

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

Long Island Chapter Policy Agenda 2021 - 2022





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President, NYLCV
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2020 HAS BEEN ONE LIKE NO OTHER. The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on our health, our economy, and our communities. It also underscored the importance of listening to science and the harm from air pollution, in particular for people of color and those living in low income neighborhoods. It has also heightened awareness of the need to take action to help avert the worst effects of climate change.

Too many New Yorkers live in communities systematically overburdened by pollution, a problem which the pandemic shone a bright light on. This is only exacerbated by COVID-19, which puts people with respiratory illnesses like asthma at higher risk. As we come out the other side of the public health crisis, we will still have a climate crisis. The devastating wildfires on the West Coast, and flooding in the Southeast, also underscore the importance of acting on climate change.

The State laid out bold and aggressive climate standards as part of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. Our power sector must achieve 70% renewable energy by 2030 and the entire economy must be carbon-neutral by 2050. Local governments are key to achieving these standards. Harnessing the power of offshore wind energy can make Long Island a leader on renewable energy.

Another critical connection between the environment and public health is clean water. More, for Long Island the economy is inextricably linked to water. From pollution from our industrial past to emerging contaminants like PFAS, PFOS and 1,4-dioxane to raw sewage overflows to harmful algal blooms to nitrogen pollution, our waterways and drinking water supplies are still at risk. We need more local policies that improve water infrastructure and keep our drinking water free of contaminants and recreational waters swimmable, and open for activities like fishing.

These renewable energy and clean water priorities are just some of the policies we lay out in our agenda. We continue to advocate for clean air, open space, clean transportation, and sustainable waste management.

The New York League of Conservation Voters Long Island Chapter works to identify and advocate for solutions to the region's most pressing environmental issues. This agenda is the result of that work and it will guide our advocacy and programs through the end of 2022.

We look forward to working with local officials to advance these priorities.

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



Top Priorities

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Municipalities can combat climate change by creating livable, sustainable communities. We will advance modernized zoning to encourage mixed land use, compact development, downtown revitalization, open space protection, and historic preservation.

RENEWABLES

Renewable energy like offshore wind and solar power can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution across the region, but it is challenging to site large-scale renewable energy installations and can be needlessly difficult to install small-scale renewable technology. We will work with municipal and county governments to reduce red tape and create new incentives for small-scale renewable energy.

CLEAN AIR

We will work to speed up conversions from home heating oil to cleaner, more efficient heating systems. We will continue working to reduce emissions from power plants and automobiles, including a push for more electric school buses and targeted interventions to protect environmental justice communities.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Electric vehicles (EVs) reduce greenhouse gas emissions and produce zero emissions, improving air quality. We will continue our successful advocacy efforts to increase the number of EVs in municipal fleets and expand the EV charging station network throughout Long Island.

Combating Climate Change

The time to act on climate is now. We must make radical changes in short order to avoid catastrophic climate change. New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act will require action at all levels of government to achieve its ambitious goal of reducing economy-wide emissions 85% by 2050 and achieving 70% renewable energy by 2030. We will work to advance policies to decrease emissions from all sectors, increase renewable energy production and improve energy efficiency, prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate change, reduce waste, and foster a strong green economy. By allocating resources wisely, local governments can have a significant impact on energy use and the environment. Localities must also adapt to a changing climate and include resiliency planning in all aspects of future governance.



ENERGY

- ▶ Support offshore wind development that creates green jobs on Long Island.
- ▶ Become a DEC certified Climate Smart Community by reducing greenhouse gases and taking action to protect Long Island and your community.
- ▶ Ensure PSEG expands LIPA's renewable energy and efficiency programs, improves storm resiliency, and makes meaningful investments in reliable, cost-effective, and large-scale renewable energy generation and necessary transmission upgrades.
- ▶ Purchase energy from renewable sources and increase clean energy purchasing power through programs like Community Choice Aggregation. Support Long Island-based renewable industries providing solar, wind, and energy storage. Participate in Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing programs to increase clean energy installation and use.
- ▶ Adopt green building standards for new residential and commercial construction, such as requiring electric heating systems, water heaters, and appliances in new constructions and requiring installation of solar panels on new commercial buildings and parking structures.
- ▶ Remove barriers in local laws and codes to streamline the permit process for installation of renewable energy sources for homeowners and business owners. Create incentives for energy-efficiency upgrades in existing residential and commercial buildings and heat pumps for home heating. Fund public education and outreach on existing energy-efficiency incentives.
- ▶ Conduct energy audits, purchase Energy Star-rated equipment, and invest in energy efficiency retrofits in municipal buildings. Install sensors and energy efficient LED bulbs in streetlights. Pass local ordinances to reduce light pollution and unnecessary light.
- ▶ Invest in wastewater treatment upgrades to process organic waste into renewable energy, including consideration of the feasibility of public-private partnerships.
- ▶ Promote policies to invest in battery storage and other emerging green technologies.
- ▶ Develop programs that ensure clean energy, microgrids, and efficiency programs are equitably delivered to low-income populations and tenants of affordable housing.



