

# LEAGUE OF ARIZONA CITIES AND TOWNS 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

**2020 was an interesting year at the League. Serving our 91 cities and towns in Arizona is a continual opportunity to refine how we assist our members to better service their residents. This year, the COVID-19 Pandemic gave us the unique obligation and opportunity to work with our municipalities to provide services and engage with the general public.**

**As the year comes to a close, we wanted to provide a brief overview of some of our activities in 2020. These areas relate directly to our strategic plan, which has guided League Staff in the delivery of services and programs this year.**





## Lead

**Boldly and proactively drive policy on behalf of Arizona cities and towns**

For 83 years the League has been a factor at the state legislature on issues facing cities and towns. In any given year the League seeks proactive legislative efforts, resolutions, intended to benefit cities and towns. In addition, we face numerous legislative challenges where we fight to defend local decision-making.



**In 2020 the League pursued five resolutions at the state legislature:**

- Restore appropriations for the Heritage Fund to continue investments in local, regional and state parks
- Allow for regulation of short-term home rentals to preserve the residential character of neighborhoods
- Explore remedies for addressing chronic blight and establish a revolving fund to aid cities and towns in revitalizing dilapidated and abandoned buildings
- Adopt legislation permitting cities and towns to discuss municipal security measures in executive session rather than exposing sensitive information to the public
- Support the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

**In addition to our proactive advocacy the League negotiated on or defeated several measures in 2020 including:**

- Firefighter cancer presumption (Support – Negotiated, impacted by COVID)
- Prime contracting (Oppose – Defeated)
- Limiting Municipal Litigation (Oppose – Defeated)
- Utility hookup preemption (Neutral – Negotiated)
- Eminent Domain (Oppose – Defeated)
- Affordable Housing Tax Credit (Support – Impacted by COVID)
- Airport ridesharing fees preemption (Oppose – Defeated)
- Municipal residential zoning preemption (Oppose – Defeated)

Throughout the legislative session the League proactively and publicly acknowledged legislators who supported city and town issues and celebrated their efforts.

## Promote

**Raise visibility of the critical role of local government**

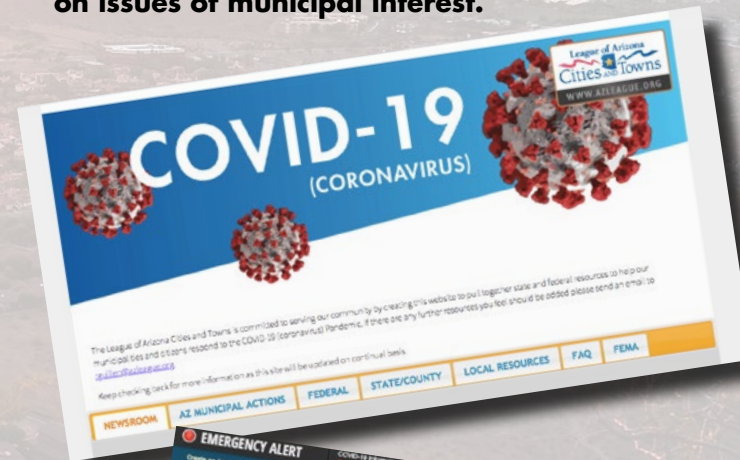
The primary platforms the League used in 2020 to promote cities and towns in Arizona, as well as the organization's events, initiatives and communications, were our website and social media channels: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

During the year, the League actively increased our emphasis on communication through these channels.

