



2016 **LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

League of Women Voters®
of New York State



League of Women Voters® of New York State
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The League of Women Voters of New York State

The League of Women Voters of New York State (LWVNYS) is a unique, multi-issue, nonpartisan, political organization. It encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through advocacy and education. We can take action under all of our positions, as outlined in LWVNYS Impact on Issues (<http://lwvny.org/advocacy/impact/index.html>). We also often take action under national positions identified in the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) Impact on Issues (<http://lwv.org/content/impact-issues>). This booklet highlights some of the key issues that we anticipate taking significant action on in the 2016 Legislative Session.

Take Action! It's Easy!

To take action on the issues listed in the brochure or any other issue, contact your elected officials and make your voice heard! To find your representatives, log onto the state League website at www.lwvny.org and click on Find Your Elected Official. You can contact your representatives by phone, letter or email. Your involvement can make a critical difference!

To learn more about a particular issue and/or how you can help advance our legislative agenda, you can contact LWVNYS office at 518-465-4162, email lwvny.org, or contact a member of the LWVNYS Issues Committee:

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For Information on the State Legislature and Pending Legislation

www.assembly.state.ny.us

www.nysenate.gov

<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi>
(Bill Text, Status, Summaries,
Sponsor Memos, Floor Votes)

Election Law Reform

Voter registration modernization, including same-day voter registration

The League supports paperless forms of voter registration as a means of decreasing costs and increasing accuracy of the voter rolls. Secure online voter registration should be expanded to serve all eligible citizens. The League supports Election Day registration, registering and voting on the same day, as a proven method of increasing voter participation. The League supports preregistration of 16- and 17-year-olds to ensure that their voting participation is routine before they attend college or enter the workforce.

Early in-person voting and no-excuse absentee voting

While 37 other states and the District of Columbia have some form of early voting, New York only allows voters to cast their ballots on one Election Day, except in

limited circumstances in which voters may by absentee ballot. The League supports implementing early voting in a manner that will allow comparable access to the polls for all voters. We also support a constitutional amendment to allow for no-excuse absentee voting.

Improvements to the way voters mark their ballots by better ballot design

New York State voters now use a paper ballot and optical scan voting machine system, but current ballot requirements are based on obsolete lever voting machine standards. A clear and simple-to-read ballot would make voting easier and more accurate. The League supports improvements to ballot design that would include: (1) a clear delineation between offices with a bold vertical bar between offices and a fine line between the candidates (2) a larger font with an absolute minimum size and (3) fill-in circles in black instead of gray.

Healthcare

Single-Payer

The League supports a single-payer concept, which includes equitable access and cost containment, as the best approach to implementing League positions on healthcare. Public financing using general taxes would reduce costs significantly by lowering administrative expenses and coordinating regional planning.

Other Healthcare Issues

The League intends to continue our efforts to improve access, equity and safety in healthcare. We will also monitor a number of healthcare concerns including the allocation of medical resources to underserved areas, health promotion and disease prevention, school-based health services, women's health issues, long term care, and cuts to the Tobacco Control Program.

Good Government Reform

Campaign Finance

The League continues to advocate for campaign finance reform, believing that meaningful reform of the current laws is necessary for a successful public financing system. Priorities for reform include a significant reduction of all contribution limits, special “pay-to-play” limits on contributions by lobbyists and those who do business with the state and eliminating the LLC loophole. The League believes that party housekeeping accounts should be banned or significantly reduced and that transfers of campaign contributions should not be allowed. The personal use of campaign funds by candidates should be banned and campaign fundraising during the legislative session restricted.

The League also supports a small-donor matching public finance system as a means of encouraging citizen involvement and reducing the influence of special interests in politics. We believe that there needs to be independent and robust enforcement for

candidates inside and outside of the public finance system.

Ethics

The League will continue to advocate for the effective implementation and improvements of ethics laws, including monitoring the Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) to make sure that it provides for effective and independent monitoring of state ethics. We also support changing the state constitution to provide that any state officer or local officer convicted of a felony involving the breach of public trust may be subject to forfeiture of their pension benefits.

Legislative Reform

The League believes that the state legislature should adopt better methods for discharging bills and better use of the committee process, particularly the use of conference committees during the budget process. The League also supports more equitable distribution of funds to legislators for staffing and resources.

Natural Resources

Energy and Climate Change

The League supports legislation, regulation and executive action to protect natural resources, public health, and the economy from impacts of the fossil fuel industry and favors the development of renewable energy to meet emissions goals and slow climate change. We believe that the state should support renewable energy, including relevant qualifying criteria for subsidies. The liabilities, costs and expenses associated with fossil fuel operations should be directed to the industry.

Hazardous Waste

The League supports the proper labeling and disposal of hazardous waste products and a ban on importing drilling and other “hazardous” waste from other states. We

promote actions that move New York toward a Zero Waste future. The League supports bans on the use of microbeads in consumer products.

Electric Grid

The League supports financing for and creation of an electrical grid that facilitates the distribution of renewable energy to the maximum number of people, enabling locally generated electrical power from renewable sources.

