



## League of Municipalities Conference

**Author :** Mike Smith

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I'm attending the NC League of Municipalities Annual Conference in Greenville. Not surprisingly, attendance is down this year because of the economy—plus a number of elected officials in contested races likely were reluctant to leave town so close to the election. The conference has a more intimate feel than usual, which makes it easier to see people and make connections.

As always, the School is well represented at the League's conference. Fleming Bell and Eileen Youens provided a two-hour ethics training course on Sunday afternoon to help folks meet the requirements mandated by the General Assembly. I wasn't able to see their session because I came down yesterday, but apparently it was jam-packed and I've heard very positive comments from many who attended. Special thanks to Donna Warner, Nancy Kiplinger, and Gail Wilkins for working behind the scenes to make everything go smoothly. Fleming and Eileen will be offering lots of training this year to help elected officials meet the new requirement, and Fleming is hard at work on developing a model code of ethics for local governments.

Greg Allison was here yesterday for a session on financial warning signs for small cities and towns. It is hard to imagine a more relevant topic. Greg has been working with Bill Rivenbark and Dale Roenigk on a financial condition model that will be available online to local governments through the State Treasurer's Office. They are developing a course and a guidebook for local officials on how to use the model and interpret the results to assess their financial condition. When the model is available this summer, it will give North Carolina local governments a tool that is unique in the country.

In the business meeting this morning, the League honored two of our friends and colleagues with distinguished service awards—David Lawrence and John Sanders. It was a very nice moment, and it was great that they were honored together. David thanked John for hiring him over 40 years ago, and John thanked David and accepted his award on behalf of everyone he worked with at the Institute/School. The elected officials and managers gave warm ovations for David and John. After the session, it was wonderful to hear many local officials praising the School (all of you) for our work. Ellis Hankins, the League's Executive Director, also announced that Kim Hibbard will become the League's new General Counsel, replacing Andy Romanet when he retires at the end of the year.

The final session is with Dr. Douglas Brinkley, a professor at Rice University, who will be the



closing speaker. He has written a new book about President Theodore Roosevelt, *Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America, 1858-1919*. I've never heard him speak and I'm looking forward to it. See you back in Chapel Hill.