

Annual Report

2025

Navigating Change
Powering Progress



Message from the Executive Director and CEO Carolyn Coleman



Recovering from devastating wildfires. Balancing budgets in the face of economic uncertainty. Countering misinformation and polarization. Dealing with immigration enforcement efforts. Harnessing technology that is rapidly changing city operations. Driving solutions to the housing and homelessness crisis.

This year has tested the resolve and strength of our communities and our city leaders. As local leaders, you faced these challenges with courage, resilience, and passion for your cities.

And Cal Cities, the organization created by you, has been with you every step of the way. Together, we're navigating the changing political, social, and economic realities to power your progress and uplift your communities.

With over 98% of California cities as members, Cal Cities is the only organization that can genuinely say that it represents California cities.

Our success lies in the fact that we deliver results that benefit cities: funding, legislation, resources, legal clarity, and opportunities to learn from and lean on each other.

Our collective achievements would not have been possible without all of you, the 2024-25 Cal Cities Officers and Board members, and the dynamic Cal Cities staff.

I am honored to present the 2025 Annual Report, which captures all we accomplished together this year. I am excited for what the future holds.

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

The Cal Cities 2024-25 Board of Directors



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.

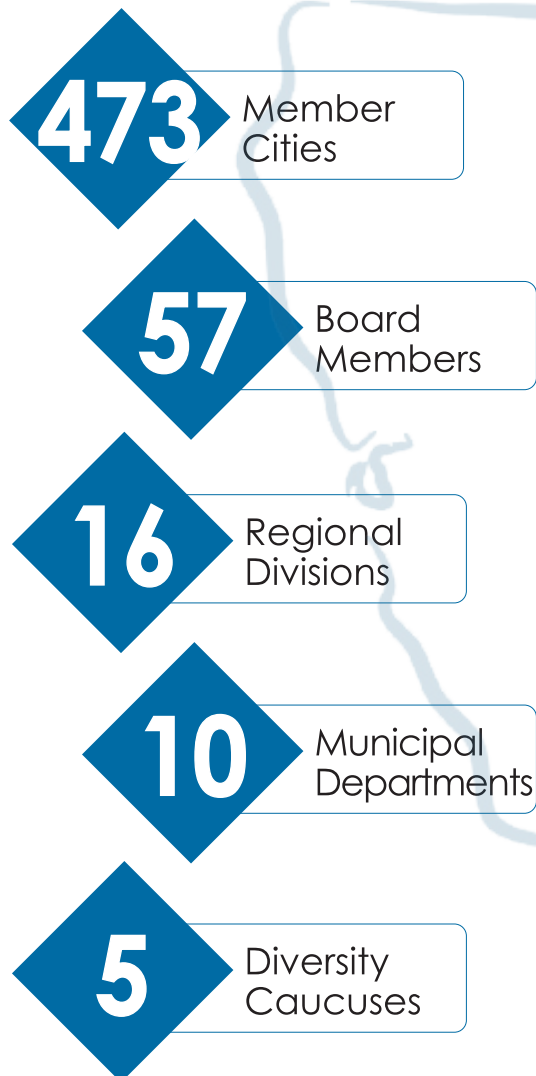
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Cal Cities is a beacon for collaboration and advocacy. Our unity is our strength. When we speak with one voice — on housing, public safety, infrastructure, fiscal stability, or climate resilience — we amplify the needs of our residents and the hopes of our communities.

