



## **2025-2026 Legislative Bulletin**



**May 12, 2025**



**Recapping a Great Capitol Connections Day**



*League Executive Director Jerry Deschane providing opening remarks at Capitol Connections*

Last Wednesday, more than 100 municipal officials joined the League for Capitol Connections: Wisconsin Municipalities Day! This event was an important opportunity for legislators to hear directly from local leaders on issues important to their municipality and all municipalities.

Your constituents are state legislators' constituents. That's why it's crucial that municipal voices are heard by legislators. This event also ensures municipal leaders can connect with each other over a casual event with great food, a beautiful backdrop, and informative programming.

Attendees represented a broad range of municipal viewpoints with both elected leaders and staff across a wide range of responsibilities and titles in attendance. This varied array of experiences provided legislators with unique and important perspectives to consider during development and deliberation on the budget and legislation before them this session.



Thank you to our afternoon speakers, Legislative Fiscal Bureau Director Bob Lang and Forward Analytics Director Dale Knapp, for sharing their stories, expertise, and work with our attendees. Additionally, thank you to legislators and legislative offices for taking the time to hear and value municipal perspectives. Finally, and most importantly, **THANK YOU** to all the municipal officials who took time out of their busy schedules to come down to our 2025 Capitol Connections: Wisconsin Municipalities Day!

*Marshfield Mayor Lois TeStrake and Senator Cory Tomczyk (R-Mosinee), Chair of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government*

Stay tuned to the [event webpage](#) later this week for the materials, presentations, and photos from Capitol Connections Day to be posted. We hope to see you all in 2027 for this biennial event!



*Legislative Fiscal  
Bureau Director Bob  
Lang speaking with  
Jerry Deschane during  
the Fireside Chat  
discussion*



*Janesville City Manager  
Kevin Lahner meeting  
with Senator Mark  
Spreitzer (D-Beloit),  
Ranking Member of the  
Senate Committee on  
Transportation and  
Local Government*



*Forward Analytics  
Director Dale Knapp  
presenting to attendees  
on Wisconsin's  
demographic  
challenges*

## **ARPA Reporting Past Due - FILE NOW**

If your municipality has filed their American Rescue Plan Act - State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA-SLFRF) Project and Expenditures Report for 2025 by its due date of April 30th, great work! Unfortunately, hundreds of Wisconsin cities, villages, and towns did not file their 2025 report by the April 30th deadline. **Remember, municipalities that accepted ARPA-SLFRF are required to report by April 30th annually through 2027.**

The National League of Cities (NLC) is hosting ARPA Office Hours today, May 12 and next Monday, May 19th from 2:00pm to 3:00pm CT for municipalities that have not yet attempted to file. Municipalities that attempted to file but ran into issues in the filing process should attend NLC's ARPA Office Hours

this Thursday, May 15th or next Thursday, May 22nd from 3:00pm to 4:00pm CT. More information on these Office Hours is available on [NLC's website](#).

Municipalities with questions on filing their ARPA-SLFRF reports may also visit this [NLC guide](#), watch [this video](#) from the U.S. Department of the Treasury, and view [these links](#) from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. **If ARPA-SLFRF reports are not filed with Treasury as required, funds may be subject to recoupment. If you haven't already, please file your report as soon as possible to prevent needing to pay back these funds.**



### **League Legislative Agenda in Action**

The [League's 2025-2026 Legislative Agenda](#) touches on a myriad of issues important to Wisconsin's municipal leaders. Today, we're going to highlight two bills which are putting the League's Legislative Agenda into action.

One of the pillars of our Legislative Agenda looks to promote efforts that address inflationary pressures being experienced locally. In 1999, the Legislature set new thresholds for local governments which required that all projects above \$25,000 are competitively bid and those above \$5,000 have a public notice. In the 26 years since these thresholds were set, inflation has nearly doubled, making \$25,000 in 1999 equivalent to approximately \$48,000 today.

Last Wednesday, a public hearing was held on [Assembly Bill 217](#). This legislation increases the bidding threshold to \$50,000 and the notice threshold to \$10,000 for all public construction projects except road

projects and indexes all bidding and notice thresholds to growth in the Consumer Price Index every five years. Not only does this bill help to avoid an unnecessary, burdensome, and lengthy process that often results in few or no bids for small projects, but by indexing the thresholds to adjust automatically, it ensures that, if signed into law, inflationary pressures will be addressed and this won't be an issue in another quarter-century.

Another pillar of the Legislative Agenda looks to address local workforce needs. While there's no easy or single solution to address the recruitment and retention challenges being faced by local governments of all sizes, options are available. Last Tuesday, a public hearing was held on [Senate Bill 170](#) which represents one of those options. Under current law, if a Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) annuitant (i.e., retiree) wants to return to work with a WRS-participating employer at more than two-thirds time, they must suspend their annuity payments. However, private employment is often more enticing for retired public employees because they do not have to suspend their annuity payments providing another public sector workforce hurdle.

This legislation looks to provide local governments with the option to rehire an annuitant for up to five years without requiring them to suspend their annuity, making returning to work with a public sector employer a more attractive option. To qualify, the annuitant must separate from employment for at least 75 days (consistent with current laws), must not have an agreement to return to work when they retire, must elect to not participate in WRS when rehired, and must have retired after July 2, 2013. Additionally, the employer must make estimated annuity payments for the rehired employee. While no solution is perfect, Senate Bill 170 could address some of the workforce challenges being faced in municipalities throughout the state.

