning Provision Creates Problems, Gains Attention

The problematic “down-zoning” land-use provision included in [a 131-page omnibus bill](#) continues to receive attention from media outlets and others as its implications on planning and development are being felt across the state. The provision, approved in December as part of a bill that could not be amended, expands a pre-existing definition of “down-zoning” to include commercial and industrial non-conformities that result from any new zoning, and requires the consent of all property owners in order for a change to be valid.

Following its approval, the UNC School of Government [published this extensive explanation of the legislation](#) and explored the potential ramifications for development and planning for growth. The national libertarian publication Reason wrote [this article](#), while local media outlets have also begun recognizing the significance of the change.

**NCLM encourages you to continue discussing the damaging implications of the provision with your legislators and to urge them to rescind the change on a statewide basis in the upcoming legislative session.**

As you do so, here are some important points to make:

- The new statute is creating confusion due to its broad nature. The retroactive date is also causing considerable headaches for some jurisdictions that have recently adopted Unified Development Ordinances, as they consider whether those are enforceable under the new law. As a result, planning staffs are slowing down some development approvals as they try to determine whether new uses have been invalidated by the law.
- The broader effects of the provision are likely to damage economic development in many places across the state as planners attempt to determine whether these land uses have been invalidated.
- Local governments adopt zoning and UDOs to encourage development, protect adjacent property values and make their communities more attractive for residents and businesses. They have always allowed nonconforming uses when making substantial zoning changes. The change under SB 382 ignores

that cities already protect these “grandfathered” uses.

- The definition of “downzoning” under the new statute is so broad that it captures a large percentage of re-zonings, including many new Unified Development Ordinances.
- It is important to understand that the change under SB 382 not only affects a single property that is nonconforming, but could invalidate entire zoning changes and UDOs. It would also give a single property owner the ability to veto those changes for all property owners.
- In cases of the adoption of UDOs or other substantial land-use changes to large areas, finding, notifying and gaining the approval of all existing landowners is impractical if not impossible.
- Land uses are constantly changing, and zoning ordinances must be adjusted to account for those new uses, including things like food trucks or vape shops. Creating limitations on those new uses could prove impossible under the new law. In addition, flood plain ordinances – required for National Flood Insurance Program coverage – could be invalidated.

NCLM’s Government Affairs staff will continue to monitor this issue closely and advocate for a repeal of the problematic downzoning provision. The unintended consequences of the statute—ranging from invalidated zoning changes to slowed development approvals—underscore the need for swift legislative correction.

---

## Legislature Convenes, Local Bill Deadline Looms

It may have been mostly perfunctory, but the North Carolina General Assembly’s 2025 session officially began on Wednesday. All 170 members of the General Assembly were sworn in and will serve for the next two years. The League and city officials congratulate Senate [President Pro Tem Phil Berger](#) on his re-election to that role, and [Rep. Destin Hall](#), newly elected as Speaker. Both chambers also adopted their respective rules that will direct the order of business for this legislative biennium. Significantly for municipalities, the rules set the following deadlines for local bills: In the Senate, local bills must be requested to legislative staff by Thursday, Feb. 13 and filed by 4 pm on Thursday, Feb. 27. In the House, local bills must be requested to legislative staff by Thursday, Feb. 20 and filed by 3 pm on Thursday, March 6. Now is the time to talk to your legislators and discuss any action you may need accomplished by a local bill—do not wait until the deadline for requests. Legislators will begin meeting in earnest on Jan. 29.

---

## Helene Recovery

Just before Christmas, Congress agreed to a federal disaster relief plan of \$100 billion, a figure that includes funding for a range of disasters across the country and programs designed to address specific needs affected by those events. Those include areas affected by Helene such as western North Carolina, wildfires in western states and Hawaii and coastal damage in Florida. Roughly \$29 billion is being funneled through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, while another \$21 billion is being used to assist farmers with crop losses.

In North Carolina, Gov. Josh Stein [announced](#) this week leaders of the Governor's Recovery Office for Western NC, which will in part administer programs funded by federal disaster dollars. With state budget officials now estimating storm damages at \$58 million, both state and federal leaders must allocate resources for recovery. New N.C. House Speaker Destin Hall told reporters Wednesday after legislators' swearing-in ceremony, "The No. 1 priority of this body, starting today, because today is day one, is doing all we can to rebuild Western North Carolina."

