

2025

Federal Policy Agenda



NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS
NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

INTRODUCTION

Each year, NYLCV and the NYLCV Education Fund work to identify the most pressing issues on the environment, public health, quality of life, and equity for the people of New York. While much of this work is focused on the state and local level, these issues demand action from the federal government as well.

New York's congressional delegation includes leaders on both sides of the aisle who can play an important role in their respective caucuses in ensuring that New York does not get short-changed. Our 2025 Federal Agenda comprises issues that significantly impact New York where we believe our representatives can make a difference. We see space for achieving a bipartisan conservation agenda and look forward to advancing the dialogue to reach agreement on bold solutions.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Tighe".

JULIE TIGHE
President, NYLCV

TOP PRIORITIES

CLEAN ENERGY

New York has made tremendous progress reducing air pollution from energy that harms human health and contributes to climate change, and it is vitally important that we do not roll back the laws and regulations that have allowed us to reach this point. NYLCV strongly supports investing in clean energy, including offshore wind, that will both reduce air and climate pollution, and create jobs in a globally competitive field. In 2022, we saw the largest climate bill in the history of the United States pass in the form of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). NYLCV advocates that IRA funds and programs be protected, as well as properly and quickly allocated so that the U.S. can transition to a clean energy economy.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Investment in mass transit pays dividends for both the environment and the economy, and expanded federal funding for projects, including the Gateway Tunnel and Second Avenue Subway, are vital to the economy of the entire region. Specifically, the federal budget must continue these projects, as well as RAISE grants and EV charging infrastructure through the Department of Transportation and adequate funding for public transportation through both operating and capital aid. A federal clean fuel standard is also a vital ingredient in decarbonizing the transportation sector by lowering the emissions of vehicles on the road right now.

CLEAN WATER

NYLCV supports increasing funding and maintaining current funding formulas for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, which provide financing that leverages state, local and private money for a wide variety of water projects, including wastewater treatment, green infrastructure, pipe replacement, addressing emerging contaminants in drinking water, and source water protection. In 2021, we saw the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), pass, which provides funds to improve water infrastructure and replace lead pipes in New York.

FOOD & FARMS

NYLCV strongly urges maintenance or increases in funding for conservation programs including the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and Conservation Reserve Program. The Farm Bill presents an opportunity to combat the climate crisis through climate-smart agriculture.

ADEQUATE FUNDING TO AGENCIES

NYLCV strongly supports maintaining funding to departments, offices, and agencies that oversee rules, regulations, and programs pertaining to clean energy, clean air, clean water, and healthy food. This includes the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy's Loan Program Office, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Transportation, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Treasury Department.

CLEAN ENERGY

A photograph of several offshore wind turbines in the ocean under a clear blue sky. The turbines are spaced out across the horizon, and the water is a deep blue. In the bottom left corner, there are some small, brownish plants.

The Inflation Reduction Act: The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is the boldest climate law in the history of the United States. It allocates \$369 billion to combat the climate crisis and has launched a manufacturing renaissance across the country. Largely through federal tax credits and grants, this legislation is currently and should continue to fund the transition to a clean energy economy and create family sustaining jobs. This funding must be protected and properly spent in a timely manner.

Investment Tax Credit (ITC) for Solar/Production Tax Credit (PTC) for Wind: The ITC provides a 30% rebate for solar, fuel cells, and wind and a 10% rebate for geothermal, microturbines, and combined heat and power technologies. The PTC is an inflation-adjusted per-kWh tax credit for electricity generated by wind, geothermal, closed-loop biomass, and solar facilities not claiming the ITC. The clean energy generation supported by these tax credits builds economic, social, and environmental resilience and furthers New York's pledge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 85% by 2050.

Wind Power: Offshore wind presents enormous opportunities for New York both as a source of carbon-free energy, but also as a powerful economic engine for Long Island and New York. Congress must ensure that agencies timely issue permits for offshore wind development. Congress should pass legislation to spur the development of offshore wind and implement revenue sharing, such as the RISEE Act.

