EDITOR'S NOTE



BY ERICH EISELT
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Taming the Wave: Municipalities and the Virus

The pandemic plays out daily in raw statistics, climbing relentlessly: millions afflicted around the world, hundreds of thousands dead. On global maps, expanding crimson circles seep across national boundaries, disrespecting geography, race, religion or political orientation.

Much of America's topology remains shrouded under the same vermilion, a massive overlapping Venn diagram of medical and economic duress. Behind the daily press briefings, the national body count and the ever-escalating fiscal countermeasures, 35,000 local governments persevere. In some, glimmers of optimism appear; in others, the wave has yet to crest. Local attitudes about precaution vary widely, making municipalities true "laboratories of democracy" in the scientific sense.

On main street, the role of governance is paramount, placing municipal lawyers in a pivotal role, critical to maintaining order and effecting policies that allow communities to function, however hobbled. In many ways, the practice of government law has never been more stimulating: seemingly every question balances public health against civil rights, and every park bench disagreement rapidly assumes constitutional dimensions. Not surprisingly, as this May-June 2020 *Municipal Lawyer* goes to print, the Supreme Court—now operating virtually--is being asked to opine on the fundamental collision between police powers and commercial interests.

The issues confronting IMLA members in the time of corona compress an entire career's worth of experience into a single season. As our Listserv and COVID-19 calls exemplify, municipal lawyers are dealing simultaneously with overarching questions about religious gatherings and the devolution of power among federal, state and local authorities while taking on less lofty but equally essential tasks of deciphering the CARES Act, the FFCRA, the EFMLA and a host of state and local emergency provisions.

IMLA is continuing to serve our constituency by providing various platforms for members to discuss these issues. Thanks to you, our virtual conference last week was a great success, affording colleagues web access to education, CLE accreditation and Zoom-facilitated camaraderie. This issue of *Municipal Lawyer* joins the cause, providing pandemic-related subject matter which we trust will be useful.

We are grateful for our shared mission with you and look forward to the time when safety and prosperity again return to the communities we serve.

Best regards-

Erich Eiselt