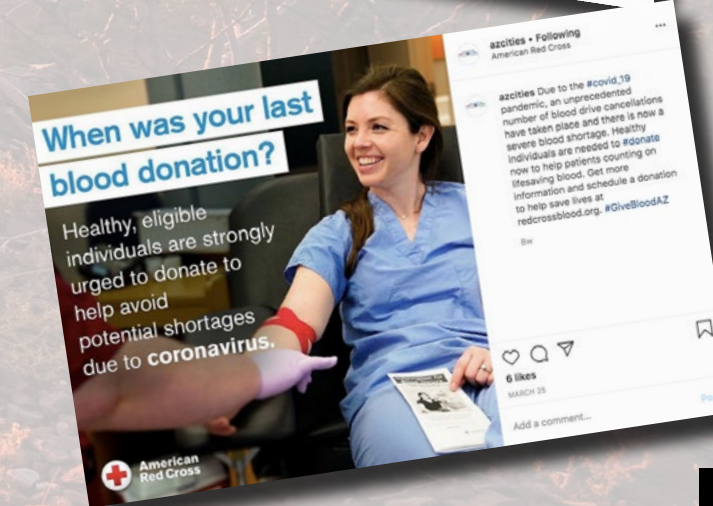
**Our goal in 2020 was fourfold:**

- Actively engage digital platforms to become an opinion leader in all things relating to municipal government.
- Amplify awareness of partner programs/internal leadership.
- Support local governments via promotion & advocacy leading to increased member participation.
- Provide accurate, critical updates and vital community resources.

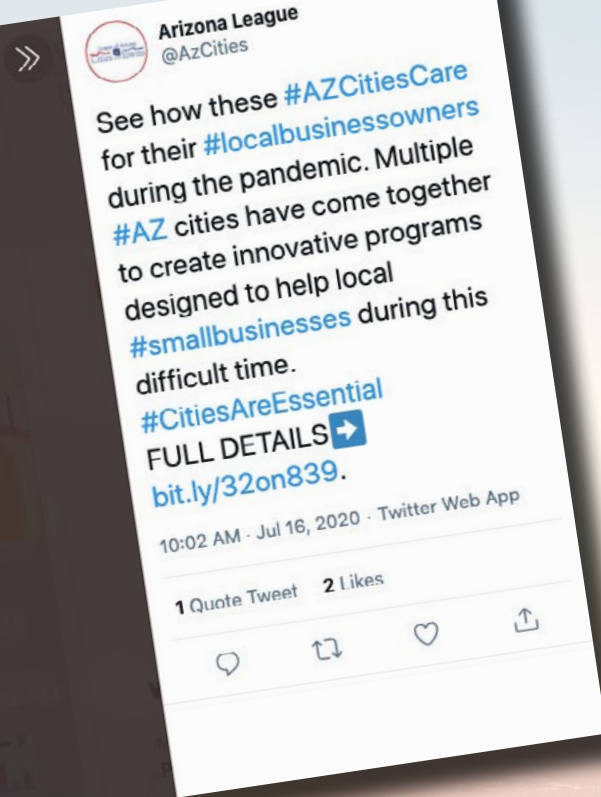
**During the year, the League more actively engaged our social media platforms to become the opinion leader, as well as interact with other opinion leaders, on issues of municipal interest.**



**In addition, the League sought to increase the awareness of our internal leadership as well as to support and promote League and partner programs that assisted cities and towns in Arizona.**





