



2009 Legislative Program

THE ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS

OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK



2009 BUSINESS SESSION

Wednesday, February 18, 2009 • Hilton New York, NYC

Resolved, that the Official Delegates to the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Association of Towns of the State of New York have adopted resolutions on the following topics:

- Preserve and Strengthen Home Rule
- Mandate Relief
- Economic Stimulus
- Highway And Transportation Funding
- Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Infrastructure Aid
- Preserve and Strengthen Local Government's Role in the Siting of Energy Generation Facilities
- Preserve Town Land Use Authority in the Natural Gas Exploration And Extraction Approval Process
- Highway Mutual Aid
- Local Road Classification
- Reform of GML 207-c Disability Benefits for Law Enforcement
- Road Preservation Bonds
- Publication Of Legal Notices
- Reform Real Property Tax System
- Justice Court Security
- Inventory Of Utility Property
- Preservation Of Town Registrars Of Vital Statistics
- Retention Of Lever Voting Machines

To: The Governor of the State of New York

To: The Members of the New York State Assembly and Senate

*To: The Heads of the Several State Departments, Divisions,
and Other Agencies of New York State Government*

To: Members of the United States Congress

The resolutions contained herein were adopted by the Delegates to the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Association of Towns of the State of New York on February 18. As such, they were passed by a majority of the delegates present and, in respect to these issues, represent the legislative positions of the Association for 2009.

The adopted resolutions were first submitted to the Association's Resolutions Committee from one or more of its member towns. They were considered by the Committee and if found to be relevant to all towns, or town government as a whole, they were then forwarded to all member towns prior to the Annual Meeting. They were then put before the delegates for an affirmative or negative vote.

The Resolutions contained herein, if successfully enacted into law or placed in regulation, would either directly or indirectly increase the efficiency of town government and lower costs to its residents. At a time when much emphasis is being placed on studying ways to accomplish such goals, the Association and its members, representing almost half of New York State's population, urge that as legislative proposals are advanced that relate to the subjects contained in these resolutions, you will keep our positions and concerns in mind, with an intent toward embracing them as positive steps for the benefit of town government and its 8 million residents.

Please feel free to call upon the staff of this Association if you need assistance in resolving any issues relating to these resolutions.

Respectfully submitted:

G. Jeffrey Haber
Executive Director

Dated February 18, 2009

150 State Street
Albany, NY 12207
(518) 465-7933

2009 Legislative Resolutions

As Reported by the Resolutions Committee
of the Association of Towns

Resolution No. 1

PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN HOME RULE

WHEREAS, beginning in 1894, the people of the State of New York have voted repeatedly to approve Constitutional provisions granting broad home rule powers to local governments and corresponding restrictions on the State Legislature to preserve these powers; and

WHEREAS, home rule powers encompass a wide range of subjects including but not limited to: the power to adopt, amend and repeal local laws in the exercise of its functions, powers and duties; the power to share services and act cooperatively with other local governments; the power to acquire real and personal property for its corporate purposes; the power to establish recreational facilities; the power to dispose of its real and personal property; the power to levy and collect rents, charges, fees and penalties in a city, village or town; the power to adopt, amend and repeal zoning regulations; and the power to perform comprehensive or other planning work relating to its jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the exercise of these powers permits local governing bodies to meet the unique and diverse needs of local residents while fostering citizen participation and grassroots involvement in government; and

WHEREAS, New York's diverse communities are best served by maintaining the principles of home rule, including those set forth in the State Constitution, Local Government Bill of Rights, Statute of Local Government and the Municipal Home Rule Law; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor and the Legislature to preserve and strengthen home rule; and **BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns will strongly oppose any state initiative to weaken or eliminate New York's long-standing tradition of home rule and local government authority.

