

## SOCIAL POLICY

State action on social policy issues is primarily carried out by LWVNYS under LWVUS social policy positions. Under this broad position, there are specific positions on childcare, early intervention for children at risk, equality of opportunity, health care, meeting basic human needs, urban policy, fiscal policy, gun control, the death penalty, and violence prevention. (**LWVUS *Impact on Issues, 2014-2016, pp. 58-79***). However, LWVNYS has developed its own positions on **Housing** (in this section), the **Death Penalty** (under **Judicial**) and **Pay Equity, Domestic Violence** (under **Women's Issues**) as noted below, as well as its own positions under **State Finances**. **Health Care** is a separate portfolio for LWVNYS and information regarding state League action appears under **Health Care** in this publication.

## EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons in the United States regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability. (**LWVUS *Impact on Issues, 2014-2016, pp. 58***).

### Recent League Activity

For employment opportunity, please refer to the **Pay Equity** section of this document.

At the LWVUS Convention in June, 2010, this national position was amended to include marriage equality, the ability of two people of the same sex to marry.

When in 2011 Governor Cuomo came out in favor of legislation granting individuals of the same sex the ability to enter into civil marriages in New York State, the League actively worked to help pass the Marriage Equality Act. Individual members of the legislature were identified as important to the passage of the legislation, and members of the League, equipped with talking points provided by state, lobbied those legislators in an effort to win their support. The New York legislation passed in 2011.

LWVNYS continues to work for passage of the Gender Expression Nondiscrimination Act (GENDA). This act would prohibit discrimination in housing, education, and public accommodation based on gender expression or identification and add crimes against transgender individuals to a list of hate crimes. Although the positions of both the state and national Leagues interpret gender equality to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity or expression, SONDA (see below) did not so define gender. Consequently, discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation (like restaurants and movies) based on gender identity or expression is still legal in New York State, except where prohibited under local law, as is the case in many jurisdictions.

In his January 2013 State of the State, Governor Cuomo introduced his 10-point Women's Equality Agenda, later the Women's Equality Act (WEA), which included a provision to address

discrimination in housing based on domestic victim status and on source of income, discrimination closing tied to gender. The WEA would:

- Prohibit building owners, managers and leasing agents from refusing to lease or sell, or evicting a tenant because of their status as a domestic violence victim
- Create a task force to study the impact of discrimination based on source of income in housing, in particular discrimination against tenants receiving Section 8 rental assistance, with focus on any sex-based impact

Following the State of the State, LWVNY joined the NY Women's Equality Coalition to lobby for passage of Governor Cuomo's 10-point Women's Equality Agenda/Act (WEA). The League lobbied extensively for passage of the WEA, but it did not pass during the 2013 legislative session. For a complete narrative on the League's advocacy on WEA, please see the *Women's Issues* section

### **Past League Activity**

The League actively supported the "Private Clubs" Bill to prohibit discrimination in evaluation application for membership in places of public accommodation, resorts, or amusement (except in distinctly private clubs). In the 1994 legislative session, this legislation passed both houses and was signed into law.

The LWVNYS lobbied for passage of SONDA, the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act. It was successful in 2002, when discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation on the basis of sexual orientation became a prohibited activity under the New York State Human Rights Law.

### **EDUCATION**

As explained in *LWVUS Impact on Issues*, the 1974-76 national program included the phrase "equal access to quality education," yet the LWVUS has never undertaken a process for determining a common League definition of "quality" that could serve as a basis for action nationwide. When the definition of quality is a key factor in a state or local community, a local or state League must conduct its own study rather than relying on the LWVUS position to take action. (*LWVUS Impact on Issues, 2014-2016, p. 59*). Accordingly, LWVNYS has developed positions on quality in education, which appear under **State Finances** in this publication.

The League strives to protect funds for education programs that would aid the disadvantaged. To this end, support is given to budget bills that provide money for opportunity programs, urban centers for vocational training, and pre-kindergarten programs. The League has also supported special aid to urban school districts having problems associated with poverty.

