

Local Leaders Can Help Advance Racial Equity Through New National League of Cities (NLC) NBC-LEO Initiative

At the start of this year, the Ohio Municipal League Board of Trustees voted to approve a new addition to the League's list of legislative priorities: advancing racial equity.

According to the League's 2021-2022 Public Policy Agenda, "the Ohio Municipal League is committed to advancing racial equity in our local communities. We will continue to partner with other government associations and community leaders to identify current and historical racial disparities and to help educate local leaders on ways to ensure inclusiveness and equity in local communities."

Over the past year, the League has witnessed the very difficult times that our communities, our state and our country have experienced as segments of our society have suffered through often unintended policies that created a culture of disenfranchisement and oppression as it relates to issues of systemic racism and social injustice.

As a state association representing the municipal officials providing direct and tangible leadership for their constituents every day, we have heard the call for action and are working to

provide the important resources our local leaders need to examine current issues that may have undesirable impacts upon minority communities.

In order to ensure Ohio's municipal leaders have access to the best resources and information on this important issue, the League has partnered with the National League of Cities (NLC) Race Equity and Leadership (REAL) program to coordinate opportunities to help educate local communities on what racial inequity looks like and to give local leaders a forum through which to collaborate with one another to advance the cause of racial equity throughout our state.

One such educational opportunity was launched last month by the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (NBC-LEO), a group within the NLC. This enterprise, called the Reclaiming the Dream initiative, seeks to give local leaders the opportunity to learn about historical disparities for Black communities while helping them identify ways to eliminate those disparities.

The initiative focuses on five policy areas: criminal justice reform, educating on equity in government, workforce skill development,

homelessness, and working with philanthropic organizations. These five core areas will be the focus of NBC-LEO working groups that will explore each area and develop local policy and process recommendations.

The Reclaiming the Dream initiative recognizes that local leaders are on the front lines of the challenges of racial disparities and seeks to equip municipal officials with the tools to address inequity in their local communities and the relationship local leaders have with their residents. NBC-LEO will be hosting a series of events that will give local officials the opportunity for education and engagement through the Reclaiming the Dream initiative.

The League will continue to work alongside Ohio local governments and law enforcement organizations to explore what it looks like for local communities to address issues of racial inequity and to work together to provide all our state's local leaders with the support and guidance they need to serve all their residents well. It is critical that Ohio's local leaders can access the resources needed to help our cities and villages in their work to advance racial equity throughout our state.

To learn more about the Reclaiming the Dream initiative and other resources, email constituencygroups@nlc.org.



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