Resolution No. 2

MANDATE RELIEF

WHEREAS, local governments are in partnership with the State and Federal Government to protect and preserve the health, safety and welfare of the people and New York State; and

WHEREAS, such a partnership requires collaboration in order to effectively accomplish these goals; and

WHEREAS, the imposition of tax-shifting unfunded State and Federal mandates (commonly occurring in the areas of public works, procurement, personnel management, provision of local service, environmental quality enhancements and loss of local tax base) represents a barrier to effective collaboration and good governance; and

WHEREAS, the growing expense of tax-shifting unfunded mandates, both individually and collectively, places financial burdens on local governments and, ultimately, the taxpayer and has in some instances forced local governments to drastically underfund crucial local services such as road maintenance, public safety and recreational and cultural services,
NOW THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the President and Congress to enhance the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (UMRA; P.L. 104-4) to expand the definition of the term “unfunded mandate” and to fully fund Federal programs administered at the state and local level; and **BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor and the New York State Legislature to enact comprehensive mandate relief legislation that would take into consideration the following among other relief measures: (1) inventory and full funding of existing and future mandates and (2) require all future legislation to include specific local fiscal impact notes.

Resolution No. 3 **ECONOMIC STIMULUS**

WHEREAS, America has a critical need for transportation infrastructure improvements that require capital investment in roads, bridges, sidewalks, pedestrian and bicycle trails, railroads, airports, harbors and mass transit systems; and

WHEREAS, America has a critical need for clean drinking water, fishable rivers and swimable lakes and beaches that requires capital investment in sewage treatment, retention ponds, wetlands and storm water facilities; and

WHEREAS, infrastructure stimulus programs would not only provide an immediate economic benefit creating jobs here in America but would benefit both current and future generations; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that in the event Congress decides to undertake any future economic stimulus packages, the Association of Towns calls upon the New York Congressional Delegation to focus funding on our infrastructure needs for transportation and clean water by investing directly in local government public projects that will employ Americans today and that will benefit future generations of Americans for years to come.

Resolution No. 4
HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

WHEREAS, a safe and dependable transportation infrastructure network is necessary in order to protect users of New York's roads, bridges and mass transit and to encourage and sustain economic development; and

WHEREAS, the roads and bridges that make up our Nation's highway and transit infrastructure are built, operated and maintained through the collaborative financial assistance of Federal, State, and Local governments with 85 percent of New York's roads and bridges maintained by local governments; and

WHEREAS, the Federal "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users" (SAFETEA-LU) funding program was established to provide federal funding for state and local infrastructure projects and is set to expire in 2009; and

WHEREAS, the New York State "Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program" (CHIPS) was established to assist localities in financing the construction, reconstruction or improvement of local highways, bridges, highway-railroad crossings and/or other local facilities (Highway Law, §10-c) is subject to annual appropriation; and

WHEREAS, studies of New York's extensive local road system continue to identify a multi-billion dollar shortfall in funding of local highways and bridges; and

WHEREAS, the Association of Towns is cognizant of the current financial crisis; and

WHEREAS, according to the Federal Highway Administration, every \$1.00 spent on street and highway improvements results in \$5.40 in economic benefits; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor, the Legislature and the Department of Transportation to maintain CHIPS funding in the 2009-10 State Budget and to provide a stable and sustainable funding stream for local infrastructure needs; and **BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor, the Legislature and the Department of Transportation to fully fund and preserve the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund (DHBTF) for capital infrastructure expenditures and to phase out noncapital expenditures; and **BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the New York Congressional Delegation to renew SAFETEA-LU and to provide an increased and dedicated funding commitment to state and local transportation infrastructure projects.

