

New York State Policy Agenda 2017



NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

INTRODUCTION

Each year, NYLCV and the NYLCV Education Fund work closely with New York's leading environmental, public health, conservation, energy, environmental justice, and transportation organizations to identify the state's most pressing priorities on fighting climate change, conserving land and water, and protecting public health. The result of that effort is the document you have here. This agenda will drive NYLCV's advocacy work throughout the legislative session as we push for legislation and appropriations in the budget that fulfill our policy goals.

Our 2017 agenda charges the legislature and executive with five distinct but interconnected directives: ensure adequate funding for the environment, address the causes and effects of climate change, protect the health of New Yorkers and their communities, protect natural resources, and invest in better, smarter infrastructure. Though there are nearly fifty policies we will support this year, there are three priority areas that are at the top of our list: clean drinking water, leadership on climate, and farms, food, and organic waste.



**Marcia Bystryn, President
NYLCV and NYLCV Education Fund**

With progress stalled at the federal level, these problems must be solved at the state and local levels. Our leaders will need to be thoughtful, work across the aisle, and make tough compromises. But we fully expect them to do whatever it takes to create a greener, healthier and more prosperous New York in 2017.



Left: Allocating \$300 million to the Environmental Protection Fund allowed for the expansion of programs that protect farmland from development and also ensure that our farms have both fresh water and soil free of contaminants. **Right:** An influx of funding for water infrastructure will help curb the recent spate of sewer main breaks in places like Syracuse but additional funds are needed to reduce the still lengthy backlog of projects.

TOP PRIORITIES

Clean Drinking Water: Clean water is on everyone's mind right now. We will push Albany to allocate \$800 million in community grants under the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act to reduce the backlog of water infrastructure projects and to support ongoing maintenance. We will also be looking to improve standards for drinking water and increased testing after last year's lead and PFOA crises.

Leadership on Climate: In the age of Trump, New York is going to need to push forward innovative policies that show the way for other states and create a guaranteed market for renewable energy that encourages the private sector to continue to invest. In addition, New York needs to do a better job of designing programs that target equitable delivery of affordable and reliable clean energy to low income populations. Resiliency must also be a top priority as we adapt to a climate that is already changing rapidly. The state should provide cutting edge coastal erosion and flood maps and utilize them to make policy decisions about whether to retreat or to fortify.

Farms, Food, and Organic Waste: We will push the Governor for leadership on a comprehensive package to both preserve farmland and strengthen our regional foodsheds. This will help alleviate development pressure on farms and ensure access to local and healthy foods for all New Yorkers. An important piece will be a requirement on large generators of organic waste to donate edible food to food banks and compost the rest so it does not end up in landfills.

ENSURE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

New York State should be a national leader on the environment. We have some of the best environmental legislation and programs in the country, but these must be supported with resources for effective implementation and enforcement. The agencies responsible for this important work need to be fully funded.

1. Continue to fund the Environmental Protection Fund at \$300 million in the 2017-2018 state budget to address significant environmental, land protection, infrastructure and conservation needs in urban areas and throughout the state without sweeps, raids or "one-shot" funds.
2. Support \$800 million in water infrastructure community grants under the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act to reduce the backlog of water infrastructure projects, and support ongoing maintenance.
3. Significantly increase funding and resources to the agencies charged with protecting and preserving the environment and public health, such as the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation.
4. Finalize New York State's funding plan for the new rail tunnel between New Jersey and Manhattan, which is the first phase of the Gateway Project.
5. Fully fund the state's mass transit capital needs throughout the state and include new, reliable revenue sources. Ensure that dedicated transit funds are not diverted to the general fund or used for other purposes.

ADDRESS CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Develop a statewide plan to address the root causes of climate change and adopt a long-term strategy to manage the effects of climate change.

Clean Energy for All

1. Design and support programs that target affordability for low-income populations to ensure equitable delivery of reliable clean energy through microgrids and efficiency programs.
2. Ensure that state implementation plans include adequate reduction of particulates, SO₂, and NO_x emissions so that residents living near small-scale distributed power generators and large-scale fossil fuel plants—particularly environmental justice communities—do not experience adverse air quality impacts.
3. Building on the successes of NYSEERDA and utility programs, increase commitment for clean energy, lower emissions, efficiency, and resiliency for low-income communities by dedicating 25% of proceeds from Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auctions to these programs.

Meet Renewable Energy Goals

1. Ensure the Clean Energy Standard 2030 state target of 50% generation of clean energy includes interim benchmarks and transmission modernization.
2. Maximize community support for siting of clean energy projects and efficiency programs through public education, outreach, and other programs.
3. Use Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auction proceeds exclusively for clean energy projects. Work with other RGGI states to match New York's carbon emission reduction goals.

Efficiency

1. Ensure NYSEERDA has adequate budget support for energy efficiency programs, including research and development, that reach all consumer groups.
2. Develop rigorous standards for evaluating and incentivizing energy efficiency programs.

Resiliency

1. Finalize and utilize updated state coastal erosion and wetlands maps, using state of the art science.
2. Require utilities and transportation authorities to integrate climate change science into planning, construction and budget decisions.
3. Fully implement the Community Risk and Resiliency Act of 2014.
4. Incorporate climate change science into emergency response plans and provide funding and training for their implementation.



New York City's air quality has come a long way since the smog-filled days of the 1960's and 1970's, but there are still a number of important measures that can help reduce the incidence of respiratory illnesses such as asthma.

PROTECT THE HEALTH OF NEW YORKERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Public health can be improved through better air and water quality, cleaning up contaminated land and limiting the public's exposure to toxic substances.