Transmission: Right now, one of the major hurdles to clean energy development is the building of transmission lines. As a result, clean energy from developers cannot get to the communities that need it. The permitting process for transmission lines is backlogged and cost prohibitive. We need permitting reform through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that values input from local governments and citizens.

Thermal Energy Networks: Thermal Energy Networks are utility-scale infrastructure projects that connect multiple buildings into a shared network with sources of thermal energy like geothermal boreholes, surface water, and wastewater. There are pilots in New York exploring these systems and federal support for this concept will help it to become mainstream, including support for transitioning municipal steam systems.

Clean Fuel Standard: A Clean Fuel Standard, sometimes also called a low carbon fuel standard (LCFS) or a clean transportation standard, is a market based system that results in producers of fuel with high carbon intensity, like fossil gasoline and diesel fuels, subsidizing fuels with low carbon intensity such as electricity, hydrogen, and biofuels. Implementing this policy at the federal level would go a long way toward cutting pollution from the transportation sector.

CLEAN WATER

We have made tremendous progress in cleaning up our waterways and drinking water supplies due to decades of federal commitment, but recent crises have shown how far we still have to go.

Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF & DWSRF): The SRFs are federal-state partnership projects that provide low-cost financing for water quality infrastructure projects to communities across the nation. Increased funding for these programs will help ensure safe, clean water for New Yorkers through improved drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater management projects and continue our progress in removing lead and emerging contaminants, such as PFAS and 1,4-dioxane, from drinking water. It is also important that the funding allotment formula for the SRFs continue to provide New York with an adequate share of federal funds.

The AQUA Act: The AQUA Act, sponsored by Rep. Paul Tonko (NY-20), would invest nearly \$104 billion over 10 years for our nation's water systems, including:

- \$49 billion for the DWSRF over 10 years
- \$30 billion to support the full replacement of every lead service line
- \$5 billion to help systems with PFAS contamination

The AQUA Act would go a long way toward addressing New York's drinking water quality issues and we fully support it.

The PFAS Action Act: PFAS is a major issue in New York State. It is a bipartisan piece of legislation that works to remove PFAS from our drinking water. We fully support it and urge Congress to bring it to the floor for a vote this session.

Other important clean water bills, regulations, and funding:

- Maintaining the recently finalized Lead and Copper Rule that protects public health by mandating full lead service line replacement across the country in 10 years, prioritizing environmental justice communities who have been disproportionately impacted by lead contamination, and lowering the action level.
- In 2021, Congress allocated \$15 billion to replace lead service lines across the country. New York will most likely receive about \$645 million from that pot, with \$120 million going to New York City. In order for all lead service lines to be removed across the nation, including New York State's estimated 494,000 lead service lines, Congress must allocate another \$30 billion to this cause.



FOOD & FARMS

The Farm Bill is up for renewal and funds a wide variety of environmentally critical programs including land and water conservation, bio-energy, and nutrition. The Inflation Reduction Act also increases funding for the land conservation programs listed here and presents the opportunity for this Farm Bill to combat climate change through climate-smart agricultural policy.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to “implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related natural resources” on agricultural and private forestland for agricultural producers with annual income under \$900,000. Protecting New York’s farmlands for smaller-scale farmers ensures healthy resources for future generations, helps local ecosystems, and fosters local economies.

A climate-smart Farm Bill would focus conservation programs on climate mitigation and resilience, including dedicating 80% of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds towards practices that reduce GHG emissions and prohibit EQIP funds for practices that increase emissions, and convert the Conservation Stewardship Program into a Climate Stewardship Program that is primarily focused on reducing emissions. It would also make equitable and reparative justice a focus by ensuring that farmers of color, new farmers, and others who have historically been excluded can access Farm Bill programs.

