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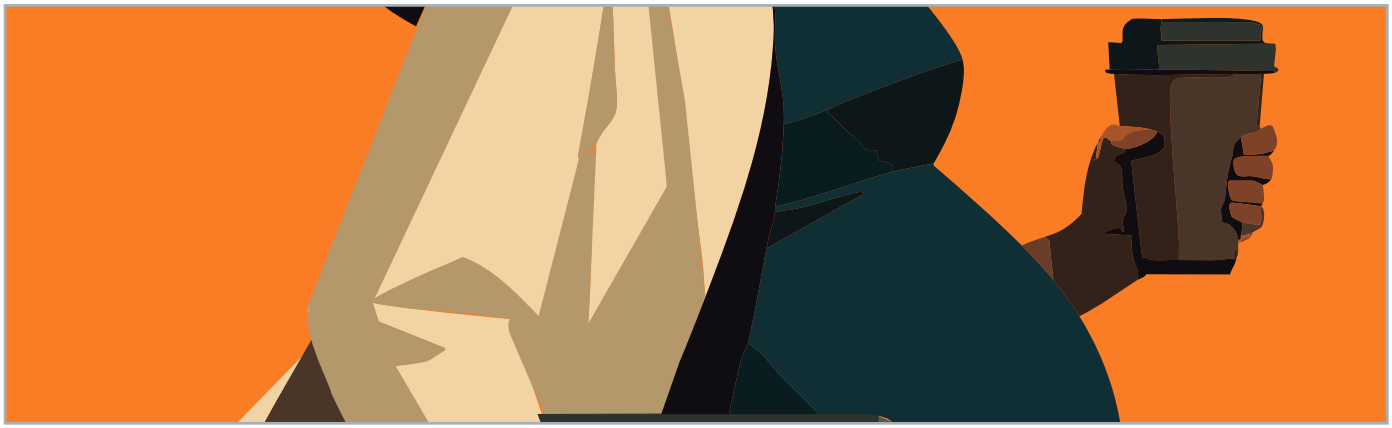
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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

STRONGER TOGETHER:

The Power of Colleagues Supporting Each Other

In the hustle of professional life, deadlines and deliverables often take center stage. But behind every project completed and every milestone reached is a network of people – colleagues – who, when they support one another, become one of the most valuable assets a workplace can offer.

Support among professional colleagues goes far beyond the occasional helping hand or friendly chat over coffee. It's the quiet encouragement that turns self-doubt into confidence. It's the willingness to listen, to step in when someone is overwhelmed, and to celebrate others' successes as if they were your own. In a world that often glorifies individual achievement, we forget that collaboration and mutual support are what drive long-term success.

Consider the moments when a colleague offers to review your work before a big presentation, or when a team member notices you're off your game and checks in. These aren't just acts of kindness – they're acts of leadership. They create an environment where people feel safe, valued, and motivated to do their best work.

Support also fosters resilience. When challenges arise – and they always do – knowing that your team has your back can make all the difference. A culture of support helps transform failure into a learning opportunity rather than a source of shame. It builds trust, and trust builds teams that don't just work together, but grow together.

There's no one way to support a colleague. It might mean advocating for them in meetings, sharing credit, mentoring, or even just being a sounding board. What matters is the intention: choosing to lift others as we climb.

Let's normalize asking for help and offering it freely. Let's lead with empathy and show that professionalism and compassion are not mutually exclusive. Because at the end of the day, success tastes better when it's shared.

In supporting each other, we don't just become better professionals – we become better people.

IMLA fosters numerous opportunities for local government attorneys to participate as part of a mutually supportive professional community. One of those involves attendance at the highly anticipated annual conference each year. This year's conference will be held from October 17-21, 2025 in New Orleans, LA. Attendance at IMLA's annual conference provides the opportunity to learn from colleagues from throughout North America. It will also be a fabulous setting for folks to socialize with colleagues and friends. I hope to see you there!

