



League of California Cities  
**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

# Message from Executive Director and CEO



This past year, Americans made it crystal clear yet again to pollsters that they have the most faith in local government. There's a good reason two-thirds of Americans trust local government: We solve problems and deliver services our residents need every day.

A key ingredient to our success as cities in California is that we understand we are stronger together. Think statewide. Act locally.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in our advocacy in the state Legislature. By working together under the banner of Cal Cities, we fought successfully against legislative proposals that sought to apply one-size-fits-all solutions and would impose unfunded mandates on local governments.

The challenge to local control is coming not just from the legislative branch, but also at the ballot box. We focused heavily this past year on fiscal sustainability, coming together to ensure local governments still have the tools and resources they need to fund essential local services our

residents depend on. We also came together to mobilize our opposition to a dangerous ballot measure set for the 2024 ballot that would put at risk billions of dollars needed to fund local services and programs.

We also fought for a stronger partnership with the state to address homelessness, boost the supply of affordable housing, and protect the public from increasing crime and the scourge of fentanyl. Cities can't do this work alone. We need the state to do its part too.

In addition to coming together to advance strong advocacy on behalf of cities, we also came together this past year to learn new and best practices in municipal government from experts and each other. With topics that were timely and relevant, Cal Cities educational events drew high levels of participation by city officials regionally and statewide, in person and virtual.

I am grateful for the dedication and commitment of the 2022-23 Cal Cities Officers and Board members, and city officials, as well as the very talented Cal Cities staff, for making all of this work on behalf of California cities possible.

It is my honor to present to you, the members of Cal Cities, the 2023 Annual Report, which captures our collective achievements of this past year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn M. Coleman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Carolyn M. Coleman  
Executive Director and CEO  
League of California Cities

“ There is power in numbers, and our voice at the state and federal capitols is so much stronger when it is echoed by city officials from cities and towns throughout the state. As public servants, we owe it to our residents to be stewards of public interests.

*Ali Sajjad Taj  
Council Member, Artesia  
2022-23 Cal Cities President*



**MISSION**



To expand and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians.

**VISION**



To be recognized and respected as the leading advocate for the common interests of California's cities.

# Who we are

By the numbers...



Largest city  
Los Angeles  
**3.8 million**



Smallest city  
Amador City  
**201**

Cal Cities serves thousands  
of city officials and staff...

- ▶ Mayors and Council Members
- ▶ City Managers
- ▶ City Attorneys
- ▶ City Clerks
- ▶ Fire Chiefs
- ▶ Fiscal Officers
- ▶ Human Resources Directors
- ▶ Planning Commissioners
- ▶ Police Chiefs
- ▶ Public Works Officers

More than **80%** of nearly **40 million** people in California **live in cities.**



# Legislative advocacy

Cal Cities works with lawmakers, the Governor's Office, and other organizations to advance member-driven and board-approved advocacy priorities. Cal Cities and its members had a record of success in 2023. Cal Cities supported 66 measures sent to the Governor. He signed the majority (82%) of the bills Cal Cities asked him to support and vetoed almost half (42%) of those Cal Cities asked him to drop. On average, the Governor only vetoes 14% of the bills that come across his desk.



### Homelessness and community wellness

California's behavioral health system will see more big changes next year. Cal Cities members played a key role in getting SB 326 (Eggman) and SB 43 (Eggman) signed into law. The two bills will make it easier to provide treatment for people with serious substance use disorders and behavioral health needs. Parts of SB 326, including targeted funding to help cities and counties create new treatment beds and supportive housing, will go on the March 2024 ballot.



### Public Safety

Thanks to the sustained support of city officials, the Governor signed measures that will curb illicit fentanyl and reduce ambulance offload times. Cal Cities' member-driven advocacy also blocked bills that would have reduced the number of tools law enforcement agencies have at their disposal, including police canines, facial recognition software, and encrypted communications.



