



# 2018 New York State Policy Agenda



**NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS**

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**NYLCV 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 budget appropriations and legislation. It will also influence the bills we select for NYLCV's State Environmental Scorecard.

Our 2018 agenda charges the legislature and executive with four 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, and conserve natural resources. Though we will support nearly fifty policies this year, we have identified the four issues below as top priorities.

With environmental policy stalled at the federal level, we will continue to lean on state and local governments to fill the leadership void. Climate change poses catastrophic threats to our health, environment and economy, while exposure to lead and other toxics can cause irreversible damage to our most vulnerable. Cuts to environmental efforts might seem pennywise but they are pound foolish. While Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature will have to make difficult decisions in preparing this year's budget, we expect them to be both creative and steadfast. They must explore new ways to generate revenue, such as congestion pricing and a fee on single-use bags, and they must protect dedicated funding streams such as the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and the Environmental Protection Fund. After a successful 2017, we look forward to another year of fruitful collaborations and meaningful progress.

Sincerely,  
Marcia Bystryn, President  
NYLCV & NYLCVEF

# TOP PRIORITIES

**Food Waste:** Food makes up 18% of the solid waste stream in New York and significantly contributes to climate change by releasing methane, a potent greenhouse gas, when it decomposes in landfills. We will push for legislation requiring large generators of food waste to donate excess food to food banks and recycle inedible food and food scraps in order to assist food insecure New Yorkers, divert food waste from landfills, and stimulate the market for organic recycling in New York.

**Congestion Pricing and Funding Mass Transit:** The New York City subway system is not in adequate condition to serve a large and growing city, and its failures encourage commuters to use less environmentally-friendly modes of transportation. At the same time, traffic congestion in Manhattan is worsening and harming both public health and the State's fight against climate change. We will advocate for a fee on all vehicles entering Manhattan's central business district in order to ease congestion and raise desperately needed funds to help bring the subway system into a state of good repair.

**Reduce Single-Use Bags:** We will push for statewide legislation to reduce carryout bag waste through a fee on all single-use carryout bags. Single-use bags are expensive to dispose of, harmful to marine and animal life, and a large contributor to litter.

**Protect Children from Toxic Chemicals:** The federal government's retreat from environmental protection is particularly evident, and harmful, in children's exposure to toxic chemicals. We will push to protect children from lead by urging the State to issue permanent, strong regulations on lead in public schools and supporting legislation to lower the definition of elevated blood lead level so that more children are treated for lead exposure. We will also advocate for legislation requiring manufacturers of children's products to disclose if their products contain potentially harmful chemicals.



Left: Last year, NYLCV President Marcia Bystryn joined state officials to launch a consumer rebate on zero emissions vehicles. Continued investment in charging infrastructure and incentives is needed to reach the State's deployment goal. Right: New York must do more to remove toxics like lead from the environment, in addition to lowering the definition of elevated blood lead levels so more children can be identified and treated for lead exposure.

## ENSURE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

**New York State is a national leader on the environment. We have some of the strongest laws, regulations, agencies, and programs in the country to protect and enhance clean air, water, and soil, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and protect wilderness and open space. However, we must also have adequate resources for effective implementation and enforcement in order to maintain New York's competitive advantage as a state and an environmental leader.**

1. Continue to fund the Environmental Protection Fund at \$300 million in the 2018-2019 State budget to address significant environmental, land protection, infrastructure, and conservation needs throughout the state without sweeps, raids, or one-shot funds.
2. Fully fund mass transit capital needs throughout the state. Help support the MTA with new, reliable revenue sources such as congestion pricing in Manhattan's central business district and fair tolling on all East River crossings. Ensure that dedicated transit funds are not diverted to the general fund or used for other purposes.
3. Ensure the Clean Water Infrastructure Act's \$500 million allocation for the 2018-2019 budget year is fully supported in order to reduce the backlog of water infrastructure projects and support green infrastructure and ongoing maintenance. Consider potential improvements to the Act that could make spending more efficient, including technical support for local governments.
4. Finalize New York State's funding plan for the new rail tunnel between New Jersey and Manhattan as part of the Gateway Project.
5. Increase funding and resources, especially for additional personnel, to the agencies charged with protecting and preserving the environment and public health, including the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation and the Department of Health.

# ADDRESS CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

**Develop a statewide plan to address the root causes of climate change and implement a long-term strategy to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.**

## Clean Energy for All

1. Design and support programs that target low-income communities to ensure affordable and equitable delivery of reliable clean energy through projects such as microgrids, energy efficiency retrofits, and shared purchasing models.
2. Ensure that State energy plans include adequate reduction of particulates, SO<sub>2</sub>, and NO<sub>x</sub> emissions so that residents living near distributed power generators and large-scale fossil fuel plants - particularly environmental justice communities - do not experience adverse air quality impacts.
3. Build on the successes of NYSEERDA and utility programs by increasing commitments to clean energy, lower emissions, energy efficiency, and resiliency for low-income communities through dedication of at least 25% of proceeds from Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auctions to these programs.
4. Develop and implement rigorous standards for evaluating and incentivizing energy efficiency retrofit programs.
5. Ensure NYSEERDA has adequate budget support for energy efficiency programs, including research and development, that reach all consumer groups.