On a personal note, I'll be passing the gavel at this year's conference to our incoming IMLA President, Susana Alcala Wood. It has been an incredible honor to serve as IMLA's President during the past year. I owe an immense debt of gratitude to so many people I've met through IMLA – colleagues who have helped me do a better job in my role as a city attorney and folks who have become true friends.

My fellow members of the IMLA board of directors include a collection of individuals who are immensely accomplished attorneys and committed public servants. More importantly, I have found them to be a group of kind and thoughtful people. I thank all of them for their contributions to, and support of, IMLA. Of course, the true stars of IMLA are the dedicated and talented staff. Amanda Karras, Jenny Ruhe, Caroline Storer, Erich Eiselt, Deanna Shahnami, Trina Shropshire-Paschal, Avery Morris, Carolina Moore, Christine Dodd, Sean Cooley, and Chuck Thompson form an amazing team who, collectively, help make IMLA the successful organization that it is.

To all IMLA Members, I hope that you have had an enjoyable summer and I look forward to seeing many of you at this year's Annual Conference in New Orleans!

JEFFREY DANA
City Solicitor,
Providence,
Rhode Island



AMANDA KARRAS

IMLA Executive Director, Rockville, Maryland

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

FINDING BALANCE:

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

This past month, our eyes turned to the District of Columbia as the federal government sought to reduce crime by assuming control of the D.C.'s police force, placing federal law enforcement in the city, and deploying the National Guard. Although Congress enacted the District of Columbia Home Rule Act in 1973, which allows D.C. to maintain a form of local self-governance, D.C. has a special relationship with the federal government, which allows the President more latitude than he would enjoy in other jurisdictions.

The Act allows the President to assume emergency control of the police if the President determines "that special conditions of an emergency nature exist which require the use of the Metropolitan Police force for Federal purposes." Such a presidential takeover is limited to 30 days or until the end of the emergency, whichever comes first. D.C. sued the President to enjoin the takeover of the police, arguing the President and Attorney General Bondi have exceeded their authority under the Home Rule Act and have acted contrary to law in violation of the APA. That action is still pending as of this writing. And while the Home Rule Act creates unique challenges for D.C., the President also mentioned other cities when he made the announcement about the police takeover in Washington, including Chicago, Baltimore, Oakland, Los Angeles, and New York City. As of this writing, the President announced he plans to deploy the National Guard to Chicago, though it remains to be seen whether the President will employ similar actions in other communities.

The deployment of National Guard troops and federal law enforcement officers to help reduce crime in a city is a different legal matter than the takeover of D.C.'s police force. One of the efforts underway in Washington, with the influx of federal troops and law enforcement, is clearing homeless encampments. According to some reports, more than 48 encampments have been cleared in just a few weeks. D.C.'s Mayor has emphasized that there is indoor shelter space available for individuals experiencing homelessness, though it is unclear if people have moved indoors or moved to a new part of the city to create new encampments.

The decision to bring in federal troops and the National Guard to respond to public safety challenges—including encampments of unhoused individuals—raises fundamental questions about governance: Who should bear responsibility for public safety, and what happens when that responsibility shifts away from the local level?

At IMLA, we have long emphasized the importance of local autonomy. Local governments are closest to the people, best positioned to understand their communities' unique challenges. They are often tasked with balancing urgent public safety concerns with the rights of their residents. The recent developments in D.C. highlight what our members across the country already know: public safety is about much more than policing. It increasingly involves addressing homelessness, addiction, mental health, and social services—all of which demand nuanced, community-specific solutions.

Federal involvement in homelessness policy is not new, but it has intensified in recent months. For example, in addition to the actions taking place in D.C., President Trump issued an Executive Order on July 24, 2025, entitled "Ending Crime and Disorder on America's Streets," (the "Homelessness EO"). The Homelessness EO seeks to move away from a housing first model to one focused on civil commitment of individuals with mental illness or those who pose a risk to themselves or the public. It also directs several agencies to set up discretionary grants for States and local governments that have policies and practices in place, including those enforcing prohibitions against urban camping and open illegal drug use.

