



434 Fayetteville Street
Suite 1900
Raleigh, NC 27601
919-715-4000
nclm.org

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Contact: Kristin Milam
(919) 715-3929
kmilam@nclm.org

Lazzara, Bell Receive NCLM ‘Community Champion’ Award

*Recognizes legislators’ work supporting and advocating for local governments
at the General Assembly*

(RALEIGH, NC) - Sen. Michael Lazzara and Rep. John Bell have been named this year's NC League of Municipalities Community Champions for their work understanding and representing the needs of cities and towns. The awards were announced Thursday at NCLM's annual conference, CityVision 2022, held in Wilmington, NC.

Senator Lazzara of Jacksonville is a familiar face around the League. He served an extended term as League president while mayor pro tem of Jacksonville, emceed numerous events and conference sessions for gatherings of municipalities, oversaw various internal and external issues on the League's board of directors, and spent valuable time with mayors, council members and key municipal officials to absorb the full diversity of North Carolina's array of cities and towns.

"Over this past year, Michael played a critical role in helping cities and towns achieve legislative priorities across a range of policy areas – from infrastructure funding to public safety reform to working for flexible land-use policies that make sense for cities and towns," said NCLM Immediate Past President Karen Alexander, the Mayor of Salisbury, who presented the senator the award.

"It's been a tremendous ride this last year serving as your senator," Senator Lazzara said at CityVision. "And what I will tell you is that I always promised

that if I made it this far, I would always remember cities and towns. Because cities and towns, to me, have always been a passion."

"You are where the rubber hits the road," he told the audience of municipal officials.

Representative Bell of Goldsboro, who was unable to attend the conference, "was an instrumental person when it came to securing funding for cities and towns related to making our communities more resilient in the face of storms and other natural disasters, as well as addressing the water and sewer needs of so many of our towns across the state," Mayor Alexander said.

She added that cities and towns had a tremendous legislative session last year, particularly as it related to support for infrastructure spending, pandemic response, and addressing public safety priorities.

"The two state legislators (awarded on Thursday) played key roles in assisting cities and towns achieve those outcomes," she said.

CityVision 2022 took place April 26-28, and included in-depth sessions, presentations and discussions of key topics including community development, affordable housing, the federal American Rescue Plan, leadership, and climate resilience.

About the League

The North Carolina League of Municipalities is a member-driven organization representing the interests of cities and towns in the state. Through their collective efforts, League member cities and towns better serve their residents and improve quality of life.

For more than 100 years, the League has been one voice for cities and towns working for a better North Carolina.