

POST-BUDGET LEGISLATIVE LOBBYING 2015

TO: Local League Presidents/Action Chairs
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Each year we ask League members to lobby their state legislators after the state budget is done, giving local League members and legislators an opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss the League's Legislative Agenda for the session. Legislative lobbying in the district office should be scheduled during the next month. These meetings will give legislators an opportunity to learn about League positions and share their ideas and agenda.

This exchange of information benefits the state League in its efforts to develop strategies that promote our legislative agenda. Our influence in Albany depends on your contact with your state Senator and Assemblyperson(s). They know you elect them! If you haven't done so already, set up an appointment to see your state Assemblyperson(s) and Senator. Seeing a staff person is fine

Information on how to set up an appointment and how to lobby is on the next page.

Talking points for each of the topics we would like you to highlight (Election Reform, Women's Equality Agenda and Education Investment Tax Credit) are attached in separate documents. These are formatted with League letterhead so that you can leave one or more with your Legislator. You do not have to cover all suggested in your meeting; cover whichever ones you are comfortable with. You can also use the 2015 Legislative Agenda brochures in your advocacy efforts and leave a copy (or several) with your legislator.

This Packet is available on the state League homepage, www.lwvny.org, Please return the attached form to the League office following your meeting, by mail, fax or email with an attachment.

You should feel free to rely on the main points in this document and the handouts for your visit, but more background information is available online on our website for your reference.

2015 TIPS FOR LOBBY VISITS

PREPARATION

1. **Making the appointment:** Contact the Legislator's district office. Ask for a ½ hour's time, but accept less if necessary, and do not overstay your welcome. Notify the Legislator of the number in your group as well as their names, if possible. Send a letter or e-mail confirming the appointment, mentioning the issues you will discuss. **If you cannot meet with the legislator, ask to meet with senior staff.**

Try to arrange for three to five League members to attend. If your League meets with several assembly members or senators, be sure to have a League member who is a constituent present. At least one person should be experienced in League. League members well versed on the issues to be lobbied should be included when possible. A new member can be included in this exciting action if accompanied by experienced League members. When more than one local League is involved, try to have representatives from as many of the constituent Leagues as possible.

2. **Assigning roles:** Each member of the lobby team should be assigned a specific role. The following are possible assignments:
 - Researching the Legislator. Someone should be prepared to brief the other members of the lobby team on the Legislator's relationship with the League and his/her voting record (if the legislator is a re-elected incumbent). What are his/her committee assignments and/or leadership positions in the Legislature? Is this Legislator a member of the League? If this legislator sponsored bills that League supported, you may want to take a moment to express League's appreciation.
 - Moderator/leader. This person should be certain that each League member introduces himself/herself. The leader must also watch the clock. Knowing ahead how much time the legislator has agreed to spend with you, the leader must allot an appropriate amount of time for each issue. It is the leader's responsibility to "pace" the visit and tactfully keep everyone (including the Legislator) on the subject. **Remember, opinions expressed should be those of the League, not of individuals.**
 - Researching the issue or issues to be discussed. Look to the materials on this subject on the league website.
 - Recording and reporting the legislator's response. The leader should not be the recorder.

NOTE: If you anticipate printing any part of the interview in a League bulletin or newspaper, the recorder is obligated to get the legislator's permission and specific conditions under which you may print.

Write a follow-up thank you after the visit. This is not only a gesture of politeness, but it also allows you to underscore some points made during the visit, answer any questions you were not sure about, or send a League publication to which you may have referred during the course of the visit.

2015 LWVNYS LOBBY REPORT FORM POST-BUDGET LOBBY VISITS

THANK YOU!

Local League: _____ League Member Name: _____

Senator: _____ Assemblymember: _____

What did the legislator say about each issue?

1. *Election Law Reform*

2. *Women's Issues*

3. *Education Investment Tax Credit*

Please return completed form to LWVNY, 62 Grand Street, Albany NY 12207
or fax 518-465-0812 or save as a pdf and attach to an email to lwny@lwny.org

by May 30, 2015



The League of Women Voters of New York State
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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

Election Law Reform

The goals of the League of Women Voters of New York State's Election Reform position include:

- Improving election processes to extend, encourage and protect voting, including paperless and Election Day registration;
- In-person early voting opportunities before Election Day for voters;
- Better ballot design to create a ballot layout that is easy for voters to read and use
- Improved polling place management/poll worker training;
- Measures to ensure the integrity of all ballots.

