

New York League of Conservation Voters
New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund

New York City Policy Agenda

2019-2020



The New York League of Conservation Voters and New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund have a long history of advocating for clear air, clean water, open space, clean transportation and sustainable waste management.

The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report and the Fourth National Climate Assessment make it clear that we must act quickly and make significant changes in order to avoid catastrophic climate change. To keep the planet from warming too drastically will require massive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, we must prepare for a changing climate by making sure that our communities are more resilient to extreme storms, sea-level rise, heat waves, and wildfires. As the White House continues to deny climate change and slash environmental protections, states and cities must lead the way. That's why addressing climate change is at the foundation of NYLCV's advocacy.

During Mayor de Blasio's first term, the administration and the City Council set many ambitious goals to fight climate change including zero waste by 2030 and reducing emissions 80% by 2050. Over the last year, my first at NYLCV, we have seen the city take steps towards meeting these goals. New standards to reduce emissions from buildings—the city's #1 contributor to climate change—and the largest increase in funding for the City's greenspaces in over twenty years are meaningful steps in our fight against climate change. Our 2019-2020 NYC Policy Agenda pushes the Mayor and City Council further to ensure that their ambitious goals and standards are implemented timely and feasibly.

We cannot meaningfully address climate change without tackling transportation. As Speaker Johnson said, we must break the car culture. To do that, we need streets that are safer and more pedestrian- and bike-friendly and a citywide plan on how to achieve that. Our agenda calls for alternative modes of transportation like bikes, e-bikes, e-scooters, and electric heavy-duty vehicles. Critically, we need to ensure that buses and subways are reliable and accessible so that more people use the mass transit system that gives NYC one of the country's lowest per capita greenhouse gas emission footprints.

The New York League of Conservation Voters NYC Chapter works closely with our environmental, public health, transportation, and environmental justice partners to identify and advocate for solutions to New York City's most pressing environmental issues. This agenda is the result of that work. It will guide our advocacy and programs through the end of 2020 and inform the bills we ultimately select for the 2019 and 2020 NYC Council Environmental Scorecards.

I look forward to working with Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Johnson, and the City Council to champion these policies.



Julie Tighe, President, NYLCV & NYLCVEF





Top Priorities for NYC 2019-2020

Common Sense Waste Management

Reaching the City's Zero Waste goal by 2030 will require work from all New Yorkers—cooperation of city officials and private industry, and buy-in from the public. Stimulating behavior change is critical to meeting this goal, as is ensuring the City has the programs in place that promote waste reduction, diversion and sustainable waste management. To improve diversion rates for recyclables and organic waste, the City must invest in a massive public education campaign, advance a mandatory residential organics program, avoid the use of unnecessary single-use items—particularly plastics—and follow through with its commercial waste zone plan. Especially given Mayor de Blasio's assertion in the Spring of 2019 that the City would move to a citywide mandatory organics recycling program, now is the time to dedicate the necessary resources to act on this commitment.

Encouraging Mode Shift to High Efficiency, Low Emission Forms of Transportation

With the historic signing of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), New York State is now legally mandated to drastically reduce emissions. Transportation is the #1 source of greenhouse gas emissions in our state, and this sector poses a unique challenge towards meeting our climate goals. In New York City, switching to alternative fuels is not enough. And with congestion pricing on its way, it is critical to provide sustainable alternatives to driving. Moving New Yorkers out of single-occupancy vehicles via improved and efficient public transit, bike, scooter, and other micro-mobility programs are all part of the solution for a greener transportation sector. It is equally important that the City take a comprehensive citywide approach to reimagining streetspace, so that there is adequate infrastructure in place to meet the growth in sustainable transportation. As with any other major transition, the administration must lead the way by reducing the size of the City's fleet and more aggressively transitioning the remainder of the fleet to zero-emissions.

Conserving New York City's Natural Areas

Open green space is one of the City's most valuable environmental assets. The urban canopy and open spaces help to mitigate climate change, provide clean air and habitats for native wildlife, absorb stormwater, and contribute to the well-being of our residents and our economy. It is imperative that the City invest in the health and sustainability of the canopy both in parks and natural forested areas to ensure this valuable resource is there to benefit New Yorkers for generations to come.