Since 1983, the League has taken a lead in the formation of and participation in the Sex Equity in Education Coalition. Since 1985, the League has actively supported legislation, which would provide equal access for all students and employees in education programs and facilities that receive state financial assistance.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Recent League Activity**

For action on pay equity, please see **Pay Equity** under the **Women's Issues** section of this publication.

**During the 2013 legislative session, LWVNY joined the NY Women's Equality Coalition to lobby for passage of Governor Cuomo's 10-point Women's Equality Agenda/Act (WEA). The WEA included employment related provisions that would address discrimination women face in the workplace. These WEA provisions would:**

- **Extend New York State's law that prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace to workplaces with fewer than four employees. (Currently, those working for employers with fewer than 4 employees cannot file a complaint with the State because small employers are currently exempt from the provisions of State law that prohibit harassment.)**
- **Outlaw discrimination against parents in the workplace (Current state law protects against familial status discrimination in housing and credit, but not employment.)**
- **Address pregnancy discrimination in the workplace by requiring employers to provide reasonable accommodation to pregnant workers**

The League lobbied extensively for passage of the WEA, but it did not pass during the 2013 legislative session. For a complete narrative on the League's advocacy on WEA, please see the *Women's Issues* section

### **Past League Activity**

In the early 1970s, the national League acted to eliminate discriminatory hiring practices in state-financed or assisted construction activity. The League has worked for legislation that will assure affirmative action in state-awarded hiring contracts. (**LWVUS Impact on Issues, 2014-2016, pp. 60**)

In the 1970s the League also focused on the plight of migrant workers, especially the need for adequate standards of health and housing, better education and day care facilities, and prevention of punitive measures that would restrict the right of migrant workers to work for better conditions.

In 1981, LWVNYS supported a constitutional amendment to increase the loan capacity of the Job Development Authority. LWVNYS support was an important factor in its subsequent acceptance by voters.

## **FAIR HOUSING**

Support for measures to meet the needs for affordable and accessible housing through use of state funds and incentives to localities.

League action in housing began in 1968 when the LWVUS added support for equality of opportunity in housing to that for education and employment. LWVNYS reached a position in 1970 providing the basis for action in housing.

### **HOUSING**

#### **Statement of Position**

**As announced by the State Board, September 1970**

**Revised to reflect State Convention action, 1999**

- 1. Support for increased state funds for affordable and accessible housing and for rent subsidies.**
- 2. Support for incentives to encourage communities to accept their share of the overall responsibility for providing sufficient housing for low and moderate-income families.**
- 3. Support for the participation of counties in meeting housing needs, through such methods as permitting the establishment of County Housing Authorities.**
- 4. Support for legislation which requires local governments to take affirmative action to provide some of their vacant land for low-income families.**

### **Recent League Activity**

The League has consistently monitored the New York State budget to assure adequate state funds for affordable and accessible housing and for rent subsidies.

### **Past League Activity**

The League has worked to eliminate discrimination in rentals to low-income families and has supported government subsidies for housing for these families. In the early 1970s, the League worked for fair housing by seeking adequate funding for the Division of Human Rights and administrative changes in, and expansion of, the Human Rights Law to make it more effective.

In 1974 and 1975, there was a successful effort for the passage of the Warranty of Habitability Law, which added an obligation by landlords to maintain rental properties in compliance with applicable codes and an obligation of tenants to pay rent. In 1979, the League successfully supported a Retaliatory Eviction bill, which protects tenants against retaliation when they notify officials of housing code violations or otherwise act in good faith to secure their rights to habitable housing.

Since 1974, the League has supported implementation of the Housing and Community Development Act, which consolidated federal assistance under the block grant approach. In 1989 the League supported legislation for a constitutional amendment, which would extend to counties the housing and development powers now granted to cities, towns and villages, an amendment, which would help provide affordable housing. This bill received first passage. However, it needed two successive sessions to approve this legislation, and it was defeated in 1991. The League continues to support this form of legislation.

