



# Northwest Municipal Conference 2026 Legislative Program

The Northwest Municipal Conference stands ready to partner with state lawmakers to address the issues that are important to our shared constituents. The following are the Northwest Municipal Conference (NWMC) legislative priorities in 2026:

## ***Preserve Municipal Pensions***

We encourage State lawmakers to resist calls from unions to rollback critical pension reforms. Reverting to more expensive pension plans would dramatically increase costs for municipalities and taxpayers.

### **Protection for our taxpayers**

- Pension increases will immediately increase the cost of pensions and force local governments to impose substantial property tax hikes, find alternative revenue streams or defund services.
- Asking taxpayers to pay for permanent pension sweeteners when our residents are struggling to pay their bills is not only unfair but unconscionable.
- Tier 2 municipal pensions provide taxpayer relief. Although pension contributions continue to grow faster than inflation, Tier 2 has helped mitigate exponential annual increases.
- To dig out of the hole caused by legacy pension costs and the Great Recession, taxpayers continue to devote substantial resources to restore pension stability.

### **A generous, stable and constitutionally protected retirement for our municipal employees**

- Municipal pensions (Articles 3, 4, and 7) are not broken, and do not need to be fixed. Tier 2 pension benefits for municipal employees far exceed the retirement benefits available to many of our residents through Social Security or private plans.
- Municipalities work hard to support employees with competitive salaries and benefits. Municipal pensions provide financial security in retirement.
- Municipal pensions are in full compliance with Safe Harbor.

## ***Secure Local Government Services***

We encourage State lawmakers to take a holistic approach to local government resources and are here to partner with you to find opportunities for revenue restoration and enhancement. By targeting the right fiscal resources, communities will be better equipped to address state-initiated priorities, public safety, infrastructure investment and legacy pension costs.

### **Reliable funding for 9-1-1 services**

- The 9-1-1 monthly phone surcharge, which has not been increased in nearly a decade, covers less than half of the cost to operate modern Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs).
- To preserve technological gains and meet growing demands, raising the surcharge to \$2.50 is essential to maintain reliable, modern 9-1-1 services while preventing additional financial strain on local governments.

### **Distribution of state collected local revenues**

- State collected local revenues are critical to meeting the challenges facing communities and to pursuing shared priorities.
- As resources expand, lawmakers should continue to work toward the full restoration of the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) and bring stability to the Personal Property Replacement Tax (PPRT).

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NWMC Executive Director Mark L. Fowler



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## *Defend Housing Controls and Tenant Protection*

We encourage State lawmakers to resist well-meaning but ill-conceived, one-size-fits-all efforts to preempt local land use and zoning authority. Rather than addressing factors affecting housing affordability and supply, such efforts misdiagnose systemic problems. Preempting local authority may prove counter to providing substantive improvements by restricting a municipality's ability to address local concerns.

### **Community led housing strategies to address community needs**

- Municipalities are the most effective place to consider complex and unique housing issues thoughtfully and democratically.
- Through comprehensive plans, transit-oriented development and "age in place" initiatives, municipalities are doing the hard work to pursue housing strategies that fit both a community's character and match government services.

### **Realistic policies for housing supply**

- Legislative efforts to "solve" housing supply concerns by preempting local zoning authority are misguided.
- Illinois' Ad-Hoc Missing Middle Housing Solutions Advisory Committee concluded that "financing gaps are the greatest barrier to attracting builders."
- Access to capital, rising construction costs and the availability of a skilled workforce are the major barriers for developers seeking to pursue new housing.

### **Protection for our residents**

- Tenant protection programs (commonly referred to as crime-free housing) have long provided municipalities with a critical tool to assist residents and property owners in maintaining safe communities.
- Current statutes protect renters from discrimination and protect victims of domestic violence.
- Proposed legislative changes will erode tenant protections and require substantial and onerous reporting by municipalities.

## **About the Northwest Municipal Conference**

As one of the premier regional councils of government, the Northwest Municipal Conference represents over 1.3 million citizens residing in our 43 municipalities and 1 township. Our membership area covers over 300 square miles in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and McHenry counties.

### **For More Information**

To learn more about the Conference's legislative priorities, activities and positions, please reach out to NWMC staff or our lobbying team:

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