

# The State of Your League

## 2010 Report

It was May 7, 2007, when nearly 20 League staff members crowded around a large table, reviewing the scattered papers of potential logos and slogans that would represent us for years to come. “Defenders of Cities.” “Nah, feels like we should wear a cape and carry a shield,” joked one director; “Your Community. Our Help.” “Not bad, but what does it mean?” wondered another staffer; “Making Municipalities Matter,” we liked all the M’s, but try saying that 10 times fast.

One option, however, jumped out at us—“Better Communities, Better Michigan.” It really said it all—investing in our communities will create a more vibrant state. It was simple, decisive, and true.

We didn’t realize it at the time, but picking our new slogan and branding approach was one of the first critical steps we would take in the years ahead. It is a constant reminder of what we are all about and have been since 1899. It gives us direction, guidance, focus, and one clear voice.

This “State of Your League” report provides a snapshot of who we are and how we work for you.



**michigan municipal league**  
better communities. better michigan.

# The League

## Who Makes Up the League?

**523** Cities, Villages, & Townships; 272 Cities, 243 Villages, 5 Urban Townships, **31** Affiliate Organizations, **92** Business Alliance Program Participants, **4,130** Total Elected Officials, 2,848 Councilmembers/Commissioners, 265 Mayors, 241 Presidents, 528 Clerks, **10,000+** Non-Elected Officials, 322 Managers, 62 Economic Development Directors, 84 Community Development Directors, **174** Finance Directors, 178 Zoning Administrators, 53 Public Safety Directors, **374** Fire Chiefs, 330 Police Chiefs

## 1 | The Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3)

Creating communities for the next 50 years, not the past 50 years, is what it is all about. The Center focuses on eight identified assets that contribute to a vibrant 21st century community. Research continues to show that “place-making” matters more than ever, as an increasingly mobile workforce seeks out neighborhoods before finding jobs and opening up businesses. The purpose of the Center (generously underwritten by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority) is to help local officials identify, develop, and implement strategies that will grow and strengthen Michigan’s communities in the coming decades. This is done through educational programming, publications, public policy forums, technical assistance, and foundational online resources.



## 2 | Social Media

The League has always been focused on serving its members, but now, thanks to the wide range of internet tools, we are reaching an even larger audience. The League is actively involved in social media outlets, including the Let’s Save Michigan initiative, our website (mml.org), Facebook, Twitter, Flickr etc., to promote our mission, members, and communities. The numbers speak for themselves and continue to grow daily.



**437,110** page views at mml.org so far in 2010



**522,086** page views & over **20,000** subscribers as of April 2010



**22,000+** listeners per radio program



## 3 | Advocacy

*Moving day in Lansing, January 19, 2008—shifting from a hidden nondescript building, blocks away from the Capitol buzz, our Lansing staff enthusiastically packed up their offices and never looked back. Today, the League’s advocacy office is housed across from the Capitol in the beautifully restored Leadership in Energy and Environmental Standards (LEED) certified Christman Building. It has given us a more prominent presence in the state Capitol and provides a showcase where lawmakers and local officials are proud to meet.*

Believing that communities are at the core of Michigan’s turnaround, our Lansing advocacy team is committed to a proactive agenda supporting policies that give our communities the tools to thrive in the 21st century. These issues range from controlling costs through Public Act 312 and revenue sharing to advocating for those things that create strong communities such as transit options, walkability, mixed-use developments, green space, and thriving cultural attractions. If we are going to create the kind of communities that attract an increasingly mobile workforce, then we need to focus on creating quality places that will attract and retain the college-educated and creative people who will help spur our economy.

## 4 | Educating Our Members

How have other communities handled this new Medical Marihuana Act? What’s the status of our roads—is any more funding coming? The League’s many educational programs and events can help you answer these questions and many more. Our Elected Officials Academy, for example, gives expanded leadership lessons to assist our elected leaders in all aspects of their role in the public’s eye. And our Capital Conference in the spring and Annual Convention in the fall will not only inform you about the issues facing your communities, but they also can connect you to peers that have “been there and done that.” Each year our programs include:

- 1,400** officials
- 50+** programs
- 20** on-site trainings
- 7** regional meetings
- 6** Newly Elected Officials trainings
- 4** affiliate programs
- 1** Convention
- 1** Capital Conference



## 5 | A Look Inside the League

### Doing More with Less

As our communities make tough decisions about staffing levels, so has the League. Since 2000, we have reduced our workforce by **32 percent** primarily through attrition. This means doing more with less, making sure the “right people are on the bus,” and better aligning resources with members’ needs in today’s economic climate. By working smarter, we’ve been able to start

several new initiatives while also

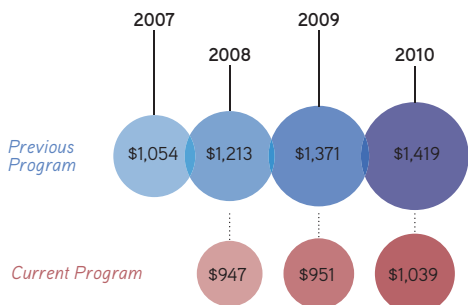
maintaining our core member services.



