



michigan municipal league

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## **Local Leaders Respond to Gov. Snyder's Invitation and Propose Government Reforms**

### ***MML's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communities Proposal Will Reduce Costs, Improve Efficiencies and Let Local Governments Take Care of Themselves***

**LANSING, Mich.** — The Michigan Municipal League (MML) today proposed a series of reforms to lower government costs, improve efficiencies and let local governments provide essential services the Legislature is increasingly failing to fund.

The MML's "21<sup>st</sup> Century Communities Proposals" was issued in response to an invitation received last week from Gov. Rick Snyder, who called on local elected officials to partner with his administration on solving the state's budget crisis.

The MML's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communities Proposal proposes public policy reforms to reduce some local government costs, improve operational efficiencies in certain areas, and to follow 34 other states that give local governments the power to do more to help themselves. The reforms will help create vibrant urban areas that are attractive to young, college-educated people. They will also help local governments deal with a Michigan Legislature that continues to break its promise made decades ago to local taxpayers to fund essential local services.

"Our proposed reforms will save money or they will avoid costs by making operations more efficient," said MML Executive Director & CEO Dan Gilmartin. "They also will give local governments and their citizens more power to help themselves, a reform that is essential today because the Legislature has broken its promise made decades ago to return locally collected tax revenues to support public safety, infrastructure and other essential services."

The reforms will help to create urban places in Michigan that will be attractive to young, college educated, talented, creative and entrepreneurial people. Troy City Council Member Robin Beltramini states with cities having high concentrations of college graduates are prospering today and will continue to prosper in the future.

"These reforms are all about creating places where prosperity can happen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy," Beltramini said. "Livable communities with multiple transportation options, access to entrepreneurial activities and places that are attractive to knowledge industries and their employees are key."

Some of the reforms include:



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- Giving local governments authority to ask voters for local taxes to support economic development and infrastructure projects that create jobs. Michigan is one of only 16 states that do not give local governments the power to take care of essential local needs. Many decades ago, Michigan local governments gave up many local taxing options in exchange for a promise from the Legislature to return as “revenue sharing” taxes collected at the local levels to fund essential services. Over the past decade, the Legislature has broken its promise nearly every year, cutting revenue sharing to local governments by more than \$4 billion.
- Amending Public Act 312 of 1969. The law requires communities to follow the direction of an arbitrator when they reach a contract impasse with a public safety union—regardless of the community's ability to pay.
- Amending the Urban Cooperation Act to make it less costly and more efficient for local governments to share services.
- Moving to online public notices. Communities are required by law to post legal notices in newspapers. Posting notices online when it makes sense reduces local government costs.
- Moving to one-time tax collections. Collecting local taxes once instead of twice a year would save local governments an estimated \$60 million per year, according to the Michigan Department of Treasury.
- Reinstating the two-inch rule. This law says if a defect in a sidewalk is less than two inches, the community maintained the sidewalk properly. The rule was struck down by the Michigan Supreme Court in 2010, increasing liability and costs to local taxpayers.
- Reinstating corrections work crews. Until budget cuts last year, the state operated a program that allowed local governments to hire prisoner work crews to perform work in communities at significantly lower rates than the community might pay other workers. The program should be reinstated.

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#### ***About the MML***

*The Michigan Municipal League advocates on behalf of its member communities in Lansing, Washington D.C., and the courts; provides educational opportunities for elected and appointed municipal officials; and assists municipal leaders in administering services to their communities through League programs and services. For more information, visit [www.mml.org](http://www.mml.org).*