

March 13, 2026

Senator Peter Harckham, Chair
NY Senate Environmental Committee

Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick, Chair
NY Assembly Environmental Committee

Re: League Environmental Priorities for the 2026 Legislative Session

Dear Senator Harckham and Assemblymember Glick:

We begin by thanking you for your service to protect and preserve New York's natural resources (air, water, soil) and our overall environment which connects them to human health, the climate emergency and ultimately the related costs. It is ever more important as federal oversight wanes.

The League of Women Voters of New York State prioritizes measures that live up to the letter and spirit of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act of 2019 (CLCPA). Thus far, this legislative session we support passage of legislation that tackles the climate emergency and compliance with the CLCPA.

Regarding the budget currently under consideration, the League supports funding (in the amount of \$560,000) pursuant to the Board of Regents' amendment of Section 100.2 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education to require instruction in climate education, the affirmative vote for which came on March 10, 2026. The League hereby appeals to you to take all steps within your authority to include in your one-house budgets the full funding for climate education contemplated in the amendment (and not leave it as an unfunded mandate). The intended funding will provide for New York State's K-12 public school students of today the very education they critically need to become the responsible leaders of tomorrow tasked with addressing the climate crisis.

The League further supports passage of the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (S1464/A1749); amending the Environmental Conservation Law relating to bottle redemption and recycling (S5684/A6543); and passage of legislation in the spirit of the Accelerate Solar for Affordable Power Act (S6570/A8758) aimed to expand access to solar energy for low-and moderate-income households. That bill seeks to incentivize solar development and ensure equitable distribution of renewable energy benefits, without requiring new state budget appropriations. For your consideration, please see the addendum to this letter which provides resource information regarding affordable solar.

Of paramount current concern is the proposed proliferation of data centers to support the escalating use of artificial intelligence (in addition to existing data center operations) which will likewise escalate the consumption of energy to enable operations and the unregulated use of water to cool the computer

hardware that facilitates the operations. The energy and water needed for these commercial operations is derived from the same finite energy supply and water resources needed by human beings and wildlife to survive. The League supports S9144/A10141 a proposed Act which “*imposes a moratorium on the issuance of permits for new data centers; requires public service commission to issue an order or orders to minimize the impact of new data centers on electricity and gas rates for residential, commercial and industrial users*” currently under consideration in your respective committees.

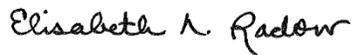
The rush to expand data centers which are likely to operate using fossil fuel, among other sources, without comprehensive environmental and economic impact assessments leaves unexplored the impact to quality of life (such as unremitting noise from operations, air, water and soil quality) regional industries such as fishing and agriculture, overall property use, property values and the ripple effects to the tax base. We urge deliberate action on the part of lawmakers to prioritize human beings and wildlife and preserve property, property value and the state’s tax base when addressing the increasing demand by corporate interests seeking to develop new data centers statewide. Passage of a moratorium represented by S9144/A10141 will enable this essential deliberation.

Once again, thank you for your service and stewardship.

Sincerely,



Erica Smitka
Executive Director



Elisabeth N. Radow
Environmental Issue Specialist*

*Elisabeth (Beth) Radow, lives in Westchester County and welcomes the opportunity to meet with you in person or on zoom to further discuss the issues raised in this letter.

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ADDENDUM

On the topic of equitable, affordable solar, the League of Women Voters offers a bit of daylight for your consideration for New York. According to an article in Inside Climate News, small scale plug-in solar (aka balcony solar) panels usable by apartment dwellers are under consideration by more than two dozen states this legislative session, including Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. “The small-scale systems are seen as a way to expand access to renewable energy, particularly for renters and apartment dwellers, but first require legislative approval.” *New England Lawmakers Weigh Plug-in Solar as Europe’s Model Spreads - Inside Climate News*, by Ryan Krugman, February 18, 2026. See also *Balcony Solar Lurches Forward in the US- New York Times*, by Claire Brown, August 25, 2025. While we do not have firsthand experience regarding these units, we offer them as a topic to explore as an accessible, affordable energy source that appears to be working elsewhere.