Resolution No. 5

WATER, WASTEWATER AND STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE AID

WHEREAS, sound infrastructure ensures a healthy environment for our residents, provides an incentive for businesses to stay in or relocate to New York State and attracts visitors to vacation in this State; and

WHEREAS, New York residents, businesses and visitors depend upon local government for clean drinking water and efficient wastewater and stormwater treatment services; and

WHEREAS, State and Federal resources were instrumental in funding the initial development of our water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has reduced wastewater infrastructure funding by 50 percent and drinking water infrastructure funding by 40 percent, thereby shifting the burden of paying for this infrastructure onto local government taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, recent reports have identified a multi-billion dollar shortfall in water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure funding; and

WHEREAS, adequate State and Federal funding to replace, maintain, update or build water and wastewater infrastructure has been lagging for decades and thereby threatens vital water quality gains of the past 30 years; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the **Association of Towns calls upon the Governor, the Legislature and the New York State Congressional Delegation to provide consistent, secure and increased funding for local government water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure.**

Resolution No. 6

PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN THE SITING OF ENERGY GENERATION FACILITIES

WHEREAS, the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) adopted a new renewable energy policy which includes wind energy facilities (WEFs) on September 22, 2004 that requires 25 percent of the State's electricity to be supplied from renewable energy sources by 2013; and

WHEREAS, the proper regulation of the siting and installation of WEFs is necessary for the purpose of protecting the health, safety and welfare of neighboring property owners and the general public; and

WHEREAS, local governments have successfully developed, implemented and administered local WEF siting laws and policies with the input and guidance of local taxpayers, residents, business and agricultural representatives, environmentalists, energy generators, planners and lawyers; and

WHEREAS, Article X of the Public Service Law (PSL), which set forth the siting procedure to construct and operate major power generation facilities with a capacity of 80 megawatts or more expired December 31, 2002, thereby requiring electric generating project developers to undergo local zoning review and environmental review pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law);
NOW THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor, State Legislature and State Agencies to develop new laws and regulations that will preserve local authority over the siting of WEFs and that will provide local government officials from a host municipality with a seat on the New York State Board on Electric Generation Siting and the Environment (Siting Board).

Resolution No. 7

PRESERVE TOWN LAND USE AUTHORITY IN THE NATURAL GAS EXPLORATION AND EXTRACTION APPROVAL PROCESS

WHEREAS, the towns of New York State are responsible for providing services to their residents to promote the health, safety and welfare of the community, including the regulation of land use; and

WHEREAS, by delegating land use authority to local governments, the Legislature has recognized that local governments are in the best position to respond to the needs of residents who are uniquely affected by projects that impact their community and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the exploration, drilling and extraction of natural gas and oil can have significant impacts on local communities and raises numerous concerns about surrounding land uses and the overall quality of life within the community; and

WHEREAS, Article 23 of the Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) limits local governments' participation in approving projects for the testing, exploration, drilling and extraction of natural gas and oil; and

WHEREAS, other states, including Texas and California, have preserved local zoning and land use authority over the siting of natural gas and oil testing, exploration, drilling and extraction; and

WHEREAS, the importance of retaining local land use authority in this area is affirmed by the preservation of local zoning and land use over the siting of mines and mineral extraction; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor, the State Legislature and the Department of Environmental Conservation to amend the Environmental Conservation Law to preserve local land use authority over the testing, exploration, drilling and extraction of natural gas and oil.

Resolution No. 8

HIGHWAY MUTUAL AID

WHEREAS, the State of New York has long recognized the benefits of sharing resources among and between its local governments; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Law provides for the sharing of local government resources and personnel in the event of a disaster, as defined by that law; and

WHEREAS, except in the event of such a disaster, local governments may share resources only pursuant to an agreement entered into in advance by municipalities; and

WHEREAS, there are certain times that do not rise to the level of a disaster, yet still require additional assistance and resources by the Highway Department or Department of Public Works in order to adequately respond; and

WHEREAS, oftentimes there are no appropriate cooperative agreements in place at the time such assistance is required; and

WHEREAS, statewide legislation enabling the sharing of highway and DPW personnel and resources and setting forth basic structure, procedures and protocols, in the absence of an appropriate cooperative agreement would improve local governments' abilities to work cooperatively to address unforeseen or unanticipated events and occurrences, **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Legislature to enact highway mutual aid legislation to enable the department head of a highway department or DPW to request and to offer such assistance in described circumstances and in the absence of a local cooperative agreement between the local governments.

