

## 2007 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

### 1) *REFORMING STATE GOVERNMENT*

- a) *Ethics*
- b) *Campaign Finance*
- c) *Redistricting*
- d) *Lobbying*
- e) *Budget*
- f) *Public Authorities*
- g) *Legislative Procedure Reform*

### 2) *EQUITY IN SCHOOL FINANCING*

### 3) *HEALTH CARE*

### 4) *COURT RESTRUCTURING/JUDICIAL*

### 5) *ADDITIONAL LEAGUE POSITIONS: Capital Punishment, Elections, Reproductive Rights, Salary Equity Reform, Smart Growth/Containing Sprawl*

## REFORMING STATE GOVERNMENT

With a new Governor in office who supports reform, there is an opportunity to realize priorities the League has supported and worked toward for several years. The League will work with the Governor's office and legislative leaders to accomplish the following government reforms:

- ◆ **Ethics:** Create an Independent Ethics Commission ◆ implement pay to play restrictions which would curb large sums of money by businesses and unions from being infused into campaign coffers of legislators ◆ strengthen efforts to eliminate the states "revolving door" by extending it to political party officials and lengthening the period of prohibition for lobbying by legislative employees;
- ◆ **Campaign Finance Reform:** support measures to reform New York State's lax campaign finance laws and move toward full public financing of campaigns;
- ◆ **Redistricting:** support a constitutional amendment to create an Independent Redistricting Commission;
- ◆ **Lobbying:** broaden the definition of lobbying ◆ improve disclosure by requiring reporting of lobbyists' business relationships with lawmakers;
- ◆ **Budget:** support for reforms including: an Independent Budget Office ◆ joint legislative budget conference committees ◆ full disclosure of discretionary funds and a three-year financial plan;
- ◆ **Public Authorities:** support legislation that would hold public authorities to the same standards as state agencies with regard to transparency, lobbying and contracting;
- ◆ **Legislative Procedure Reform:** support the strengthening of standing committees so that rank-and- file legislators can move bills to the floor without leadership approval ◆ use of conference committees to resolve differences in similar bills ◆ support of measures to allow legislators greater independence over their staff and resources.

## EQUITY IN SCHOOL FINANCING

In 2006, the League amended its financing education and real-property taxation positions to encompass funding for the CFE remedy, revision of its property tax relief position, and adoption of a position on charter schools.

The governor and Legislature should support the range of additional funding for NYC schools recommended by Governors Pataki and Spitzer and endorsed by CFE, of between \$4 billion and \$6 billion in additional operating expenses, extended on a statewide basis. The state should adopt a

foundation approach to funding education, adjusted for student need and regional costs, and increased annually with a cost-of-living adjustment. To the extent that additional funding is required, it should be raised through the state's personal income tax, implemented in a progressive fashion. Stability should be increased by creation of a substantial education reserve.

Major efficiencies in funding education should be recognized by replacement of tax relief programs providing relief regardless of ability to pay with those that target relief to those most in need, adjusted for inflation.

The League recognizes that charter schools are an educational experiment and therefore opposes increase in the number without measures to limit their negative financial impact on home school districts, research to determine the factors that lead to success in charters, and proof of positive educational outcomes for all children prior to renewal.

### **HEALTH CARE**

New York State has a proper role in the regulation of health care and must assure high quality care that is affordable and accessible to all. Therefore, the League of Women Voters supports:

- ◆ A basic level of quality physical and mental health care for all state residents;
- ◆ Provision of planning and regulations assuring New Yorkers, including the medically indigent, access to a basic level of quality care;
- ◆ A single-payer system as an acceptable way to contain cost and provide equitable access;
- ◆ Containment of costs without compromising accessibility or quality of care;
- ◆ More resources to help promote disease prevention.

### **COURT RESTRUCTURING/JUDICIAL**

The League supports a constitutional amendment to restructure the NYS court system. The current trial courts with overlapping and limited jurisdiction should be combined into a two-tier system, which is user- friendly, efficient and consistent throughout the state. It should allow litigants to have their cases heard in one court by one judge instead of presenting their cases in different courts, before different judges.

The League supports the long-term goal of a constitutional amendment to replace judicial elections with a qualification based appointive system for selecting all judges in New York State. We also support the establishment in the constitutional amendment of a broadly based, diverse nonpartisan Nominating Commission. In the interim, to comply with Federal District Court decision in Lopez-Torres, we urge the state Legislature to adopt reform of the party nominating convention process to make it a more open, accessible, independent, diverse, and deliberative body. In addition, as long as judicial election is the way we nominate and select judges, public financing is imperative.

### **ADDITIONAL LEAGUE POSITIONS**

- ◆ **Capital Punishment** - The League supports abolition of the death penalty, with the use of life without parole as the primary alternative.
- ◆ **Elections** – The League supports a single statewide voting system using paper ballot/optical scan. We support legislation to ensure the integrity of the election process and all ballots. The League also supports increased state funding for poll worker and voter education.

- ◆ **Reproductive Rights** – The League supports a woman’s constitutional right of privacy in making reproductive choices must be protected.
- ◆ **Salary Equity Reform** – The League supports legislation to enable private sector employees to obtain and reveal private sector salaries without reprisal. Secret salaries in the private sector keep employees from knowing if they are equally paid and can often mean job termination for seeking this information. In the public sector, we support legislation requiring the use of gender-neutral job evaluation systems to end underpayment of job titles in which women and minorities predominate.
- ◆ **Smart Growth/Containing Sprawl** – The League supports a proactive role for the state in conserving natural resources and containing sprawl. We support legislation that will promote regional land use planning, enhance urban neighborhoods, and protect agricultural land, open space, watersheds, and other sensitive areas.

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FOR INFORMATION ON LEGISLATION: You can access the New York State Legislative Session Information Page at: <http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menuf.cgi>

NEW YORK STATE RESOURCES ON THE LEGISLATURE, ASSEMBLY AND SENATE  
[www.nysl.nysed.gov/ils/legislature/legis.html](http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/ils/legislature/legis.html)

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