



**Ohio Municipal League  
2017-2018  
Public Policy Agenda**



# OUR NEW APPROACH

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Dear Members,

The Ohio Municipal League (OML) is pleased to present our 2017–2018 Public Policy Agenda. Our new agenda reflects our continued commitment to advance our policy positions framed by the values of our members. We also identify our organization’s top six priorities for the new legislative session of the Ohio General Assembly.

Our Public Policy Agenda is informed by months of visits and discussions with our members throughout the state listening to their values, priorities, needs, concerns, and goals. It also was guided by a Board of Trustees Leadership Retreat. All of these efforts reinforced that our core values and goals unite our membership, communities, big and small, and compel us to frame our priorities in these common truths.

The Public Policy Agenda organizes our policy positions by our core values of creating jobs, protecting our citizens, investing in public infrastructure and clean water, and advancing good government and fiscal responsibility.

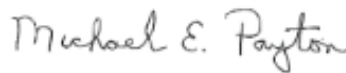
The League also embarked on a critical Strategic Framework and Action Agenda Project to examine the challenges our municipalities have faced in recent years driven by economic forces and state policies. This project looks at the impacts of these forces on our municipalities and provides recommendations to advance policies that enhance our ability to help create jobs and provide essential services to our citizens. The project’s recommendations are the basis of our priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

We look forward to working with the State of Ohio and with leaders from business, labor, faith, civic, and community organizations— all of us partnering for stronger cities, villages, and a stronger State of Ohio.

Sincerely,



Kent Scarrett  
Executive Director



Michael Payton  
President of the Board of Trustees

## 2017-2018 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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**Restore Local Government Funding to help municipalities provide essential services and create jobs.**

**Resolve the Medicaid Sales Tax termination problem in a manner that does not harm local government.**

**Support a State Motor Fuel Tax Increase to fund critical state and local transportation and development projects.**

**Fight Ohio’s Opioid Epidemic with new, well funded, and coordinated state and local strategies.**

**Develop a Public Works Statewide Ballot Initiative to fund local projects to strengthen our foundation for growth.**

**Guard against unfunded state mandates and erosions of our Home Rule authority.**

# 2017-2018 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

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## CREATING JOBS

The Ohio Municipal League advocates for policies that help our communities create jobs, advance economic development, and promote sustainable economic growth.

**Economic Growth:** State policy should support and facilitate job creation and economic development efforts by municipalities, providing more tools and flexibility to develop and redevelop properties, retain and expand jobs, and promote workforce development in partnership with business.

**Annexation:** State policy should support and facilitate the rights of property owners and municipalities to annex property and assure economic development, essential municipal services, and fiscal responsibility.

**Housing:** State policy should support and facilitate the development of a broad spectrum of safe, affordable, fair housing and provide municipalities with the tools and authority to ensure property owners maintain their properties.

**Land Use Planning, Management, and Control:** State policy should support and facilitate the primacy of municipalities in land use and development matters within and around their jurisdictions to promote effective and sustainable growth, safe buildings and infrastructure, and management of right of way.

**The most significant economic development challenges facing our survey respondents are related to:**

- 1. Infrastructure needs**
- 2. Workforce development challenges**
- 3. The inability to redevelop vacant properties and brownfields**

*“It takes cooperation between the state and the cities and villages to provide all the services needed to have a healthy economy. Stronger and financially-healthy municipalities, large and small, mean a stronger economy for Ohio.” — City Council President Sis Love, City of Bucyrus*

## PROTECTING OUR CITIZENS

The Ohio Municipal League advocates for policies that help our communities protect our citizens through responsible public safety and health measures.

**Fighting the Opioid Epidemic:** State policy should support and facilitate new funding with state and local cooperation to address the threat of opioids and other harmful drugs through law enforcement, addiction treatment, and public education.

**Homeland Security and Emergency Management Policy:** State policy should support and facilitate intergovernmental coordination and cooperation, training, and investment on matters of public safety, health, and emergency management.

**Supporting First Responders:** State policy should support and facilitate direct operational and financial assistance to local agencies managing first responders, health services, and infrastructure on homeland security and public emergencies.

**Liquor Control Policy:** State policy should support and facilitate cooperation and understanding of municipal recommendations and on local safety and operations in the regulation of liquor permits within a municipality.

**Our survey respondents reported that drug abuse, heroin and opiates in particular, is the most common public health challenge. Members also listed drugs as a leading public safety challenge.**

*“For many communities, past state funding cuts resulted in cuts to essential services like policing. We need a new partnership with the state investing in our communities so, together, we can fight society’s real threats, like this opiate epidemic.”*  
— Mayor Scott Schertzer, City of Marion

## INVESTING IN PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLEAN WATER

The Ohio Municipal League advocates for policies that help our communities provide clean drinking water, safe and efficient transportation, safe energy, and quality parks through reliable public infrastructure investments and services.

**Transportation:** State policy should support and facilitate a safe and efficient transportation system with adequate funding of state infrastructure within municipalities and for effective local public transit systems and work with municipalities to expand local funding and public-private partnership tools.

**Clean Drinking Water:** State policy should support and facilitate local agencies providing clean drinking water and sanitary and stormwater management services and should provide adequate funding to help locals comply with environmental mandates and funding and regulation to ensure water sources are protected from natural and man-made risks.

**Prevailing Wage:** State policy should support and facilitate project management by municipalities and allow local options and thresholds for prevailing wage projects.