Resolution No. 9

LOCAL ROAD CLASSIFICATION

WHEREAS, American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) develops minimum standards for local highways; and

WHEREAS, many rural town roads are unpaved and do not meet minimum AASHTO standards; and

WHEREAS, upgrading the State's 90,000 miles of county and town roads to meet the AASHTO minimum standards would cost in excess of \$9.7 billion; and

WHEREAS, there is a shortage of available state and federal funding for local road and bridge maintenance; and

WHEREAS, the proper designation of qualified local roads as minimum maintenance or low volume will simultaneously result in lower real property taxes and more efficient use of state and federal resources while ensuring the public with safe travel; and

WHEREAS, other states such as North Dakota and Minnesota have enacted provisions authorizing and regulating low volume and minimum maintenance road standards; and

WHEREAS, there is a need to provide an appropriate legal and technical basis for the decisions of those local highway superintendents, town boards and their engineering professionals regarding the maintenance, reconstruction and construction of low volume and minimum maintenance local roads; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Local Road Classification Task Force developed guidelines that incorporate a design process for rehabilitation projects on low traffic roads, including recommendations for pavement width, bridge width and roadside clear zones; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns urges the Governor and the Legislature to enact appropriate enabling authority for local road classification as recommended by the NYS Local Road Classification Task Force, as a measure of mandate relief, which will permit local governments to rationally reduce, to more appropriate levels, the costs of maintenance and repair of such low volume roads.

Resolution No. 10

REFORM OF GML 207-C DISABILITY BENEFITS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

WHEREAS, pursuant to General Municipal Law (GML), §207-c, law enforcement personnel are entitled to payment of municipal compensation including payment of salary, fringe benefits and all medical costs when they are injured in the line of duty and these payments are nontaxable and can continue for years or even decades until there is recovery, a disability retirement or attainment of retirement age; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Court of Appeals decided (*Matter of Theroux, et al. v. Reilly, et al.*) that pursuant to GML, §207-c, law enforcement officers are entitled to these benefits regardless of the duties performed or the nature of the injury; and

WHEREAS, the Office of the New York State Comptroller has the final determination as to when a law enforcement officer is eligible for a disability retirement and historically has been reluctant to issue disability retirements to law enforcement officers who are receiving section 207-c benefits; and

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers have been known to stay on municipal payrolls receiving 207-c benefits for multiple years thereby occupying a position that could be filled by another officer; and

WHEREAS, this interpretation of GML, §207-c by the New York State Court of Appeals will substantially increase municipal compensation costs and create a great hardship to taxpayers at all municipal government levels; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns supports legislation to amend General Municipal Law, §207-c to require disability retirement benefits to be extended to any law enforcement officer who has been receiving GML, §207-c benefits for a period of 36 consecutive months without the ability to return to work.

Resolution No. 11 **ROAD PRESERVATION BONDS**

WHEREAS, well-maintained roads are important to the economic well-being of towns, as are commercial endeavors such as timber harvesting, mining and natural gas exploration; and

WHEREAS, many of these endeavors require the frequent transport of heavy equipment and loads over local highways, occasionally damaging local roads in the process; and

WHEREAS, current New York State Law does not provide express statutory authority for local governments to require road reconstruction bonds to fund road repairs caused by vehicles moving heavy equipment and loads; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor and the State Legislature to provide express statutory authority for local governments to require the posting of road reconstruction bonds to protect local highways from damage attributable to overweight commercial vehicles and loads.

Resolution No. 12 **PUBLICATION OF LEGAL NOTICES**

WHEREAS, current law restricts public notices to be published in paid dailies and weeklies; and

WHEREAS, it has become increasingly difficult to purchase adequate citizen coverage under current restrictions regarding what can be designated as an official newspaper; and

WHEREAS, the cost of publishing in an official newspaper could become costly; and

WHEREAS, studies show the decline in paid local daily and weekly newspaper readership is accelerating; and

WHEREAS, studies also show an increase in circulation of free community papers from 30 million in 1968 to 88 million in 2000; and

WHEREAS, the intent of required public notice is to increase the likelihood that citizens are well-informed regarding local government actions, finances and plans; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor and the Legislature to amend the General Construction Law to allow papers, distributed without charge, but with an established and large circulation, to be considered newspapers in certain instances to permit towns and other local governments to place the legal notices in the local publications which may reach a larger audience and/or be less costly to the taxpayers.