Agriculture

The League supports policies that protect food production and distribution while diverting food waste from New York’s landfills, incinerators and other waste treatment facilities.

Judicial Issues

Streamlining of the Court System

The League supports a unified state court system.

Improved Judicial Selection

The League believes judges should be chosen on the basis of merit and continues to support improvements in the judicial selection process. Candidates should be proactively encouraged to participate in

the current system of Independent Judicial Elections Qualifications Commissions.

Statewide Guidelines for Law Enforcement

The League supports the adoption of statewide guidelines for law enforcement at all levels to prevent racial and economic profiling.

Support of Adequate Indigents’ Defense Services

The League supports a consistent statewide system with oversight by an Independent Public Defense Commission to ensure indigents’ defense is more equitable and uniform throughout the state.

Alternatives to Incarceration

The League supports alternatives to incarceration for appropriate offenders. Drug and mental health courts that divert

defendants to a more rehabilitative process and ex-offender reentry programs should be monitored and improved where appropriate.

Juvenile Justice

The League supports the protection of children’s legal rights. Juvenile justice should focus on rehabilitation rather than punitive action. Children under the age of 18 should not be treated as adults in the criminal justice system.

State Finances and Education

Greater Equity in Education Financing

Past Campaign for Fiscal Equity court-ordered state aid increases should be funded irrespective of the property tax cap. The League also opposes the use of “geographic shares” as a basis for allocating either operating or capital aid and believes that the past practices of “holding harmless” school districts and apportioning incremental aid by geographic shares perpetuate inequities for both pupils and taxpayers.

Reform of the Property Tax System

The League advocates for uniform equitable assessment and property tax systems. The League supports consolidation and efficiencies that might result from reducing the number of units of government, but recognizes local control as a means of maintaining excellence in public education. The League accepts the necessity of local property taxes, while at the same time

opposing overreliance on property taxes. The League favors implementing a property tax circuit breaker based on need, with an annual cost of living adjustment (in lieu of the STAR program) to alleviate the impact of high property taxes on some households.

Opposition to the Education Investment Tax Credit

The League opposes the diversion of funds for the Education Investment Tax Credit or similar initiatives and believes that charitable deductions are a more appropriate means of encouraging philanthropy in this area. Large tax credits disproportionately reduce the tax obligations of high tax bracket taxpayers and create a two-tiered donor/beneficiary system. The non-transparency of the Education Investment Tax Credit also violates the League’s principles of open government, as the public would not know donors and recipients until eighteen months later.

Transportation

Infrastructure

The League supports measures that would help ensure that a safe transportation infrastructure is put in place throughout the state.

Public Transportation

The League believes that all New Yorkers deserve to have adequate public transportation systems in place, including in rural areas of the state. The League supports the creation of an Interagency coordinating committee on rural public transportation that will provide an outlet to address the issues facing rural communities in need of public transportation.

Women’s Issues

Fair Pay

The League supports fair pay reforms, including passage of equal-pay-for-job-titles-of-comparable-worth legislation.

Paid Family Leave and Childcare

The League supports gender neutral paid family leave to care for a sick child, spouse, or parent.

The League supports affordable, quality childcare, and compensation for childcare workers at a rate commensurate with responsibility and skill.

Domestic Violence

The League supports protections against discrimination for victims of domestic violence.

Reproductive Choice

The League supports the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices. The League believes that the federal constitutional protections of Roe v. Wade should be written into New York state law.

Social Welfare

The Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA)

The League supports GENDA in order to protect transgender New Yorkers from discrimination in housing, employment, access to credit, medical care and public accommodations as well as provide additional protections under New York’s hate crimes law.

Livable Wage

The League supports a living wage, based on our national position about meeting basic human needs. A living wage should provide sufficient income without government assistance, for food, clothing, housing, energy, transportation, health care, education, child care, and a small amount of discretionary income.

Membership

Membership is open to women and men. There are 50 local Leagues across NY State. Joining at any level automatically confers membership at every level: local, state and national. Membership enables you to support the League and receive publications from all three levels, and provides the

opportunity to be involved in local, state and national issues. Please visit www.lwvny.org and click Find a Local League to join a League in your area, or click the Join Now button to become a member of the State League.

Contact Your Elected Officials

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor

NYS Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224 • (518) 474-8390
For additional information, please visit the
Governor's Web site: www.governor.ny.gov

New York State Senate

c/o Your Senator, Room #, Albany, NY 12247
Senate Operator: (518) 455-2800
Legislative Info: (518) 455-3216
Bill Status Hotline: (518) 455-7545 / (800) 342-9860
Web site: www.nysenate.gov/

New York State Senator John J. Flanagan

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New York State Senator Jeffrey Klein

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New York State Assembly

c/o Your Assemblymember, Room #, Albany, NY 12248
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Public Info: (518) 455-4218
Bill Status Hotline: (518) 455-7545 / (800) 342-9860
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New York State Legislature Legislative Session Information

Bill Text, Status, Summaries, Sponsor Memos, Floor Votes
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