Toxics

1. Enact legislation to require disclosure of toxic chemicals in consumer products, like the "Parents Right to Know Act."
2. Extend the Safe School Drinking Water Act to nursery schools, pre-schools, and private schools.
3. Expand testing of smaller public drinking water supplies (i.e., 10,000 households or less) and establish a regulatory regime to address emerging contaminants (e.g. perfluorinated compounds).
4. Enact legislation that ensures the State's definition of hazardous waste is applied consistently and covers waste from oil and natural gas drilling and extraction.
5. Enact a statewide drug take-back and disposal program.

Air Quality

1. Improve air quality through replacement of old diesel vehicles with cleaner, new vehicles and encourage upgrades to Zero Emission Vehicles.
2. Encourage the continued adoption of zero emission home heating systems like heat pumps and conversions to ultra-low sulfur home heating oil, propane, or natural gas to replace #6 and #4 home heating oil.
3. Adopt legislation that expands the use of sustainable biofuel blends in home heating oil, commercial buildings, and vehicles used in dense urban areas with high levels of childhood asthma.

Food Quality and Security

1. Preserve the state's farmland and regional food sheds and improve transportation options available for the movement of farm-fresh food.
2. Support legislation that allows farmland preservation funds to be used to support working farms, including necessary and appropriate infrastructure.
3. Increase funding for school meal reimbursement for schools sourcing healthy foods grown on local farms.
4. Support legislation to require large generators of food waste to donate edible food to food banks and compost the rest.



Left: Regional ecosystem programs such as the Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda can protect wildlife threatened by human activity. Right: Implementing features of bus rapid transit, as the Capital District Transportation Authority has done with BusPlus, is a cost-effective way of creating fast and efficient transit options. The state must do more to encourage such programs.

PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCES

New York's spectacular natural resources not only provide awe-inspiring views and recreational opportunities, they help keep our children and families healthy. Our parks, rivers, lakes and oceans should be protected so future generations can enjoy them.

1. Reduce single-use bag use and pollution through local initiatives that ban or require nominal fees for single-use bags.
2. Promote clean water, encourage healthy and abundant wildlife populations, and support vibrant communities in the Adirondacks by protecting 31,000 acres of Adirondack forest in the MacIntyre East/ West and the Boreas ponds tracts with a Wilderness classification.
3. Implement and strengthen regional ecosystem programs including the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for Long Island Sound, the Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda, and other comprehensive estuary and Great Lakes management initiatives.
4. Develop a comprehensive approach to improve water quality and address surface water impacts such as runoff and nitrates.
5. Establish new Water Quality Standards that will increase the level of protection of our waters.
6. Support habitat management and conservation on private land through monetary incentives for landowners. Update the State's forest tax abatement program to include sustainable forestry and wildlife habitat management on smaller parcels. Offset fiscal impacts to local governments with reimbursements.
7. Adequately fund and implement robust programs to deal with the growing threat of invasive species.
8. Establish a more rigorous process for the alienation of parkland that holds government accountable, provides transparency and protects parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas from inequitable land swaps and sales.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE: BETTER, SMARTER INFRASTRUCTURE

Investment in infrastructure lays the foundation for our communities' well-being. With today's investments, we have opportunities to leave a legacy of equity, growth, prosperity and conservation for generations to come. Investments should also be evaluated for their ability to build better, smarter and greener infrastructure.

Transportation Infrastructure & Efficiency

1. Support multimodal transportation like bus rapid transit, rails-to-trails conversions of abandoned rail lines, ferries, connected regional bike lanes and trails, and community multi-use trails that promote bicycling, walking and safety.
2. Continue to promote deployment of zero emission vehicles (ZEV) by significantly expanding ZEV infrastructure. Encourage utility and private investment in recharging infrastructure in ways that benefit the grid and all electricity customers. Continue consumer and municipal incentives to accelerate ZEV adoption.
3. Support the expansion of car sharing services that meet high environmental standards throughout the state to reduce single occupancy vehicles and enable greater mobility in areas not served by mass transit.
4. Repair and upgrade critical freight rail lines throughout the region and state to limit truck traffic on local roads and highways.

Sustainable Development

1. Promote sustainable growth, equitable land use and community revitalization through investment in existing and next-generation infrastructure, low carbon transportation choices, and higher density mixed-use development.
2. Support the redesign and reconstruction of arterial streets as complete streets to make communities more walkable and bike-able. Support traffic calming projects, lower speed limits, conversion of elevated highways into surface-level boulevards and streets, electronic speed enforcement, increased penalties and enforcement for reckless driving, and other initiatives focused on street safety.
3. Incorporate green infrastructure into gray or "hard" infrastructure projects funded by the State.

Rail Transport of Crude Oil

1. Ensure that crude oil rail and barge transporters are fully insured to cover accident costs.
2. Ensure air quality and water protection laws and regulations relating to rail and barge transportation and trans-loading of crude oil are adequately protective of health, safety and the environment.
3. Ensure that Community and Spill Response Plans are robust, adequately funded and that local, state, and federal first responders are trained, funded and coordinated to implement them. Ensure that rail operators and oil companies, not local taxpayers, pay for them.



Marcia Bystryn, President
Patrick McClellan, State Policy Director
Jordan Levine, Communications Director

30 Broad Street, 30th Floor
New York, NY 10004
Phone: 212-361-6350
www.nylcv.org
www.nylcvef.org

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS, INC.

NYLCV is the only nonpartisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy and open space through political action.

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND, INC.

*NYLCVEF educates, engages and empowers New Yorkers
to be effective advocates for the environment.*