

THE PROGRESS REPORT

A Newsletter of Arkansas Black Mayors Association

The Arkansas Black Mayors Association, established in 1972, is a non-profit, charitable, and educational organization.

FEBRUARY 2025



Leadership Spotlight:

Mayor Melisa Logan of Blytheville, Arkansas

Blytheville Mayor Melisa Logan recently represented her city on the global stage at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, as part of a delegation from the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI). At the climate conference, Mayor Logan joined other leaders in discussing strategies

for climate resilience and disaster relief, emphasizing the importance of sustainable policies for riverfront communities like Blytheville. Her participation highlights her commitment to addressing environmental challenges that directly impact her city and the broader Mississippi Delta region.

In addition to her climate advocacy, Mayor Logan continues to drive progress at home. She was recently selected for the 2025 Delta Leadership Institute (DLI) Executive Academy, a program by the Delta Regional Authority that equips leaders with skills to tackle economic challenges. As the first female and only the second African American mayor of Blytheville, she is focused on strengthening infrastructure, workforce development, and public safety. A decorated Army veteran, entrepreneur, and educator, Mayor Logan brings a wealth of experience to her leadership, ensuring that Blytheville remains resilient and forward-thinking for future generations.

From Mayor to State Representative

The Arkansas Black Mayors Association (ABMA) is proud to congratulate former Hughes Mayor **Lincoln Barnett** on his successful election to the Arkansas State Legislature. A former member of ABMA, Rep. Barnett's dedication to public service has made a lasting impact on his community. As mayor of Hughes, Arkansas, he championed initiatives focused on economic development, infrastructure improvement, and community wellness, earning the respect and trust of residents and fellow leaders.

His leadership demonstrated a commitment to improving the lives of those in his community, and now, as a state representative, he is poised to continue his work at the state level. Rep. Barnett's election to the Arkansas State Legislature is a significant achievement, not only for him but for the entire community of Hughes and beyond. With a strong foundation in local government and a deep understanding of the challenges facing communities in Arkansas, Rep. Barnett is well equipped to advocate for the needs of his constituents.

ABMA congratulates him on this remarkable achievement and looks forward to seeing the continued positive impact he will have on the state of Arkansas.



Welcome to the Progress Report!

As we begin a new year of advocacy and collaboration, we're excited to share inspiring stories of resilience, leadership, and progress from our network of African American mayors. This edition highlights powerful examples of mayors taking action to create meaningful change in their communities, along with new training programs, historic milestones, and efforts to uplift communities across the state. We remain committed to providing vital resources to marginalized communities and stand "United for Progress."

Stay tuned for more updates.



Newly Elected Member Mayor Vivian Flowers

The Arkansas Black Mayors Association (ABMA) is thrilled to welcome Mayor Vivian Flowers of Pine Bluff as its newest member. Sworn in on January 1, 2025, Mayor Flowers brings a wealth

of experience and a dynamic vision to her role. A fifth-generation Arkansan and Pine Bluff native, she has dedicated over three decades to public service, including five terms in the Arkansas House of Representatives. Her top priorities include investing in youth, bolstering economic development, and enhancing public safety. ABMA looks forward to collaborating with Mayor Flowers to foster growth and prosperity in Pine Bluff and beyond.

Breaking Barriers: Leading Hughes into a New Era

A historic moment for Hughes, Arkansas, as **Shelby C. Pulliam** is sworn in as the city's first female mayor and the 20th person to hold the position! With 14 years of dedicated service to the city in roles including City Clerk, HR Director, and Administrative Office Manager, Mayor Pulliam brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to her community. Her swearing-in ceremony, officiated by St. Francis County Judge Craig Jones, marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for Hughes. As a leader who has consistently demonstrated passion and dedication, Mayor Pulliam is poised to lead with vision and heart. Her journey is a powerful reminder that hard work and perseverance can break barriers and inspire others. Let's all join in congratulating her and supporting her as she embarks on this historic and inspiring journey. Hughes is in great hands!