### **FISCAL POLICY**

Although the LWVUS has adopted a federal deficit and tax policy, these apply only to fiscal policy at the national level. **(LWVUS Impact on Issues, 2014-2016, pp. 66-68)**

The LWVNYS must oppose any state bills or other actions that would call for a constitutional amendment to balance the federal budget. Subject to this exception, LWVUS fiscal policies cannot be used at the state level without separate League study and membership agreement. LWVNYS's positions on Fiscal Policy are found primarily in the **State Finances** section of this document.

### **WELFARE REFORM**

LWVNYS action on welfare reform is taken under this LWVUS position. The League has worked since 1970 for a decent level of public assistance and curtailment of repressive and punitive welfare legislation in New York State. Support has been given to cost of living increases in public assistance allowances. In 1973, the League was successful in securing the restoration of a 10% cut in benefits, which had been passed during the budget crisis of 1971. In 1972 and in 1981, the League successfully lobbied for both a general increase, and an energy-related increase. In 1989 a year of state budget austerity, League successfully supported legislation to increase public assistance benefits by 15%.

LWVUS opposed the Family Support Act of 1988, citing inadequate funding and mandatory participation quotas for job training programs. Concerned League activists worked at the state and local levels to shape Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) programs to provide the best possible education and job training.

In the 1994 session, legislation was introduced and passed by the legislature to expand the pilot Home Relief fingerprinting project. The League opposed this legislation based on the lack of clear evidence that this process would have the desired result—fraud prevention and cost savings. The savings noted in the two pilot projects may have been the result of deterring bona fide recipients from seeking genuinely needed assistance.

After the governor's proposed budget was introduced in early February 1995, the League joined with other advocacy organizations to oppose reductions in funding for programs and services vital to the welfare of children and families throughout NYS. Governor Pataki's budget proposed a dramatic change in the way child welfare services are funded by the state Department

of Social Services. The 1995-96 State Budget created a block grant for Family and Children Services, both merging and cutting funding for multiple child welfare programs.

The Executive Budget for the 1996-97 Fiscal Year contained proposals for welfare reform predicated upon presumed federal action that would be employment-based, limit the time recipients could receive benefits, and essentially hand over welfare to the states. The League monitored this effort to reform welfare and urged the governor, and the leadership in the Senate and the Assembly to make this reform more than symbolic politics. Support was given for reform that would prevent or reduce poverty and promote sustained self-sufficiency for individuals and families. When the 1996 legislative session ended in early July the outcome of federal reform was uncertain and ideological differences between the Assembly and the governor prevented a bipartisan compromise on welfare reform. In the final budget; the proposed time limits, benefit cuts, block grants to local governments, and earnings disregard failed to be adopted.

In August 1996 President Clinton signed The Personal Responsibility Act of 1996, ending an era when entitlement to cash assistance was assumed and the oversight of the welfare system was carried out by the federal government. All states were faced with developing welfare reform designed to implement the new federal requirements. The federal reform requires that 50% of all adults in single parent families and 90% of adults in two parent families will have to fulfill the work requirements by 2002. In November, the governor announced his reform proposal: New York Works. In an effort to prevent the negative effects this reform would have at the local level, local Leagues were urged to schedule appointments with their Department of Social Services Commissioners to discuss reform and seek answers to specific questions. This provided the information necessary for lobbying based on the local effects of welfare reform.

The state League along with six other organizations released a joint position statement addressing the following pivotal provisions in the reform debate: expansion of alternative sources of income support such as child support and the state earned income tax credit; child care; transitional benefits including health care coverage; follow-up case management and other support services that help maintain someone in employment; and workable models for providing sufficient funding for training and transportation needs. In addition to these provisions, we supported expansion of the Child Assistance Program (CAP) to all counties with the local share of the administrative costs to be borne by the state and increased funding for preventive family planning services. The League opposed any reduction in cash benefits, a cashless Safety Net Program (vouchers), and allowing counties the option of accepting their funds in the form of a block grant.

During the 2000 through 2007 legislative sessions, the League has supported and will continue to support funding for childcare and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in the New York State budget.