TRANSPORTATION

- ▶ Increase funding for LIRR and regional transit and increase service and routes. Improve interconnectivity between buses, trains, and planes.
- ▶ Support full funding of the MTA Capital Plan, especially East Side Access and other projects that would increase capacity and reliability on the LIRR.
- ▶ Convert municipal fleets to hybrid, electric, or other clean energy vehicles. Replace diesel vehicles, especially those that transport children, with electric vehicles and buses where possible and to other clean fuel technology where electric is not viable.
- ▶ Install electric vehicle charging stations in all municipal garages and parking lots. Promote local ordinances that require EV charging in all new housing and commercial construction projects.
- ▶ Reduce reliance on cars through other viable options, including walking, bicycling, and public transportation. Improve bike and bus mobility by creating complete networks of streets with dedicated bus lanes, protected bike lanes, and transportation networks that connect residential areas to commercial areas, parks, and green spaces. Create bike-sharing opportunities and expand electric car-share initiatives.
- ▶ Explore congestion easing measures on county highways.

- ▶ Evaluate ways to reduce emissions at Long Island airports, including converting to EV ground vehicles, using renewable fuels, installing onsite solar facilities, and investing in efficiency projects.
- ▶ Enforce existing anti-idling laws.

RESILIENCY

- ▶ Implement resiliency projects including resiliency retrofits to critical facilities, installation of shoreline defenses to reduce erosion, and construction of stormwater management systems.
- ▶ Develop county and town plans to address long-term resiliency, particularly of critical infrastructure along waterfronts, airports, wastewater treatment plants, and marine transfer stations that are vulnerable to sea level rise, power outages, and storm surge. Pursue regional collaboration to facilitate intrastate resilience planning and raise funds for critical adaptation infrastructure that protects residents from coastal and inland flooding.
- ▶ Support robust natural buffers along the coast, including restored wetlands, oyster reefs, dunes, and other living shoreline approaches.
- ▶ Provide incentives and technical assistance to property owners, developers, and communities to manage on-site stormwater with a variety of technologies, such as green roofs, bioswales, rain gardens, and rain barrels.



- ▶ Strengthen zoning codes to protect homes in vulnerable areas and enact building standards designed to minimize and prevent damage from flooding and increasing storms. Apply current projections on storm surge, flood plains, and sea level rise to establish exclusionary zones for future development and strategic retreat.
- ▶ Continue carrying out the Long Island Sound, Peconic and South Shore Estuary Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (CCMP) to restore and preserve the estuaries by incorporating CCMP recommendations into enforceable town and village codes.

SOLID WASTE

- ▶ Incentivize and expand regional recycling facilities, anaerobic digesters, compost sites, and other technologies that can process waste with a smaller impact on the environment.
- ▶ Explore curbside collection of residential food waste and commercial organic waste recycling programs, with the goal of establishing facilities and anaerobic digesters capable of processing organic waste into compost and/or renewable energies.
- ▶ Provide educational materials for backyard composting and other local organic recycling efforts, and link local composting with local agriculture.
- ▶ Implement a “save-as-you-throw” program to charge for collection of non-recyclable trash based on the amount being thrown away.
- ▶ Work with schools, restaurants, and municipalities to develop waste reduction plans, boost recycling rates, and provide education about recycling and waste diversion, with emphasis on reduction and reuse. Work with restaurants and organizations not covered by the State food waste law to participate in food recovery programs that donate excess untouched food to help those in need.
- ▶ Pass an ordinance in Nassau County implementing a fee on paper bags to complement NYS’ plastic bag ban and encourage reusable bag use.
- ▶ Promote policies that ban single-use plastic straws, utensils, and containers in favor of reusable and compostable materials.
- ▶ Expand product stewardship programs for items such as packaging used for residential deliveries and carpeting.
- ▶ Encourage local governments to source materials for projects from their own waste stream where possible, including use of recycled glass for concrete needs and compost for landscaping needs.

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, land, and water, protect our open spaces, and improve the well-being of all New Yorkers.