Combating Climate Change

The time to act on climate is now. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report makes it clear that we must make radical changes in short order to avoid catastrophic climate change. We will work to advance policies that decrease emissions from all sectors, prepare us to meet the unavoidable impacts of climate change, reduce waste, and foster a strong green economy.

Energy and Infrastructure

1. Ensure the speedy and effective implementation of NYC's nation-leading buildings emissions law, including the rollout and expansion of supporting programs such as property assessed clean energy financing options, the Retrofit Accelerator and associated green jobs trainings.
2. Take action to upgrade the City's wastewater treatment plants to process organic waste into renewable energy, including exploring the feasibility of public-private partnerships.
3. Work to remove barriers to siting and permitting renewable energy projects citywide.
4. Proactively change policies and regulations to encourage growth of emerging green technologies such as battery storage and microgrids, and encourage interagency collaboration.
5. Ensure that city-owned buildings are on track to meet emissions reduction targets and procurement commitments for renewable energy.
6. Spur clean energy innovation and investment by implementing programs like Community Choice Aggregation, a shared purchasing model which can serve as a vehicle for increased procurement of renewables as the City's energy source.
7. Develop a dedicated funding stream to support targeted, community-led, residential solar campaigns to spur the growth of renewable energy projects in low-income communities across the city.
8. Revisit mandatory parking minimums for new developments, especially those in transit rich neighborhoods, and consider replacing parking space requirements with electric vehicle charging stations, shared bike or scooter opportunities for connections to mass transit.



Transportation

1. Support the implementation of a fair congestion pricing plan that will reduce both emissions and traffic congestion. The plan should explore variable tolling for vehicles based on air quality or gridlock alert days, and the vehicle's contributions to emissions.
2. Support the rapid rollout of Mayor de Blasio's Better Bus Action Plan with a focus on transit deserts within the five boroughs for bus rapid transit technology, such as transit signal priority, dedicated bus lanes, and all-door boarding. This work must be concentrated heavily in 2019-2020 in advance of the roll out of congestion pricing.
3. Embrace new multimodal strategies to bolster the public transportation system in NYC, including support for bike share programs and bike infrastructure, scooters, light rails and ferries.
4. Ensure that mobility via bus and bike are dependable by increasing enforcement of dedicated lanes and assessing stricter penalties for violations.
5. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the use of street space, particularly for parking in predominantly residential neighborhoods, and study the feasibility of a residential



parking permit system, so that commuters aren't incentivized to use areas just outside of the central business district as a park & ride. The study should also look at how recaptured public space can be turned into green infrastructure and used for pedestrian plazas, bike and bus lanes, and playgrounds. Fight for reform and increased enforcement against placard abuse by city workers and officials.

Resiliency

1. Develop a citywide plan that tackles long-term resiliency, particularly of critical infrastructure along our waterfronts including airports, wastewater treatment plants, and marine transfer stations that are vulnerable to sea level rise, power outages, and storm surge.
2. Reform the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) Environmental Review process to expand considerations of sea level rise, risk of storm surge, and other climate change impacts when reviewing a proposed development.
3. Strengthen zoning codes to protect homes in vulnerable areas against the dangers of climate change, including the use of the most recent projections on storm surge, flood plains, and sea level rise. These projections should also be used to consider exclusionary zones for future development and strategic retreat.
4. Pursue regional collaboration to facilitate intrastate resilience planning, and raise funds for critical adaptation infrastructure that protects residents from coastal and inland flooding.
5. Support robust natural buffers along the coast including restored wetlands, oyster reefs, dunes, and other living shoreline approaches.
6. Ensure the steadfast implementation of the Cool Neighborhoods program to protect New Yorkers against urban heat island effect through mitigation, adaptation, and monitoring.