As the debate in Washington was unfolding regarding disaster assistance, NCLM Executive Director Rose Vaughn Williams and N.C. Association of County Commissioners Executive Director Kevin Leonard sent a letter to North Carolina's Congressional delegation as a follow-up to a meeting of over 200 local government officials in Morganton. The letter included links to [this document](#) and [video](#) outlining findings from that meeting, and we encourage you to refer to these as we continue making the case for disaster assistance in western North Carolina.

---

## Legislative Goals Voting Deadline Looms

There is still time for your municipality to vote for Legislative Goals for the upcoming legislative biennium! The deadline for voting is Jan. 17, with a Jan. 16 deadline to designate a voting delegate. Your participation in formulating NCLM's Legislative Goals is critical as cities and towns pursue these priorities and make clear that they are the collective needs of municipalities from across the state.

If your municipality has not voted or selected a voting delegate, you can do so by clicking on [this form](#). Official voting instructions and the ballot will be sent directly to the Voting Delegate. Each municipality, after receiving these [16 proposed advocacy goals](#), can cast a single vote by selecting 10 from the list. These proposals follow a long process, involving 197 individuals representing 154 municipalities, of submitting several hundred ideas and then having those compiled, refined and whittled down by the NCLM Legislative Policy Committee, and then reviewed by the NCLM Board of Directors. It's a process that truly allows our organization to live up to its motto, "Working as one, advancing all."

---

## Governor Makes Key Appointments

Gov. Josh Stein has announced a number of key appointments in recent days and weeks, after being sworn into office on New Year's Day. His cabinet secretaries will be sworn in by January 12 but cannot officially take office until they are confirmed by the Senate. Announced cabinet secretaries include D. Reid Wilson, Department of Environmental Quality; McKinley Wooten, Jr., Department of Revenue; Jocelyn Mitnaul Mallette, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs; Lee Lilley, Department of Commerce; Kristin Walker, Office of State Budget and Management; and Joey Hopkins, Department of Transportation. Governor Stein has also tapped several familiar faces to fill out senior roles on his leadership team. They include [Amber Harris](#), formerly the Director of Advocacy and Policy at the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, who will serve as Deputy Legislative Director; former Wake County Commissioner [Matt Calabria](#), who will also serve as the Director of the Governor's Recovery Office for Western North Carolina (GROW NC), a newly

established office created to support Helene recovery efforts in Western North Carolina; [David Webb](#), who will serve as the Intergovernmental and Outreach Director.

---

## Metro Mayors Coalition Celebrating 25 Years in Wilmington

Mayors from across North Carolina largest cities gathered in Historic Downtown Wilmington for the 2024 Metro Mayors Coalition (MMC) Annual Meeting. The event provided a valuable opportunity for the municipal leaders to engage in meaningful discussions, share insights, and plan for a productive 2025.

Attendees participated in discussions on critical issues facing urban North Carolina, from transportation to economic development. These conversations will help shape the direction of the MMC's work in the coming year, ensuring that all North Carolina's cities and towns continue to thrive and address challenges effectively.

The event featured an impressive lineup of special guests who shared their expertise and perspectives:

- Zach Ambrose, President of Ambrose Strategies
- James Jarvis, Executive Director of the American Red Cross of the Cape Fear Area
- Jim Trogdon, Major General (Ret.), Former Secretary of NCDOT, and VP of Transportation Business Line at AECOM
- North Carolina Senator Michael Lee
- Asheville City Staff and Community Nonprofit Leaders
- Morgan Jackson, Co-Founder and Partner of Nexus Strategies
- Chris Chung, CEO of Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC)

Relive the highlights or catch a glimpse of what you missed by viewing the event photos [here](#).

The Metro Mayors Coalition extends its gratitude to everyone who participated, making the annual meeting a success. Stay tuned for more updates and initiatives as the MMC continues its work to support municipalities across North Carolina.

---

## Register Now for Town & State Dinner 2025!

Town & State Dinner is the League's premier legislative event that brings state legislators and municipal officials together to break bread and connect on issues important to local communities. This year's event will be held in Raleigh and continues the Town & State Dinner tradition of providing members the opportunity to share the successes and challenges from their communities with their state representatives. Register now to join us on Feb. 26, 2025, at the Marriot City Center in downtown Raleigh!

**REGISTER NOW**

---



**WORKING AS ONE. ADVANCING ALL.**

CONTACT US



**Stay Connected with the North Carolina League of Municipalities**

{{Companyaddress}}

[Manage Preferences](#)