Community Impact Stories

The Arkansas Black Mayors Association (ABMA) has been awarded a \$250,000 Urban and Community Forestry grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop an urban forestry plan for disadvantaged communities in Arkansas. This grant, part of a nationwide effort to enhance urban forestry and community resilience, will support ABMA's initiatives to expand tree canopy coverage, reduce urban heat islands, raise public awareness of the

benefits of urban trees, and mitigate stormwater flooding in underserved communities. Funding will be used to engage the public in urban forestry efforts, conduct tree inventories, collect and analyze tree data, develop and utilize public-facing tree maps and create a comprehensive urban forestry plan. ABMA is excited about this opportunity to enhance green spaces, improve environmental resilience, and support the health and well-being of communities across Arkansas.

Revitalizing Helena-West Helena Through Infrastructure and Healthcare



Under the leadership of **Mayor Christopher Franklin**, Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, is experiencing significant advancements in infrastructure and public services. The city has secured over \$25 million in funding for water and wastewater projects, aiming to modernize its aging water system and ensure reliable access for residents. This investment addresses longstanding issues and demonstrates a commitment to the community's well-being. These

infrastructure improvements will provide cleaner, safer water for homes and businesses. This will lay the foundation for future economic and residential growth. In addition to water system improvements, the city has enhanced its sanitation services with the acquisition of three new sanitation trucks, improving waste management efficiency and cleanliness. This upgrade ensures better citywide service and a cleaner environment for residents. Furthermore, the Helena-West Helena City Council unanimously approved the sale of the Helena Regional Medical Center to Progressive Health of Oxford, Mississippi. This strategic move is expected to revitalize the hospital, expand healthcare services and stimulate economic growth in the region. Mayor Franklin's leadership continues to drive progress, reinforcing his vision for a stronger healthier, and more prosperous Helena-West Helena.

Our Watershed Planning Phase Completed; One Step Closer to Flood Reduction

We are thrilled to share the incredible progress we have made in our watershed planning initiative, which spans 14 projects, including The Big 5: Pine Bluff, West Helena, Camden, and the Forrest City/Haynes/Marianna region. These communities are central to our mission, and we are committed to sustainable water infrastructure improvements.

Designed to correct flooding issues, this effort ensures residents and businesses are better protected. With the planning phase complete, we are advancing into design, backed by \$10 million in funding. Engineers will now develop specific recommendations addressing priorities identified through community input. Community engagement has been vital. **Through statewide workshops, passionate residents shared their concerns and vision for a more sustainable future. Their voices have driven this initiative forward.**

A special thanks to our dedicated mayors for mobilizing their communities and ensuring widespread participation. Their leadership is paving the way for equitable, lasting water solutions. We look forward to the impact ahead.



A Trailblazer in Black History and Community Progress

As we celebrate Black History Month, we honor **Mayor Larry S. Bryant**, whose leadership has shaped Forrest City, Arkansas for decades. Elected in 1998 as the city's first African American mayor, Bryant's 18 years in office reflect his resilience, progress, and commitment to unity. His journey is deeply tied to racial progress in Arkansas. As a student, he helped integrate Sam Smith Jr. High School, a pivotal step toward educational equity. A Vietnam veteran and former NAACP leader, his life's work embodies justice and empowerment.

Under his leadership, Forrest City has prioritized revitalization, economic investment, and infrastructure improvements. His vision of "One Forrest City" ensures future generations benefit from the foundations he has laid.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Quarterly MEETING INVITATION

MAR **21** 2025
 AT **10** AM

Steel Technology ROOM
ANC Center for Allied Technology
2501 S Division St
Blytheville, AR 72315

Meeting Hosts: Dr. Melisa Logan, Mayor and Dr. Chris Hiegle, Arkansas Northeastern College President

Campus Tour
9:00 am

MORE INFO
Arkansas Black Mayors Association
300 Spring Suite 1015
Little Rock, AR 72201
501-913-2136

arblackmayors.com