### **CHILD CARE**

**Support efforts to expand the supply of affordable, quality childcare for all who need it. (LWVUS *Impact on Issues, 2014-2016, p. 76*)**

## **Recent League Activity**

The history of recent LWNYS advocacy in this area appears under **State Finances** in this publication

## **Past League Activity**

During the period 1989-1994, a simultaneous tax reduction and budget shortfall adversely affected a range of needed services. The LWNYS therefore was cautious about lobbying for childcare services in preference to other needed state programs. In 1991, the state League board decided on a moratorium on lobbying program dollars for all fiscal legislative issues. (Each year until the moratorium, the League had supported expanding the funding and framework of childcare centers.) However, with the introduction of the 1995-1996 Executive budget, Governor Pataki included a four-year tax cut of 25%. These circumstances led the state Board to lift the moratorium on League legislative lobbying concerning social service funding. The League has continued support for legislation that would give tax benefits to corporations that provide day care services to their employees, and increase appropriations for good developmental day care for children of low-income working parents.

In 1988 and 1989, the League worked to provide salary enhancements to child care workers and to increase funding for childcare resource and referral agencies across New York State. Governor Pataki's 1995-96 Executive budget proposal deleted all funding for childcare resource and referral agencies. However, the legislature restored \$500,000 for this valuable service. In 1996-97, League continued its effort to expand the supply of affordable quality childcare for all who need it. In 1996-97, the push for employment-based welfare reform provided an opportunity for childcare advocates to expand and improve childcare for all NYS parents. The League joined 30 other organizations in support of the NYS Child Care Coordinating Council's "CHILD CARE WORKS . . ." campaign. The campaign's five-point plan in brief was to: keep child care affordable; maintain health safety standards; support quality child care; expand the supply of child care; and increase funding for child care resources and referral services that will help parents make informed decisions regarding child care. League lobbied with other campaign members in support of these five points.

The League continued its involvement in the Child Care that Works Campaign (CCtW) and in 1998-99 the League joined with other Child-welfare advocates as part of the campaign in supporting a major legislative proposal to address the critical shortage of affordable, high quality child care/early learning programs in New York State. The total proposed cost of the CCtW proposal in State Fiscal Year 1999-2000 was to be \$277 million. As a way to meet the needs of both parents and children under the CCtW proposal, investments are made in three main component areas: 1) expanded eligibility for subsidized child care, 2) a series of quality initiatives to ensure that New York's child care/early learning programs are the best possible for children, and 3) facility renovation & construction to expand supply. The members also support proposals to improve quality by investing in teacher pay and education. The League participated in conference calls and lobbying visits.

Since 1999, childcare advocacy efforts have been joined with budget advocacy for universal Pre-Kindergarten and early grade class size reduction programs. In 1996, expanded preschool education was the subject of a report by Lieutenant Governor Ross. The League supported the intent of the report. Assembly Speaker Silver has continued to advocate for funding for this program. Although the 1997-98 final budget included a \$5.5 billion education plan, which would phase in over five years pre-kindergarten classes for all 4-year-olds, full-day kindergarten for all children, and smaller class sizes in the early grades, this program has never been fully implemented.

The League participates in the Pre-K Coalition (formerly called the Emergency Coalition to Save Universal Pre-K), a statewide consortium. The Pre-K Coalition continues an active annual lobbying program in Albany and throughout the State. Their advocacy materials and list of members, including the LWVNYS, are available at <http://www.winningbeginningny.org/>. The basic premises are that in Pre-K, children develop the cognitive, sensory-motor and social skills they need to succeed in school. The League believes that investing in children's early years lays the foundation for reading, writing, and math skills, critical to academic success and economic self-sufficiency.

Each year since the early education legislation passed in 1997, Governor Pataki has proposed less than full funding of the amount scheduled during the phase-in period. During the budget negotiations in 2003, following intense lobbying by the Pre-K Coalition, the legislature overrode vetoes by Governor Pataki and supported funding for Pre-K programs, although not at the required level to provide universal Pre-K throughout the State.