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. In 2013, New York moved a major step toward this goal by allowing secure online voter registration through the Department of Motor Vehicles.
- The League supports Election Day registration, registering and voting on the same day, as a proven method of increasing voter participation.
- The League supports pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds to ensure that their voting participation is routine before they attend college or enter the workforce.
- *2015-2016: A2529 Kavanagh/S0857 Carlucci, relates to voter pre-registration and education on voter pre-registration.*

Early in-person voting and no-excuse absentee voting

- While 32 other states 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 vote 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.
- *2015-2016: A.4433 Silver, no Senate sponsor, relates to early voting in NYS, referred to Assembly Election Law Committee*

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

- 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.
- The NYS Election Commissioners Association supports a simplified ballot design.
- *2015-16: A3389/Kavanagh, no Senate sponsor. "Voter-Friendly Ballot Act." In 2014, the bill was sponsored in the Senate by Senator Martin Golden(R), SD22.*



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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

Women's Issues

The League of Women Voters of New York State is a proud member of the Women's Equality Coalition and will continue to advocate for measures that advance economic and reproductive justice for all women in New York State.

The League applauds both the Senate and Assembly for passing A506 (Paulin) / S007 (Lanza), anti-human trafficking legislation earlier this session. We are pleased that the Assembly passed two other critical pieces of legislation: A.6221 (Glick) / S.4432 (Stewart-Cousins), the Reproductive Health Act; and A.3870 (Nolan) / S.3004 (Addabbo) the Paid Family Leave Act. We now call on the Senate to also pass those bills. Both the Senate and Assembly passed A6075 (Titus) / S1 (Savino), which prohibits differential pay because of sex. This is a victory for working women!

Additionally, the League will continue to advocate for the following pieces of legislation which have already passed in the Senate:

- **S.2 (Valesky)/A.5360 (Galef): *An act to amend the executive law, in relation to unlawful discriminatory practices.*** The purpose of this legislation is to break down barriers that perpetuate discrimination and inequality based on gender by extending the law against Sexual Harassment to ALL workplaces.
- **S.4 (Little)/No Assembly companion: *An act to amend the executive law, in relation to unlawful discriminatory practice because of familial status.*** This bill would prohibit employers from denying work or promotions to workers simply because of their familial status.
- **S.3 (Little)/No Assembly companion: *An act to amend the executive law, in relation to the provision of attorney's fees in cases of housing, employment or credit discrimination; to amend the executive law, in relation to the awarding of reasonable attorney's fees.*** This bill would allow for reasonable attorney's fees in employment and credit discrimination cases when sex is a basis of discrimination.
- **S.5 (Robach)/No Assembly companion: *An act to amend the real property law and the real property actions and proceedings law, in relation to prohibiting discrimination in housing based upon domestic violence status and establishing a task force to study the impact of source of income on access to housing.*** This bill would amend the Real Property Law to add a new Section 227-d, which would prohibit discrimination against domestic violence victim status in housing.
- **S.8 (Hannon)/A.4272 (Gunther): *An act to amend the executive law, in relation to reasonable accommodation.*** This bill would amend Exec. L. S 296 to clarify that employers must perform a reasonable accommodation analysis for employees with pregnancy-related conditions.



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Post Budget 2015-16 PreK-12 Education Advocacy

In this year's budget, an average of 6% was added to state aid to local school districts, for a total of approximately \$23.4 billion, up from \$21.8 billion in the prior year, dedicated to equalizing and augmenting local aid for the 2.8 million students who attend public schools in New York State (\$1.3 billion), but also providing \$300 million other categorical aid outside the "school aid runs" including a controversial \$25 million "bullet aid" item to support charter schools. Most of the aid addressed:

- the elimination of the "Gap" which was created when the fiscal crisis began in 2009 (\$600 million) and
- restoration of "Foundation Aid" to the highest need districts (\$400 million).

The League supports restoration of "Foundation Aid" as a higher priority, since our highest-need (poorer, with higher concentrations of special-needs and English as a second-language students) districts remain inadequately funded while wealthier districts tend to have higher local property values, more adequate taxing capacity, and private donations.

The League believes that public dollars should go to public education and has opposed efforts to divert that funding. **The Education Investment Tax Credit** (A.2551/S.1976/S.2003/A.3003) bills proposed by the Governor and the Legislature were NOT included in the final budget, and *we applaud the judgment of the key negotiators in the Assembly*. The schemes favor taxpayers who desire to support private and public schools of *their* choice, through a first-come, first-serve "limited window of opportunity" two week to one month process, *with no regard to geographic distribution or the target institution's need*. Depending upon which version above-named, they initially allocated either \$100 or \$150 million at a minimum to provide tax credits to individuals and corporations, reducing their tax liability by 90% (Senate) and 75% (Assembly and Governor). The League strongly opposes this budget initiative because:

- The League believes that education aid should to be allocated through a democratic and transparent legislative process.
- The League believes that these bills are inconsistent with our position in favor of progressive taxation.
- In light of the Legislature's ongoing failure to fulfill the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit's aims, the League supports the direction of taxpayer dollars primarily toward students attending public schools in high-needs school districts. Parochial and private schools would receive half of these funds, and there is no guarantee that high-needs public schools would benefit at all.