

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



LEAGUE OF
**CALIFORNIA
CITIES**



Message from Executive Director and CEO

Influential. Underestimated. Powerful. Those are just a few of the words the media, members of the business community, and legislators used to describe the League of California Cities this year.

For 126 years, Cal Cities' North Star continues to be our ability to uplift and amplify your collective voices to shape and influence good public policy outcomes for cities. In the last year, like the many that came before, we relied on a "whole of Cal Cities" advocacy approach, leveraging our united voice in the courts, at the ballot box, and in the Legislature to ensure cities have enough tools in the toolbox to tailor solutions to the challenges their communities face.

We led a robust opposition campaign that blocked the dangerous Taxpayer Deception Act, a ballot measure that posed an existential threat to local funding that supports local services. We mobilized cities to fight against an unfunded mandate that places severe restrictions on new or expanding warehouses. We successfully pushed back against the Governor's proposal to reduce funding that helps cities prevent and reduce homelessness and ensured it was restored in the final budget package. We played a leading role in advancing new laws to keep our communities safe by holding repeat retail theft offenders and serious drug traffickers accountable while incentivizing drug treatment for those with serious addictions.

In all of Cal Cities' advocacy achievements this year, city officials stand out as the secret sauce of our success: They

are the problem solvers at the local level who know what their communities need. Their engagement is a spark that ignites our work and drives results.

In 2024, we also came together to learn and grow. With timely, cutting-edge topics, Cal Cities' virtual events and flagship conferences welcomed high levels of engagement from city officials throughout the state.

Looking ahead to 2025, we will stay laser-focused on the work prioritized by our members, including our organizational diversity goals. We have reinvigorated the Advancing Equity Advisory Committee to support cities seeking to strengthen their capacity to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions, and build more equitable communities.

Our success would not have been possible without the dedicated and committed 2023-24 Cal Cities Officers and Board members, city officials from throughout the state, and the very talented Cal Cities staff.

I am honored to present the 2024 Annual Report, which captures our collective achievements this past year.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn M. Coleman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carolyn" and last name "Coleman" clearly visible.

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

2023-24 Cal Cities Board of Directors



“Cal Cities represents the voice of our cities, the voice of our residents. Those issues that are the most important, we’re able to make sure that those needs of our residents are met through our advocacy and through our education.

*Karen Goh
Mayor, Bakersfield
Cal Cities Board Member*

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



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

58
Board
Members

16
Regional
Divisions

476
Member
Cities

10
Municipal
Departments

5
Diversity
Caucuses



Legislative advocacy

Cal Cities works with lawmakers, the Governor's Office, and other organizations to advance member-driven and advocacy priorities. Cal Cities also leverages the collective power of city voices to push back against bills that take away local control and add unnecessary bureaucracy. Together, we elevate Cal Cities as the leading voice for California cities.



Local revenues

Cities are the engines of the state's economy, and in 2024, Cal Cities blocked several bills that threatened local revenue streams. Cal Cities halted an effort to exempt new accessory dwelling units from property tax assessments and stopped a bill prohibiting cities from entering new sales tax rebate agreements with retailers. Cal Cities also convened a diverse group of city managers to study Bradley-Burns sales tax reform and develop recommendations that equitably benefit all cities, further fiscal sustainability, and strengthen the viability of the sales tax.



Public Safety

When it comes to public safety, no one knows better than local leaders what their communities need. In a complete turnabout from 2023, lawmakers and the Governor finally listened to city voices and advanced a 10-bill package seeking to address the rise in retail theft. Combined with the incredibly strong voter support behind the Cal Cities-supported Proposition 36, these measures will establish tough new penalties to combat retail theft and slow the deadly spread of fentanyl.



Housing and homelessness

Cal Cities supported the expansion of access to new behavioral health funding, services, and housing through Proposition 1, which voters passed in March 2024. We also worked with lawmakers to restore essential funding cut by the Governor that helps cities address homelessness. At Cal Cities' urging, the Governor signed two sponsored bills that hold recovery homes accountable for high-quality treatment and care. Cal Cities also helped block or modify dozens of top-down housing bills, including one that would have forced cities to approve all office-to-residential conversions and exempted the conversions from certain fees.



Climate change

Cal Cities advanced important work this year on climate change. Cal Cities supported and voters approved a \$10 billion climate bond that will bring sorely needed resources to cities. The Governor also signed two Cal Cities-supported bills that will make it easier for cities to meet the state's organic waste mandate. Cal Cities helped secure flexibility in the state's new long-term water savings rule and craft sea level rise guidance.





