

**2018**

# 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 2018 Legislative Session.

## Take Action! It's Easy!

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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](http://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](mailto:lwvny.org), or contact a member of the LWVNYS Issues Committee:

**Dare Thompson**, President, [darethompson@gmail.com](mailto:darethompson@gmail.com)

**Sally Robinson**, VP/ Issues & Advocacy, [sally.s.robinson@gmail.com](mailto:sally.s.robinson@gmail.com)

**Carol Mellor**, Grassroots Director, [carolmellor140@gmail.com](mailto:carolmellor140@gmail.com)

**Marian Bott**, Education Finance Specialist, [sydneymab@aol.com](mailto:sydneymab@aol.com)

**Helga Schroeter**, Judicial Specialist, [helgasquith@verizon.net](mailto:helgasquith@verizon.net)

**Lois Haignere**, Pay Equity Specialist, [haigner@nycap.rr.com](mailto:haigner@nycap.rr.com)

**Barbara Thomas**, Women's Issues Specialist, [Barb.lwv@nycap.rr.com](mailto:Barb.lwv@nycap.rr.com)

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**Madeline Zevon**, Co-Chair, Health Care Committee, [madeline.zevon@gmail.com](mailto:madeline.zevon@gmail.com)

**Anne Burton**, Co-Chair, Health Care Committee, [anneburton10@gmail.com](mailto:anneburton10@gmail.com)

**Beth Radow**, Chair, Energy, Agriculture & the Environment Committee, [enradow@gmail.com](mailto:enradow@gmail.com)

**Suzanne Perry**, Co-Chair, GENDA Committee, [tillingonrye@gmail.com](mailto:tillingonrye@gmail.com)

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**Laura Ladd Bierman**, Executive Director, [Laura@lwvny.org](mailto:Laura@lwvny.org)

**Jennifer Wilson**, Legislative Director, [Jennifer@lwvny.org](mailto:Jennifer@lwvny.org)

## For Information on the State Legislature and Pending Legislation

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[www.nyassembly.gov](http://www.nyassembly.gov)

[www.nysenate.gov](http://www.nysenate.gov)

<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi>

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

## ELECTION LAW

### **Voter registration modernization, including automatic voter registration and same-day voter registration**

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The League supports automatic 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**

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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

vote by absentee ballot. The League supports implementing early voting in a manner that will allow comparable access to the polls for all voters. Electronic poll books should be utilized on Election Day so that accurate information can be accessed in real time. 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**

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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 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

The League intends to continue efforts to improve access, cost containment, equity, and safety in healthcare. In order to achieve these goals, the League supports allocation of medical resources to underserved areas, healthy living promotion, disease prevention, school-based health services, women's health issues, long-term care, and adequate financing of the tobacco control program. The League supports

a single-payer system as an acceptable method for public financing, which would lower administrative costs and promote equity, access, and quality healthcare for all. The League also supports measures for enhancing the safety of patients and staff in acute and long-term care facilities.

# GOOD GOVERNMENT REFORM

## **Campaign Finance**

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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**

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The League will continue to advocate for the effective implementation and improvement 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**

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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 resource.

# JUDICIAL ISSUES

## **Streamlining of the Court System**

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The League supports a unified state court system.

## **Improved Judicial Selection**

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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**

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

# NATURAL RESOURCES

## **Energy and Climate Change**

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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**

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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**

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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.

## **Clean Water**

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The League, since 1970, has supported the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act, and likewise supports infrastructure and other measures to prevent polluted wastewater and agricultural waste from migrating into our groundwater, rivers and streams. The League also supports funding to clean up toxic waste dumps and segregate and properly treat hazardous waste on land and remediate polluted waterways in our state.

## **Agriculture**

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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.

## **Support of Adequate Indigents’ Defense Services**

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

## **Alternatives to Incarceration**

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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**

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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**

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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**

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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**

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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.

# TRANSPORTATION

## **Infrastructure**

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

## **Public Transportation**

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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 measures to reduce the incidence and effects of domestic violence. We also support protections against discrimination for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

### 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](http://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](http://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/](http://www.nysenate.gov/)

## **New York State Senator John J. Flanagan**

Majority Leader  
Legislative Office Building, Room 330  
Albany, New York 12247 • (518) 455-2071  
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## **New York State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins**

Minority Leader  
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## **New York State Senator Jeffrey Klein**

Independent Democratic Conference Leader  
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## **New York State Assembly**

c/o Your Assemblymember, Room #, Albany, NY 12248  
Assembly Operator: (518) 455-4100  
Public Info: (518) 455-4218  
Bill Status Hotline: (518) 455-7545 / (800) 342-9860  
Web site: [www.nyassembly.gov](http://www.nyassembly.gov)

## **New York State Assemblyman Carl E. Heastie**

Speaker  
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## **New York State Assemblyman Brian M. Kolb**

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## **New York State Legislature Legislative Session Information**

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