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**2016 Environmental Candidate Questionnaire**

**Campaign Contact Information**

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Please share your accomplishments or experiences that indicate your commitment to advancing a pro-environment agenda. These experiences may be professional or personal.

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| The preservation of New York’s natural environment has always been one of my top priorities and I am consistently ranked one of the top environmental legislators in New York State. As the Democratic Conference Leader, I have been at the forefront of my Conference’s efforts to protect our land, air, water and natural resources and fight climate change. These efforts have recently paid off in big ways for the environment. In the last two sessions, New York State has successfully prohibited hydraulic fracturing within our borders, increased the EPF by $123 million to a record $300 million, provided continued strong investments in our State parks system, incentivized the use of renewable energy sources through increasingly successful RGGI auctions and took steps to integrate climate change consciousness into state planning and funding decisions. I believe these efforts will not only improve the health of our residents but will create jobs by building a sustainable green economy sector in our State. |

Please indicate your level of commitment to, and if applicable your recent personal and professional activity with respect to, the following issues:

(To ensure your responses address the issues NYLCV and its partners are most concerned about, please review [NYLCV’s 2016 State Policy Agenda](http://nylcv.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/StatewideAgenda2016-FINAL-lowres.pdf))

Ensuring adequate funding for the environmental agencies and programs

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| I, along with my Senate Democratic Conference colleagues, have long sought many of the positive funding developments realized in the 2016-17 enacted budget. Most notably, I am proud to have advocated for a fully-funded $300 million Environmental Protection Fund that increases support for existing environmental programs across multiple state agencies and includes $22 million in first-time funding for the newly created Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Account. This year’s budget also secured a significant $200 million increase in clean water infrastructure funding grants to supplement our state revolving loan programs and help communities address rather daunting drinking water and wastewater system modernization needs. While I had advocated for $800 million for this purpose, growing our current grant program each of the last two years is an important step toward addressing the larger need that reaches every corner of the state. I have also supported the enacted budget’s inclusion of the MTA’s $30 billion, five-year Capital Program which includes a commitment of $8.3 billion in state assistance. A robust mass transit system provides myriad environmental benefits for each dollar invested. Further, there are few investments that connect New York State residents more immediately with the environment that we all strive to protect than those made in our state park system. I have advocated strongly, and will continue to do so, for the continued capital investment in our parks as we look to continue addressing the system’s documented $1 billion backlog in needed health and safety infrastructure upgrades. I am pleased that this year’s budget secured an additional $90 million for this purpose. |

Addressing the causes and effects of climate change (e.g., clean energy and emission controls)

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| It is sadly becoming old news to hear that 2016 is now projected to eclipse 2015 as the earth’s hottest year on record. However, the Democratic Conference and I have worked hard to bring climate change consciousness to the forefront of the State Senate. This past year, these efforts have included moving the Global Warming Pollution Control Act, which passes the Assembly each year, through the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee. This “Environmental Superbill” encapsulates the long-term strategy required to achieve the emissions reductions necessary to stave off the worse impacts of climate change. Additionally, I have long supported the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and the investments in green jobs, renewable energy and energy efficiency projects that have resulted from the successful auctions of carbon allowances. The Senate Democrats have continuously opposed efforts to sweep RGGI proceeds for uses outside of the RGGI Operating Plan and introduced a budget amendment on the floor of the Senate to block such a sweep in this year’s enacted budget. Most recently, the Senate Democratic Conference Policy Group hosted a climate action forum in May that heard testimony from medical professionals and environmental experts concerning the health risks of a changing climate as well as potential legislative pathways to mitigate these impacts. As we move into the next legislative session, we will work to make these concepts and proposals a reality. Finally, providing funding for the Climate Smart Communities Program through the EPF is a timely investment in local action plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change impacts at the neighborhood level. |

Protecting the health of New Yorkers and their communities (e.g., toxics, air quality, food quality and security)

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| Protecting our communities against environmental health risks often begins with protecting our most vulnerable populations; those in underserved communities and children. I have a long record in the environmental justice movement, having fought for the equitable siting of environmentally harmful facilities and interjecting equity into state agency decision making. I am also a long-time supporter of keeping toxins out of children’s products and am a co-sponsor, along with my Senate Democrat colleagues, of Senator Hoylman’s legislation to establish a regulatory framework to accomplish this important task. I also co-sponsor the “Environmental Superbill” that would protect New Yorker’s from unnecessary exposures by uniformly applying the testing, tracking, and safety standards to waste generated from oil and gas extraction activities that is currently applied to other forms of hazardous waste. Further, my Senate Democratic Conference colleagues and I have been vocal opponents of the annual exercise of delaying compliance with the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act. We are now six years overdue for fitting the State’s dirtiest diesel vehicles with emissions-reducing filters, and each year that the State fails to require compliance puts additional New Yorkers at risk of asthma, heart ailments, and other chronic diseases caused by exposures to fine particulate matter and low level ozone. To ensure all New Yorkers have access to healthy, nutritious food, I support Fresh Connects as a means to connect upstate producers with downstate consumers, and have called for increased funding for the Farm to School program to allow additional school districts to better access local farmers and procure healthy foods. I have also advocated for portions of recent financial settlement funds to be dedicated to the preservation of farmland and am supportive of the $20 million dedicated last year to such initiatives in the Hudson Valley, as well as the increased $20 million appropriation contained in this year’s EPF to be distributed statewide. |

Conserving and protecting natural resources (e.g., water, open spaces, habitat, organic recycling)

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| The 2016-17 EPF was increased by $123 million to a record $300 million. I have long voiced support for such a fully-funded EPF and am pleased that its realization includes natural resource conservation investments such as $40 million for open space preservation, $20 million for farmland protection, and $12 million for invasive species programs. Importantly, the EPF also includes $28 million for the stewardship of lands already managed by the State. Our state water resources are better served when the wastewater infrastructure of the communities’ along their borders and in their watersheds are able to meet clean water standards. This year’s budget included an additional $200 million in municipal grants to help address this need but more must be done to provide the Environmental Facilities Corporation with the resources necessary to meet the demands of applicants standing by with projects at the ready. |

Investing in better, smarter infrastructure (e.g., transportation, electrical grid, green infrastructure, smart growth, rail transport of crude oil)

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| One of the smartest infrastructure investments that the public can make is in mass transit, and New York can boast one of the largest mass transit systems in the world in the MTA. The MTA permits the region to avoid almost 17 million metric tons of greenhouse gases per year - equivalent to the annual emissions of 3.5 million passenger vehicles. In addition to providing $5 billion for transit operations across the state, including roughly $4.5 billion to the MTA, this year’s budget also funded five-year capital plans for both MTA and non-MTA operators. This includes 940 subway cars, more than 1700 buses, and more than 300 commuter rail cars that help take cars off the road and reduce emissions. These purchases were greened even further, to include new articulated buses and subway cars, as well as hundreds of CNG and hybrid buses. Again, the topic of smart infrastructure investment also gets back to the EPF, which is why so many of us have advocated for its full funding for so long. Without this year’s increase, we would not have new funding for municipal electric vehicle fleets and charging stations, smart growth grants, state agency climate change assessments, or the Climate Smart Communities Program. |