Defeating the Taxpayer Deception Act

Cal Cities led a powerful coalition to stop the Taxpayer Deception Act (TDA), a dangerous ballot measure that could have decimated city services. Cal Cities launched an aggressive, three-pronged strategy to fight the measure in the courts, before the Legislature, and at the ballot box. Ultimately, the California Supreme Court found the measure unconstitutional, and it was not placed on the November ballot. But either way, Cal Cities was ready. Working with city officials across the state, Cal Cities raised the alarm bells and worked with the Legislature to bring forward a measure that could have potentially blocked the TDA on the ballot. Cal Cities will be vigilant in monitoring for any effort to bring back the TDA in 2026.

“Cal Cities recognized early what an existential threat the Taxpayer Deception Act was for cities and acted decisively to educate and mobilize members to oppose it. We organized in the Legislature; we had a proactive ground game throughout the state — and we made the case to the California Supreme Court for how this would dramatically erode city services and hurt our residents. We used every tool at our disposal to successfully defeat this measure. We are stronger together and I'm so proud of what we can achieve when we unify behind a common focus.

*Jim Lewis
City Manager, City of Atascadero
Cal Cities Board Member*

Fighting for city interests

Some legislative fights in the Capitol are over before they've started. Some can last years. One yearslong battle for Cal Cities has involved the location of warehouses in local communities.

This year's bill, AB 98, places major, one-size-fits-all restrictions on local authority over the siting of new or expanding warehouses. After months of closed-door negotiations, lawmakers jammed AB 98 through the Legislature in the last week of session.

Cal Cities was quick to act, mobilizing city officials from throughout the state to flood their lawmakers and the Governor with opposition letters and calls. Cal Cities hosted a virtual press conference with city officials and business leaders urging the Governor to veto the measure and launched a robust digital media campaign that reached nearly 300,000 people across Facebook, Instagram, and X/Twitter. Although the Governor signed the flawed legislation, Cal Cities' vigorous defense secured commitments from lawmakers to work together on clean-up legislation that addresses cities' top concerns.

By the numbers...

Cal Cities partnered with legislators and others to **sponsor 13 bills** of importance to cities. The Governor **signed 4** of the 7 bills that were sent to his desk.



Cal Cities tracked and engaged on **1,274 bills**. Cal Cities had positions on 79 measures that made it to the Governor's desk. The Governor sided with Cal Cities **nearly 55%** of the time.



Cal Cities filed **33 friend-of-the-court briefs** in both state and federal courts to help advance cities' collective legal interests.

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



Legal advocacy

Our legal advocacy program provides cities with unparalleled representation in the state and federal courts. For Cal Cities to weigh in, cities should agree on the preferred outcome and no city should be adversely affected by its efforts. This year, Cal Cities didn't just join forces with the Governor, Legislature, and other local government associations to block the dangerous Taxpayer Deception Act. It weighed in on other crucial cases, including:



The U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in *Johnson v. City of Grants Pass* that reversed a ruling prohibiting public camping ordinances. The decision provides much-needed legal clarity and returns a vital tool that cities can use to compassionately address homelessness.



The California Supreme Court handed charter cities a major win in *City of Redondo Beach et al. v. Rob Bonta, et al.* Cal Cities argued land use and zoning regulations are municipal affairs and that SB 9 (Atkins, 2021) deprived charter cities of their home rule authority. Over 240 cities opposed the bill when lawmakers sent it to Gov. Gavin Newsom.



The California Supreme Court issued an opinion in *Stone v. Alameda Health System*, concluding that the Legislature intended to exempt public employers from certain Labor Code provisions. The court's opinion referenced the amicus brief Cal Cities filed with other local government associations.

Meeting our members where they are — and connecting them to each other

At Cal Cities, we often talk about our ground game: listening to what is happening in our cities, identifying common issues, and mobilizing our members to lobby lawmakers both in the Capitol and in their communities. Our ground game is only possible because of the member-led leadership of the 16 regional divisions. The divisions represent the priorities of millions of residents, and when city leaders use their voices in Sacramento, lawmakers really listen.

Our regional divisions are more than advocacy. They are also about connecting. Through regular meetings and activities, members build relationships with leaders from nearby cities. These connections help officials collaborate and share best practices to solve common challenges.

Cal Cities' five diversity caucuses and 10 municipal departments also bring together city leaders to work together on common issues and grow their networks with city officials who share similar concerns. These strong connections yield results. This year, thousands of city officials joined member-driven, issue-based roundtables on issues as diverse as needle exchange programs, housing element compliance, and homeless encampments.