These actions create both opportunities and challenges for local governments. Federal resources can help communities, but they come with strings attached, compliance requirements, and potential litigation risks. Local governments must carefully navigate the balance between accepting federal assistance and retaining the flexibility needed to address their community's needs.

That balance was at the heart of *Grants Pass v. Johnson*, the Supreme Court homeless encampment case decided last June. IMLA was proud to advocate for

local governments in that case, filing an amicus brief that underscored the need for localities to retain authority over how best to address homelessness in their jurisdictions, including the ability to clear encampments. The Court's decision reaffirmed that these difficult policy choices belong to local communities—not to the federal judiciary. While no ruling eliminates the challenges communities face, *Grants Pass* made clear that local governments have the constitutional space to craft solutions. As Justice Gorsuch, who authored the opinion, explained:

> Instead of encouraging "productive dialogue" and "experimentation" through our democratic institutions, courts have frozen in place their own "formulas" by "fiat." Id., at 534, 537. Issued by federal courts removed from realities on the ground, those rules have produced confusion. And they have interfered with "essential considerations of federalism," taking from the people and their elected leaders difficult questions traditionally "thought to be the[ir] province."

Whether or not clearing encampments and requiring civil commitment of homeless individuals is good policy remains to be seen, and each community may seek to address homelessness in different and nuanced ways. The Homeless EO is incentivizing those policies through discretionary grants, which localities may choose to apply for. Incentives are one thing, but taking the homeless policy decisions away from D.C.'s elected officials and forcing the clearing of encampments within the District would seem to offer some of the same problems that we saw in *Grants Pass* when the federal judiciary had prevented localities from clearing encampments in the Ninth Circuit. IMLA maintains that local elected leaders are in the best position to come up with solutions to the difficult problem of homelessness in their communities.

These developments remind us why IMLA exists: to equip local government lawyers with the tools they need to navigate evolving legal landscapes, assert local authority, and serve their communities effectively. Through our conferences, webinars, working groups, and other resources, we provide education on public safety, homelessness, federal grant compliance, and intergovernmental relations. And through our advocacy, we continue to speak collectively for local governments when the stakes are highest.

As we look ahead to our upcoming Conference in New Orleans, these themes will be front and center. From sessions on homelessness to panels on public safety, immigration, federal funding, and constitutional law, we will explore the most pressing challenges facing our members. I encourage you to join us, connect with colleagues, and share your own experiences.

Local government lawyers stand on the frontlines of some of the most complex and consequential issues of our time. Whether in Washington, D.C., Grants Pass, Oregon, or your own community, the questions of public safety, homelessness, and local autonomy are deeply intertwined. At IMLA, we are here to support you as you address them.

