



**NYAOT**  
Celebrating America's 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday

New York Association of Towns' Legislative Conference  
Local Voices, State Impact  
September 22-23<sup>rd</sup>  
Tentative Agenda

Tuesday, September 22

| <b>Time</b>     | <b>Topic</b>  | <b>Speaker</b> |
|-----------------|---|----------------|
| 10:30 am        | Registration opens  |                |
| 11am-11:40      | Women's Leadership Caucus discussion<br>Rural Communities Council discussion  |                |
| 11:45 – 12:30pm | Buffet Lunch  |                |
| 12:30pm-1       | <b>Conference Welcome and Opening Comments</b>  |                |
| 1-2:10pm        | <b>Plenary (70 Mins)</b><br>New York State Legislative Landscape: An Update from State Legislators  |                |
| 2:10-2:30       | Coffee Break  |                |
| 2:30-3:40       | <b>3 Concurrent Panels (70 mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Town Workforce Development: Staffing, Skills, and State Support</li><li>• Employee Benefits, Local Budgets, and State Policy: Addressing Rising Health Insurance Costs</li><li>• State Housing Policy: Local Impacts and Town Perspectives</li></ul> |                |

|           |   |  |
|-----------|---|--|
| 3:45-4:55 | <b>3 Concurrent Sessions (70 Mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the Money and the Mandate: How Albany Works</li> <li>• 2026 Case Law Updates</li> <li>• Building Effective Intergovernmental Relationships</li> </ul> |  |
| 5pm-6pm   | Reception   |  |

| Day 2: September 23 |  |  |
|---------------------|--|--|
| 8am-9am             | Breakfast  |  |
| 9am-9:30            | Opening Comments and NYAOT Update  |  |
| 9:30am-10:40am      | <b>Plenary (70 mins)</b><br>From Local Government to State Representative  |  |
| 10:40-11am          | Coffee Break   |  |
| 11am-12:10          | <b>3 Concurrent Sessions (70 mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water Infrastructure Policy for Towns: Funding, Mandates, and Legislative Priorities</li> <li>• The Future of EMS: State Policy, Local Costs, and Town Responsibilities</li> <li>• Open</li> </ul> |  |
| 12:15-1:30          | Lunch  |  |
| 1:30-2:40           | <b>3 Concurrent Sessions (70 mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective Advocacy and Working with Your Representatives</li> <li>• Growing the Local Economy: Partnerships, Tools, and Strategies for Towns</li> <li>• Open</li> </ul>                            |  |
| 2:45pm-4pm          | Meeting on NYAOT Legislative Priorities for 2027   |  |

## **Class Descriptions**

**11-11:30am**

### **Women's Leadership Caucus**

The Women's Leadership Caucus is an initiative of the NYAOT dedicated to connecting, supporting, and advancing women serving in town government across New York State. Its mission is to facilitate connection, mentorship, and advancement for women in town government, in positions like supervisors, clerks, board members, department heads, historians, and administrators, and to help shape future programming and policy engagement for NYAOT's 933 member towns.

### **Rural Communities Council**

Rural towns face a distinct set of pressures, and the Rural Communities Council is a forum to compare notes, share what's working, and tackle the challenges that look different when you're governing a small town.

**Plenary: 1pm-2:10**

### **New York State Legislative Landscape: An Update from State Legislators (Plenary)**

State legislators join us to look back on the 2026 session and ahead to what's coming next. Panelists will walk through the bills, budget decisions, and policy debates that mattered most for towns this year, what passed, what stalled, and what it means for local officials heading into the fall and the 2027 session. They'll share what they're hearing from their own districts, where town priorities gained traction in Albany, and which issues are likely to return when lawmakers reconvene in January. Expect a candid conversation about the wins, the missed opportunities, and where towns have the most leverage to shape what comes next.

**Concurrent Classes: 2:30-3:40pm**

### **Town Workforce: Staffing, Skills, and State Support**

Workforce policy is shaped as much in Albany as it is on the ground, and the decisions legislators make about apprenticeships, training funds, prevailing wage, childcare, and education pipelines all land squarely on towns trying to grow their local economies. This panel brings together state legislators and workforce development leaders to discuss the bills and budget items driving workforce policy in New York, what passed this session, what's still in play, and what towns should be watching heading into 2027. Panelists will talk through how recent state investments are reaching (or not reaching) municipalities, where the gaps remain between state programs and local needs, and how town officials can weigh in as workforce legislation takes shape. Expect a practical conversation about how state policy translates into real opportunities for town employers, residents, and the next generation of the local workforce.

### **Employee Benefits, Local Budgets, and State Policy: Addressing Rising Health Insurance Costs**

Health insurance is one of the fastest growing lines in nearly every town budget, and the pressure isn't letting up. Double-digit renewal quotes, rising prescription drug costs, and federal policy shifts are all landing on town boards at the same time, often with little room

to absorb them under the property tax cap. This panel brings together benefits experts, municipal officials, and policy voices to walk through what's driving the increases and what towns can actually do about them. Panelists will discuss the tradeoffs between NYSHIP, municipal cooperatives, and self-insured pools, share cost-containment strategies that have worked for other towns, and talk candidly about how to navigate collective bargaining when benefits are on the table.

