



## Delaware League of Local Governments responds to Home Rule Challenges

On behalf of Delaware’s three counties and fifty-seven chartered municipalities, we are writing to express our support for the principle of home rule in local zoning decisions. Something we feel is under attack based on recent legislative actions and bills introduced during the 153<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly.

Local governments have long served as the most responsive and knowledgeable authorities when it comes to land use and community development. Preserving local control is essential to ensure that zoning decisions reflect the unique needs, values, and priorities of the residents they directly affect.

Zoning is not simply a bureaucratic process — it is a key tool that shapes how our communities and neighborhoods grow, how traffic flows, where businesses operate, and how housing is developed. Local leaders and planning boards are far better positioned than state or federal entities to assess the on-the-ground realities of infrastructure capacity, environmental impact, and community character. They also provide opportunities whereby residents can voice their concerns and contribute to the decision-making process in a meaningful way.

While broader infrastructure, housing, and economic issues may require state-level coordination, overriding local zoning authority risks undermining democratic participation, weakening community trust, and encouraging one-size-fits-all solutions that will not work in diverse local contexts.

***Effective governance relies on subsidiarity – the idea that decisions should be made at the most immediate or local level consistent with their resolution. Home rule honors that principle.***

As our communities’ face pressure to accommodate growth, improve housing access, and preserve environmental and historical resources, local control remains essential. Empowering localities through home rule enables thoughtful, balanced development that respects both individual property rights and the collective good.

We urge you to protect and confirm the authority of municipalities in zoning and land-use decisions. Strong local governance is a cornerstone of accountable, transparent, and effective democracy.

**Nick Smith**

*President, Delaware League  
Mayor, Town of Clayton*

**Bill West**

*Vice President, Delaware League  
Mayor, Town of Georgetown*

**Ken Branner**

*Mayor, Town of Middletown*

**Robin Christiansen**

*Mayor, City of Dover*

**Ron Belinko**

*Mayor, Town of Millville*

**Jeff Hall**

*Kent County Levy Court*

**Jason James**

*Vice Mayor, City of Milford*

**Ron Calef**

*Mayor, Town of Bethany Beach*

**Paul Bauer**

*Commissioner, Town of Dewey Beach*

**Doug Hudson**

*Sussex County Council President*

**Dr. Corrine Upshur**

*Vice Mayor, Town of Smyrna*