Solid Waste

1. Pass enabling legislation for Commercial Waste Zones that prioritizes waste diversion and emissions reductions. Specific measures that should be included are priority considerations for haulers who commit to greening their truck fleets, and incentives for haulers who have invested in organic waste processing at their facilities and for partnering with micro-haulers.
2. Adopt legislation to advance a citywide program for mandatory residential organic waste recycling.
3. Invest in a robust recycling and waste diversion public education program, with emphasis on reduction and reuse, to bring New York City closer to its Zero Waste to Landfills goal laid out in OneNYC.
4. Reduce unnecessary waste, including non-recyclable packaging from deliveries and single-use plastics such as straws, utensils, and containers.
5. Promote the equitable siting of regional capacity for processing organic waste.
6. Advance a "Save-As-You-Throw" study for residential waste, charging for trash collection based on the volume of waste being thrown away.
7. Promote the use of Zero Waste Design Guidelines in buildings, planning for separation, movement and storage of waste in a way that maximizes waste diversion and minimizes use of space.
8. Expand product stewardship programs for items such as packaging used for residential deliveries and carpeting.
9. Encourage city agencies to source materials for projects from the City's own waste stream where possible. For example, using recycled glass for the Department of Transportation's concrete needs and compost from DSNY for landscaping needs by NYC Parks and Environmental Protection.

Protecting People and Natural Resources

All New Yorkers deserve indoor and outdoor environments that are free of contamination and pollution. We will promote policies that provide access to healthy air and water, protect our open spaces, and improve the well-being of all New Yorkers.

Lead Poisoning Prevention

1. Lower the drinking water action level for lead to align with up-to-date county and state levels, at most 5 parts per billion.
 2. Require mandatory annual inspections for lead paint and dust in all New York City elementary schools built before 1960.
 3. Increase enforcement against landlords who fail to keep their units in compliance with the City's lead poisoning prevention laws (LL1). For example, when responding to a case of childhood lead poisoning, HPD should require that landlords provide all records of compliance including child inquiry outreach, annual inspections and abatement at turnover, as mandated by LL1, and require the agency to issue a violation if the landlord cannot provide proof of compliance.
 4. Push for increased collaboration between City agencies, especially around construction and renovation work in residential buildings, to prevent exposing children to construction dust in buildings known or presumed to have lead paint.
1. Lower the drinking water action level for lead to align with up-to-date county and state levels, at most 5 parts per billion.
 2. Increase enforcement of NYC's anti-idling laws, including greater citizen engagement.
 3. Support the transition from heating oils to cleaner heat sources such as electric heat pumps or biofuels.
 4. Support efforts to mitigate traffic and reduce emissions from trucks by piloting alternative policies for residential and commercial deliveries, including off-peak hour incentives, green loading zones, and neighborhood distribution centers.

Clean Air for All

1. Advocate for the electrification of the City's vehicle fleet, including school buses. Cleaner vehicle technology should be prioritized for those with highest average vehicle miles traveled and highest emissions, and those fleets that largely operate in environmental justice communities.
1. Push for NYC's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to implement a formal, transparent reporting process on the progress of the Long Term Control Plans for the city's waterways. Process should include a public comment period with opportunity for community engagement.
 2. Expand New York City's Green Infrastructure program with a more robust grant or other incentive program to catalyze installation on private property in targeted communities where benefits can be maximized.
 3. Encourage more collaboration between city agencies to increase the adoption of green infrastructure in projects beyond DEP, including urging the Departments of

Clean Water for All



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Transportation and Parks and Recreation to use pervious pavement and installation of bioswales and rain gardens wherever possible.

- Urge DEP to conduct a study and develop recommendations on water rate restructuring that promotes equitable generation of needed revenues, water conservation, and widespread use of green infrastructure. The process should include a robust public engagement component.

- Aggressively expand the number of NYC schools that provide youth education programs on sustainability and healthy eating through workshops and school gardens.

Sustainable food systems

- Support the expansion of both community and commercial urban agriculture in New York City with a comprehensive plan. This plan should examine amendments to the zoning code that clearly define permissible urban agriculture practices in each zoning district.
- Fight to ensure every family has access to healthy, local, and affordable produce through expansion of critical food access programs such as SNAP, FRESH, GrowNYC Youthmarkets, and Health Bucks redeemable at farmers markets across the city.

Parks and Active Waterfronts

- Play Fair with the City's parks budget, with particular focus on construction and maintenance of parks in communities underserved by parkland.
- Increase the efficiency of the NYC Parks Department's Capital Division with a clearly defined process and deadlines for design, more expedient and transparent decision making on individual projects, standardized project management tools, and increased accountability for completing projects on-time and on-budget.
- Support waterfront parks as a vital component of resiliency, and continue the expansion of public access to the waterfront on both public and private property.
- Protect parkland and jointly-operated playgrounds from alienation, a process by which these spaces can be sold or leased to be used for another purpose.



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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.