Historical Employee Count

We’ve also reduced costs by restructuring the

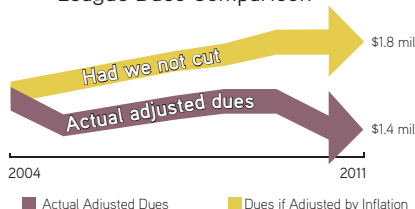
health insurance offerings to our employees. The result of this 2008 change is significantly lower premiums and a real cost savings to the League. Cost per staff member:



### Dues Revenue/Membership

Sensitive to members’ declining revenues, dues were cut by 10 percent in the 2005-06 budget year, frozen for 2009-10, and the League is looking to cut another 12 percent for 2010-11. That’s a total savings of over **25 percent**.

League Dues Comparison



*“Thank you for your research. We are in the process of cleaning up many loose ends and it was very helpful in getting things running in the right direction. We love the League and are glad that you’re here to help us!”*

Carie Fowler-Gehring,  
President, Village of Benzonia

*“The League helps its members in so many different ways from networking with businesses and other League members to training and lobbying in Lansing. They make our job as elected leaders much more manageable.”*

Jeff Jenks, 09-10 League  
President, Huntington  
Woods Mayor Pro Tem

*“I have great respect for the League’s efforts in Lansing. They do a great job fighting on behalf of their members.”*

State Rep. Woodrow  
Stanley (D-Flint) –  
former Flint Mayor and  
League President

*“As the chair of the Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee, I have worked with the League on a variety of tools that work in communities of all sizes to promote development and investment statewide. I appreciate the League’s professionalism and shared commitment to revitalizing our state.”*

Senator Jason Allen  
(R-Traverse City)

## 6 | Technology

### Going Green Makes \$ense

The concept in our IT/Operations department was simple: Use the latest technology to do more with less and do it in a cost-effective and environmentally friendly way. In 2009, we saved thousands of dollars by using “virtualization” hardware to combine computer servers and a new “zero client computing” system that allows employees to work from their desk without a desktop computer!



**\$50,000–**  
anticipated savings in hardware costs in the next three years

## 7 | League Foundation

When it formed in 1991, the League Foundation was a way to secure funding for our members, and it has done that to the tune of \$2.4 million in grants and contributions. But the League Foundation also has evolved into something we didn’t envision nearly 20 years ago. It has become a leader in identifying and filling the unmet needs of Michigan’s local officials and communities. Keeping your dollars in mind, the Foundation continues to provide education programs at little or no cost. The Foundation is a catalyst in developing and offering our members new opportunities and initiatives—most notably the Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3) and the Michigan Green Communities Challenge.



## 8 | Legal Defense Fund (LDF)

The League’s Legal Defense Fund provides support to LDF member communities in cases that potentially have a statewide impact.

**27**  
Active years

**400+**  
Amicus briefs filed in the Michigan Supreme Court and Court of Appeals

**11**  
Cases for which the Supreme Court requested a Municipal League Amicus brief

**80+**  
Percent participation among League members

facebook

822 League fans  
5,050 Let’s Save Michigan fans

twitter

522 League followers  
901 Let’s Save Michigan followers

flickr

1,498 views of 503 League photos

## 9 | Risk Management Programs

### Liability & Property Pool Workers' Compensation Fund



Pool member contributions  
**\$20 million**

Workers' Compensation Fund  
**\$25 million**

Since 1978, \$150 mil+ returned  
to members in dividends



Pool new claims handled  
**1,232**

Fund new claims handled  
**2,894**



Pool assets  
**\$87 million**

Fund assets  
**\$120 million**



Pool member equity  
**\$46.8 million**

Fund member equity  
**\$60.5 million**

*Stable cost-effective risk management programs*

## 10 | We Are Your Resource

**Q:** Are we required to post notices of committee meetings?

We answer thousands of questions like these each year through personal research assistance and direct contact with our members each day. We supply critical information on core topics to our members and serve as an information clearinghouse, helping steer communities through the complexities of local governance. As communities are forced to do more with less, League services help fill the gap. We offer databases, extensive sample ordinances, policies, contracts, handbooks, tool kits, fact sheets, and a myriad of other resources. If you can think to ask it, we can help find the answer!

**Q:** Ever wonder how the salaries and benefits in your community stack up to those in other communities?

You can find out by participating in our one-of-a-kind online wage and salary survey. This wealth of information provides data for 143 job classifications easily searchable by a number of criteria. There is also a benefits section that can help our members during budget season and contract talks.



### Better Communities. Better Michigan.

The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. Our goals are to aid them in creating desirable and unique places through legislative and judicial advocacy; to provide educational opportunities for elected and appointed officials; and to assist municipal leaders in administering community services. Our mission is that of a non-profit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs to passionately push change for better communities and a better Michigan.



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