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**Women From Across the State Gather for the  
Inaugural Conference of Women Leading Government, Alabama Chapter**

**Pelham, AL...**Karen Pinkos, City Manager in El Cerrito, California and ICMA President, was joined by a slate of Alabama local government executives as the newly formed state chapter of Women Leading Government (WLG) held its Inaugural Conference on Monday, February 25 at the Pelham Civic Complex & Ice Arena. Over 140 women represented more than 20 municipalities and counties from across the state to network and take advantage of educational opportunities.

Chapter organizer, Gretchen DiFante, Pelham City Manager, visited with Governor Kay Ivey last week in Montgomery and shared the mission and plans for the state chapter. In a letter Governor Ivey asked to be read at the conference, she comments, “Many of you did not plan for a career in local government. In fact, like me, your path was not predetermined or even perhaps likely.” The Governor goes on to describe growing up in Camden, Alabama at a time and place where little girls didn’t dream of becoming governor one day. “Governor Ivey was an inspiration to me as I made the decision to leave New York State after 28 years and come back home to Alabama to serve as its only female city manager,” said DiFante. “When Cheryl Kidd (Council Administrator for the City of Birmingham) and I began researching the national organization and spoke to chapter presidents in Arizona, Colorado, Arkansas, California and Texas, they all encouraged us to simply start a conversation and people would show up hungry to talk about how women could work together and support one another to make an even greater impact in their communities. The feedback has been encouraging,” adds DiFante.

“Every other day, I get an email, phone call or text message from a woman in the state thanking us for putting the conference together and providing the opportunity for collaboration.”

The conference theme, “Leading with Character and Confidence,” follows WLG’s mission of encouraging women to pursue careers in local government and through networking and education, help prepare women for success in the unique communities across our state.

The Honorable Sybil Cleveland, Municipal Judge in Huntsville, Michelle Rodrigues, Ph.D., Director of Human Resources, Jefferson County and Dr. Monique Witherspoon, Assistant Professor, Director, M.S.E. Leadership, Samford University will join Pinkos, DiFante and Kidd as conference speakers.

Alabama becomes the twelfth state to welcome a Women Leading Government Chapter. WLG is a partner organization to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) whose 10,000 members seek to share a commitment to local government excellence and dedication to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Alabama WLG is a partner organization to The Alabama City/County Management Association (ACCMA) which also serves as a conference sponsor.