

PRE-BUDGET LEGISLATIVE PACKET 2026

TO: Local League Presidents/Action Chairs
FROM: Sally Robinson, VP Issues and Advocacy, sally.s.robinson@gmail.com
Erica Smitka, Executive Director, erica@lwvny.org

This year we are again providing members with key information on issues of interest to us in the 2026-2027 state budget and asking you to lobby your legislators on these issues. Enclosed please find the annual pre-budget legislative packet to assist with your lobby visits with your state Senators and Assembly Members. Pre-budget legislative lobbying in legislators' district offices should be **during March**. This year our legislative packet covers funding for elections, protecting sensitive locations from civil immigration enforcement, ensuring constitutional accountability, stopping deception and AI disinformation, funding climate education, education financing, and mitigating lost federal funding for healthcare.

For more information, all of our full testimony on these issues has been uploaded onto the website here: <https://lwvny.org/new-york-state-legislative-tracking/>

Though we are continuing to work on our other priority issues related to good government, criminal justice reform, rural issues, healthcare, women's issues, and other environmental issues, we are not specifically acting on these with relation to the state budget. Should these issues be advanced before the April 1st budget deadline, we will issue action alerts to all members through our social media channels and email. Members should always feel free to mention any advocacy issue in the League's 2026 Legislative Agenda during their advocacy visits, but we do ask that you focus your conversations on the issues included in this packet. You may bring copies of the state League's Legislative Agenda to leave with the legislator or staff to inform them of all the issues on which the League is currently active. We expect that our legislative priorities not directly impacted by the budget will be the primary focus of our post-budget lobbying.

ELECTIONS AND GOOD GOVERNMENT

Fund election administration—especially county Boards of Elections

- Maintain Executive Budget funding for the State Board of Elections: poll worker/commissioner training, election security and enforcement, accessible vote-by-mail expansion, the Flateau Voting & Elections Database, and continued implementation of Online Voter Registration and Automatic Voter Registration.
- Increased misinformation, litigation pressure, and potential reductions in federal cybersecurity support mean NY must invest more at the state/local level ahead of the 2026 midterm cycle.
- **Budget request:** Create an annual dedicated **\$35 million** Aid-to-Localities stream for county boards of elections.
- Note: Appreciate the \$5M allocation for absentee/early vote-by-mail postage, but it does not cover broader operational needs.
- Support Democracy During Detention Act (S440/A2121) requiring boards of elections and jail administration to create a facility voter access plan ensuring at least one secure voting method (absentee, early vote-by-mail, or poll site). **Budget request: \$500,000** direct funding to local boards of elections to implement.

Fund 2030 Census Preparation

- **Budget request:** \$15M to support statewide census planning
- Creation of a State Census Assistance Office within the Department of State and the establishment of a New York Counts Commission to guide and coordinate state and local efforts.
- Early investment saves representation for New Yorkers (the more accurate our count, the more accurate our representation will be in Congress) and federal funding.

Fund the Public Campaign Finance Board

- Strongly support maintaining **\$116.1M** for the Public Campaign Finance Board to keep the small-donor matching program viable. NY's high contribution limits plus post-Citizens United outside spending means big money can drown out everyday New Yorkers making the program essential.

Governor's Budget Article VII: Public Protection and General Government

Part L - Protect "sensitive locations" from civil immigration enforcement

- We support Part L, which would bar civil immigration enforcement actions at designated sensitive locations without a valid federal judicial warrant.
- Covered sensitive locations include schools/colleges, childcare & youth service facilities, health care facilities, and houses of worship.
- We urge the Legislature to include or strengthen protections for polling places against external interference, especially civil immigration enforcement.
- There is no justification for ICE presence at or near poll sites and even the perception of it would be harmful.

Part M - New York State Bivens Act (constitutional accountability)

- We support a revised New York State Bivens Act to ensure meaningful recourse when constitutional rights are violated especially given recent federal actions and accountability gaps.
- Supreme Court decisions have narrowed federal remedies for individuals seeking recourse after their rights have been violated, creating a gap New York should address.
- Restore accountability by allowing people to seek damages and equitable relief when federal constitutional rights are violated by federal officials acting under color of law.
- Revise the proposal so it applies immediately to federal, state, and local officials, rather than being delayed by a future contingency. We would like to see this measure more in line with the NY Civil Rights Act (S8500/A9076)
- New York needs tools now, not later, to deter abuses and provide remedies when rights are violated.

Parts R and S - stop deception and address AI-generated misinformation

NY has seen deceptive tactics (wrong poll site texts, robocalls, AI chatbots giving incorrect deadlines). Include **revised measures** addressing deception and deceptive media in the **one-house budgets**.