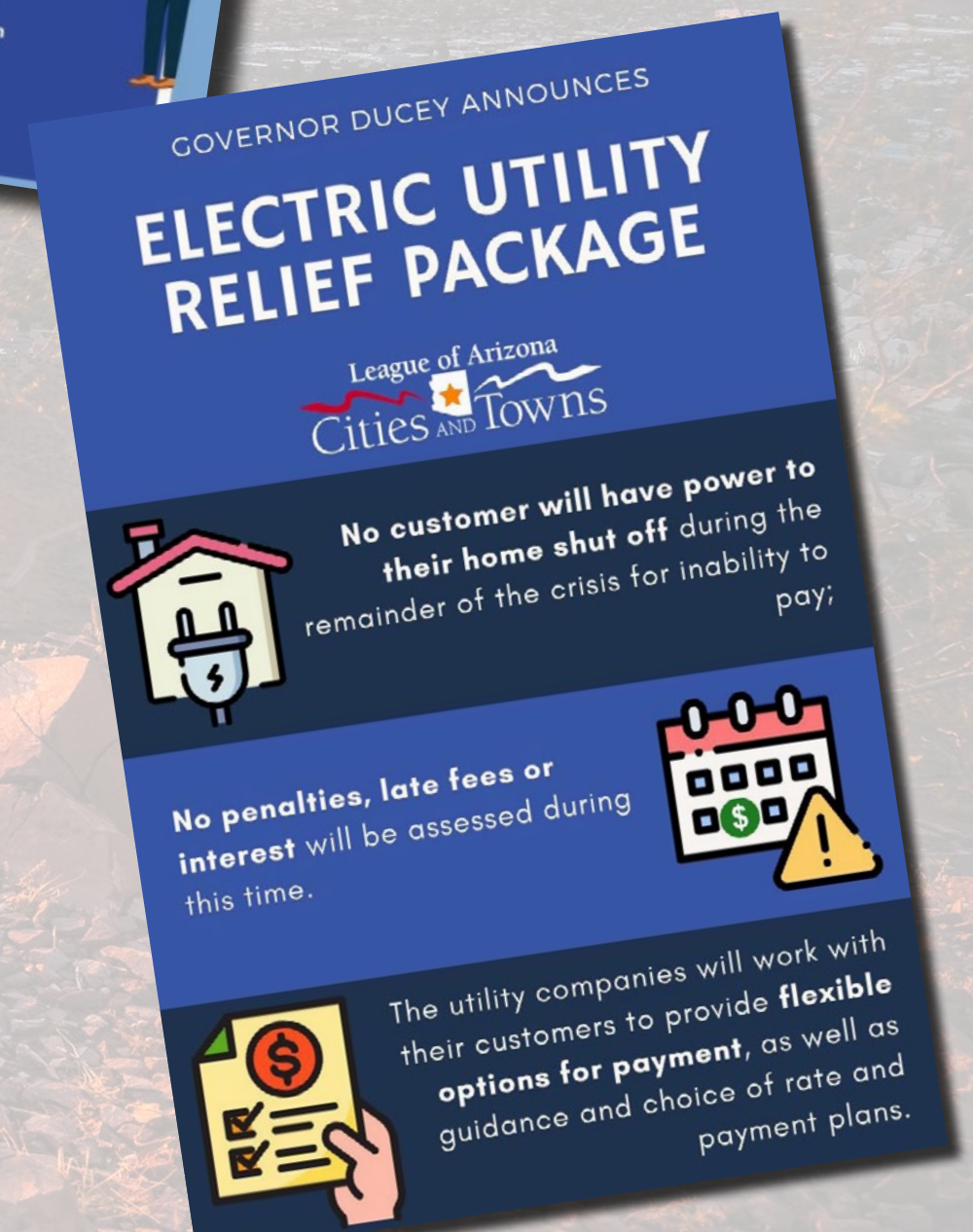


2020 saw a marketable increase in both Impressions and engagements during the year, especially during the height of the COVID spike in Arizona. During the early summer we saw a massive bump across all key performance indicators, indicating that our members and interested parties were utilizing our social media sites to get the latest information on statewide orders regarding COVID restrictions and updates.



The League pursued an increased effort to raise awareness of the programs and initiatives of Arizona's cities and towns and their elected officials and employees.

And most importantly, a priority in 2020 was that the League is increasingly viewed as the "go-to" source on issues impacting cities and towns in Arizona by providing accurate, timely and important information on issues of statewide municipal importance.





## Engage

**Seek inclusiveness and provide meaningful engagement opportunities to all members**

Our leadership team and Executive Committee understand our success as an organization will only go as far as the relationships we build. In 2020, and in the coming years, we endeavor to approach the legislature and our colleagues and counterparts with that as a primary focus.

With that in mind, the League made an increased emphasis on building relationships with other key civic and government organizations. Even during the pandemic, the League partnered with groups to create stronger relationships, whether it be sitting on their advisory groups, doing joint conferences and trainings, working with them on projects or participating in policy development.

League Staff and leadership made a concerted effort to reach out and partner with groups, even those who previously may have been seen as adversarial, such as the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Arizona Restaurant Association, Professional Fire Fighters of Arizona, and the Arizona Commerce Authority. In addition to strengthening these relationships, the League has worked to forge new ground in working with Local First Arizona, American Heart Association (Arizona), and the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Arizona.

Both our social media efforts and our continued cultivation of important strategic relationships will be integral as we promote the work that the League, as well as our member cities and towns, are engaging in 2021.

