

PRIORITY FOCUS



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AB 1254 PASSES OUT OF ASSEMBLY LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

AB 1254, a bill authored by Assemblywoman Anna Caballero (D-Salinas) passed out of the Assembly Local Government Committee by a 5-2 vote this week. If signed into law, AB 1254 would reward local governments that approve affordable housing developments operated by nonprofit housing providers.

For more, see Page 4.

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LEAGUE ENCOURAGES SUPPORT OF ALL-MAIL BALLOT BILL (AB 1654)

The League of California Cities is in strong support of AB 1654 (Huffman), a bill that would allow California's general law cities the option of conducting all-mail ballots. The League encourages cities to review and support the measure.

For more, see Page 4.

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APRIL 19 DEADLINE LOOMS FOR LEAGUE GRASSROOTS NETWORK SURVEY

Last month, randomly selected mayors, council members and city managers received a request from the League to participate in a survey to evaluate the League's Grassroots Network. If you were selected for the survey and have not responded, please do so now by taking the survey online or completing and returning the printed questionnaire you received in the mail.

For more, see Page 3.

WANT MORE DETAILS ON BILLS?

Visit the League of
California Cities
Web site at
[www.cacities.org/
billsearch](http://www.cacities.org/billsearch).

CALPERS ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT PLANNING FAIRS FOR 2007

The California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) has announced its 2007 retirement planning fair schedule. The fairs will be held in a variety of locations statewide during the next three months.

These retirement planning fairs, operating under the theme "It's Never too Early ... It's Never too Late," will provide employees with a chance to get acquainted with representatives from their local regional offices, as well as a chance to learn about a variety of CalPERS programs.

The fairs are free, "drop-in" events. For more information, including the schedule of fairs, visit the CalPERS Web site at www.calpers.ca.gov or call the Employer Contact Center at (888) CalPERS.



APPLY TODAY FOR THE GOVERNOR'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Applications for the Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership (GEEL) awards are now available! This award program is California's highest environmental honor, and recognizes those that have demonstrated exceptional leadership and have made notable, voluntary contributions to conserving California's natural resources, protecting the environment and building public-private partnerships.

Since 1993, the Governor has recognized numerous individuals, organizations, businesses, trade associations and communities with GEEL awards. This year, a new award category has been established – climate change – expanding the breadth of recognition possibilities.

To apply for the 2007 awards, visit www.calepa.ca.gov/awards/geela for an application. Applications are due by May 25.

SUPPORT SCR 31 - 'HEALTHY COMMUNITIES AWARENESS MONTH'

The League of California Cities and the Cities, Counties, Schools (CCS) Partnership is sponsoring SCR 31, a resolution that recognizes the importance of health and wellness in communities and declares May as "Healthy Communities Awareness Month."

While the measure still must go through the legislative process to be signed into law, the League encourages cities, in conjunction with this resolution, to think about how your city will celebrate this month, and to adopt your own resolutions declaring May as "Healthy Communities Awareness Month." A sample resolution is located at www.cacities.org/healthyresolution.

Co-authored by Sen. Alex Padilla (D-Pacoima) and Assemblywoman Anna Caballero (D-Salinas), SCR 31 is part of a number of activities the League is working on in the health and wellness arena. Last year, during the League's Annual Conference, the general assembly of the League adopted a resolution to focus on health and wellness. The action items included developing a clearinghouse of information that cities can use to promote wellness policies and healthier cities.

In an effort to collect this information, the League has developed a survey that asks about what your city is doing in this area. To view and fill out this survey, visit www.cacities.org/healthysurvey.

Obesity is an issue that crosses local jurisdictions and is the kind of issue that requires a collaborative, multi-faceted approach. Last year, the CCS Partnership developed "Healthy Children, Healthy Communities: An Action Guide for California Communities," which sets forth principles and strategies for how to best address childhood obesity in California. For a copy of this report, visit www.ccspartnership.org/pdf/CommunityActionGuide.pdf, or call (916) 323-6011.

