



1400 K Street, Suite 400 • Sacramento, California 95814
Phone: (916) 658-8200 Fax: (916) 658-8240
www.cacities.org

Oct. 3, 2013

Contact: Eva Spiegel, (916) 658-8228
Cell: (530) 400-9068

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

League of California Cities Reinforces Commitment to Local Government Transparency and Accountability in Wake of former City of Bell City Manager Plea

League Has Developed Significant Resources to Ensure Maximum Transparency and Accountability at the Local Level

Sacramento, CA — In response to today's news that the city of Bell's former city manager Robert Rizzo has pleaded no contest to 69 counts of public corruption, the League of California Cities issued the following statement condemning the acts of Rizzo and reinforcing the League and all cities' commitment to the highest standards of ethics, accountability and transparency. The League also publicized extensive transparency and accountability resources available to cities, the media, and the general public (below) and highlighted steps taken to assist the residents of the city of Bell reclaim and reform their government.

"The outrageous crimes of a few former elected and appointed officials in the city of Bell represent a significant breach of public trust that is inexcusable. Yet this corruption scandal also served as an important opportunity for local governments throughout California to evaluate and improve upon their own practices," said League President and San Francisco Treasurer José Cisneros.

"In the wake of the Bell scandal, the League of California Cities and its member cities, city managers and local elected officials took immediate and significant steps to enhance local government transparency and accountability, to assist the residents of Bell in reforming and reconstituting their government, and to provide all California cities with the tools, guidelines and resources to become more open and responsive to their taxpayers," continued Chris McKenzie, executive director, League of California Cities. "The League of California Cities is pleased it is able to play a continual role in developing tools and resources to ensure maximum transparency and accountability."

The League's goal is to help inform the public about the resources available to them and reinforce California cities' commitment to be open, transparent and accountable to the residents we serve. Some of the tools available for cities and the general public include:

- **Local government employee compensation database.** While conducting its own survey of city manager salaries that it published, the League also worked with the State Controller to develop an online statewide database that discloses all local government employee salaries and benefits, including thousands of cities, counties, special districts, school districts and others — <http://publicpay.ca.gov>.
- **"Open Government" website for local governments, media and citizens.** www.cacities.org/opengovernment contains vital information on local government transparency and accountability. In addition to the public employee compensation information, this portal includes information on Open Meeting Laws (the Brown Act), Open Records Laws (the Public Records Act), transparency laws and resources for local government officials and staff, the media and residents.

- **City Manager salary guidelines.** The League developed and published City Manager Compensation Guidelines that are a combination of best practices and provisions of state law. The guidelines are a tool for city councils to ensure that compensation is fair and reasonable and within the range of comparable positions elsewhere in the community and state. The guidelines are available at www.cacities.org/opengovernment.
- **Ethics training for local officials.** The League and its nonprofit research affiliate, the Institute for Local Government (ILG), offer frequent ethics training, guidance, and resources for local officials related to public service ethics and transparency.

Steps Taken to Assist City of Bell

ILG, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the California City Management Foundation (CCMF) and city officials from throughout California also banded together in the wake of the Bell scandal to help the city's residents reclaim their city government, understand its budget, and reform its organizational structure. A series of public workshops and community hearings were organized in which expertise was provided on the fundamental principles of local government (meeting procedures, etc.) and other basic information essential to effective governance. Moreover, a bilingual community forum was held in which the new Bell City Council engaged the community in setting the city's 2012–2013 budget.

The city of Bell has taken great strides in the past two years. Citizens elected an entirely new city council that is more diverse and reflective of their community. The city council and staff have restored structural balance to their city budget that had been decimated by poor fiscal management. Three independent audits of city spending were done in the last year alone. The city's debt has been cut in half. The city's website was completely revised and now includes salary information for all city employee and elected officials, the city's checkbook and budgets, all contracts and other information. The Sunshine Review, a non-profit that examines state and local government transparency, gave the city an award for transparency.

###