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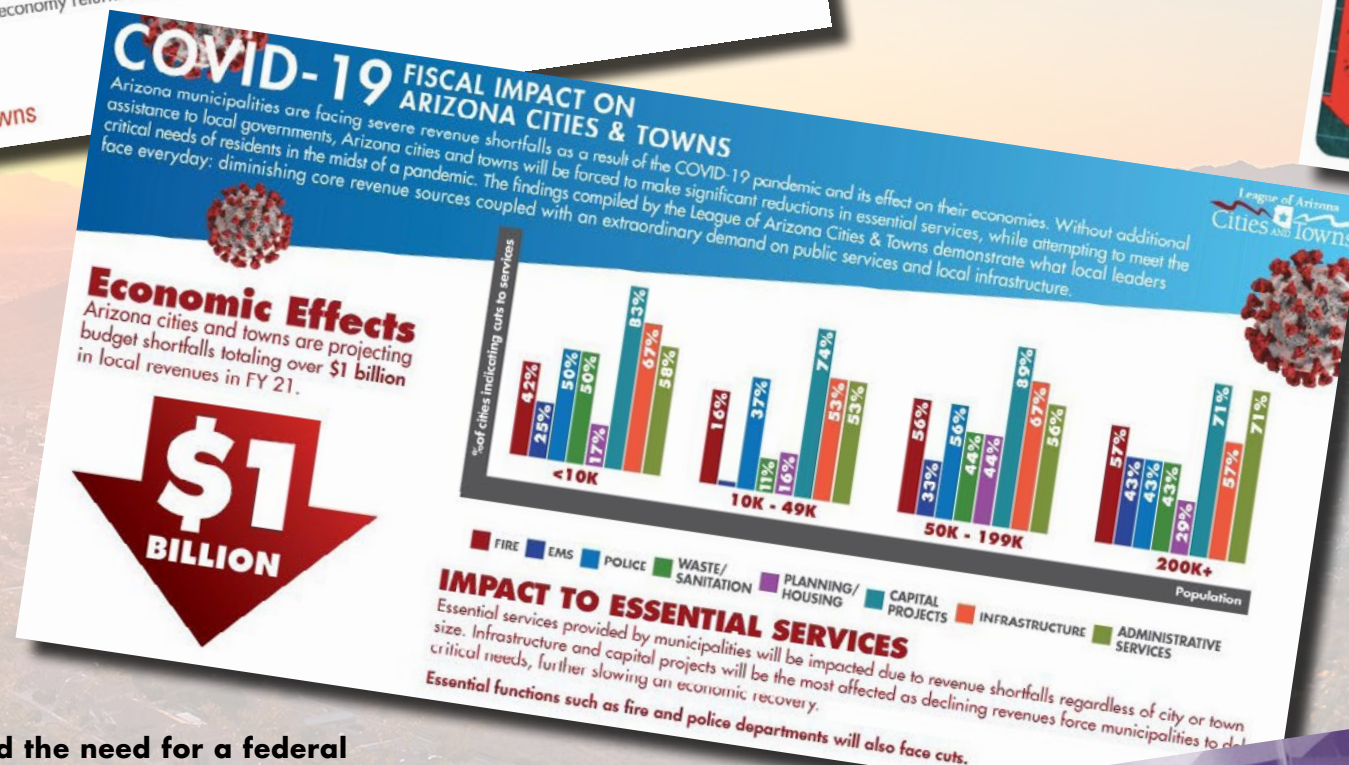
**Additional funding for cities and towns in the HEALS Act is vital** to ensure that our local and state economy can survive and flourish in this unprecedented time. The coronavirus package released yesterday, July 27th, by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell fails to consider the significant challenges faced by local governments in Arizona. Arizona cities and towns appreciate initial CARES Act distributions and utilized those monies throughout Arizona by investing in homelessness, eviction, food, small business, and many other assistance programs.

Our cities and towns continue to struggle to meet municipal needs for public safety, local services, and enterprise funds while also attempting to avoid layoffs for local employees and cancellations or delays of infrastructure projects integral to maintaining Arizona as an economic leader.

From mid-March through June more than **783 thousand Arizonans** applied for first-time unemployment benefits, hotel tax revenues were down 70% across the state, amusement tax revenues were down 65%, and restaurant tax revenues were down more than 35% all while demand for essential municipal services increased.

**Flexibility of CARES Act dollars is insufficient.** We strongly encourage the entire Arizona congressional delegation to support additional assistance to local governments to ensure the Arizona economy returns stronger.