## Meet Renewable Energy Goals

1. Ensure the Clean Energy Standard 2030 state target of 50% generation of clean energy includes interim benchmarks, performance metrics, and transmission modernization.
2. Maximize community support for siting of clean energy projects and energy efficiency programs through public education, outreach, and other programs.
3. Establish effective, streamlined siting principles and regulatory processes for siting large-scale renewable energy projects that protect natural resources.
4. Use Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative auction proceeds exclusively for clean energy projects.

## Transportation Infrastructure and Efficiency

1. Support integrated 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. Promote deployment of zero emission vehicles (ZEV) by significantly expanding ZEV infrastructure, increasing government fleet adoption of ZEVs, and continuing incentives to purchase ZEVs.
3. Support the expansion of programs and services, such as car sharing, that enable greater mobility in areas not served by mass transit and reduce single occupancy vehicle use.
4. Repair and upgrade critical freight rail lines throughout the region and state to limit truck traffic on local roads and highways.

## Resiliency

1. Finalize and adopt updated state coastal erosion hazard area and wetlands maps that reflect 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. Require the incorporation of climate change science into emergency response plans and provide funding and training for their implementation.
5. Incorporate green infrastructure into gray or hard infrastructure projects funded or supported by the State.
6. Hold relevant agencies accountable to use any remaining federal money provided by the HUD Community Development Block Grant disaster recovery program for the implementation of resiliency measures, and develop a comprehensive plan for securing funds and managing disaster relief in the future.

## Sustainable Development

1. Promote sustainable growth and community revitalization through State support for higher density mixed-use development near transit hubs, walkable neighborhoods, and green buildings.
2. Make communities more walkable and bikeable by supporting the design, construction, and maintenance of roadways as complete streets and expanding the scope of the New York State Complete Streets law to include maintenance and repaving projects. Support street safety initiatives including traffic calming, lower speed limits, conversion of elevated highways into surface-level boulevards and streets, electronic speed enforcement, and increased penalties and enforcement for reckless driving.
3. Reform the Adirondack Park Agency Act to protect sensitive backcountry lands while incentivizing hamlet-based development.



Left: Years of underfunding and growing ridership have left the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's NYC Subway with crippling delays, while roads are choked by traffic. A congestion pricing scheme could help to alleviate both. Right: The Clean Energy Standard is encouraging the development of offshore wind and other renewables as the State strives toward its ambitious climate goals.

# PROTECT THE HEALTH OF NEW YORKERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Public health can be improved through better air and water quality, the cleanup of contaminated land, limiting the public's exposure to toxic substances, and ensuring universal access to fresh and healthy food.

## Toxics

1. Enact legislation to require disclosure of toxic chemicals in consumer products. Finalize and publish regulations requiring the disclosure of chemicals used in cleaning products.
2. Improve the Safe School Drinking Water Act with permanent, stringent, up-to-date standards to ensure that public schools with lead-containing fixtures address them in a timely manner, and consider expanding the law to include and potentially fund testing for nursery schools, pre-schools, and private schools.
3. Lower New York State's definition of elevated blood lead level to the CDC's recommended level and automatically lower it when the CDC lowers its recommendation in the future in order to protect children's health.
4. Enact statewide prescription drug take-back and disposal programs.
5. Support the work of the Drinking Water Quality Council and encourage the issuance of new regulations to address emerging contaminants.
6. Enact legislation that ensures the State's definition of hazardous waste is applied consistently and covers waste derived from oil and natural gas drilling and extraction.

## 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 electric heat, ultra-low sulfur home heating oil, propane, or natural gas to replace #6 and #4 home heating oil.

## Food Quality and Security

1. Support legislation requiring large generators of food waste to donate edible food to food banks and recycle the rest.
2. Preserve the state's farmland and regional foodsheds and improve transportation options available for the movement of farm-fresh food.
3. Support legislation that allows working farms subject to easements acquired with farmland preservation funds to make necessary and appropriate infrastructure improvements related directly and exclusively to farm operations.
4. Increase funding for school meal reimbursement for schools sourcing healthy foods grown on New York State farms.
5. Create programs to support new and beginning farmers.
6. Develop policies to support pollinator colonies and better understand and prevent pollinator collapse.



Farmland preservation both insulates our family farms from development pressures and protects our regional foodsheds, helping to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to sustainably grown, local and healthy foods.

## CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES

**New York's spectacular natural resources not only provide awe-inspiring views and recreational opportunities, they also 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, or pursue statewide legislation to do the same.
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. Enforce and strengthen Water Quality Standards to increase the level of protection of our waters.
5. Support legislation that enables local communities to raise local funds for open space conservation and community preservation.
6. Support habitat management and conservation on private lands through fiscal 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. Curtail the cumulative impacts of clearcutting on private lands within the Adirondack Park.
8. Adequately fund and implement robust programs to deal with the growing threat of invasive species, including aquatic invasive species.
9. Develop, implement, and fund a robust program to address harmful algal blooms in lakes, ponds, and waterways statewide.
10. Develop the Empire State Trail with connector trails to urban centers.
11. Enforce a rigorous process for parkland alienation to hold municipal governments accountable and protect parks, playgrounds, and recreation areas from inequitable land swaps and sales.
12. Ensure that crude oil rail and barge transporters are fully insured, subject to strict air quality and water protection regulations, and financially responsible for robust Community and Spill Response Plans.



**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](http://www.nylcv.org)**  
**[www.nylcvef.org](http://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.*