To learn more about these two bills and others and to read the testimony we've provided to legislative committees this session, visit the [League's 2025-2026 Legislative Communications webpage](#).

### Recently Introduced Bills of Municipal Importance

The following bills were recently introduced in the Wisconsin State Legislature and have been added to the list of those being monitored by the League. Unless otherwise indicated, no formal position has been taken on these proposals to date.

- **[Senate Bill 241: TIF Exemptions for Data Centers](#)** - Sen. Jagler (R-Watertown) and Reps. Born (R-Beaver Dam) and Brooks (R-Saukville)  
- Last session, a tax credit was created for a qualified data center, which are data centers that [meet certain investment thresholds](#) based on the population of the county of the development. This legislation exempts properties being developed into a qualified data center from the 12% equalized value cap on tax incremental financing (TIF), allowing municipalities to create a tax incremental district (TID) for those data centers without the 12% limitation if all project costs are related to the data center. Additionally, the value increment of a data center TID is exempt from the 12% calculation for the creation of other TIDs.

[View the League's Full Summary of Bills Introduced in Past Two Weeks](#)

★ If you would like to contact your legislators on any bills mentioned in the Legislative Bulletin, you can find contact information for all

**legislators [here](#).** To find out which legislators represent your community, use the "Find Your Legislator" function on the right side of the page.



### **Legislative Floor Period this Week**

Tomorrow, May 13th, the Assembly will be in session at 1:00pm to consider about a dozen bills. The only bill of note for Wisconsin municipalities is [Assembly Bill 134](#). This legislation would delay the transition of local election campaign finance reporting from municipal clerks to the Wisconsin Ethics Commission from its deadline in [2023 Wisconsin Act 126](#) of July 1, 2025 to December 1, 2027.

The League has not taken a position on the legislation. Ultimately, while supported by the League, Act 126 is unable to be implemented by the Wisconsin Ethics Commission without additional staff and technology resources to accommodate and support 10,000-plus new campaign finance registrants. The legislation does not delay the implementation of protections for election workers from Act 126 which will still go into effect on July 1, 2025.

The Senate could be in session this Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, though it's unclear as of this morning if or when the Senate will be coming to the floor this week.



### **Agency Anecdotes**

## **League Submits Comments on Water Quality Trading**

Toni Herkert, the League's Government Affairs Director, recently submitted comments to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on their proposed updates to a lengthy water quality trading guidance document. Water quality trading is when a permitted point source discharger, such as a municipal wastewater treatment plant, pays a nonpoint source discharger, such as a farm, to reduce nonpoint source runoff pollution. In exchange, the point source discharger receives some regulatory relief in their ratcheted pollutant discharge limits.

Water quality trading has been proven to be an effective tool for addressing the nation's most stringent phosphorus standards while still improving local water quality. Despite its success, the DNR has failed to properly implement 2019 Wisconsin Act 151, a law that was aimed at creating a water quality trading clearinghouse managed by a third-party and overseen by the DNR to reduce the administrative and legal burdens faced in facilitating water quality trades. The League's comments, which may be [read here](#), encourage the DNR to loosen the reins and allow third-party water quality trades to be a tool available to municipalities statewide.

## **MyDORGov Annual Refresher Webinar**

The Wisconsin Department of Revenue's (DOR) online filing system for local governments, known as MyDORGov, is an important tool for municipal clerks, treasurers, and assessors to understand. If you have the responsibility of using MyDORGov to file required forms on behalf of your municipality, you're encouraged to register for DOR's Annual Refresher Webinar which will provide an overview of the system and highlight recent

enhancements. The webinar will take place on **Wednesday, May 21st from 12:00pm to 1:00pm**. Learn more and register [here](#).

### **Webinar to Maximize Online Tourism Presence**

Google, in coordination with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, is hosting a webinar this **Wednesday, May 14th from 12:00pm to 1:00pm** on how to maximize online presence with their free business tools, including how to create, manage, and optimize online presence for tourism leaders. Municipal officials that partner with local tourism organizations or tourism-reliant businesses may be interested in attending this webinar. Learn more and register [here](#).

### **Applications Being Accepted for EMS Subcommittees**

Qualified EMS professionals looking to have their experience and perspectives included in state decision making are encouraged to apply for Wisconsin EMS Board Subcommittees by **4:00pm on Monday, May 19th**. Applications are being accepted for six different subcommittees, and applicants chosen will serve a one-year term starting on July 1st. For more information on the six subcommittees and to find the application link, please visit the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services' website](#).



## FUTURE READY

Exploring fire and EMS services in  
Sun Prairie and surrounding communities



In its fourth recent report on EMS, the Wisconsin Policy Forum recently published [\*Future Ready: Exploring Fire and EMS Services in Sun Prairie and Surrounding Communities\*](#). This report, much like other recent reports, lays out a range of options that can be considered to best serve the growing EMS needs of this community with recommendations that are more broadly applicable throughout the state. All recent reports by the Wisconsin Policy Forum may be [viewed here](#).

If you're looking for additional reading materials, check out the [League's publications](#). This includes, among many others, *Basic Financial Administration for Wisconsin Local Governments*, *Handbook for Wisconsin Municipal Officials*, and *Municipal Licensing and Regulation of Alcohol Beverages*. Order one today to have it in hand for your summer reading pleasure!

**Email questions or comments to:**

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