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Message from the President

By Chief Doug Fry, Belmont-San Carlos Fire Department, 2010-11 Fire Chiefs Department President-Elect

The League of California Cities' Fire Chiefs (League Chiefs) has been working hard to keep up to speed, if not ahead of the curve, on the current activities and issues that impact all of us. At the core, we are working to improve municipal fire service by protecting local control as best we can.

Let me first give thanks for allowing me the opportunity to finish out the term of our 2009-10 President Paul Christman from the city of Murrieta Fire Department, who retired this past July. As president, I look forward to being involved in a wide range of issues from the state budget and legislative proposals to putting the full weight of the chiefs behind supporting Proposition 22, the Local Taxpayer, Public Safety, and Transportation Protection Act of 2010.

"The new lens with which we look at tough decisions affects not only today's fire service, but the future of the fire service."

This has been a challenging but productive year for California's fire service. We, as the League Chiefs, have had the opportunity to work on many issues this past year with an open-door policy with the California Fire Chiefs Association, Fire Districts Association of California, California State Firefighters Association and the California Professional Firefighters. The budget of course weighs heavily on us and we take into consideration this challenge like we never have before. The new lens with which we look at

tough decisions affects not only today's fire service, but the future of the fire service. One thing is for certain: tomorrow's fire service will be completely different than the one we know today!

This is why the League Chiefs need fire service leadership to step up and be part of our Department. There are 480 incorporated cities in California (and soon to be 481). If your city is a League member, then you too are a member who can get involved. We welcome Fire Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs who are interested in advancing their knowledge base and growing their professional network. Your involvement can come in a variety of ways:

Policy Committee Representation: If you are passionate about certain issues, then maybe a policy committee is where you want to land. The policy committees consist of the following concentrations: Public Safety; Environmental Quality; Transportation/Communication/Public Works; Revenue and Taxation; Housing, Community and Economic Development; Community Services; Employee Relations; and Administrative Services. Through these committees you can be a part of the leadership that guides the Department and League decisions on current legislative, regulatory and budget proposals.

Department Activities: We have a monthly conference call and welcome any interested member to dial in. We discuss the ongoing budget debates, legislative issues, regulatory changes and any proposal with impacts to local government organizations.

Educational Activities: A great way to start your involvement with the Department is by helping guide the programming for the Fire Chiefs Department Leadership Seminar or Fire Chiefs (*continued on page 4*)

The Unique and Important Role of the League Chiefs

By Chief Demetrious Shaffer, Alameda County Fire Department, 2009-10 Fire Chiefs Department Immediate Past President

If at any point in your career you have thought to yourself, “I’d like to make a greater influence on the fire service that will positively impact more than just my department,” then I have no doubt you will find that the League of California Cities’ Fire Chiefs Department (League Chiefs) will provide you that opportunity. Clearly it is more difficult than ever for any of us to dedicate time to anything outside of our own departments because of the fiscal crisis (coupled with the elimination of training and travel) that has swept across this state. However, I would argue that now is the time when it is even more important for each of us to step outside of our comfort zone (although being a chief hasn’t really been that comfortable lately) and engage at a whole new level. It’s our time, and our time has come with significant challenges to not only manage the current landscape but to make changes that will take us in the right direction.

The League of California Cities (League) was created with the purpose of having cities work collaboratively to ensure that local municipalities retain the ability to make decisions over issues primarily impacting their jurisdiction (i.e., local control). Over the past several years this, has become a more pervasive issue while each municipality works to not only prepare a budget with anticipated - but unknown - state takeaways, but also as city leaders (elected and appointed) have worked tirelessly to stave off countless attempts by the state to raid city coffers and/or redirect revenue we each depend on to provide essential services to the community.

Involvement in the League means that you learn first-hand about legislation, budget proposals, and other decisions that have the potential to impact your city and ultimately your fire department. Additionally, League involvement means that you not only have the opportunity to weigh in on issues concerning all disciplines of local government, but you also have the ability to specialize in particular areas of interest such as public safety, community planning, municipal finance, environmental protection, revenue and taxation, and much more. Through participation in the League Chiefs you are afforded the opportunity to influence League policy through input which ultimately can impact the League’s position on proposed legislation and all issues with the potential to impact local control.

To maximize our input, and because we recognize the value in speaking with “one fire service voice,” the League Chiefs work collaboratively with other fire service organizations (e.g., CalChiefs, CPF, CSFA, California Fire Districts, etc.). However, being a member of the League Chiefs provides unique opportunities to our members. Involvement with the League affords each member a great opportunity to develop a network across all disciplines (e.g., Public Works, City Managers, Finance Directors, Clerks, etc.) from member cities throughout the state and to provide direct input to elected officials seeking our professional opinion or position. Ultimately, the members of the League Chiefs have the ability to influence positive change on a larger scale that benefits our own departments and the future of the California fire service. ◀

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Message from the Director: Local Control is Central

By Chief Dennis Downs, City of Pasadena Fire Department, 2004-2010 Fire Chiefs Department Director

The Department Director serves as a crucial link between the Fire Chiefs Department and the League's Board of Directors by representing members of the Chiefs Department on policy discussions, votes, or other action items that come before the Board. The League's Board is made up of roughly 60 members, the vast majority of whom are elected officials. As with the League's other Departments, the Fire Chiefs Department members elect their Director to serve for a two-year term. I am honored to have been elected to the Board in 2004, and to have remained as your Director for the past six years.