- Support with revisions to carefully protect voters from deception **without discouraging lawful participation or undermining First Amendment rights**.
- Overbroad standing and escalating criminal penalties could **chill legitimate voter education/outreach** and increase litigation risk for election officials/civic groups.
- **Clarify scope and add guardrails** so enforcement targets deception without unintended consequences.

ENVIRONMENT

The Board of Regents is expected to vote in March 2026 to adopt an amendment to Section 100.2 requiring climate education instruction.

The League asks the Senate and Assembly to include full climate education funding in one-house budgets of **\$560,000** to avoid an unfunded mandate if the regulation is adopted. An unfunded mandate would undermine the Climate Leadership and Community Protections Act's goals.

EDUCATION FINANCING

New York uses a Foundation Aid formula to distribute State Aid to PreK-12 schools. One of the components of the formula is the Regional Cost Index, using nine regions to recognize their cost differences. The League supports legislation to make the **Regional Cost Index more fair**.

We need more labor force regions to be defined and to move to an index which more accurately reflects the costs in those more discrete separate regions. We join the Rockefeller Institute in supporting measures such as the [Comparable Wage Index for Teachers](#) (CWIFT), as detailed in the [Rockefeller Report](#). We recommend that this year the legislature resist the urge to put one more band-aid on the currently inadequate approach to regional cost adjustments (meaning, just adjusting Long Island/NYC is not a solution).

HEALTHCARE

New York faces a looming federal funding shock, credible estimates warn of up to \$13B in lost federal payments and roughly 1.5 million New Yorkers losing coverage, with additional people dropping coverage if it becomes unaffordable.

Cover the New Yorkers at risk of losing coverage

- The Legislature must include funding in one-house budgets to cover the at least 1.5M residents expected to lose eligibility or drop coverage due to federal changes.
- Maintain reimbursement levels to prevent provider closures, keeping coverage and the care system intact is not optional for public health and economic stability.

Invest \$3B in primary care for big savings and better health

- Primary care investment (pediatrics, family care, geriatrics, OB/GYN, therapy) improves prevention and chronic disease management—reducing avoidable ER use, hospitalizations, and high-cost specialty care.
- \$3B more could yield large downstream savings by shifting care to earlier, lower-cost settings.
- Workforce reality: address reimbursement inequities and work conditions that are worsening crisis-level shortages (e.g., pediatricians, EMS, Early Intervention therapists), NYS-wide but particularly endangering rural areas.

Direct funding to NYSDOH and reduce reliance on for-profit middlemen

- Shift away from private, for-profit entities and administrative overhead; prioritize public oversight, transparency, and auditability so taxpayer dollars go to care—not profit.
- In-source MLTC: NYS pays private insurers for coordination that often doesn't add value; DOH fee-for-service administration could reduce costs after a minimal transition.
- Privileging nonprofit/public providers: Limit expansion of for-profit facilities (hospice, nursing homes, dialysis) due to concerns about quality, fraud, and cost.
- Corporate ownership/CPOM transparency: NYS should require clearer disclosure of ownership/control structures so medical decisions remain patient-centered and publicly accountable.
- With federal agencies pulling back, NY needs DOH capacity to provide trustworthy public health information, respond to threats, and protect patient rights, plus stronger oversight of Medicaid spending, fraud reduction, and improved transparency.

Final Thoughts

Although we have presented you with multiple subjects for discussion with your legislator, you do not need to cover all included topics. This exchange of information benefits the State League in its efforts to develop strategies that promote our advocacy at the Capitol. Our influence in Albany depends on your contact with your state Senator and Assembly person(s). They know you elect them! If you haven't done so already, set up an appointment to see your state Assembly person(s) and Senator virtually. Meeting with a staff person in your elected's office is fine.

This Packet is available on the state League website under Advocacy, <https://lwvny.org/pre-and-post-budget/>. Please return the attached form to the League office following your meeting by email to erica@lwvny.org. Alternatively, you may fill out a Post-Lobby Report form online via [this link](#). For any questions or concerns, please contact Erica at erica@lwvny.org

Tips for Lobbying While Remote

PREPARATION

1. **Making the appointment:** Like in-person meetings, the best method to schedule an appointment is to contact the legislator's district office and request an appointment with the scheduler. Many staff are now working remotely, so it is more likely you will have to schedule the meeting via email. In your email request include possible meetings dates and the names of the members attending. Be sure to mention which members are constituents of the Legislator and a general description of what you plan to discuss.