Warm regards,
Amanda Karras
Executive Director, IMLA

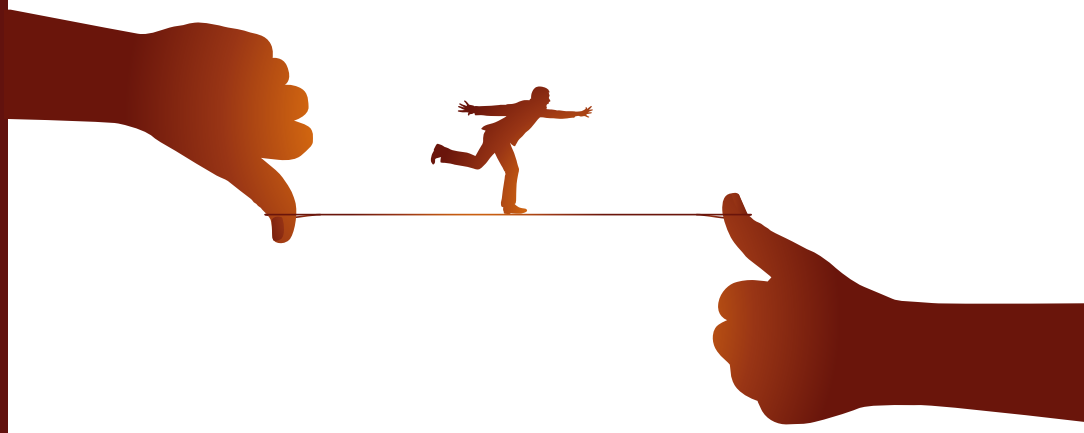




MENTOR'S CORNER

7 Skills for Success as a Municipal Lawyer

This Mentor's Corner is provided to you by the mentors from the following cities: Leann Guzman, Fort Worth; Shaun Dabby Jacobs, Los Angeles; Trish Link, Austin; Mandana D. Vidwan, Charlotte; and Jeannine Williams, St. Petersburg.



Local government attorneys are in a unique position in the legal profession: everything we touch is in the public eye and funded by public dollars, we are working for the level of government closest to the people, we are called on to do more with less every day, we never know what will cross our desk at any given moment, and even the most creative storywriter couldn't make up some of what we encounter. So, to succeed long-term as a municipal lawyer, it takes much more than just knowing the law.

This niche area of law practice requires the development of certain skills to build a successful career.

1. Political savvy. Pay attention to which individuals, groups, and entities have influence with various people in the city, both elected and non-elected. Also take note of what issues are most likely to be of interest or what has been of interest to the public and the media (both traditional and social). This knowledge will help you give advice and provide legal services in the context of power dynamics and media attention, which have an immense impact on your client's strategies and decisions.

2. Know and accept your role. Your role is to provide legal services, risk analysis, and good advice, and the decisions your client makes with what you provide is their job, not yours. You must be willing to let the client make the decisions, even those you don't agree with. Stay in your lane and try your best not to adopt a "told you so"

attitude when they inevitably come to you to untangle messes caused by not doing what you advised in the first place.

3. Resilience. Practicing law of any kind requires resilience, but practicing in public in front of performative critics, pot-stirrers, and keyboard warriors requires a whole other level of strength and tough skin. It's important that you learn to keep things in perspective, let things go, stay grounded in and base your identity on something bigger and more important than your job, and take the time on a regular basis to do what restores peace to your soul.

4. Adaptability. Daily adaptability and flexibility are necessary because the day you plan is not usually (ever?) the day you have. Municipal lawyers must be able to prioritize and pivot to the most important issue of the day, while still ensuring the regular tasks get done. Adaptability in communications is also crucial, so that your communication style fits its intended audience and the needs of the moment. A brief to the court requires a much different communication style than the written legal advice to a person who doesn't care what cases you read and only wants the answer, which had better be short.

5. Curiosity. Be open and curious about everything, be an active listener, and ask good questions. If you have the opportunity to work in different divisions or handle different kinds of matters within your office, take advantage of those opportunities because it will help you understand more about the city and make you a more valuable resource to your client. Also, use your curiosity to dig for details of the story they tell you because they always leave something out and you'll need those details to provide better service.

6. Hard-working. Local government lawyers are going to carry a heavy workload, so the only way to succeed long term is to be a hard worker. With a heavy workload, it's tempting to cut corners, look for quick and easy ways to get an answer, or shoot off a response that you're less than 100% sure is right. But none of those methods lead to long term success as a lawyer of any kind, much less the lawyer who works with elected officials and the public.

7. Strong belief in public service. You may not have come to local government work because of a strong belief in public service, but if you stay for the long haul, holding that belief is what will carry you through. Working for local government is an incredibly rewarding way to contribute to the community in which you live, work, or play. Few other areas of the law offer such a tangible reward for your efforts; work in a city for a while and you'll drive around and see projects you've touched that make things better for people. Believe it: your work has a positive impact on the public, your work is meaningful, and your work is important! ML





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