By the numbers...

7,000 city leaders joined **66 roundtable discussions and webinars** on priority legislation, organic waste and recycling, mental health, and more.



More than **4,000 city officials** attended **74 regional division events** this year to hear from Cal Cities, state leaders, and others on diverse topics important to their regions.



Cal Cities hosted **10 conferences** with nearly **5,500 city leaders** from California in attendance. The 2024 Annual Conference and Expo had its **largest gathering since 2015!**

City leaders sharing and helping each other improve their communities

Cal Cities' Annual Conference and Expo in Long Beach this year drew over 2,300 attendees and 239 exhibitors — including 65 new exhibitors — from throughout the state. This highly anticipated event is where members hear directly from city officials about how they are solving local issues. Local leaders also connect with a wide range of service providers that help cities meet the ever-changing needs of their communities.

The City Leaders Summit brought more than 330 city officials to Sacramento to advocate for state policy decisions that impact cities and hone their leadership skills. City leaders received policy briefings on need-to-know topics — like threats to fiscal sustainability, redistricting, and artificial intelligence — in between over 50 meetings with lawmakers to discuss the most pressing issues affecting their cities.

Cal Cities' eight other flagship department conferences provide an unparalleled opportunity for city leaders to step back from their day-to-day duties and explore local solutions to statewide problems.

“I really love coming to Cal Cities' annual conference. It's a time to meet with other cities, talk about some of the problems you might be having in your city, and find solutions. This is something that my entire council looks forward to every year. We get so much out of it: wonderful networking, we have fun, and we learn. It's worth every dime.

*Tamala Kelly
Mayor Pro Tem
Monrovia*

Supporting cities to stay on the cutting-edge

Cal Cities is continually exploring new opportunities to ensure our members have what they need not just for today, but for decades to come. Our partnerships with two joint power authorities — the California Statewide Community Development Authority, a bond financing authority, and California Class, a pooled investment program — are prime examples of how we are already supporting cities.

This year, Cal Cities launched a new cybersecurity and technology service powered by VC3 to help cities respond to the growing cybersecurity threats facing local governments. VC3's municipal-focused services can help cities secure and modernize their IT services.





#LocalWorks

Amplifying city voices

City and town leaders throughout California are committed to uplifting their communities, driving solutions, and delivering vital services to residents. Cal Cities prioritizes bringing attention to these efforts, ensuring that local voices are central to conversations among state and federal lawmakers, the media, and the public.

Cal Cities utilizes both news media and social media to share powerful stories about how cities are making a difference in the lives of California residents. In 2024, Cal Cities' #LocalWorks initiative highlighted how cities are meeting today's challenges, including homelessness, inadequate housing supply, public safety, and climate change. These stories were highlighted on Cal Cities' Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts, as well as in Cal Cities' two flagship publications, *Western City*, a monthly digital magazine, and *Cal Cities Advocate*, a weekly subscriber newsletter. *Cal Cities Advocate* is a weekly one-stop-shop for city leaders, delivering timely legislative updates and key details on upcoming conferences and events, grant opportunities, and more.

Cal Cities celebrated cities during California Cities Week, April 14-20, to recognize and appreciate the many ways that our diverse cities make life better for all Californians. Cal Cities also amplified the voices and stories of city officials by honoring 23 individuals and their contributions during heritage months throughout the year.



“Cal Cities advocacy has been essential in how we are able to run successfully as a city by making us aware of pending legislation, and [giving us] messaging and who to talk to for bills that are coming down the pipeline.

Peggy Flynn, City Manager, Petaluma

“The reason why the League of California Cities is so effective is that we're stronger together. That when cities across our state, cities large and small, come together with one voice, we can drive an agenda that improves the lives of the people in our cities.

Todd Gloria, Mayor, San Diego
Cal Cities Board Member

In 2024, Cal Cities enhanced and strengthened relationships with the media to shape important conversations in the news on issues vital to our cities. As a result, Cal Cities and the voices of cities were featured in several regional publications and prominent statewide media outlets, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *Associated Press*, *Los Angeles Times*, *CalMatters*, and *Politico*. Strong media coverage was key to our successful advocacy efforts. Two weeks following the placement of an op-ed in the *Voice of OC* penned by La Palma Mayor and Cal Cities Board Member Marshall Goodman on the importance of recovery housing reforms, the Governor signed into law two Cal Cities-sponsored bills that will provide more oversight on recovery housing facilities and hold bad actors accountable.

By the numbers...

