

## EPA Local Government Advisory Committee to Tackle Key Issues

**T**he charter of EPA's Local Government Advisory Committee recognizes that states and localities are "ultimately responsible" for implementing many of the programs that ensure environmental quality for all Americans. LGAC was created to assist EPA in "ensuring that its regulations, policies, guidance, and technical assistance support and improve the capacity of local governments to implement and carry out" public health and environmental programs.

This year, 16 new appointees join 13 reappointed members who together represent 27 states and include a range of elected and appointed government officials. For example, the committee now consists of over 20 mayors (including those from Newark, Selma, San Antonio, and Nashua), numerous council members from local governments around the country, and several local government sustainability officers.

According to the National League of Cities' Clarence Anthony, LGAC provides "an amazing opportunity for local officials to amplify their voices and be directly engaged in the policy development process at the federal level." Similarly, newly appointed Montgomery, Maryland, council member Evan Glass emphasizes, "It is imperative that local leaders are engaged in the federal policymaking process as we work to address the climate emergency we are experiencing."

This year, LGAC will focus on providing input on the proposed rule for national primary drinking water regulations for lead and copper. Next, LGAC workgroups will provide recommendations on EPA's draft strategy for reducing plastic

pollution. The agency's efforts to develop a cumulative-impact framework is in the docket, and so are improvements to community-level communication and engagement on climate change issues. John Lucey, EPA deputy associate administrator for intergovernmental relations, anticipates some workgroups will make recommendations as early as May, while others may wait until the fall.

Over the years, LGAC has issued recommendations on a wide range of issues, including PFAS risk communications and drinking water regulations, food waste and loss, harmful algal blooms, and hydraulic fracturing.

Lucey explains that "EPA offices identify policies or programs that they believe would benefit from the input of local government leaders and draft specific charges." LGAC leaders then review the charges and, in some cases, propose

changes to ensure that each charge "captures an issue that resonates with local government leaders."

EPA also appointed five new and 15 returning members to LGAC's Small Communities Advisory Subcommittee. This panel seeks to "strengthen the capacity of small communities throughout America to improve and protect the health of their people and the environment in which they live." The subcommittee's objectives include changing how EPA develops regulations that impact small communities; ensuring that adequate resources are appropriated and allocated to small communities to account for their costs associated with providing environmental protection; and encouraging the provision of technical assistance to small communities.

Not all of LGAC's recommendations are adopted by the agency,



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however. According to Lucey: "Parts of each recommendation document presented to EPA in the last three years have been incorporated" into agency policy. As an example, he points to the LGAC recommendation that EPA build partnerships between its regional offices and state municipal leagues. He highlights that at the LGAC meeting last October, "Region 5 leadership joined a lengthy discussion with representatives from the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and Wisconsin state government."

In addition, with respect to the agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grants, LGAC recommended that EPA "create a comprehensive collection of new and existing resources available for applicants to swiftly develop action plans." Lucey says that "in response, EPA developed a set of sample documents for states and municipalities to use when crafting their applications."

Furthermore, he notes that LGAC "called for the use of new and existing EPA staff to manage and coordinate program activities, as well as provide regular technical assistance tailored to communities." The grant program will create "Climate Innovation Teams" to "provide training and technical assistance to funding recipients as well as create opportunities for peer-to-peer technical assistance, peer collaboration and mentoring, and sharing of case studies, best practices, and lessons learned."

**Committee to issue recommendations on EPA's plastic pollution reduction strategy**