Other important agricultural programs:

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

(ACEP): ACEP provides technical and financial assistance to non-profit organizations and state, local, and tribal governments to conserve agricultural lands and wetlands. The continuation of funding for this program aids in New York’s long-term sustainability of food supply, wildlife habitats, environmental quality, and related economic and recreational benefits by promoting sustainable use of these working lands.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): This Farm Service Agency program pays an annual rental fee to farmers for removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production, instead planting flora that will improve ecosystem health. The CRP develops sustainable, ecologically-helpful land cover, and its continued funding is important to improve water and soil quality and wildlife habitat across New York.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Federal environmental spending across a range of agencies protects local ecosystems, fosters interstate cooperation, and strengthens New York's economy.

Delaware River Basin Conservation Initiative:

This multi-level program joins federal, state, and local agencies and organizations to promote watershed health and revitalize communities along the river that have historically suffered economic and environmental losses from river degradation. The Delaware River supplies valuable drinking water, habitat, and recreational opportunities. Any cuts to the program would negatively affect the health of the Delaware River, and consequently the New Yorkers that depend upon it. We would like to see the program continue and receive another \$12 million in funding.

National Estuary Program (NEP): The EPA's National Estuary Program protects and restores 28 estuaries nationwide, including the New York/New Jersey Harbor. The continued funding of this program is important for coastal research and management programs and will improve New York's environmental health and coastal resiliency.

Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act:

The Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act would add to current water quality and shore restoration programs in the Long Island Sound, improving coordination and management of the programs and allocating over \$65 million.

The increased funding and improved oversight would help protect New York's recreation, tourism, and shipping industries, and ensure the long-term health of the Sound and the nine million inhabitants of its surrounding communities.

Plum Island Protection and Preservation: New Yorkers have mobilized to take action to preserve undeveloped lands on the ecologically-significant Plum Island, an 840-acre island off the eastern coast of Long Island. The federal government must take steps to protect this valuable hub of biodiversity in perpetuity by making it a national monument.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative accelerates efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Since 2010 this initiative has provided funding to 16 federal organizations to target the largest threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem. The 2023 and 2024 funding for this initiative were at \$368 million. This funding level should be maintained for the next fiscal year.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The Environmental Justice for All Act: This legislation was drafted through an inclusive, community-led process. This comprehensive bill prioritizes the voices, health, and safety of communities most impacted by pollution from fossil fuels, toxic substances, and exploitative practices by allowing them to hold polluters accountable, restructuring permitting processes to consider cumulative impacts and ensure community consultation, investing in these communities, and enacting other policy shifts that seek to achieve environmental justice.





SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Reliable, affordable, low-carbon transportation is important to both economic growth and environmental protection, and it requires federal investment to succeed.

Highway Trust Fund (HTF): The HTF, sourced from a federal fuel tax, is a Federal Highway Administration program that funds the development of highways and mass transit systems. Projects funded by the HTF could suffer if the Department of Transportation's budget were cut. Any changes to the HTF should reorient it towards increased mass transit projects and the development of more sustainable forms of transit.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) is the largest infrastructure investment in a generation. It is funding the rebuilding of America's infrastructure, investing in public transportation, and remediating dangerous and outdated infrastructure such as lead service lines. This funding must now get to those who need it to rebuild New York and the United States.

Investment in Transportation: Mass transportation reduces congestion, fuel use, pollutant and GHG emissions, and commuter costs while creating jobs and benefiting local and regional economies. The continued prosperity of the entire northeastern corridor of the United States is dependent upon federal investment in projects including the Gateway Tunnel, the Second Avenue Subway, and other mass transit projects around New York.

Implementing Congestion Pricing: Congestion pricing will reduce the current extreme levels of traffic we are seeing, as well as raise at least \$15 billion in dedicated funding for the MTA. It was first authorized by the State legislature in 2019 and went into effect this year. NYLCV will strongly oppose any efforts to roll back this program.

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NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

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

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