The League has participated in attempts to restore the funding cuts, and has met with varying degrees of success. The cost of providing quality programs has increased, making it more difficult to spread the program to all eligible children and to provide quality professionals, transportation, and space.

By 2005, the Governor and legislature had still not implemented the multi-year phase-in. Approximately ¼ of NYS 4-year-olds attend pre-kindergarten classes. Full-day kindergarten is still not universally provided. The League continues to support the full phase-in of these programs statewide.

With the support of the newly elected governor, Eliot Spitzer the 2007-2008 state budget included full funding for universal pre-school education for all four year olds.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

**The LWVUS believes that energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs and will continue to examine transportation policies in light of these goals. (LWVUS *Impact on Issues*, 2014-2016, p. 73)**

LWVNYS also relies on its **Urban Sprawl** position located in the **Natural Resources** section of this publication, which does not mention transportation explicitly, but which transportation infrastructure does affect in very direct ways.

### **Recent League Activity**

In 2016, for the first time, the League submitted budget testimony to the Joint Committee on Transportation. The testimony was focused on increasing transportation funding for upstate highways and public transportation authorities. We addressed the need for funding to repair upstate infrastructure and roadways. Later during session, we issued a memo of support for a bill to require greater transparency from the New York State Department of Transportation. The bill would require that the NYSDOT submit Capital Plans in a timely manner and allow for public comment to be considered.

In 2014, LWVNYS Transportation Specialist, Gladys Gifford, urged local leagues to raise the need for upstate funding for public transit. This was accomplished in the budget process, through a change in the formula for distributing NYS sales tax.

LWVNYS encourages legislators to shape transportation decisions toward a coherent policy that supports energy efficiency and smart growth. Priorities in this area include maintenance and repair of existing transportation infrastructure, provision of capital and operating needs for transit agencies, and creation of a railroad network that provides adequate capacity for both passenger and freight systems. The League will specifically continue to monitor and support high-speed rail corridor development.

## **GUN CONTROL**

LWVUS' Statement of Position on Gun Control, as Adopted by 1990 Convention and amended by the 1994 and 1998 conventions:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.

The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for a background check, personal identity verification, gun safety education, and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.

The League supports a ban on "Saturday night specials," enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocations of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.

The League acknowledges that the U.S. Supreme Court and the lower federal courts have ruled consistently that the Second Amendment confers a right to keep and bear arms only in connection with service in a well-regulated militia—known today as the National Guard. LWVUS' Statement of Position on Gun Control, as Adopted by 1990 Convention and amended by the 1994 and 1998 conventions: ([LWVUS Impact on Issues, 2014-2016, p. 77](#))

### **Recent League Activity**

In 2014, LWVNY issued a memo of support for “Nicholas’ Bill” (A.73283A), which would require the safe storage of all guns not in the immediate possession or control of the gun owner, either in a safe storage depository or with a locking device, to prevent access by children and others who should not have access to them.

Two recent Supreme Court cases make it clear that the Second Amendment protects the individual’s right to possess a firearm, unconnected to service in a militia, and to use the firearm for traditionally lawful purposes, such as self-defense within the home.

In the 2008 case of *District of Columbia v. Heller*, the Supreme Court held that the District’s gun control act, the [Firearms Control Regulations Act of 1975](#), violated the Second Amendment insofar as it banned handgun possession in the home and required that any lawful firearm be disassembled or bound by a trigger lock while in the home. In issuing its opinion, the Court noted that the Second Amendment right was not unlimited. It does not provide a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose: For example, concealed weapons prohibitions have been upheld. The Court’s opinion should not be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms.

In 2010, the Supreme Court extended the Second Amendment rights articulated in [Heller](#) to state attempts to ban and/or regulate guns. In *McDonald v. Chicago*, the Court held that the right of an individual to “keep and bear arms” protected by the Second Amendment is [incorporated](#) by the [Due Process Clause](#) of the [Fourteenth Amendment](#) and applies to the states.

