

WASTE MANAGEMENT

(Further Guidelines and Criteria, LWVUS Impact on Issues, 2010-2012, pp. 50-51)

Since 1980, the League has supported legislation to encourage source separation and recycling of solid waste. Passage of the Bottle Bill was the League triumph of 1982, the result of an eight-year campaign. We continued to support General Municipal Law (GML) 120AA which mandates municipalities to source separate certain materials such as glass, metals and some papers. Leagues around the state urged local officials to implement and enforce this legislation. In the 1980s, the League adopted the state's solid waste hierarchy of Reduction, Reuse, Recycle, Incinerate and Landfill. In 1991 LWVUS proposed a moratorium on incinerators until fiscal, health and recycling impacts were fully examined. We have lobbied extensively for an environmentally sound packaging act, which would reduce the amount of packaging, reduce the use of virgin materials, and create recycling markets. This is an area where League members have shown true leadership with the development of the environmental shopping program and school education projects. In this process, League members have joined boards, committees and encouraged solid waste management activities at the local, state, and national levels.

While many New York State localities are doing an excellent job of recycling, and encouraging reuse and reduction, other places have never heard of the Solid Waste Hierarchy or GML 120AA. Therefore, League members continue to advocate and educate.

In 1995-96 most of the legislation raised at the state level was minor. With the stronger incinerator regulations enacted in the year 2007, this issue will become more important. Legislation is still actively being proposed at both the state and federal levels to limit the transport of solid waste across state lines. Business groups continue to try and have regulations repealed, an attempt to pass on to the taxpayers the costs of doing business. For years, waste disposal has been borne by taxpayers and consumers, rather than the manufacturers that produce it. Several communities have passed laws preventing the importation of waste for disposal within their municipalities. However, there is still no real pressure to reduce the amount of solid waste and this will continue until the DEC starts to enforce the recycling regulations. In 2007, Governor Eliot Spitzer appointed an environmentally strong Commissioner of DEC. Our hopes were renewed that recycling regulations would be better enforced.

During the 2003 legislative session, the League revisited an issue from the early 1980's. Because of strong League leadership, in 1982 New York State passed the "bottle bill" that requires a deposit on soft drink containers. Since that time, the use of plastic water bottles, juice bottles, and other non-carbonated beverages has proliferated, and there have been numerous attempts to pass a "Bigger Better Bottle Bill" to include these containers. Passage of a BBBB has been a priority since 2004. With a new governor in office in 2007, there was a major effort by a large coalition, including LWVNYS, to pass a BBBB that would have recycled an estimated two billion additional containers, and generated \$100 million for the Environmental Protection Fund. Governor Eliot Spitzer had included the bill in his budget; but it was removed by the legislature. Mr. Spitzer has promised to introduce the "Bigger Better Bottle Bill" as separate legislation. The League has lobbied vigorously for this legislation and will continue our efforts until this legislation becomes reality.