*Lynne Kennedy, Rancho Cucamonga Mayor Pro Tem
and Cal Cities Board President*

Who we are

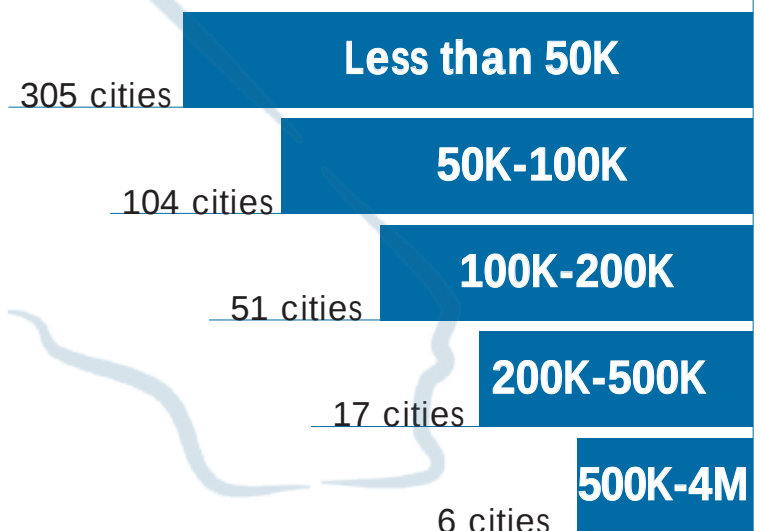
Cal Cities is a member-informed organization powered by the voices of city officials. Together, we elevate Cal Cities as the leading voice for California cities.



We serve 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

...and cities of ALL population sizes.



Mobilizing members to power advocacy

Cal Cities is a powerhouse, member-driven organization that advances the interests of cities in the Legislature, in the courts, and at the ballot box. Grassroots mobilization through our public affairs team is key to advancing those efforts.



State and federal courts play an increasingly outsized role in shaping the laws that affect cities, and city voices are integral to our efforts to further cities' collective legal interests. Over the last year, Cal Cities filed 30 amicus briefs and letters in support of cities in state and federal courts.

In the Legislature, Cal Cities sponsored 15 bills — the most in recent history! Eight of those bills made it to the Governor's desk, and six were signed into law.

City officials traveled from every corner of the state to testify in Sacramento. Cities sent over 1,300 letters to the Capitol. Regional divisions hosted forums with lawmakers to highlight how legislation would impact their communities and led lobby days that shaped the outcomes of legislative debates.

All of this helped us advance legislation that will serve communities throughout California and stop bills that would harm our cities.

“Local government plays an essential role in shaping the day-to-day lives of Californians. Through Cal Cities, we are able to elevate the legal issues cities are facing, contribute to statewide policy, and help shape effective, practical solutions. I'm grateful for the chance to support that work and strengthen the legal tools that help cities protect and serve their communities.

Heather Ferbert, San Diego City Attorney

Legislative highlights

Local Revenues

In a time of significant state and national fiscal uncertainty, we must fight more than ever to protect local revenues. This year, we sponsored a bill that would crack down on illegal short-term rentals and enable cities to capture the millions of tax dollars left uncollected each year. Deep-pocketed corporations pushed back with a robust disinformation campaign, but ultimately, SB 346 (Durazo) sailed through the Legislature with bipartisan support before being signed into law.

Homelessness

Cal Cities has long urged state leaders to provide ongoing, reliable homelessness funding. But in June, the state zeroed out the biggest homeless prevention grant program for the fiscal year and set aside half of the normal amount in the next budget. Cal Cities fought back to prevent any interruption in services, despite the significant funding cuts. We also forced changes to SB 634 (Perez), which threatened cities' ability to address encampments. After overwhelming opposition from nearly 100 cities, the measure was significantly amended to address our concerns.



Housing

Over 180 cities joined Cal Cities in the fight against SB 79 (Wiener), a measure that gives transit agencies unprecedented land use authority while disregarding local zoning and state-certified housing elements. The groundswell of opposition resulted in the bill being amended 13 times, significantly narrowing its impact before becoming law. Cal Cities also channeled long-simmering frustrations from city officials about the timeliness, consistency, and fairness of the state's housing element approval process and sponsored AB 650 (Papan). The common-sense bill would have made it easier for cities to plan for homes faster and more effectively. Although it received unanimous bipartisan support, the Governor vetoed it based on cost concerns.

Climate change

The climate crisis is affecting cities' core functions: infrastructure, public safety, and housing. To respond to these impacts, cities need resources and a strong partnership with the state. This year, Cal Cities and a broad coalition secured an extension of the Cap-and-Trade program, which invests millions of dollars into communities to help meet the state's climate goals. Cal Cities fought to ensure that the program continues to fund city priorities and includes specific funding for affordable housing and wildfire resilience.