If you do celebrate May as "Healthy Communities Awareness Month," please e-mail League Legislative Analyst Genevieve Morelos at gmorelos@cacities.org. Too often, the good work that cities do is forgotten. Take this opportunity to celebrate and share with others the work you are doing.

COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTHY KIDS PROGRAM RECEIVES \$1.7 MILLION GRANT

The Blue Cross of California Foundation has awarded the Institute for Local Government (ILG) – the nonprofit research arm of the League of California Cities and California State Association of Counties – a \$1.7 million grant for Communities for Healthy Kids, a new program designed to help increase the number of children enrolled in no- and low-cost health insurance.

The three-year grant will enable cities and counties in California to work collaboratively with local health insurance companies and other state and local partners to identify and enroll kids who are eligible for health insurance through the Healthy Families Program or Medi-Cal. A ceremony to celebrate the grant award was held recently at the League's board of directors meeting in Oakland.

"We are thrilled to have received the grant," said Harriet Miller, ILG president. "Communities for Healthy Kids will take advantage of the connections California local agency officials have as trusted sources of information and to reach out to those families whose children are potentially eligible for no- and low-cost health insurance."

Communities for Healthy Kids is a joint effort between the ILG, the League, the California Teachers Association, the California Association of Health Plans, the City-County-Schools Partnership, and Teachers for Healthy Kids.

Cities and counties have regular contact with many, if not all of these children and their parents. Examples include local parks and recreation, library, low-income housing and anti-gang programs.

"Some local agencies may wish to reach out and partner with their local business community, the schools, or faith-based communities in order to identify and enroll eligible children," explained Yvonne Hunter, Communities for Healthy Kids program director. "A key partner in the success of

this program will be the health insurance companies that offer insurance in participating communities."

For more information on Communities for Healthy Kids, e-mail Yvonne Hunter at yhunter@ca-ilg.org.

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To increase survey validity, it is essential that a high percentage of the selected city officials participate. Results will be analyzed in a number of different ways including position, division and city population, so every response is important.

If you have questions about this project (or if you were not selected but would like to participate) please contact one of the following individuals:

- Dan Harrison, League of California Cities
Phone: (916) 658-8267
E-mail: dharrison@cacities.org
- Chrystine Zacherau, APCO Insight
Phone: (202) 778-1000
E-mail: czacherau@apcoinsight.com

FIND A BILL, LEGISLATORS, LEG COMMITTEE – OR ASK LEAGUE LEG STAFF

Visit (and bookmark!) the League's [Legislative Resources](http://www.cacities.org/legresources) page (www.cacities.org/legresources). You'll find a roster and contact information for the League's legislative staff; the online Bill Search program, background materials on lobbying your legislators, and more.

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A common complaint among local officials is that the revenue derived from housing often fails to match local service costs. One area where this situation is particularly acute is when local governments approve affordable units operated by nonprofits. These units typically pay no property taxes, because the state grants a “welfare exemption” for these units pursuant to subdivision (f) or (g) of Section 214 Revenue and Taxation Code.

Sponsored by the League of California Cities, AB 1254 provides a solution. The bill would reward “good actor” communities by offsetting what they lose on property tax on any new affordable units approved after January 1, 2008.

While the property tax exemption provided to nonprofit operators of affordable housing developments promotes affordable housing policy by assisting in maintaining units at affordable rents, local governments are left with no property tax revenue to provide police, fire, park, recreation, library and other services to residents of these units.

For local governments, this loss of revenue can operate as a disincentive to approve affordable units. But even when these units are approved, it can produce undesirable effects: agencies are faced with reducing community services, transferring revenues from other public priorities, or chasing retail tax dollars.

AB 1254 reduces the required local transfers of property tax for (ERAF) education purposes by an identical amount. This would allow these communities to retain more property tax at the local level to provide services to the residents of affordable housing.