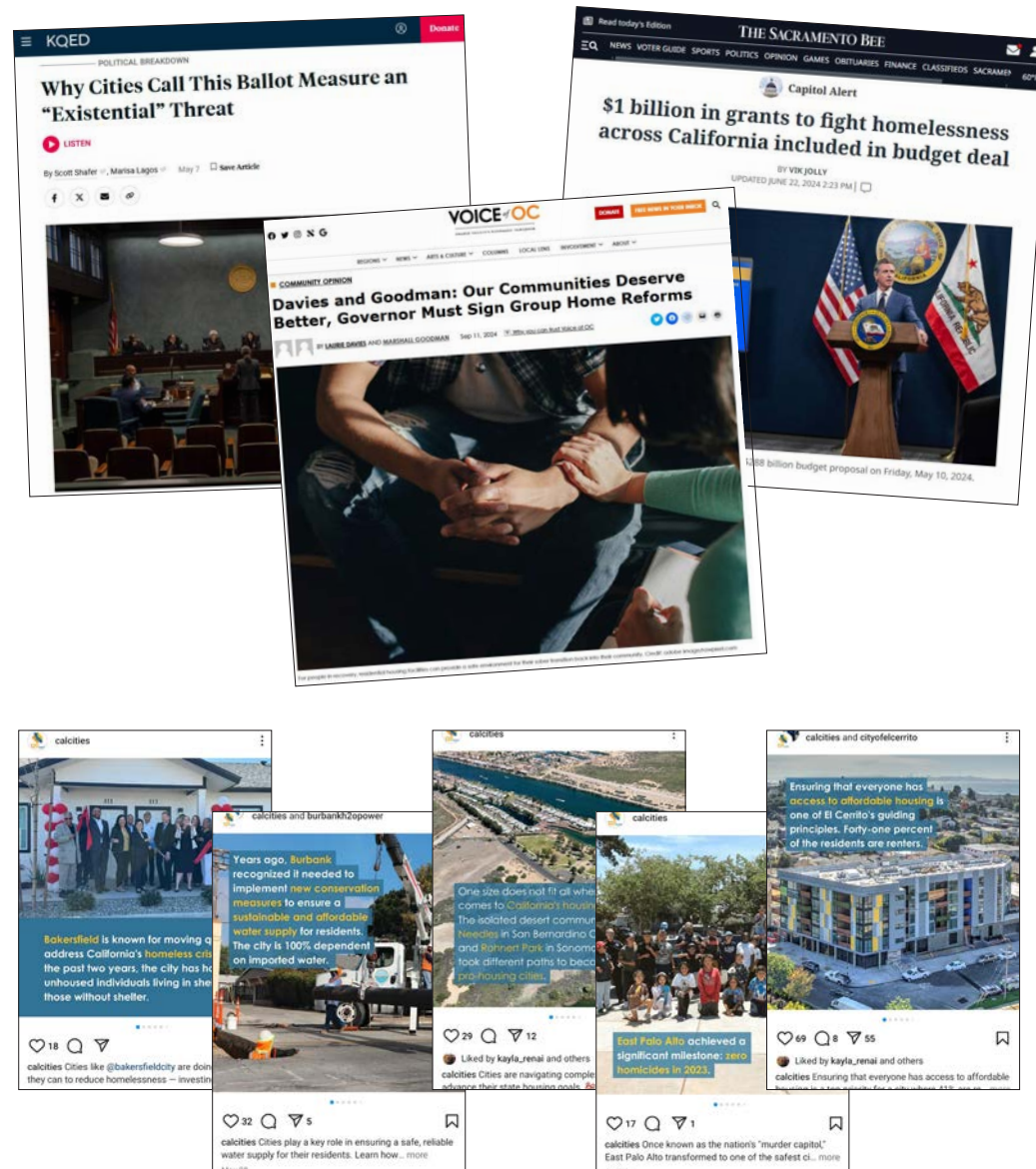
Cal Cities appeared in **2,240 news stories**, sharing the city perspective and advancing local priorities. That's a **32% increase** in press coverage from last year!



Cal Cities featured **31 cities** in #LocalWorks — stories of local actions that are making a difference to California communities.

More than **120 cities and city officials** were featured on Cal Cities' social media channels.

10 Helen Putnam Award for Excellence winning cities: Benicia, Brisbane, Citrus Heights, Concord, Goleta, Livermore, Modesto (three awards), Moreno Valley, Vacaville, and Watsonville, will be featured in *Western City* magazine.



Follow us on social media!



@calcities

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.



The Cal Cities 2023-24 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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Strengthening cities through **advocacy** and **education**

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