### Housing

Yet again, lawmakers were hyper-focused on passing a barrage of top-down bills that nibble around the edges of the housing crisis. But Cal Cities did more than help stop or modify bills that circumvent local zoning rules. We made major progress on our call for ongoing funding for affordable housing and supportive services. Years of advocacy, a bipartisan endorsement from lawmakers, a rally at the Capitol, and extensive media coverage propelled ACA 1 (Aguiar-Curry) to the 2024 ballot — a major Cal Cities' priority. The ballot measure is a badly needed tool that local leaders could use to finance affordable housing and infrastructure.



### Fiscal Sustainability

Protecting and expanding local fiscal sustainability was top of mind in every issue area this year. We stopped a bill that would have enacted a statewide short-term rental tax that threatened local revenue streams and two others that would have disrupted public services through changes to employment laws. Cal Cities also co-sponsored bills that will make it easier for cities to complete infrastructure projects.

### The Corporate Tax Trick

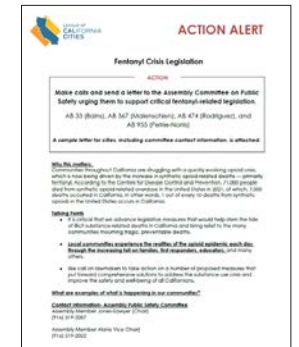


We are leading a broad coalition to block a 2024 ballot measure that would significantly jeopardize local funding for local services, create frivolous lawsuits, and undermine voter rights. Cal Cities played a pivotal role in several opposition efforts this year to the "Taxpayer and Government Accountability Act", including sending to voters an initiative that preserves the majority vote threshold at the ballot box and joining a state-led legal challenge.



# Other legislative achievements

Here are a few more ways your advocacy paid off: New homes and businesses will get connected to the electric grid faster. General law cities can adjust council member salaries for inflation for the first time since 1984. Cities will still have Brown Act flexibility during proclaimed states of emergencies. Cities can still prohibit cycling on certain sidewalks and enforce parking violations. Your advocacy also secured flexibility in many other laws, including new permanent water restrictions.



“ Even with more than 30 lawyers on staff, it still becomes challenging to stay on top of the rapidly changing legal issues affecting cities in a state as dynamic as California. That is why Cal Cities’ legal advocacy programs and resources are invaluable to our practice and greatly assists my office to stay current on the law for the benefit of the city.

*Susana Alcalá Wood,  
City Attorney, Sacramento*

## By the numbers...

This year Cal Cities tracked and engaged on **1,770 bills**.

Cal Cities had positions on 66 measures that made it to the Governor's desk.



He **signed 82%** of the bills Cal Cities supported and **vetoed 42%** of the bills Cal Cities opposed — compared to his average 14% veto rate.

Cal Cities partnered with legislators and others to sponsor **9 bills** of importance to cities. The Governor signed **all 5** that were sent to his desk.



Nearly **450 local leaders** engaged in Cal Cities committees to shape policy positions central to our advocacy.

Cal Cities filed **35 friend-of-the-court briefs** in both state and federal courts to help advance cities' collective legal interests.



## Legal advocacy

Cal Cities' robust legal advocacy program protects the interests of cities in matters before the courts. As part of this program, Cal Cities files amicus, or "friend-of-the-court," briefs.

Cal Cities participated in several federal cases involving the regulation of homeless encampments on public property and joined several ongoing state cases, including a lawsuit against SB 9 (Atkins, 2021) and a state-led legal challenge that would remove the "Taxpayer Protection and Government Accountability Act" from the ballot.

The legal advocacy program also occasionally weighs in on regulatory matters. Thanks to member-driven advocacy, the state passed regulations that clarify how an expanded campaign finance law impacts elected officials.

A few legal advocacy highlights include:



An appellate court issued a ruling in ***Save Livermore Downtown v. City of Livermore*** that protects affordable housing projects from meritless environmental lawsuits. In its brief, Cal Cities noted that the lawsuit is part of a broader trend by special interest groups.



In ***Grant Park Association Advocates vs. California Department of Public Health***, an appellate court ruled that the state must consult local law enforcement about hypodermic needle exchange programs. The decision emphasizes the importance of meaningful state and local government communication.



