

RAISE THE AGE

JUVENILE JUSTICE Statement of Position As announced by the State Board, 2016

The League of Women Voters of New York State supports legislation to raise the age of adult criminal responsibility to 18 years old. Our position is based on the following beliefs:

1. Children under the age of 18 are not adults and their treatment within the juvenile justice and criminal court system should relate to their stage of development.
2. Children should not be held in adult jails.
3. Rehabilitation is the purpose of the juvenile justice system.
4. The legal rights of children should be protected.

Recent Activity

In June 2015, LWVNYS convention delegates approved a state board recommended program item to conduct a post-convention concurrence with portions of LWV of Ohio's Juvenile Justice position. In January of 2016 the position was approved. After its approval, the League used the new position to advocate for the proposed legislation. During our annual lobby day, members from LWV Schenectady attended a press conference with the Raise the Age coalition in support of the bill. The League also created a memo of support. The bill was not considered in 2016 but we will continue to advocate for it next session.

New York State and North Carolina are the only states that prosecute all youth 16 years of age and older as adults. This law does not reflect brain development research that has proved the human brain is not fully formed until the age of 26. These developing adolescents are often impulsive and lack the ability to focus on the consequences of their behavior. Adolescents respond well to interventions and are likely to grow out of negative or delinquent behavior.