The major focus of the Board this past year has been to secure local government revenues and keep the state from raiding local coffers. This effort resulted in the November ballot's Proposition 22: The Local Taxpayer, Public Safety and Transportation Protection Act of 2010. If passed, this initiative will supersede the previous Proposition 1A approved by voters in 2004 (which allows the State to "borrow" local revenues), keeping the state from touching or reallocating city revenues. As such, the League Board has refrained from taking positions on other ballot measures that did not have significant impacts on city revenues or authority. The two ballot measures that the Board did take positions on were Proposition 19 (marijuana legalization) and Proposition 26 (taxation and revenue authority). They voted to oppose both measures because of the direct negative consequences the measures would create for cities.

Protecting local control and funding for vital local services, like fire and emergency response, was the number one goal of the League this year. Each year, the League Board of Directors meets with leaders of the League's regional divisions, professional departments, and policy committees to determine the major areas of focus for the following year's work. The combined leadership of the League endorsed three strategic goals for 2010 that have guided the League's advocacy and education efforts. First, under "*Protect Local Control and Funding for Vital Local Services*" the League is using the statewide ballot measure and legislative and legal advocacy to achieve reforms that protect local control and abolish the power of the state to borrow, divert or impose restrictions on the use of all local revenue sources, including locally imposed or levied taxes, the local shares of all transportation tax revenues (including public transit funding), the redevelopment tax increment, and any other local revenue source used to fund vital local services.

Another goal is to "*Support Reform of the Structure, Governance, Management and Financing of State Government.*" Building on the success of the 2009 Local Government Summit on State Governance and Fiscal Reform, they have worked collaboratively with other stakeholder groups to advance reforms to modernize the structure, governance, management and method of financing state government.

The final goal for 2010 is to "*Promote Economic Stimulus, Infrastructure Investment, Business Development and Job Creation.*" The League is promoting federal, state and local investment in transportation, water, redevelopment and other critical infrastructure projects that will support the retention and creation of new private businesses and jobs in our cities and state. ◀

League Chiefs 2009-2010 Executive Officers

President	Chief Paul Christman	City of Murrieta	<i>(Retired)</i>
1st Vice President	Chief Doug Fry	Belmont-San Carlos FD	dougf@bscfd.org
2nd Vice President	Chief Bill Soqui	City of Cathedral City	bsoqui@cathedralcity.org
Immediate Past President	Chief Demetrious Shaffer	City of Newark/ Alameda County FD	demetrious.shaffer@ acgov.org
Director	Chief Dennis Downs	City of Pasadena	ddowns@cityofpasadena.net

Message from the President continued

(from page 1) Leadership Annual Conference Track. What learning opportunities do you want featured?

Mentoring and Recruitment: We are well aware what a wealth of institutional knowledge our seasoned chiefs have, many of whom may be thinking of retirement. To this group we ask for your help in transitioning new chiefs as they get promoted to be potential leaders by asking them to get involved in any of the above items. It's amazing who will step up if you simply ask. Most are just waiting for the opportunity. The Department is open to all municipal fire chiefs participation and involvement.

So what has all the involvement from chiefs like you amounted to? In 2008, the Department began a "Strategic Planning" process. The Executive Committee decided that the focus of the Department should be 1) Succession Planning; 2) Legislative Collaboration; and 3) Improved Fire Service Communications.

We addressed "Succession Planning" by offering seminars and information to aspiring and new fire chiefs. This included featuring a session at our conference called "No Stupid Questions," an interactive discussion regarding things you wish you knew when you were promoted to chief, or what you want to know before becoming a chief.

We saw a need to promote "Legislative Collaboration," which is at the core of our daily activity. We are striving to work more and more with our partner organizations to speak with one voice on important, far reaching issues, like the Emergency Response Initiative. And while we may not always see eye-to-eye on every issue, we respect each others opinions.

Finally, we want to "Improve Fire Service Communications," both internally and with our fellow fire service groups. We are making more of an effort to get information out to the chiefs so you can understand how your voice makes a difference at the state and local level. During the next several months, the fire service will be attacked and challenged by the state budget, pension obligations, and threats to local control and authority over decision-making.

We have made strides, but we can do more and we need your help to do that. If you have ever even thought of learning more about the League Chiefs, now is the time. You too can be a part of the big changes underway and not just for the fire service but for all local leaders. Please contact your League staff at (916) 658-8200 or any of your chiefs currently serving in the Department. (The list of previous officers is on page 3 of this publication.) Thank you again for the opportunity to serve you. I am confident that the progress we have made, and will continue to make, through the League Chiefs will serve as a foundation for the future of a stronger fire service. ◀

Where Does the Fire Chiefs Department Fit Into the League?