**Tom Belshe**  
Executive Director  
League of Arizona Cities and Towns



**Arizona League**  
@AzCities

The numbers clearly show our economy is struggling from impacts of **#COVID19** pandemic. Rebuilding our economy will require direct **#federal** assistance to **#municipalities** to lay the foundation to thrive again. **#CitiesAreEssential** **#StateandLocalRelief** **@leagueofcities**

**OUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY IS AT RISK. SUPPORT STATE AND LOCAL RELIEF IN THE HEALS ACT!**

**ARIZONA'S TAX COLLECTIONS DOWN 29%**  
FROM MARCH - MAY  
THINK YOU'VE ALREADY FELT THE PAIN OF REDUCED MONTHLY INCOME?

**MORE THAN 783K ARIZONANS**  
HAVE FILED FIRST TIME UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS SINCE MARCH (DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY)

**OUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY IS AT RISK. SUPPORT STATE AND LOCAL RELIEF IN THE HEALS ACT!**

**League of Arizona Cities and Towns**  
**#CITIESAREESSENTIAL** **#STATEANDLOCALRELIEF**

**Born out of COVID-19 and the need for a federal approach the League also used 2020 as an opportunity to develop relationships with our federal delegation and the White House. Historically, the League has relied heavily on the National League of Cities at the federal level and devoted our attention to the state legislature; 2020 has taught us that there is no substitute for having a personal relationship with our federal offices.**

**Arizona League**  
@AzCities

What do economists and experts from across the political spectrum all agree upon? See for yourself here [📺](#)  
**#CitiesAreEssential** **#HEALSAct** **#FunFactFriday**  
**@leagueofcities**  
**@economics\_ma** **@federalreserve** **@QuaadmanT**  
**@USChamber** **@SenBillCassidy** **@SenatorSinema**  
**@ClevelandFed** **@roundsconsult**

Leading economists and experts recognize the important role that **cities & towns** play in maintaining and protecting the state's economic health.

1:44 445 views

**"Ensuring Arizona communities and Tribal governments receive DIRECT ASSISTANCE and have flexibility to use that funding for local budget support WILL SAVE ARIZONA JOBS AND KEEP OUR COUNTIES AND CITIES STRONG AND THRIVING."**

**KYRSTEN SINEMA**  
US SENATOR  
D - ARIZONA

**League of Arizona Cities and Towns**

Leveraging existing relationships and developing new ones has given our membership the opportunity to engage with the Governor's office, Senators Sinema and McSally, and other entities which can only help in our efforts both locally and federally as we push our association to new heights.





## Educate

*Model and inspire excellent and effective city and town leadership*

One of the foundations of the League in its 83 years of existence has been the role we play in providing training and education to our members. 2020 saw a marked increase in both the number of trainings we offered as well as our use of virtual and online platforms to provide education sessions and workshops.

We began the year by holding mostly in-person trainings and events, but quickly moved to an online format once the pandemic made in-person gatherings untenable. During 2020, the League and our affiliate organizations conducted over 20 standalone trainings, a dozen networking discussions as well as two in-person and three virtual conferences.

Going virtual in 2020 due to the pandemic has allowed the League and its affiliate groups to expand how we present our trainings as well as increase our audience base. Though we hope to go back to more traditional in-person events and trainings as 2021 unfolds, we will continue to provide online offerings to meet the needs of our geographically diverse membership.