**Ohio and its local governments have tens of billions of dollars in public infrastructure needs impacting water quality, transportation safety, and economic development. Lack of resources to maintain roadways and bridges lead as the most pressing public infrastructure challenge of survey respondents, followed by funding challenges for water, sewer, and stormwater improvements.**

*“We are prepared to partner with state leaders and build a stronger Ohio with infrastructure that will support continued growth and opportunity for our current and future residents, business, and industry.”*

*— Mayor Michael Barhorst, City of Sidney*

## ADVANCING GOOD GOVERNMENT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Ohio Municipal League advocates for policies that help our communities promote ethical, efficient, and fiscally responsible governance through effective leadership and financial management, guided by the Home Rule of our citizens.

**Home Rule:** State policy should support and facilitate the Home Rule of municipalities, grounded in our State Constitution and guided by our citizens and should resist infringement of this authority.

**Taxes and Finances:** State policy should support and facilitate the right of municipalities to impose and collect an income tax on earnings within its boundaries to provide funding for essential municipal services, like police, fire, emergency medical services, and snow removal.

**Fiscal Responsibility:** State policy should support and facilitate municipal management and should not impose unfunded mandates, employment restrictions, or other impairments to local decision-making, funding, and governance.

**Ethics:** State policy should support and facilitate good government practices and training of local elected officials and employees on ethics, financing, management, procurement, and customer service.

**Cooperation and Innovation:** State policy should support and facilitate municipalities cooperating and sharing services with other public agencies and promoting innovation to improve service delivery, customer service, and cost efficiencies.

**Municipalities continue to suffer from state budget cuts. In recent years, over 90% of survey respondents have had to delay significant road repairs and over 70% have had to increase fees. Asked to prioritize state financial matters, the majority of respondents say the state should restore these funding cuts.**

*“Our citizens expect that we are efficient and effective at delivering services; innovative in how we partner with the private sector to attract and retain jobs; lead in rolling out new technologies, and model ethical, fiscally responsible government.”* — Matt Greeson, City Manager, City of Worthington

# STRONGER MUNICIPALITIES MEAN A STRONGER OHIO ECONOMY: A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND ACTION AGENDA

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## OVERVIEW

*This Strategic Framework and Action Agenda represents the OML's renewed effort to better understand and address key policy and economic issues impacting Ohio's cities and villages and to do so with the direct and substantive input of its members. This analysis argues that because the municipal sector is the state's primary engine of economic growth, it is essential that state policy makers focus on revitalizing the state-municipal partnership. Put plainly, stronger municipalities mean a stronger Ohio economy.*

### **Economic Forces Undermining Municipalities**

The same structural economic forces that have undermined and continue to challenge the State of Ohio also have destabilized Ohio's municipalities. The decades-long shift from an industrial to an increasingly post-industrial, knowledge-based economy and the effects of the Great Recession left most local communities reeling with high rates of unemployment and underemployment. Despite recent state job growth, many municipalities continue to struggle.

### **State Policy Impacts**

Additional stress came with the double whammy of net state tax cuts and a dramatic reduction in the earmarked portion of these state revenues going to the Local Government Fund. This revenue sharing reduction amounted to an estimated \$453 million loss in CY 2015 alone. This does not include the state's decision to eliminate two important sources of local tax revenue: the estate tax and the tangible personal property tax.

### **This confluence of forces has pushed Municipalities to:**

- Delay infrastructure maintenance, repair and upgrading
- Reduce investments in economic development
- Lower investments in public health and safety
- Increase municipal taxes and fees
- Replace full-time employees with part-time employees and increase outsourcing

### **The OML is using this Strategic Framework and Action Agenda to:**


- Guide its 2017-2018 Priorities and Public Policy Agenda
- Position municipalities as stronger economic development partners
- Create Leadership Initiatives to improve collaboration, measure progress, and report on the strength of municipalities

## OML LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES

### **Create Municipal Best Practice Center to:**

- Allow members to share best practices and policies
- Provide professional development and assistance
- Collaborate with our state universities

### **Launch a biennial State of the Cities Report to:**

- Survey membership on important issues
  - Examine the condition of our diverse municipal sector
  - Inform OML's priorities and public policy agenda
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# HISTORY & MEMBERSHIP

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## HISTORY

With roots dating back over one hundred years, the Ohio Municipal League was formally founded in 1952 and represents the collective interest of Ohio cities and villages before the Ohio General Assembly and the state elected and administrative offices. An official legislative policy is developed every other year and adopted by our membership at the annual conference.

The League is incorporated as a nonprofit organization governed by a Board of Trustees, elected by the membership. The board is the policy making body and appoints and Executive Director to manage the League under its general direction.

Any city or village may become a member of the League. Upon becoming a member, a municipality's elected and key appointed officials are eligible to use League services.

**The League also manages the following member associations:**

- The Mayors Association of Ohio
- The Ohio Municipal Attorneys Association
- Municipal Finance Officers Association of Ohio
- The Ohio Association of Public Safety Directors
- The Ohio City/County Management Association
- The Ohio Municipal Clerks Association
- The Ohio Municipal Income Tax Administrators committee

*To join the League or to learn more about member services, please contact the Ohio Municipal League at (800) 561-3597 or go to [www.omloho.org](http://www.omloho.org).*

## BOARD & STAFF

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