An appellate court reinforced the strength of the home rule doctrine in ***Cultiva La Salud v. State of California***. The case centered on a 2018 law that prohibited cities from adopting taxes on certain groceries, including sodas.

# Connecting and growing with each other

Now, more than ever, Cal Cities members crave connection to each other — a chance to share successes as well as the challenges they experience in their cities. Cal Cities provides an unparalleled range of conferences and events, where city leaders can step back from their day-to-day duties and grow personally and professionally.

During the City Leaders Summit in Sacramento in April, over 350 city officials joined county officials at a special joint convening between Cal Cities and the California State Association of Counties focused on potential shared solutions to homelessness. Prior to the Summit, over 100 city officials drew media and legislative attention when they gathered outside the Capitol to urge the state to invest

\$3 billion in ongoing funding to prevent and reduce homelessness and increase affordable housing.

In September, over 2,000 city leaders came together for the Annual Conference and Expo. The three-day event was a chance for local officials to come together, discover solutions to city-specific issues, and celebrate noteworthy successes. A conference highlight was that the five Cal Cities diversity caucuses — the African American Caucus, the Asian Pacific Islander Caucus, the Latino Caucus, the LGBTQ Caucus, and the Women's Caucus — each organized an education session. One example was *Righting Wrongs: Addressing Discrimination Against AAPIs* where city leaders discussed Zoom bombing and other obstacles to governance.



“ A diversity of people and perspectives matter. That is the backbone of Cal Cities. No two cities are the same, yet we face some of the same challenges and bring different ideas to the table for solving those problems. Together, we are indeed stronger.

Daniel T. Parra  
Mayor, Fowler, 2022-23 Cal Cities First Vice President



# Diverse opportunities for a diverse membership

One-size-fits-all solutions don't work for every city or every member, which is why Cal Cities also makes available a wide variety of opportunities for members to engage at both the regional and statewide levels.

Cal Cities' 16 regional divisions held meetings throughout the year to focus on their regional needs and advocate on top regional concerns. They also met in small groups with their legislators to advocate directly for more resources to help cities tackle these issues.

In addition, thousands of city officials participated in member-driven department and issue-based roundtables, providing members with a safe space to learn from their peers.

Elected and appointed officials came together to gain a deeper, statewide perspective on the unique opportunities and challenges faced by their professions. In 2023, two of the highlights were the City Managers Conference and the New Mayors and Council Members Academy. These events drew a high level of participation and praise for timely, relevant educational content.



## By the numbers...

**8** conferences  
**4,916** attendees



**32** webinars and Speaker Series  
**4,494** attendees

**29** Professional department roundtables  
**2,080** attendees



**121** Regional division events  
**4,659** attendees

# Amplifying city voices

City leaders are doing important work every day to meet the needs of residents, solve problems, and improve the quality of life for all Californians. Telling the city story — ensuring that your work is visible to lawmakers, state and federal officials, the media, and other city leaders throughout the state — is front and center of what we do at Cal Cities.

Amplifying local stories is an integral part of how Cal Cities advances the collective power of cities and brings about change. #LocalWorks highlights examples of local actions that are making a difference in your communities. This year Cal Cities focused on ways cities are making real progress to address homelessness and spur affordable housing. These important city stories were featured in the *Cal Cities Advocate* (a weekly newsletter) and *Western City* (a digital magazine) which both reach nearly 20,000 subscribers. The winning cities of the Helen Putnam Award for Excellence, which honors outstanding efforts to improve the quality of life and delivery of services in their communities, were also featured on these platforms throughout the year.



#LocalWorks



California cities to state: Pay up on homeless crisis



Who's responsible for the homeless?

Today, local government officials are gathering in downtown Sacramento for the first joint summit between the California State Association of Counties and the League of California Cities to discuss creating a comprehensive plan for tackling homelessness.