Other legislative achievements

Recent changes to state licensing requirements were stalling city efforts to commission murals. Cal Cities sprang into action and built a coalition with city officials and artists to secure much-needed reform. The new law, SB 456 (Ashby), provides a narrow exemption to state licensing requirements, making it easier for cities to commission local artists and uplift their communities.

“The political heft of the League of California Cities has helped push the reform agenda forward this session.”

Columnist Teri Sforza, writing for the Orange County Register

Recovery housing reforms bring transparency and accountability



For a decade, cities have struggled with the lack of accountability and transparency over recovery housing facilities. Despite efforts by Cal Cities, the Legislature refused to act — until recently. Thanks in part to strong engagement from Orange County Division city officials, Cal Cities successfully pushed through two new laws, AB 492 (Valencia) and AB 424 (Davies), that will bring much-needed oversight to recovery housing facilities. City leaders traveled to the Capitol to testify in favor of the Cal Cities-sponsored bills and joined Cal Cities for a press conference alongside lawmakers calling for reforms.

City officials connecting and learning together



The Cal Cities Annual Conference and Expo had its highest attendance in 20 years, as over 2,300 city officials, partners, sponsors, and vendors came together for three days to explore solutions to city issues, learn from each other, and celebrate achievements.

Five of Cal Cities' department conferences sold out in 2025, a strong indicator of just how much city officials value coming together with colleagues from throughout the state.

The City Leaders Summit saw a record number of city officials come together in Sacramento. Cal Cities led delegations of city officials to meet with all 120 legislative offices, celebrated

California Cities Week, and held a rally and press event on the Capitol lawn calling attention to city priorities in the state budget. City officials also explored local solutions to statewide problems through educational sessions.



“As a young, Latina/AAPI, woman who started as a councilmember and now, mayor, and being the first in many aspects, I was met with empowerment by Cal Cities. It empowers elected officials to advocate and share their experiences to create better cities and a stronger voice at the state level.

Rachel Hernandez, Riverbank Mayor

“ The diversity caucuses strengthen Cal Cities' role as the leading advocate for city interests. The caucuses provide crucial support for Cal Cities members from our state's diverse demographic groups and make meaningful connections with historically underrepresented communities throughout California.

Jeffrey Koji Maloney, Alhambra Vice Mayor

Cal Cities builds community

Cal Cities serves as a convener — meeting officials where they are and connecting them to resources and, more importantly, each other. This year, more than 15,000 city officials participated in a Cal Cities conference, webinar, division event, or roundtable to share ideas, hear from experts, and learn from each other.

Cal Cities' five diversity caucuses and 10 municipal departments also bring together city leaders to advance shared solutions and connect with peers who share similar concerns. This year, diversity caucuses sponsored several panels at Cal Cities' conferences, as well as virtual and in-person events on a wide range of issues to help educate city officials. 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 on issues as diverse as wildfire preparedness, Brown Act reforms, federal immigration enforcement efforts, and supporting groups impacted by hate crimes.

New this year, Cal Cities launched the Veterans and Military City Officials member group. These local leaders have dynamic perspectives, shaped by their service to our country. This dedicated group is another Cal Cities opportunity for members to connect and collaborate.



CCLI celebrates 20 years!



Cal Cities' California Civic Leadership Institute celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2025, marking two decades of helping local government officials prepare for the state Legislature.

Established in 2005, CCLI helps ready local leaders for state-wide campaigns, strengthens Cal Cities' relationships with future legislators, and builds connections among California's political leaders.

An impressive list of 54 alumni went on to serve in higher office:

- U.S. Senator Alex Padilla
- California Attorney General Rob Bonta
- California State Treasurer Fiona Ma
- California State Superintendent of Public Education Tony Thurmond
- 14 California Assembly Members
- 11 California Senate Members
- Two California Congressional Members

Cal Cities elevates city voices to influence statewide conversations



As the nation's media landscape becomes more fractured, local officials and city issues must be at the forefront of conversations between lawmakers, the media, and the public. That's why in 2025, Cal Cities made a concerted effort to strengthen relationships with the media and increase its online visibility.

