In 2018, the Florida Legislature continued its assault against Home Rule. However, municipal officials from throughout the state joined in the fight to #LetCitiesWork. We were successful in thwarting many attempts to dilute local self-government.

Almost 3,200 bills were filed during this year’s legislative session, but only 200 bills passed both chambers. We cannot let up as many of the issues that didn’t pass this year are likely to be debated next year.

As we share our successes from 2018 in this annual report, the Florida League of Cities commits itself to work hard for you and your city so that together, through #WeLiveLocal, we can triumph again in 2019.
PRESIDENTS’ INITIATIVES

President Gil Ziffer, commissioner of Tallahassee, made it his goal to actively promote and defend the Home Rule powers of municipalities with his Let Cities Work initiative. Under his leadership, the League and municipal officials throughout Florida gave a clear, united message to the Florida Legislature: Let city officials continue to have the flexibility to find local solutions for local issues. Florida cities received an unprecedented amount of media coverage focusing on the Legislature’s attempts to preempt municipalities’ Home Rule powers and other key issues.

At the League’s 92nd Annual Conference in August, incoming President Leo E. Longworth, mayor of Bartow, announced his We Live Local initiative to harness the power of Florida’s citizens to fight for Home Rule.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

The League’s Legislative Affairs Department mostly played defense during the 2018 legislative session. Working closely with our members, we were successful in defeating a wide range of bad bills.

The legislative affairs team, 19 local/regional leagues and regional advocacy teams have been working together to strengthen the advocacy efforts of the leagues and their members. Under the Let Cities Work initiative, the local/regional leagues played a big role in getting their members more involved in advocacy.

The League developed Amendment 1 resources to be used by city officials to educate the public about the dangers of Amendment 1, and the League hosted workshops at conferences and regionally to assist members with communicating the message to their residents.

The Federal Action Strike Team held a fly-in to Washington, D.C., on May 16-17, 2018. Municipal officials met with 14 members of Florida’s congressional delegation, including Sen. Bill Nelson. They addressed protection of and investment in infrastructure, reauthorization of the National Flood Insurance Program, modernization of flood mapping modernization and clarification of the FEMA de-obligation process.
A FOCUS ON EDUCATION
The League celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Institute for Elected Municipal Officials. More than 2,000 city officials have participated in the class since 1991, and three more levels of the IEMO program have been created in response to attendees’ requests for more.

The 2017-18 FLC University calendar featured multiple social media workshops held across the state. It also provided customized classes related to specific issues within municipalities that requested them. One example was a customized ethics in the workplace class held for all employees (300-plus) of a member city over six sessions.

The 92nd Annual Conference was held August 16-18 at the Diplomat Beach Resort, Hollywood, where Mayor Longworth was sworn in as president. There were 824 registered delegates attending. The conference celebrated the 50th anniversary of Home Rule and featured a rousing Home Rule Rally.

Florida City Government Week is one of the longest-running (since 1990) and most popular events sponsored by the League. Held in October, Florida City Government Week provides a great opportunity for citizens to receive more information about how our cities operate and to convey to all Floridians that they can shape and influence government through their civic involvement.

DEPARTMENTS UPDATE
The Communication and Education Department has expanded the League’s social media presence by adding Snapchat and growing our following to more than 10,000 across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube platforms. Video production also increased, with the debut of our “Tailor Made Solutions” PSA, the advocacy pop-up recording studio and the History of Home Rule. Working with municipal public information and communications professionals throughout Florida, the department helped establish a new affiliate, the Florida Municipal Communicators Association.
The Technology Services Department developed cloud-hosted websites for two affiliates and MuniMod, a civic tech competition for college students. The department also developed an improved Florida Municipal Insurance Trust website, providing access to an enhanced FMIT Member Dashboard to manage policy information and reports.

The Membership Relations Department continues its successful “Ambassador Visits” throughout the state. By the end of December, League ambassadors will have visited or touched scores of cities, towns and villages throughout Florida. As part of its civic education outreach, the department has worked with several cities to help establish or enhance a youth council program. Each year at the annual conference, the Youth Council summit draws more than 100 youth participants along with their coordinators.

The League’s Legal Department played a major role in developing and implementing the League’s strategies to influence the Constitution Revision Commission. It also filed four amicus curiae briefs in Florida’s appellate courts on issues of municipal authority such as operating red-light camera programs and imposing stormwater fees on a school district. It also filed notices with the Florida Supreme Court in two cases stating that if the court accepts jurisdiction, it will file an amicus curiae brief in each case.