This measure is patterned after SB 1509 (Dunn) of 2001, which received significant bipartisan support, but was vetoed by Gov. Gray Davis. A sunset date is also included in AB 1254 so that the State Legislature may properly evaluate the effectiveness of this law in rewarding communities approving affordable units.

While AB 1254 has taken one step forward by passing through the Assembly Local Government

Committee, the real work to have it appear on Gov. Schwarzenegger’s desk is just beginning. Cities are encouraged to send letters supporting this bill. To look up more information on the measure and access a sample letter, visit www.cacities.org/billsearch.

..... AB 1654 from page 1

Voting by mail has increased steadily in California for more than 40 years. Providing a proper addition to the institutionalized “Ballot Casting at the Polls” for general law cities is a way to increase voter turnout and to cut costs of elections for cities and counties.

This is one of the major reasons that local government entities such as the League, the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the California Association of County Election Officers (CACEO) and the City Clerks Association of California (CCAC) all support AB 1654.

The League has met with labor, community based organizations, civil rights groups and members on both sides of the aisle to gather input and continue to educate on how cities are losing money on the current ballot system. The larger the voting pool, the more diverse the opinion. Does it really matter if a vote comes from the voting booth or via mail?

States such as Oregon have benefited from all-mail ballots. Oregon’s voter turnout in 2002 was the fifth-highest in the nation and by 2004 they were the fourth-highest – a savings of 30 percent in election related costs. AB 1654 is good public policy that is in need of local government support.

Letters of support for AB 1654 can be sent to Assemblyman Huffman at:

The Honorable Jared Huffman
State Capitol Building, Room 4139
Sacramento, CA 95814
RE: Support AB 1654 (Huffman)

Please remember to copy League Legislative Representative P. Anthony Thomas and your local assembly member on the letter. Thomas can be reached at athomas@cacities.org.

Legislative Bill Action

The following are summaries of just a few of the legislative bills that are currently being acted upon by the League of California Cities. For more information about these and other bills, please **visit** the League website to access information about legislation, policy issues and related developments. You can track information on bills (www.cacities.org/billsearch), locate legislators and legislative committees, send letters to legislators or the media through the online Advocacy Center (www.cacities.org/advocacycenter), research League policy positions, access useful related links, and much more.

AB 1496 (Swanson) Local Government:

Cities and Counties: Civil Service. AB 1496 would mandate restrictive changes to all city and county civil service and merit systems by March 1, 2008. Specifically it would require inclusion of all employees within the civil service or merit system except:

- 1) Apprentices or technical experts employed temporarily for a specific project, or
- 2) Substitute or short term employees paid for less than 50 percent of work days in a fiscal year, where the employment is not needed on a continuing basis. Substitute employees would be restricted to a person(s) collectively employed no longer than 60 days.

In addition to significant staffing restrictions imposed on local agencies, this bill would be very costly when it forces replacement of temporary personnel with permanent personnel on regular or overtime payment. It would impact city's summer program staff, reserve police officers, snow removal personnel, lifeguards hired annually, and peak work-load staff hired by planning and building departments, just to name a few.

This bill is being heard on April 18th. Please send in letters of opposition and let your legislators know how this would impact your city. **Staff:** Anthony Thomas; **Status:** Assembly Public Employees, Retirement and Social Security; **Position: Oppose.**

WANT TO SEND A LETTER IN SUPPORT OF A LEAGUE POSITION? HERE'S WHO TO CALL:

**ASSEMBLY PUBLIC EMPLOYEES,
RETIREMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY
(6)**—Hernandez (Chair), Jeffries (Vice
Chair), Anderson, Mullin, Soto, and
Torrico. Chief Consultant: Karon Green.
Phone: (916) 319-3957; Location: 1020 N
St., Rm. 153.

Stay Up-to-Date on Bills That May Impact Your City

www.cacities.org/billsearch

Become a regular user of the League's online Legislative Tracking System. The League's website is your gateway to all the information you need: bills sorted by subject areas, showing the bill history, current status, committee analyses, votes, and much more. You can even view League letters of support or opposition, and access the League lobbyist working on the bill.