

City Basics & Cal Cities Overview

Jason Rhine, Assistant Legislative
Director, [jrhone@cacities.org](mailto:jrhine@cacities.org)

Overview

- City Basics
- What is Cal Cities?
- Cal Cities Key Functions
 - Education
 - Advocacy
- Key Challenges
- Local Protection Measures
- 2021 Strategic Priorities
- 2021 Key Issues

City Basics

- 482 cities. Approximately 83% of state population, 31.5 million
- Formed by people to provide more self-government.
- Level of government closest to the people.
- Important issues to city residents:
 - Community traditions and sense of place.
 - Local history.
 - Retaining “local quality of life.”
 - Ensuring new growth and development are compatible with community plans.
- Cities provide municipal services: police, fire, water, sewer, parks, library, etc.
- Common ground between all cities: passionate support for fundamental principle of local democracy and local decision making.

City Basics

Two Types of Cities

- Charter Cities (121 cities)

Authorized in the Constitution. Special powers to govern “municipal affairs.”

- General Law Cities (361 cities)

Formed under the general laws of the state with local voter approval.

What is Cal Cites?

- Established in 1898 (operating for 123 years)
- Organization largely governed by local *elected* officials
- Mission: *Restore and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy in order to enhance the quality of life for all Californians.*

Cal Cities Key Functions: Advocacy

- **Policy and Legislative:**

- 6 full-time lobbyists.
- 16 Regional Public Affairs Managers mobilize city officials and coalition partners to augment and support these efforts.

- **Legal:**

- Represents city interests in both federal and state court. File approximately 50 friend of the court briefs per year.

- **Ballot Issues:** Proposition 1A, Proposition 98/99 and Proposition 22.

In 2018: Support Prop 1 (housing) and Prop 2 (mental health), Oppose Prop 6 (transportation funding).

Cal Cities Key Functions: Education

Local government is a complicated endeavor.

Cities constantly innovating and learning from each other.

- Cal Cities hosts many conferences, webinars, and roundtables, to address the educational needs of local elected officials, city department heads, their staff at all phases of their professional careers.

Other information sources:

- Western City Magazine.
- CA Cities Advocate (weekly newsletter).
- Institute for Local Government.
- californiacityfinance.com.

Key Challenges

- Absorbing population growth (AB 32/SB 375) ideals, matched up against fiscal and infrastructure limitations.
- Environmental challenges with expanding population: water availability, clean air, trash collection and recycling, etc.
- Sustainability of quality local services.
- Maintaining vibrant communities.
- COVID-19 impacts and recovery.

Key Challenges

- Budget and Fiscal:
 - Prop 13, Prop 218 and Prop 26. Very restrictive. Most financing options involve local voter approval by either 2/3rds or majority vote.
 - Easier to raise taxes on raw land (Mello-Roos)
 - Hard to do infill
 - State's constant state tinkering with local revenue:
 - Triple-flip
 - VLF-property tax swap
 - Using truck weight fees to pay for transportation bonds
 - Shifting over \$8 billion per year in ERAF from (cities, counties and special districts) \$400 million growth per year!
 - Tried to take local sales taxes
 - Tried to take local highways users taxes
 - Eliminated redevelopment agencies

Local Protection Measures

- Prop 1A of 2004:
 - Cannot take sales taxes
 - Caps on unfunded mandates, and had to repay \$1 billion in unpaid mandate claims (now pay or suspend)
 - Capped state's ability to “borrow” property taxes at \$2 billion, had to be repaid in three years
 - Locked in VLF-Property Tax SWAP

Local Protection Measures

- Proposition 22 of 2010:
 - Protected local transportation funds
 - Removed the ability of the state to “borrow” property taxes
 - Protected all other locally approved revenue from state raids
 - Tried to protect redevelopment agencies (*but not well enough*)

2021 Strategic Advocacy Priorities

1. Secure state and federal funding for local COVID-19 public health response and economic recovery for all.
2. Secure funding to increase the supply and affordability of housing and resources to assist individuals at risk of – or already experiencing – homelessness while preserving local decision making.
3. Improve state-local coordination and planning to strengthen community disaster preparedness, resiliency, and recovery.
4. Protect and modernize critical infrastructure.



2021 Key Issues

- COVID-19 Relief and Recovery
- Advancing Equity
- Housing and Homelessness
- Disaster Preparedness
- Public Safety Reform
- Access to Broadband



Thank You!

For more information on Cal Cities' positions on pending legislation, please visit www.cacities.org/billsearch and type the bill number into the search function.