CLEAN WATER

- ▶ Support the recommendations of the Long Island Commission on Aquifer Protection.
- ▶ Develop regional, county, and local plans to restore streams and other water resources.
- ▶ Update sewage treatment plants and reduce combined sewer overflow drainage to prevent sewer spills and improve water quality and aquatic habitat.
- ▶ Develop stormwater and agricultural runoff management programs for key watershed and estuary areas across Long Island. Update stormwater systems and adopt best management practices to protect against water and land contamination from stormwater runoff. Integrate permeable surfaces into new road, sidewalk and parking lot construction projects to increase stormwater capture and prevent runoff.
- ▶ Invest in wastewater treatment plant upgrades to remove nitrogen effectively and consistently to restore the health of waterways, oceans, and bays. Support rigorous monitoring of wastewater treatment plants to ensure compliance with permitted nitrogen levels. Continue to implement the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan with strong nitrogen reduction plans for all sources of nitrogen pollution.
- ▶ Adopt and implement updated plans and regulations that integrate best-available, next-generation septic systems. Ensure that funds allocated in the Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017 and county grant programs are efficiently leveraged and reauthorized going forward for septic upgrades, replacements, and alternative septic management initiatives.
- ▶ Delay any decision on reopening Jamaica Water Service wells until after the conclusion of the U.S. Geological Survey's sustainability assessment.



- ▶ Adopt revised Peconic Bay Community Preservation Fund initiative to extend and allocate some of the fund to be used for water quality projects.
- ▶ Encourage continued U.S. Geological Service participation in groundwater aquifer testing and mapping on Long Island specifically for monitoring saltwater intrusion in vulnerable areas.
- ▶ Implement comprehensive pesticide reduction and phase-out plans, particularly in Special Groundwater Protection Areas. Adopt Integrated Pest Management plans for publicly owned property. Develop policies to educate private property owners and companies about the benefits of adopting Integrated Management plans to reduce pesticide and herbicide use.
- ▶ Investigate water conservation and water reuse options, including rainwater capture technologies.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- ▶ Create livable, sustainable communities designed with density and diversity in downtowns and with access to convenient mass transit. Modernize zoning, tax incentives, and regulations to encourage mixed land use, compact development, downtown revitalization, open space protection, and historic preservation.
- ▶ Make communities more walkable and bikeable through safer walkways, lower speed limits, electronic speed enforcement, and increased

enforcement for reckless driving. Reduce or eliminate parking minimums to encourage walkable neighborhoods.

- ▶ Encourage adaptive reuse of existing building structures instead of new development.
- ▶ Promote ordinances and legislation to require green roofing on new residential and commercial structures, including solar panels or plants.
- ▶ Ensure waterfront development is consistent with smart growth goals, meets resiliency targets, and facilitates public access to waterfront.
- ▶ Prevent loss of native biodiversity and growth of invasive species to protect natural landscapes and resiliency of natural habitats. Integrate the use of native plants for landscaping and increase the number of native and pollinator-friendly gardens and natural areas in public space. Work with local partners and public officials to educate the public about best landscaping practices and measures to respond to the growing threat of invasive species, including improved wildlife management.
- ▶ Identify and encourage redevelopment of brownfield sites and utilize the Brownfields Opportunity Area program to ensure that local communities are engaged.



PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

- ▶ Adopt zoning that preserves existing green space and open space set-asides. Expand regional and local land banks to preserve green space for livable neighborhoods.
- ▶ Protect open space from development by promoting local bond initiatives, conservation land trusts, community preservation funds, dedicated revenue streams for conservation, and reduced property taxes for open space.
- ▶ Promote investment in parks and greenspaces to underserved communities in greatest need of parkland development.
- ▶ Create programming in parks, farms, and other open spaces to encourage the public's use and appreciation of them.
- ▶ Ensure that any expansion of the Pine Barrens includes a new report from the Central Pine Barrens Commission on how new transferable development rights would be created and used.
- ▶ Create pocket parks, community gardens and urban farms and protect them through conservation easements held by land trusts or municipalities. Protect parks and playgrounds from alienation through lease or sale of these spaces for other purposes.