The Special Investigation Unit actively investigated 105 suspected fraud cases. Since its inception, its efforts have resulted in 69 arrests and 47 convictions. The unit’s efforts have resulted in over $2.1 million in restitution ordered with more than $277,000 paid, negotiated recoveries of more than $8,000 and cost savings of almost $7.5 million.

TRUST UPDATES

The Florida Municipal Insurance Trust provides workers’ compensation, liability, property and health coverages to local governments throughout Florida. The FMIT had a 98 percent retention rate of members this year. It reached more than $496 million in assets and returned premiums of $4 million to its members for a total of $78 million returned premiums over 11 years.

The FMIT’s Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Program continues to be a best-in-class service offered to FMIT property members. Hurricane Irma made landfall as a major hurricane on September 11, 2017, and impacted 80 percent of FMIT property members. The Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Program responded in a timely manner to mitigate insured property damages and helped FMIT members maintain continuity of services by restoring buildings efficiently and effectively.
The FMIT’s **Hometown Health** program provides FMIT health members with the education, tools and services needed to take preventative measures to maintain health and achieve a better quality of life. Hometown Health has proven to produce substantial health gains and to reduce costs for members.

The FMIT’s **Risk and Safety Management** programs offer risk management techniques, training and resources to help mitigate loss exposure and reduce accidents. A robust online training platform, a **Matching Safety Grant Program** and a **Law Enforcement Advisory Panel** focused on mitigating law enforcement liability exposure are offered. Since 2005, the FMIT has awarded more than $2.2 million in safety grant funds.

The FLC continues to partner with the **Florida Association of Counties Trust**, a liability-only insurance pool, to provide administrative services such as underwriting, financial, risk control and claims administration.

The **Florida Municipal Investment Trust**, a local government investment pool, remained stable at $1.7 billion in assets under management, serving 54 members in 10 portfolios.

The **Florida Municipal Pension Trust Fund** serves local governments with retirement plan services and provides complete administration for defined benefit, other post-employment benefits (OPEB), 401(a) defined contribution and 457(b) deferred compensation plans. The FMPTF administers nearly 210 plans that cover over 5,200 participants with net assets of nearly $750 million.

The **Florida Municipal Loan Council** Series 2018A Bond Issue closed on August 23, 2018. The Series 2018A bonds were issued for $7.595 million on behalf of the City of Bradenton to finance the costs of constructing a public parking garage.

**AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

Five youth councils won awards in the League’s **2018 Municipal Youth Council Community Service Contest**. They are first place: City of Belleair Teen Council; second place: City of Homestead Mayor’s Youth Council; third place: City of Cape Coral Youth Council; fourth place: City of Niceville Youth Advisory Council; and fifth place: City of Hollywood Youth Ambassador Program.

The **10th Annual Florida Municipal Achievement Award** winners were announced this summer and recognized at the League’s annual conference. They are **City Spirit – City of Clermont** for The Oakhurst Project; **City Citizenship – City of Miami Beach** for its MB Resident Connect; and **Environmental Stewardship – City of Largo** for its Freecycle Event.
Also at the Annual Conference, the **E. Harris Drew Municipal Official Lifetime Achievement Award** was given to Pensacola Councilman P.C. Wu.

Thirty-eight elected officials were honored with the **2018 John Land Years of Service Award** for 20 or more years of service.

The FLC recognized 89 municipal officials as **Home Rule Heroes** for going above and beyond to advocate the League’s agenda during the legislative session. Sen. Debbie Mayfield (R-Melbourne), Rep. Bobby DuBose (D-Fort Lauderdale) and Rep. Mel Ponder (R-Destin) were given awards as **Defenders of Home Rule** for strongly defending municipal Home Rule this past legislative session.

MuniMod remains one of the largest statewide civic education competitions in Florida. Teams of students from 11 universities competed to create cutting-edge technology and service delivery solutions for municipalities. **Florida State University** was presented with the $10,000 grand prize for **SocialSafe**, a GPS-enabled safety app designed to reduce intimate partner violence. The second-place team from **Florida A&M University** received $5,000 for developing **Quisha**, a solution to manage and market municipally owned event venues.

**FINANCIAL PRUDENCE**

The FMIT, FMIVT, FMPTF and FMLC applied for and received the **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting** from the **Government Finance Officers Association**.

The League and our sponsored trusts and affiliates (12 in total) received unqualified audits from Shorstein and Shorstein, CPAs.

In the fight for Home Rule,

Michael Sittig