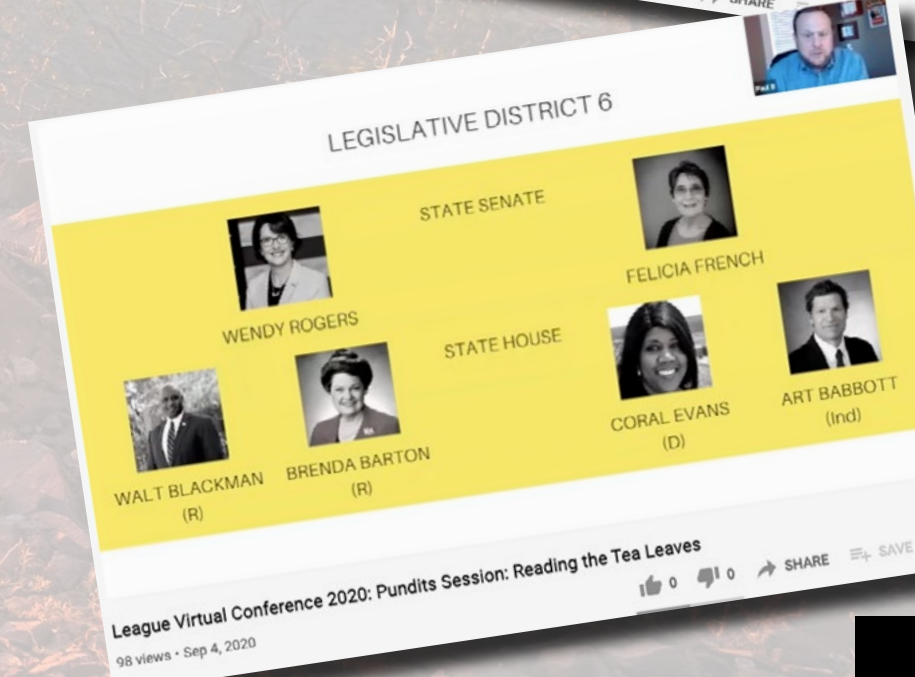
## Empower

*Develop and champion high-quality solutions to help cities and towns thrive*

In addition to the standard technical assistance offered by the League, this year saw significant challenges related to campaign finance, adult-use marijuana, and COVID-19. COVID-19 not only required assistance with technology, but also with navigating the various state and federal relief options available to cities and their residents.

Thanks to a partnership with the Maricopa Association of Governments, the League's Open Data Project took a significant leap forward and will go live with the first iteration in early 2021.

Operationally, the League has utilized Office 365, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom to facilitate working from home and to enable all-remote or virtual training sessions. Familiarity with these software solutions culminated in a successful and completely virtual annual conference, albeit on a much smaller scale compared to its in-person counterpart.



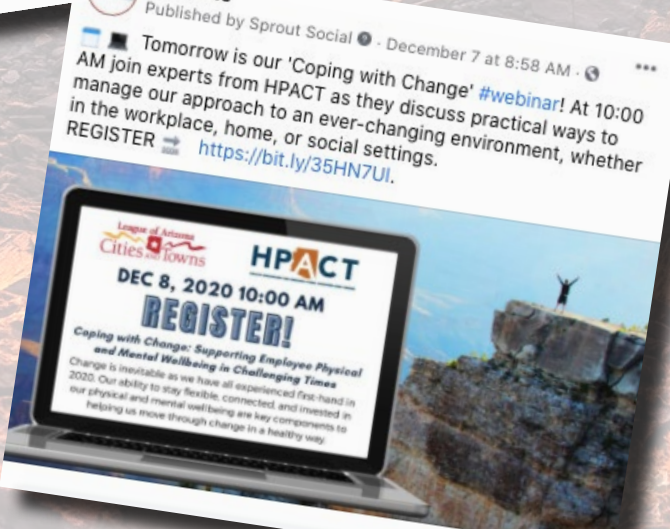


**Deliver**  
**Maximize organizational effectiveness**

Recognizing the financial impacts related to COVID-19, when other associations raised or maintained their dues, the League actually cut dues by 15%. This financial relief allowed members to direct those critical dollars to other priorities. This year saw the League utilizing mayors to convey critical messages through the media and via social media. Additionally, greater focus was placed on using both League officers and League Executive Committee members for these purposes.



In order to maximize services to League members, trainings were transitioned to purely online, and were met with a positive reception. Considerable resources were also committed to creating dedicated website for various aspects of the pandemic response, including FAQs, general information, legal background, information on local ordinances, and resources for residents and businesses.



Internally, the League quickly adapted to the pandemic by providing broad flexibility to employees, including work-from-home options.



Thanks to the operational flexibility at the League, upon learning about our general counsel taking a position in the private sector, League staff was able to quickly identify potential replacements, interview them, and ultimately on-board a new general counsel with additional support systems to provide for a smooth transition.

While 2020 has been a difficult year in some aspects, it has shown the perseverance of our cities and towns as you have continued to provide services to residents. Thank you to all our municipalities for your work this year. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, or if you would like a League representative to visit your city or town council, please feel free to contact us at 602-258-5786 or send an e-mail to Executive Director Tom Belshe at [tbelshe@azleague.org](mailto:tbelshe@azleague.org).

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