Resolution No. 13
REFORM REAL PROPERTY TAX SYSTEM

WHEREAS, towns primarily rely on real property tax revenues to fund important government services; and

WHEREAS, New York's property tax burden is higher than the national average, thereby impacting our standard of living and economic vitality; and

WHEREAS, a contributing factor to high real property taxes is the volume of legislation passed each year granting particular property owners either a partial or full exemption from the payment of real property taxes, a practice that has continued unabated; and

WHEREAS, the legislative trend to grant exceptions from established taxable status dates, either at local option or statewide, contributes to the increase in real property taxes paid by homeowners and small businesses; and

WHEREAS, it is essential that the cumulative long-term impact of real property tax exemptions be studied in New York, particularly in light of the retroactive exemptions for specific properties annually enacted and the expanding scope of existing exemptions; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns requests the Governor and Legislature to study, define and enact a uniform, well-defined approach to exemption and taxable status date legislation and provide State funding for any state-mandated or encouraged exemption programs and protect local property tax revenues.

Resolution No. 14
JUSTICE COURT SECURITY

WHEREAS, the safety and security of the public and of the municipal officers and employees, appearing in local Justice Courts is a matter of utmost importance; and

WHEREAS, the presence of Uniformed Court Officers with the powers of peace officers would help local governments maintain a safe and secure justice court facility; and

WHEREAS, uniformed Court Officers of the Justice Courts do not have peace officer status except where granted by special legislation; and

WHEREAS, in the past two years, six special bills that would grant peace officer status to uniformed court officers of the Justice Courts have been vetoed; and

WHEREAS, these vetoes cited, in part, the need for comprehensive legislation increasing the required training for peace officers and setting forth the categories of employees that need peace officer status on a statewide basis; and

WHEREAS, the Association of Towns believes that Uniform Court Officers of the Justice Courts is such a category of employee; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Legislature to enact legislation granting peace officer status to the Uniformed Court Officers of the Justice Courts across the State.

Resolution No. 15
INVENTORY OF UTILITY PROPERTY

WHEREAS, certain utility companies have refused to submit to town assessors an inventory of their property on private lands and corresponding data relating thereto; and

WHEREAS, such inventory and data are needed by the assessors, when faced with potential judicial review, to defend the assessments placed on utility property; and

WHEREAS, such data is needed in order for assessors to determine the appropriate assessment; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns requests that the Governor and the State Legislature enact legislation requiring utility companies to furnish to each assessor an inventory of all nonspecial franchise real property within the assessor's respective municipality and such corresponding data with respect to such properties in order to enable assessors to properly assess the utility property.

Resolution No. 16
PRESERVATION OF TOWN REGISTRARS OF VITAL STATISTICS

WHEREAS, the New York State Local Government Commission on Efficiency and Competitiveness has made certain recommendations to the Governor which affect the operation of local governments; and

WHEREAS, one of the recommendations of the Commission was to move all Registrar of Vital Statistics duties to the county level under the direction of the New York State Health Commissioner; and

WHEREAS, the NYS Department of Health has developed a program bill that would allow the Commissioner to consolidate the function of the local registrars of vital statistics; and

WHEREAS, New York State Department of Health has inappropriately attached these proposed changes in the structure of the Registrar of Vital Statistics duties to the "Pandemic Flu and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Law"; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioner could consolidate these services without county legislative approval; and

WHEREAS, the local city, town and village clerks have provided this service professionally and efficiently over the years; and

WHEREAS, losing this function would have a financial impact on the local governments; and

WHEREAS, many citizens are under financial stress due to fluctuating fuel costs, layoffs, rising food healthcare and utility prices; and

WHEREAS, the town, city and village clerk offices are conveniently located thereby reducing the cost and burden to receive this service; NOW THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, that in the interest of good government and accessibility to the taxpayer, the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor, the State Legislature and the Commissioner of the Department of Health to continue to allow town, city and village clerks to provide this important service; and BE IT FURTHER

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns calls upon the Governor, the State Legislature and the Commissioner of the Department of Health to work with local governments to provide the necessary resources (including voluntary cooperation, local opt out or voluntary consolidation) to assist local registrars in the provision of this important service in order to comply with the Federal Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 and the pending regulations.