### **Housing Policy and the Pressure on Towns**

Housing has become one of the most contested policy fights in Albany, and towns are squarely in the middle of it. From the Governor's push for statewide housing targets to ongoing debates over ADU legislation, zoning preemption, and transit-oriented development mandates, state policymakers are increasingly looking at local land use as the lever to address New York's housing shortage. For town officials, that raises hard questions about the balance between state goals and local control, and about what towns can actually do to meet the moment on their own terms. This panel brings together housing policy experts to walk through where housing legislation stands heading into the 2027 session, what proposals are likely to return, and how towns can shape the conversation rather than simply react to it. Panelists will discuss the practical implications of recent and pending state action, the funding and incentive programs available to towns that want to expand housing supply, and how local officials can make the case for approaches that work in their communities.

### **3:45-4:55 Concurrent Sessions**

#### **Following the Money and the Mandate: How Albany Works**

Every decision in Albany eventually lands in your town, in your budget, your workload, or your residents' tax bills. This session traces how state government actually works: how the budget gets built, how a bill becomes law, and why some mandates come with funding and others don't. You'll leave knowing not just how Albany works, but how to work with it.

#### **2026 Case Law Updates**

This session breaks down the past year's most significant rulings affecting New York local governments, from land use and zoning to FOIL and Open Meetings Law, assessment challenges, employment, and municipal liability. We'll skip the legalese and focus on what each decision means in practice: where you may need to adjust how your town operates, and where the courts have given you firmer ground to stand on

#### **Building Effective Intergovernmental Relationships**

No town operates alone. The work increasingly runs through your relationships with the county, neighboring municipalities, school districts, and state agencies — on everything from shared services and emergency response to roads, water, and planning. This session focuses on how to build and sustain those partnerships: finding common ground across governments with different priorities, structuring agreements that hold up, and keeping lines of communication open before a crisis forces the conversation. We'll look at what makes intergovernmental cooperation actually work, and how strong relationships can stretch limited local resources further than any town could on its own.

## Day 2

### **Plenary: 9:30-10:40am**

#### **From Local Government to State Representative (Plenary)**

Many state legislators got their start at the local government level - learning to read a budget, hold a public hearing, and build a coalition long before they ran for Albany. But the jump from local to state office is a real shift in scale, pace, and political culture. This panel brings together current state representatives who made that leap to discuss what local government taught them, what they had to unlearn, and how their early work still shapes the way they legislate today.

### **11-12:20am Concurrent Sessions**

#### **The Future of EMS: State Policy, Local Costs, and Town Responsibilities**

Emergency medical services are in a moment of real strain across New York. Call volumes are up, volunteer rosters are thinning, and towns that once relied on a local squad showing up without a line item in the budget are finding that model harder to sustain every year. At the same time, EMS isn't classified as an essential service under state law, which leaves towns navigating a patchwork of funding, mutual aid agreements, and regional arrangements to make sure someone answers the call. This panel brings together EMS leaders, town officials, and state policy voices for a broad conversation about where things stand and what towns can actually do about it. Panelists will discuss the push to designate EMS as an essential service and what that would mean for local budgets, the recruitment and retention challenges facing volunteer squads, and the regional and shared-service models some communities are turning to as a path forward.

#### **Water Infrastructure Policy for Towns: Funding, Mandates, and Legislative Priorities**

Towns across New York are staring down aging water and sewer systems, rising construction costs, and federal and state mandates that don't come with enough funding attached. For years, local officials have pointed to CHIPS as proof that a dedicated, formula-based funding stream can make a real difference for town infrastructure—and have asked why water and sewer don't have the same. The Safe Water Action Program (SWAP) is designed to fill that gap: a dedicated fund modeled on CHIPS that would give towns reliable, predictable resources to invest in the pipes, plants, and systems their residents depend on. This panel brings together advocates, state officials, and town leaders to discuss where SWAP stands, what it would mean for town budgets if fully funded, and how local officials can make the case for water infrastructure investment alongside the other pressures on Albany. Panelists will also share practical guidance on navigating existing funding

### **Concurrent Classes 1:30pm -2:40pm**

#### **Growing the Local Economy: Partnerships, Tools, and Strategies for Towns**

Economic development does not happen in a vacuum. For many towns, the key to supporting local growth is knowing how to build the right partnerships. This session will examine how towns can work with counties, neighboring municipalities, regional councils, IDAs, chambers of commerce, and state agencies to address workforce, tourism, infrastructure, and community development needs.

### **Effective Advocacy and Working with Your Representatives**

Town officials have a story to tell in Albany and Washington, but telling it well is a skill. The towns that consistently get heard are the ones that build relationships with their state and federal representatives long before they need something, know how to frame a local issue in terms a legislator can act on, and show up at the right moments with the right ask. This panel brings together experienced local advocates to walk through what effective advocacy actually looks like from a town official's perspective. Panelists will discuss how to build lasting relationships with your representatives and their staff, when a phone call beats an email and when it's the other way around, how to make the case for a town priority in a crowded legislative environment, and how to work with statewide associations to amplify your voice.

### **2:45-4pm: Vote on NYAOT's Legislative Priorities**

In this meeting, delegates will vote on the issues that will define NYAOT's 2027 Legislative Priorities, the agenda that guides the Association's advocacy in the year ahead. Your participation determines which town concerns rise to the top when lawmakers reconvene in January.