

NOTE: This document is not intended to be read or shared as-is.

PREPARE IN ADVANCE

Familiarize yourself with the talking points below. Select the talking points that feel most natural and then personalize your message.

Prepare local examples that relate to your key issues. It is important to share real-world scenarios and localize the impact. This step is key for successful advocacy.

This is an opportunity to highlight your municipality's COVID-related successes and challenges. It's also an opportunity to remind the delegation of how immediate and diverse a city's response can be to the wants and needs of its community.

GENERAL TIPS FOR OPENING

Introduction should include your name and city position.

Begin by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to present and/or thanking the delegation for their public service.

Make eye contact. Be energetic. Be positive.

Extend yourself as a partner and ally. Express an interest in coalition-building and good governance.

When preparing your comments, be respectful of the amount of time given for your presentation. Try to be as efficient and effective as possible in the time you're given.

GENERAL STATEMENTS ABOUT THE FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES

The Florida League of Cities is the united voice for Florida's 411 municipal governments.

Created in 1922, the League was founded on the belief that local self-government is the keystone of American democracy.

The League's mission is to promote local self-government, serve the needs of Florida's municipal governments and encourage local voices to make local choices.

Advocacy and educating the public are key components of the League's mission.

Did you know that more than half of Floridians live in a municipality?

GENERAL STATEMENTS ABOUT POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Each year, municipal officials from across the state volunteer to serve on one of the League's five legislative policy committees.

The League's policy committees develop the League's Legislative Action Agenda, which addresses priority issues most likely to have a statewide impact on daily municipal operations and governance. (The Agenda can be found on the League's website and could be handed out to attendees.)

The priorities in the League's Legislative Action Agenda are considered and approved by the full League membership.

Policy committee members help the League understand the real-world implications of proposed legislation and are asked to serve as advocates throughout the legislative process.

GENERAL STATEMENTS ABOUT HOME RULE/LOCAL CONTROL/ LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

In Florida, local government is the express will of the people.

The Florida Constitution states that cities may exercise any power for municipal purposes except as otherwise provided as law.

Citizens granted broad Home Rule powers to the cities for a good reason – because the old ways didn't work.

Interference with local decision-making by government undermines the power of citizens to govern themselves. Corporate special interests are pressuring state government to undermine local democracy with increasing frequency.

Local self-government empowers local voices to make local choices. Cities are citizen-driven representative democracies with citizen engagement, citizen input and citizen leadership.

As the government closest to the people, a city has a unique bond with its citizens. Florida's constitution enables cities to respond to the unique needs and preferences of their citizens.

City leaders want to partner with state and federal leaders to protect cities' ability to control their own destiny, because it puts control of communities in the hands of citizens and the local leaders they elect.

Cities are committed to creating a stronger partnership with state government and working collaboratively to benefit all Floridians.

Each one of Florida's 411 cities is unique. But no matter their size or demographics, all cities have the same goal: to deliver diverse, high-quality services in an efficient and responsive manner; enhance the quality of life of their citizens; and promote education, employment and economic development.

2022 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

SHORT-TERM RENTALS

The Florida League of Cities supports legislation that restores authority to local governments for the regulation of short-term rental properties as necessary for quality of life, public safety and a fair lodging marketplace.

The Florida League of Cities supports legislation clarifying that existing, grandfathered municipal short-term rental ordinances can be amended without penalty.

The Florida League of Cities opposes legislation that preempts municipal authority as it relates to the regulation of short-term rental properties.

Cities were preempted from regulating short-term vacation rentals in 2011.

Cities with an existing ordinance at that time were "grandfathered" and allowed to keep what was already in place.

Cities without an ordinance lost the ability to regulate the location of these properties, resulting in a proliferation of short-term rentals in areas that had traditionally been long-term residential neighborhoods.

Short-term rentals are a local zoning issue. Commercial activity in neighborhoods is regulated for a good reason: to protect residents and ensure the right infrastructure is there.

Currently available solutions for cities are inadequate and will not solve the problems that many communities are facing.

