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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

A.3379 (Kavanagh)/ S.1512 (Avella)

To: NYS Assembly Election Law Committee

Date: February 14th, 2017

SUBJECT: An act to amend the election law, in relation to enacting the voter friendly ballot act; and to repeal section 7-108 of such law relating to the form of ballots.

The League of Women Voters of New York State (the League) strongly supports this legislation to improve the ballot layout so voters will be able to read and mark their ballots more accurately and easily.

New York State voters use a paper ballot and optical scan voting machine system but the ballot requirements in New York State Election Law are based on obsolete lever voting machine standards.

In November 2010 and again in November 2012 the League conducted a statewide survey of over 1,000 voters who used the paper ballot optical scan voting machines. A significant number of voters participating in both surveys indicated they had problems using the paper ballot and wanted an improved ballot design, which would enable them to mark their ballots with greater ease and accuracy.

A ballot that is clear and simple to read makes voting easier and more accurate for voters to register their choices. The United States Election Assistance Commission (EAC) report, "Effective Designs for the Administration of Elections" cites guidelines for ballots for improved readability, usability and which would result in more accurate voting.

The Voter Friendly Ballot Act amends the current election law to conform ballot requirements to meet these guidelines, which also have been recommended by the AIGA Design for Democracy project.

The League supports the changes to New York State Election Law in this bill that achieve minimum uniform standards for all ballots used in the State and still provide flexibility for local boards of elections to achieve good ballot design.

The League of Women Voters of New York State strongly supports A.3379 (Kavanagh)/S.1512 (Avella).