The League anticipates that these two Supreme Court opinions will engender additional litigation, as individuals attempt to further define the both the scope of the Second Amendment right and the ability of the state to limit that right.

In January 2013, in the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in Connecticut, the legislature passed and Governor Cuomo signed into law the New York Secure Ammunition and Firearms Enforcement Act of 2013 (NY SAFE Act, A2388/S2230). Among the NY SAFE Act provisions are universal background checks on gun purchases, increased penalties for people who use illegal guns, mandated life imprisonment without parole for anyone who murders a first responder, and an assault weapons ban. The bill was passed using a message of necessity. The League joined its good government partners in praising the public safety goal of the anti-gun violence legislation, but criticized the use of a message of necessity, pointing out that the public

interest is best served when public policy making includes robust public discussion and a transparent legislative process.

### **Past League Activity**

Several bills (introduced by Assemblyman Silver and Senator Volker) to increase the penalties for firearms infractions were supported by the League, passed by the 1991 legislature, and signed into law by Governor Cuomo. The League actively lobbied in support of a bill sponsored by Assemblyman Koppell and Senator Frank Padavan to restrict the ownership of certain assault weapons. This legislation passed the Assembly during the 1993 session but was not addressed in the Senate.

During both the 1994 and 1995 legislative sessions, the assault weapons bill, now sponsored by Assemblywoman Matusow, passed the Assembly, but was not addressed by the Senate. LWVNYS supported this legislation because passage at the state level will allow local prosecutors to enforce the restrictions in state courts. During the 1998 legislative session due primarily to the school shootings across the country there was renewed interest within the legislature to address gun safety where it pertains to children and guns. Late in the 1998 session, legislation was introduced by Assembly member Naomi Matusow that would require child safety locks on all guns sold in New York State. The League supports this legislation under the LWVUS position on violence prevention. This bill passed the Assembly but was not addressed in the state Senate.

Again, in the 1999 legislative session, the League lobbied for the Matusow legislation and joined with New Yorkers Against Gun Violence in a coalition involving several groups around the issue of child safety and school violence. Following the Littleton Colorado violence and close on the heels of other school shootings across the nation the League lobbied for better restrictions of gun shows and background checks on weapons sold at gun shows and flea markets. School violence legislation passed the Assembly but was again not addressed in the state Senate.

The League had worked for several years in coalition with New Yorkers Against Gun Violence to pass sensible gun laws. Both houses of the legislature passed the Governor's bill and it went into effect on January 1, 2001. This comprehensive legislation will:

1. Establish criminal sanctions for possession and sale of assault weapons and large capacity ammunition feeding devices;
2. Requires that a gun locking device be provided when a rifle, shotgun or firearm is sold at retail;
3. Establishes a NYS ballistics identification databank;
4. Requires all sales at gun shows to be subject to a background check;
5. Establishes a minimum age of 21 yrs. for purchase of handguns;
6. Establishes a funded gun trafficking interdiction program;
7. Authorizes a study of the availability and effectiveness of existing technology for use of smart guns.

The League joined with the New Yorkers Against Gun Violence coalition in support of strengthening legislation to revoke firearms to individuals who have violated an order of protection which would change the standard from one “serious physical to “physical injury” which is easier to prove. The legislation did not pass during the 2001-2003 sessions. **However, in December 2005 the Governor called the legislature back into special session to deal with violence against police officers. Following a three-way agreement the legislature passed legislation to increase the penalties for killing a “peace officer” to life without parole. Legislation was also passed to increase the penalties for illegal gun use.**

During the session of 2006/2007 the Assembly again passed legislation to provide child safety locks on all handguns in New York State. This same legislation was not addressed in the Senate. Legislation was also passed in the Assembly both sessions to ban the use of a fifty caliber machine gun, again this legislation was never addressed in the Senate.