The restoration of zoning authority will allow cities to implement smart, targeted solutions to problems caused by short-term rentals and ensure the preservation of traditional residential communities and neighborhoods.

CYBERSECURITY

The Florida League of Cities supports legislation dedicating state resources for the development and enhancement of municipal cybersecurity by providing funding for technical assistance, threat assessments, employee training, infrastructure improvements and data protection, including the protection of exempt and confidential information such as law enforcement personnel information and security plans for government buildings and other key critical infrastructure.

Local governments urgently need help from the state in three primary areas: technical assistance, training and infrastructure improvements.

- ▶ Technical assistance: Outside experts should be retained to conduct threat assessments to identify operational and system vulnerabilities so that all are irrevocably addressed before they are exploited.

CYBERSECURITY (continued)

- ▶ Training: Local governments should increase training for employees, emphasize the importance of being a cyber-aware organization and develop response plans in the event of a security breach.
- ▶ Infrastructure improvements: Finally, many cities and counties must devote resources to improving critical cyberinfrastructure to ensure that hardware and software are impenetrable.

With resources and support from the Legislature, Florida can set the standard for ensuring the cybersecurity of its local governments, citizens and businesses.

TREE PROTECTION

The Florida League of Cities supports legislation to close loopholes and create standards in current law exemptions from municipal tree ordinances that have caused litigation and abuses, including the clear-cutting of land pre-development and the removal of healthy trees that present little, if any, risk to persons or structures.

The protection and maintenance of healthy Florida tree canopies are beneficial for habitat, climate adaptation and mitigation, stormwater management, quality of life and community character.

Section 163.045, Florida Statutes, was created in 2019 after several hurricanes caused extensive vegetation damage in Florida.

Under this new law, a local government may not require a notice, application, approval, permit, fee or mitigation for the pruning, trimming or removal of a tree on residential property if the owner obtains documentation from an arborist or a Florida licensed landscape architect that the tree presents a danger to persons or property.

Key terms in the 2019 law are vague and undefined, specifically "danger," "residential property" and "documentation," which has led to conflict and litigation.

This law has left local governments powerless in policing bad actors and caused unnecessary problems for both municipalities and developers.

Section 163.045, Florida Statutes, should be clarified to remove these ambiguities and define these key terms.

The statute should be amended to apply only to developed single-family residential property, identify industry-appropriate standards for assessing tree risk and identify necessary documentation.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

The Florida League of Cities supports legislation directing the Florida Department of Transportation to establish a grant program to provide financial assistance for the installation of publicly available electric vehicle charging infrastructure on public or private property.

The League also supports providing technical assistance for the development and adoption of local or regional plans for charging infrastructure and associated equipment, and identifying additional transportation revenue to support innovative infrastructure and transit projects to meet the surging transportation demands driven by dramatic growth throughout Florida.

Florida needs to prepare for the future by embracing the growth of electric and autonomous vehicles, which require completely different infrastructure needs than their gas counterparts. This preparation will require a dedicated revenue source or fee and technical guidance on a local and regional level on how to provide the appropriate resources to ensure Florida remains a leader in this area.

By investing in these overdue infrastructure needs now, other transit options like public buses, electronic scooters, electronic bikes and high-speed rail can be expanded to help alleviate congestion on our roads and improve the quality of life for residents and tourists.

When we improve access to highways and cut travel delays and transportation costs, the economy benefits, as do all the people who live and work here.

As more residents and businesses embrace electric and autonomous vehicles, Florida must be ready to serve their needs.

To prosper, Florida cities need greater funding flexibility.

GENERAL CLOSING REMARKS

Thank you again for your public service and commitment to bettering our state.

Many of you have shared the importance of having information related to the local impact of proposed legislation. To that end, we hope you will call upon us for this data before you make decisions affecting our mutual constituents. We are here to help.

In closing, I'd like to assure you that we look forward to working with all of you throughout the upcoming legislative session.

Let's work together to enhance the quality of life in our communities.

Florida's cities stand ready to help legislators and work cooperatively to serve the citizens of Florida.