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**THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS**
of New York State

MEMORANDUM IN RESPONSE TO ASSEMBLY REFORM PROPOSALS

TO: New York State Assembly
DATE: March 22 2016

The League of Women Voters of New York State fully supports the recommendations proposed by the Assembly Work Group on Legislative Process. These reforms will increase transparency, legislative efficiency, and give the public greater access to legislative information.

Transparency and Public Participation

In the past, the League has been critical of the lack of transparency from our state government. We are pleased to see so many reforms that will open our legislative system to the public. The League supports reforms to establish an active debate list, identify fiscal impact notes on legislative memos, and publically release support and opposition memos, from lobbyists, business interest, and advocacy groups. Additional proposals to make LRS (Legislative Retrieval System) available through the creation of an online portal, will increase transparency and allow the public access to legislative actions.

Advancing Legislation

The Committee has proposed creating a true two year legislative session by eliminating automatic regression of bills so that bills passed in one year by the first house can be passed in the second year by the other. This new rule change needs Senate approval and statutory changes; we encourage the Senate to move forward with this proposal. The League supports rule changes which give members up to five priority bills to be considered and voted upon in committee in the first year of the term, and an unlimited number of bills in the second year. These reforms will ensure that rank and file legislators have the opportunity to have their legislation considered in Committee. The League is also pleased that the Assembly Committee on Conference Committees will regularly meet again.

Resources and Efficiency

By giving legislators and their staff the tools necessary to quickly respond to constituent concerns we can restore some of the public's faith in their state government. Installing a CRM system to help with constituent casework and providing on-going training for staff and legislators are common sense reforms that will benefit all parties involved. Although these are not rules changes, the League supports these proposals and hopes they will be considered by the Assembly.

Further Recommendations

Although these rule reforms are a positive step in the right direction, the League believes that there is still work to be done. Streamlining committees, allowing a simple majority of members to bring any bill to the floor for consideration, and a fair allocation of resources between the majority and minority members would further simplify the legislative process and allow for greater equality for all members. We hope that the Assembly will consider these reform recommendations in future sessions.

The League of Women Voters of New York State applauds co- chairs Assembly Members Kavanagh and Pretlow and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, for their work on these rule reforms. We look forward to their passage and final implementation.