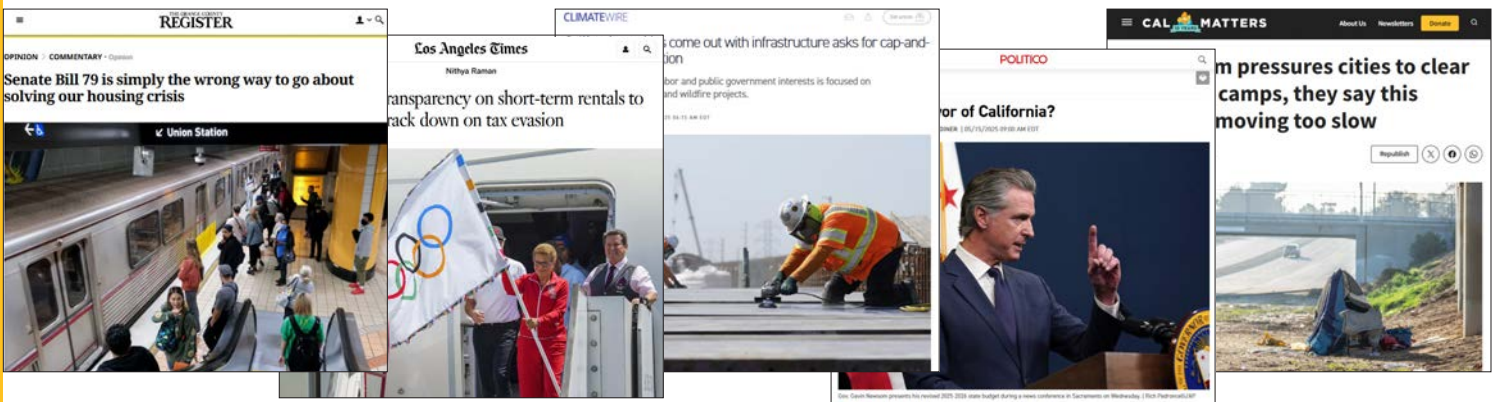
As a result, Cal Cities and the voices of cities were featured in several regional publications and prominent national and statewide

media outlets, including the *Associated Press*, *CalMatters*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Politico*, and *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Strong media coverage helped get one major measure across the finish line and significantly altered another one. Cal Cities worked with an LA city official to place an op-ed urging lawmakers to pass SB 346 (Durazo), a bill that makes it easier for cities to enforce short-term rental ordinances and receive transient occupancy taxes. It also

“Cal Cities empowers local leaders to turn challenges into opportunities for communities across California. As a city manager, I've seen how Cal Cities amplifies our collective voice and delivers results. Together, we're shaping a stronger, more inclusive California.

LaTanya Bellow, Emeryville City Manager and Cal Cities Board Member





“ At the end of the day, local government is where the rubber really meets the road... Local government is where government is connected to the people, and celebrating the work of our cities that are tackling the big issues, from housing to homelessness to climate change, is so important.

Assembly Member Nick Schultz

worked with two other city officials to pen an op-ed urging caution when ceding local land use authority. Although the Governor signed SB 79 into law, he did so only after bruising committee fights and dozens of rounds of changes.

Also central to Cal Cities' advocacy wins is #LocalWorks, which highlights how cities are meeting today's challenges head-on. These 26 stories appeared in *Western City* magazine and *Cal Cities Advocate* — the weekly newsletter — as well as in advocacy materials to lawmakers. When the state says cities aren't doing enough, we say, "Yes, we are: Here's how."

At no time during the year was our visibility higher than during California Cities Week in April, when hundreds of city officials converged on the Capitol. Lawmakers heard from city officials and recognized the many ways California's diverse cities make life better for all.



“ We are grateful to Cal Cities for its steadfast commitment to protecting local control and amplifying the voices of smaller cities. Cal Cities empowers Paramount and other cities to shape policies that reflect our local needs while working together to strengthen the foundation of local governance statewide.

Peggy Lemons, Paramount Mayor

The Cal Cities team

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



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