Resolution No. 17
RETENTION OF LEVER VOTING MACHINES

WHEREAS, for many decades New York State has successfully used mechanical lever-style voting machines, with very few problems, and is desirous of continuing to do so; and

WHEREAS, the continued use of lever voting machines is in the best interest of the public and should be permitted to be used in future general elections; and

WHEREAS, the elimination of lever voting machines, as required by statute, is costly to taxpayers, will result in another burden upon the local taxpayers and will be confusing to the voting public without adequate time and education, NOW THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Association of Towns hereby requests the United States Congress, Governor of New York, New York State Legislature and the New York State Board of Elections to enact laws, rules and regulations and take all other needed actions to specifically authorize the continued use of lever voting machines.

2008-2009 Resolutions Committee

<u>NAME</u>	<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>TOWN</u>
Elizabeth Greene, Chairwoman	Councilwoman	Newburgh
Kenneth Andrews	Councilman	DeWitt
Don Barber	Supervisor	Caroline
Donald Castellucci	Councilman	Owego
Rebecca Connolly	Town Clerk	Somerset
Raymond J. Elliott	Town Justice	North Greenbush
Robert Giza	Supervisor	Lancaster
Dorothy Goosby	Councilwoman	Hempstead
Rebecca Haines	Town Clerk	Ellery
Cheryl Horton	Supervisor	Philadelphia
John LaPointe	Supervisor	Putnam
Carole Marsh	Supervisor	Pompey
Edward Mosher	Supervisor	Colesville
Elizabeth Ann Neville	Town Clerk	Southold
William Nichols	Hwy. Supt.	Belfast
Andrea Nilon	Assessor	Chester
Dennis M. Powers	Councilman	Elma
Jean Raymond	Supervisor	Edinburg
Robert Taylor	Supervisor	New Lisbon
Timothy Whitesell	Supervisor	Binghamton
John Walker	Supervisor	Sheridan
Gerald Geist, Ex-Officio	Councilman	North Castle

About New York's Towns . . .

New York State local government structure is made up of four general purpose municipal corporations: counties, towns, villages and cities. A town is a general purpose municipal corporation with Constitutional “home rule” powers. More than 8.1 million New Yorkers or nearly 50 percent of our population live in towns; in fact everyone in New York who lives outside a city or an Indian reservation lives in a town. There are more towns in New York than there are cities and villages combined.

About the Association of Towns . . .

The Association of Towns of the State of New York was established by town officials in 1933 as a means for united action of the towns of this State and of the officers thereof for the improvement and preservation of town government. In 1935, the Association organized the Town and County Officers Training School and obtained a charter from the Board of Regents to conduct training courses of both a regional and state-wide nature, for various town and county officers; including, town board members, clerks, tax collectors and receivers, assessors, finance officers, justices, attorneys, and planning and zoning board members. The Annual Meeting of the Association of Towns is a peak in the Association’s internal affairs each year. The group sessions for the respective officers provide not only formal instruction, but also a medium for the exchange of ideas and information. For the past 40 years, the annual meeting and training school has been conducted in New York City. As part of the Annual Meeting, town officials from around the state gather to vote on the Association of Town’s annual legislative program. The goals of the legislative program are many, including preservation of home rule and local authority, elimination of burdensome mandates and a means to strengthen the partnership between federal, state and local governments in order to foster our shared economic prosperity and to improve the quality of life for those who live, work and visit New York.