

This past week, Vice-Mayor Woolridge and I had an opportunity to attend the National League of Cities (NLC) Congressional City Conference in Washington D.C. NLC is a bipartisan organization dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. Throughout the year, NLC advocates for cities and towns in Washington, D.C. through full-time lobbying and grassroots campaigns. The overall attendance at this conference was approximately 2,000 registered attendees from around the country. While attending this conference, we gained a wealth of ideas and knowledge available from attendees, business associates, presentation facilitators, panel discussions and through interactions with youth delegates from around the county at the conference.

The National League members are representative of small towns to large cities, rural and urban areas, coastal and heartland. The themed message from the conference focused upon the urgency for Congress and the administration to work collaboratively with local governments to rebuild and reimagine America's infrastructure. It was communicated, "Today's infrastructure needs are diverse and complex – and local governments are doing all that we can to address these needs. To remain competitive, we need an infrastructure plan that builds for 2050, not one that simply fixes 1950." In addition, we attended trainings that focused on an array of topics, such as: *smart policy decisions and strong civic engagement; shifting from a reactive approach to a proactive approach; private and public-sector roles and partnerships; understanding how developers think about these opportunities and challenges in their communities; recruitment and retention for our changing workforce; structural changes to daily operations, budgeting, communications, decision-making, and community leadership, smart cities initiatives; future of work, specifically building a jobs pipeline to the middle class, and successful strategies to address the opioid crisis.* There were also opportunities to participate in various committee meetings such as: the *Public Sector Retirement Advisory Committee Meeting* and the *Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources (EENR) Federal Advocacy Committee Meetings*. One of the facilitators, Dr. Anita Yadavalli, had invited me to serve on a panel at the Public Sector Retirement Advisory Committee Meeting, after I had attended her presentation on Management and Public Administration 201: The Changing Workforce: Using Post-Employment Benefits for Recruitment. In addition, our town will be participating in a free study to gain a national perspective on how post-employment benefits and the overall compensation package are affecting cities and their ability to recruit and retain talent.

Additionally, in attending the Congressional Conference, we received specific training in the area of being prepared for productive meetings with federal representatives. NLC represents the nation's 19,000 municipalities, offering access to collaborate with peers nationwide. Through attending this conference, I learned about emerging trends affecting local government, how to continue innovation, and go deeper on the issue with experts and industry thought-leaders. Lastly, we were able to strategically communicate and effectively partner with federal agencies to improve the livability score of our multiple communities. I am very appreciative to have had the opportunity to attend this conference and am looking forward to further communicating and implementing what we learned.



Mayor Tara Walter and Vice-Mayor Vallarie Woolridge attended the National League of Cities Congressional Conference in Washington D.C. March 9th-14th.



Mayor Tara Walter was selected to serve on a panel at the Public Sector Retirement Advisory Committee Meeting.