

# **Bravo Zulu, MML**

*Definition: Bravo Zulu – a naval signal conveyed by flag hoist or voice radio meaning “well done”.*

## **The State of the League Report 2000-2001**

by Scott A. Hancock, Executive Director

I have taken the liberty of borrowing the phrase “Bravo Zulu” from the United States Navy this year as a way of congratulating the members and staff of MML for superb work during the past year. 2000-2001 was truly a remarkable year for your association leaving the state of the League better than ever!

### **Education Advocacy and Training**

MML completed its multi-year book publication and education project this year with what I believe was the best phase of the overall project – the actual distribution and marketing of *Maryland’s 157, The Incorporation Cities and Towns*. As reported in 1998, the MML Board approved the funding for the publication of a one-of-a-kind book about Maryland municipalities. The purpose of the book, in addition to being MML’s millennium project, was to tell the story of Maryland’s 157 municipalities in an effort to educate Marylanders about the most effective form of government in the State. After two years of information gathering and editing, the book was finally unveiled to the MML membership in June of 2000 and distributed to every public and school library in Maryland during the past year.

I am pleased to report that the project is now complete thanks to the hard work of each and every MML chapter across the state. Mayors and council members hand delivered copies of the book to excited and appreciative school principals and media specialists all year long. Interest in the book was so great that MML negotiated a business arrangement with Barnes and Noble Booksellers in Maryland to stock our book. Sales have been brisk and recipients have been awed by the content and quality of this publication.

MML’s 2000-2001 president, Glenn Steckman from Ocean City, made discussion about the book his passion during his statewide travels this year. In addition to free distribution of copies of the book to schools and libraries across Maryland, copies were also given to each state legislator. President Steckman hand delivered copies of the book to each Maryland congressional representative, to county councils in those Maryland counties without any municipal presence, and even to the Roman Catholic Cardinal of the Baltimore Archdiocese, William Keeler. President Steckman’s advocacy of the book

and MML also landed him a holiday guest appearance on a Maryland Public Television weekly news program in December. Surely no MML project during our 65-year history has brought MML more credibility and positive exposure than our book.

### **Bravo Zulu, MML.**

Though distribution of the book was the largest component of MML's 2000-2001 education and training effort, it was not the only project undertaken in this MML action area. The 2001 convention in Ocean City offered participants 21 opportunities to learn more about municipal governance techniques and many of the annual convention workshops qualified attendees for credits from the well-respected Academy for Excellence in Local Governance. Interest was so keen in the Academy during the past two years that advisors have established a second tier of training opportunities for those who have already completed the required course of study for their certificate.

The 2001 convention also held the distinction of being the largest MML convention ever with 120 municipalities represented and a total attendance of 1,331 registrants. In addition to the annual convention and fall conference training opportunities, MML staff conducted newly elected officials workshops in several cities and towns across the state including Cumberland, Cambridge and Denton. Several special training sessions were held this past year on the topic of the Maryland Public Information Act. The seminars were held for the purpose of educating municipal leaders on the requirements of the law to assure uniform compliance statewide.

One of our most innovative education projects during the past year was the 2001 Municipal Government Works program, which took a multifaceted approach to celebrating municipal government in Maryland. The Communications Committee, chaired by Seat Pleasant Council Member Bettie Jeter, organized and produced an innovative essay contest involving fourth grade public elementary school children who were asked to address the question of what they would do if they were the elected mayor of a Maryland city or town. Over 1,600 entries from every corner of the state were received and Governor Glendening publicly recognized the eight winners during the annual Municipal Government Week proclamation ceremony in Annapolis in late April. The contest winners were also present at the first annual Municipal Night at the Ball Park in Prince George's Stadium in Bowie to receive their savings bond prizes for the winning essays. Seeing so many municipal officials and the smiling faces of the fourth grade essay winners left a lasting impression on all of us present.

**Bravo Zulu, Communications Chair Bettie Jeter and Convention Planning Committee Chair Nancy Howard and their entire committees!**

## **Board of Directors**

A very active and effective Board of Directors officially began the year in September with a highly acclaimed workshop/retreat in Ocean City, home of President Glenn Steckman. The annual Board gathering set the stage for a comprehensive survey of the MML membership to measure satisfaction with MML programs and services. Ad hoc committees of the MML Board were formed to coordinate reviews of current office space requirements, League policies, and the existing strategic plan in preparation for a new focus on MML's future. Next year's Board has been charged with the responsibility for interpreting the member responses from the survey instrument and the task of developing a "Blueprint for the Future" for MML over the next three to five years.

In addition to chairing six regular Board meetings and his previously mentioned MML ambassador role promoting the MML book, President Steckman announced his intention to seek a seat on the National League of Cities Board of Directors in October. Thanks to the hard work of many MML members, our association once again has a member on the national Board.

**Bravo Zulu, President Steckman and the entire Board of Directors!**

## **Legislative Advocacy**

Last fall, MML regretfully accepted the resignation of Governmental Relations Director Teresa Milio Birge. The fall months of 2000 were spent seeking a replacement for Teresa before the start of the 2001 General Assembly session. The search produced an experienced public relations professional, Candace L. Donoho, who officially began working on the MML team November 1. Candace was introduced to the membership during a very successful fall conference in Hagerstown in October.

The 2001 General Assembly session was another highly successful one for MML. For the fourth consecutive year, MML saw all its pursued legislative priorities become law after successfully passing both houses of the legislature and receiving the Governor's signature. For the first time in recent memory, **not one** bill passed the Maryland General Assembly in 2001 over the objection of MML. One of the League's member-endorsed legislative priorities took an administrative track in lieu of the legislative process and saw action by the Governor, which was announced at the annual inaugural dinner during the June convention. The Governor's edict effectively provided MML with the remedy it had originally sought on the topic of water and sewer master plans.

The overall MML legislative advocacy effort received a tremendous boost in February when 63 Maryland mayors arrived in Annapolis for the annual Maryland Mayors Association conference. Having so many municipal leaders sporting their green "MAYOR" ribbons certainly got the attention of many Maryland legislators.

One of the most exciting developments of our legislative advocacy action area this year was the further refinement to the MML legislative advocacy page on the League's web site. Visitors interested in tracking a particular bill could access all the up-to-date information on that legislation through the MML home page. MML received major kudos from members for this new, expanded service. Additional refinements and options are being planned for the 2002 General Assembly session. Be sure to check us out at [www.mdmunicipal.org](http://www.mdmunicipal.org).

**Bravo Zulu, Legislative Chair David Carey and the entire Legislative Committee!**

Thanks to the tremendous work of MML members, your association continues to grow and prosper. Our credibility among our colleagues throughout the state, and even nationally, is very strong. We have greater opportunities for input and influence into state and federal decisions affecting the lives of municipal residents than ever before. The coming year promises to be a challenging one for your association as together we plan a blueprint for the future of MML. This effort will require much work and continued dedication to MML by its hardworking members and staff. But, together we will accomplish this task.

**Bravo Zulu, MML for a highly successful year!!**