

A WORD TO NEW MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

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Your election in June 2001 as a municipal official in the State of Mississippi is significant in a number of ways. You are now one of some two thousand citizens in whom Mississippians have placed their trust and confidence to govern their municipalities for the next four years. You have been vested for four years by the electorate with the authority and responsibility to make a positive impact upon your municipality. You number among the thousands of individuals in our nation who selflessly strive to provide grassroots government at its best.

The weeks that followed your election were a time for celebration of your victory. Now that you have taken office, you need to take time to do some soul-searching.

What was your motivation to seek public office? What are your goals and aspirations for your municipality for the next four years? How do you plan to become familiar with the multitude of areas in which your municipality is involved and with the services your municipality provides? How do you plan to keep abreast of the state laws under which your municipality must operate? Questions of this sort must be considered and answered.

This book is designed to introduce you to your duties and responsibilities and to get you thinking about the future of your municipality and your role as part of the governing authority. The educational programs coordinated by the Center for Governmental Training & Technology (CGT) in the Mississippi State University Extension Service in cooperation with the major agencies of state government and the Mississippi Municipal League (MML) are designed to keep you current with the law and practice of municipal government. Several programs will be held throughout the year.

No book can set your goals or determine your aspirations for your municipality. No book can map all the roads you must travel to reach your goals. No book can tell you everything you need to know. This book can, however, help you start taking stock of a number of things which every municipal official must know if they are going to be successful in helping lead the municipality farther than it has ever gone.

The chapters which follow outline the essentials of municipal government in Mississippi, from its historical and constitutional development to measuring governmental performance. The appendices of this book provide supplementary information about various aspects of municipal government and contain information about three organizations important to municipality government – the Mississippi Municipal League, the Mississippi Municipal Service Company, and the CGT.

I hope that this book can help direct your energy and initiative toward accomplishment of the goals you have for your municipality. If so, the citizens of your municipality will be the beneficiaries.