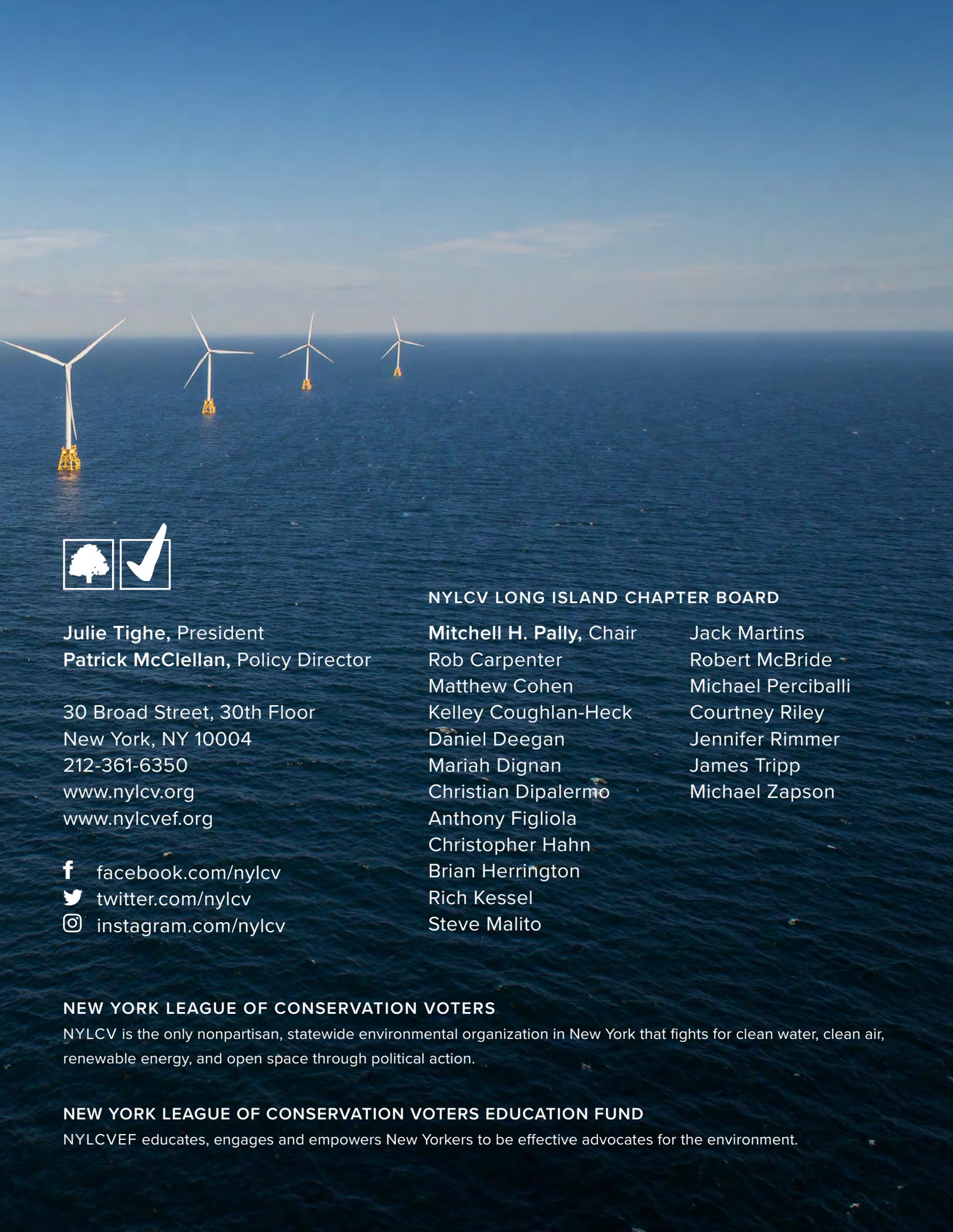
FARMS AND LOCAL FOOD

Work with the State Department of Agriculture to

- ▶ expand the Fresh-Connect Program to create more farmers' markets throughout the region, especially in "food desert" communities.
- ▶ Create programs to assist young and beginning farmers. Adopt affordable farmland and affirmative farming legislation that ensures protected land remains farmed for food production. Encourage funding streams for farmland preservation that can leverage private and public dollars. Maintain productive farmland through the acquisition and donation of development rights.



- ▶ Create outreach and awareness campaigns to take advantage of the growing popularity of regional agriculture, sustainable viticulture, and local agricultural products.
- ▶ On the East End, enhance agricultural districts within which farmers receive incentives to continue using their land for agricultural purposes, including changes to real property tax and estate tax treatment of working farms, protections against local laws that inhibit farming practices, and incentivize zoning such as Agricultural Planned Development Districts.
- ▶ Promote policies to ensure every family has access to healthy, local, and affordable produce through expansion of critical food access programs, such as SNAP, Feeding Westchester, and other types of health bucks redeemable at farmers markets across the county. Identify food recovery partners for programs to feed those in need.
- ▶ Expand the number of Long Island schools that provide youth education on agriculture, sustainability, and healthy eating through workshops and school gardens.



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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.

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