Some legislators prefer conference calls while others may make use of Zoom, Webex, or Google Meets. No matter the preferred meeting method, notify the scheduler of the number of participants in your group as well as their names, if possible. Send an e-mail confirming the appointment, mentioning the issues you will discuss. **If you cannot meet with the legislator, ask to meet with senior staff.**

Although meetings are remote, 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 in the League. League members well versed on the issues to be lobbied should be included when possible. When more than one local League is involved, try to have representatives from as many of the constituent Leagues as possible.

2. **Assigning roles:** Even over Zoom or phone, 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?
 - 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 for the materials on this subject on the league website.

- Recording and reporting the legislator's response. The leader should not be the recorder.
3. **Follow Up:** In our remote world, follow up is more important than ever. Because members cannot physically leave behind documents related to the issues you discussed, a follow up email to the legislator and their staff will allow you to send a "thank you" along with documents related to the issues you discussed.

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.

Tips for In-person Lobby Visits

PREPARATION

1. **Making the appointment:** Contact the legislator's district office. Ask for an 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. Note: 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.**
- Involve the entire team. Choose someone familiar with or willing to review the general subject area of the question.
- Recording and reporting the legislator's response. The leader should not be the recorder.

Bring copies of the state League's Legislative Agenda to leave with the legislator or staff to inform them of all the issues on which the League is currently active.

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.

Complete and return the lobby report forms to the state League immediately following the visit. This information is critical to the development of effective League action plans.

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 visit.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING

- Keep the meeting friendly and focused. If there is disagreement on a particular issue, make clear the League position but avoid argument. How the legislator arrived at a particular position is sometimes revealing; it provides an opportunity for explanation (for better or worse!) but it also can give the League a clue for future approaches on the subject.
- Keep the lines of communication open. There will be other issues, and other days, for finding agreement and support.

- If you do not know the answer to a legislator's question, please tell him/her that you will get the answer and provide him/her with the information as soon as possible.
- Give the legislator a copy of our brochure: [2026 Legislative Agenda](#).

If you have any questions about the visit, contact:

Erica Smitka, Executive Director

E-mail: erica@lwvny.org

Lobby Check List

Before Your Visit:

- Do you know **what your “ask”** is?
- Did you send copies of the **Legislative Packet materials** to the legislator or staff ahead of the meeting?
- Are you ready to **refute opposition** arguments?
- Do you have a couple of **questions** you want to ask?
- Is there an **upcoming event** where you can invite the lawmaker? Or are you sending a student from their area to the **Students Inside Albany Conference**?

After Your Visit:

- Did you send the legislator and/or their staff a **Thank You** note?
- Did you send the legislator and/or their staff a copy of **Legislative Packet materials**?
- Did you send **follow up on any questions** they had?
- Did you send your **Lobby Response Form** to the State League office?
- Celebrate your success!**

Use this space for any additional notes:

2026 LWVNY S LOBBY REPORT FORM : PRE-BUDGET LOBBY VISITS

Local League: _____ League Member Name: _____

Senator: _____ Assembly Member: _____

Bill or Topic _____

Bill Number (if applicable) _____

Other notes:

- 0- Talked about bill, but unsure of member's position
- 1- Opposes
- 2- Undecided/Has concerns or follow up questions
- 3- Supports
- 4- Will co-sponsor
- 5- Already co-sponsors and will champion publicly

Bill or Topic _____

Bill Number (if applicable) _____

Other notes:

- 0- Talked about bill, but unsure of member's position
- 1- Opposes
- 2- Undecided/Has concerns or follow up questions
- 3- Supports
- 4- Will co-sponsor
- 5- Already co-sponsors and will champion publicly

Bill or Topic _____

Bill Number (if applicable) _____

Other notes:

- 0- Talked about bill, but unsure of member's position
- 1- Opposes
- 2- Undecided/Has concerns or follow up questions
- 3- Supports
- 4- Will co-sponsor
- 5- Already co-sponsors and will champion publicly

Bill or Topic _____

Bill Number (if applicable) _____

Other notes:

- 0- Talked about bill, but unsure of member's position
- 1- Opposes
- 2- Undecided/Has concerns or follow up questions
- 3- Supports
- 4- Will co-sponsor
- 5- Already co-sponsors and will champion publicly

- *What were the legislator's biggest concerns?*

- *Where did you see eye to eye?*

- *Did they ask for additional information?*

Please return completed form to LWNYS, 1 Steuben Place, Albany, NY 12207,
or by email to Erica Smitka at erica@lwvny.org

Return the completed form by April 3, 2026