### **HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

In his January 2013 State of the State, Governor Cuomo announced his 10-point Women’s Equality Act (WEA), which included provisions to combat human trafficking. The League, already in support of nearly all of the other WEA measures, was eager to take a position on human trafficking. In March 2013, the state board recommended an immediate post-convention concurrence with LWV of Ohio’s Human Trafficking position. 2013 Convention delegates approved asking local leagues to vote on the concurrence. In June 2013, the question was put to local leagues. All local leagues who responded agreed to concur with the position, consensus was reached, and the geographic distribution requirements for concurrence were met. Accordingly, the League adopted the following position on human trafficking in 2013.

**Human Trafficking  
Statement of Position  
As announced by the State Board in 2013**

**Human forced labor and sex trafficking should be stopped through legislation and changes in public policy. Those who have been commercially sexually exploited or coerced into slave labor, or who are minors, should be considered as victims of human trafficking. Victims of human trafficking should be provided with services to facilitate integration into the community.**

### **Recent League Activity**

During the 2013 legislative session, LWVNY joined the NY Women’s Equality Coalition to lobby for passage of Governor Cuomo’s Women’s Equality Agenda/Act (WEA). The WEA included provisions that would offer better protection to survivors of human trafficking, especially minors, by treating survivors as victims and increasing penalties to punish offenders by:

- Creating an affirmative defense to a prostitution charge that the individual was a trafficking victim;
- Increasing penalties across the board for human trafficking and labor trafficking;
- Creating new offenses, in increasing degrees, of aggravated patronizing a minor; and
- Creating a civil action for victims of trafficking against their perpetrators.

The League lobbied extensively for passage of the WEA, but it did not pass during the 2013 legislative session. For a complete narrative on the League's advocacy on WEA, please see the *Women's Issues* section

### **Living Wage-Minimum Wage**

Following guidance from LWVUS that Leagues could support a minimum wage increase for their area (under the national position on meeting basic human needs) after conducting appropriate research, the State League decided to conduct research on minimum wage-living wage in New York State. The Living Wage Committee was created to determine what an appropriate living wage is for our state and its localities and to define the relationship between a living wage and the minimum wage. The League believes that one of the goals of social policy should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families. We define a living wage as one that provides sufficient income without government assistance, for food, clothing, housing, energy, transportation, health care, education, child care, and a small amount of discretionary income.

### **Livable Wage**

#### **Statement of Position**

**As announced by the State Board, December 2015**

Support of a livable wage for all localities in New York State determined by using either of the following calculators (or one that may in the future be developed which includes the same items), whichever has been updated most recently. Each of these calculators presents its findings of the costs involved in meeting basic human needs on a county-by-county basis, for families of different sizes and composition, and indicates the wage needed to meet those costs on an hourly, monthly and annual basis.

1. This is the link to the MIT developed calculator for a living wage, which is available by County in NYS: <http://livingwage.mit.edu> Originally done in 2004, it was updated in 2014.

2. The self-sufficiency standard developed by Empire Justice Center/NYS Community Action Association <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/docs/New-York-State2010.pdf> especially pp. 57 to 89, which lists the self-sufficiency standard for different family configurations for each county, and expresses it on an hourly/monthly/annual basis. P 91 compares the self-sufficiency standard to the federal poverty rate. We further support that the minimum wage, if set state-wide, be set no higher than, but close to, the living wage for a family consisting of one wage earner and 2 children, in the county with the lowest living costs. The League has long supported equal pay for equal work, and does not recommend that the minimum wage be set, or employers pay employees, based on the number of their dependents. On the other hand employees working full-time at the minimum wage should be able to make a living wage for themselves and one to two dependents.

### **Recent League Activity**

In 2016, after determining our new position, the League quickly took action and came out in support of increasing New York's minimum wage. The League submitted budget testimony to the Joint Committees on Work Force Development encouraging them to follow the MIT developed calculator to determine a proper livable wage. The testimony also supported the implementation of paid family leave for all New Yorkers. We were pleased when Governor Cuomo announced that the legislature had agreed to a budget that raised the minimum wage. This will occur in increments: In NYC it would reach \$15 and in the rest of the state \$12.50 by 2020. After 2020, the DOB gets to decide how many more years it will take the rest of the state to reach \$15.