California mayors demand \$3 billion annually in homelessness funds from Newsom, lawmakers



California cities, counties hold convention to tackle homeless crisis



City, county leaders rally to secure \$3B in permanent funding for homelessness

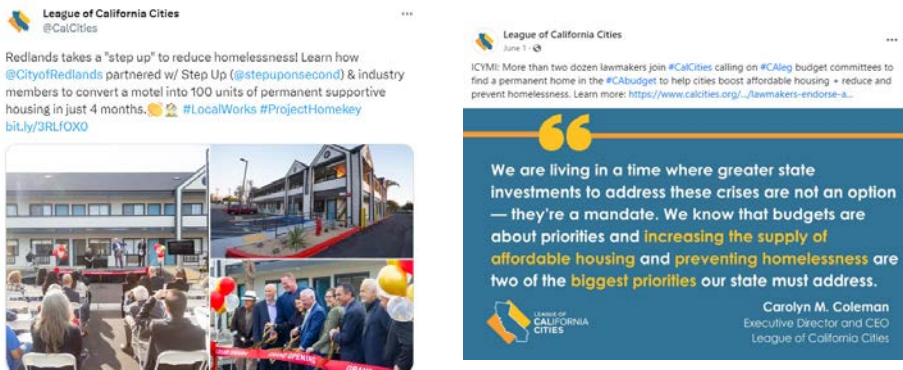
“ In today’s world, it is imperative that Cal Cities uses every tool in its box to effectively communicate with our diverse cities. Social media is one of those tools. Cal Cities’ use of social media increases member engagement, ensures accurate information delivery, and provides timely crisis communication. Cal Cities’ presence on Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn meets our members where they are, and that is on social media.

Randi Johl, Legislative Director/City Clerk,  
Temecula, Cal Cities Board Member

Cal Cities also shared city stories, news, events, and more valuable information on Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, and LinkedIn. This past year Cal Cities expanded its reach on Instagram and LinkedIn with more timely content for our growing audience of engaged city leaders, lawmakers, and other stakeholders. Be sure to follow our pages if you don't already!

Cal Cities also strengthened relationships with the media to ensure the city perspective was part of the greater conversation. Cal Cities' advocacy efforts drew significant media attention, and where our cities' collective work was featured in a plethora of local publications and statewide media including the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Politico*, and *CalMatters*. Cal Cities placed op-eds in the *Sacramento Bee* and *Modesto Bee* — one covered the lack of ongoing funding to cities to help reduce homelessness and boost affordable housing, and the other calls for the lack of swift action from lawmakers to address the fentanyl crisis.

As part of Cal Cities' efforts to amplify local perspectives, a new feature called City Voices gives a platform for local leaders to talk about the biggest challenges and successes facing their communities.



Follow us on social media!



@calcities

## By the numbers...

Cal Cities was mentioned in **1,700** news stories.



Shared **20** #LocalWorks stories of local actions that are making a difference to California communities.



Highlighted **96** cities on social media who are making strides to address housing and homelessness in their communities.

**12** Helen Putnam Award for Excellence winners were featured in *Western City* magazine.



- City of Agoura Hills
- City of Azusa
- City of Corona (two)
- City of Modesto (two)
- City of Moreno Valley
- City of Pleasanton
- City of Riverside
- City of Santa Monica
- City of Shafter
- City of West Sacramento

Expanded our reach by **586%** on Instagram and **241%** on LinkedIn to meet members where they are.

## City Solutions by the numbers...

**80** CAL CITIES PARTNER



**\$1 billion** in bond financing issued



Nearly **\$800 million** in pooled investments

# The Cal Cities team

Supported by a staff of about 70, Cal Cities is the leading advocate and premier educational resource for California cities and their leaders.



# The Cal Cities 2022-23 Board of Directors

The Cal Cities Board of Directors provides leadership and guidance, shaping state policy and the actions of the organization.

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**Tyler Williamson**, Mayor, Monterey, LGBTQ Caucus  
**Dan Wright**, Council Member, Stockton, Central Valley Division  
**Nancy Young**, Mayor, Tracy, At-large

\*Mayor Steve Martin passed away in August 2023.



Strengthening cities through **advocacy** and **education**

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