

2024

Federal Policy Agenda



NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS
NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

INTRODUCTION

Each year, NYLCV and the NYLCV Education Fund work to identify the most pressing issues on the environment, public health, quality of life, and equity for the people of New York. While much of this work is focused on the state and local level, these issues demand action from the federal government as well. New York's congressional delegation includes leaders on both sides of the aisle who can play an important role in their respective caucuses in ensuring that New York does not get short-changed. Our 2024 Federal Agenda comprises issues that significantly impact New York where we believe our representatives can make a difference. We see space for achieving a bipartisan conservation agenda and look forward to advancing the dialogue to reach agreement on bold solutions.



JULIE TIGHE

President

TOP PRIORITIES

CLEAN ENERGY

New York has made tremendous progress reducing air pollution that harms human health and contributes to climate change, and it is vitally important that we do not roll back the laws and regulations that have allowed us to reach this point. NYLCV strongly supports investing in clean energy, including offshore wind, that will both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create jobs in a globally competitive field. In 2022, we saw the largest climate bill in the history of the United States pass in the form of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). NYLCV advocates that the IRA funds be properly and quickly allocated so that the US can transition to a clean energy economy.

CLEAN WATER

NYLCV supports increasing funding and maintaining current funding formulas for the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, which provide financing that leverages state and private money for a wide variety of water projects, including wastewater treatment, green infrastructure, pipe replacement, and source water protection. In 2021, we saw the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), pass, which provides \$2.6 billion in funds to improve water infrastructure and replace lead pipes in New York.

FOOD AND FARMS

The Farm Bill is up for renewal every five years, and due to a continuing resolution, will be approved in 2024. NYLCV strongly urges maintenance or increases in funding for conservation programs including the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and Conservation Reserve Program. The Farm Bill presents an opportunity to combat the climate crisis through climate-smart agriculture.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Investment in mass transportation pays dividends for both the environment and the economy, and expanded federal funding for projects, including the Gateway Tunnel, are vital to the economy of the entire region. Specifically, the federal budget must continue to support New Starts, Small Starts, and TIGER grants through the Department of Transportation, as well as adequate funding for public transportation through both operating and capital aid.

CLEAN ENERGY

A photograph of two offshore wind turbines in the ocean at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange and yellow glow across the sky and reflecting on the water. The turbines are silhouetted against the bright sky. The water is dark blue with some ripples.

The Inflation Reduction Act: The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is the boldest climate law in the history of the United States. It allocates \$369 billion to combat the climate crisis. Largely through federal tax credits and grants, this legislation will fund the transition to a clean energy economy. This funding must be protected and properly spent in a timely manner.

Investment Tax Credit (ITC) for Solar/Production Tax Credit (PTC) for Wind: The ITC provides a 30% rebate for solar, fuel cells, and wind, and a 10% rebate for geothermal, microturbines, and combined heat and power technologies. The PTC is an inflation-adjusted per-kWh tax credit for electricity generated by wind, geothermal, closed-loop biomass, and solar facilities not claiming the ITC. The clean energy generation supported by these tax credits builds economic, social, and environmental resilience and furthers New York's pledge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80% by 2050.

Offshore Wind: Offshore wind presents enormous opportunities for New York both as a source of carbon-free energy, but also as a powerful economic engine for Long Island and New York. Recent legislation to spur the development of offshore wind and implement revenue sharing include the RISEE Act and the OWNER Act.

Transmission: Right now, one of the major hurdles to clean energy development is the building of transmission lines. As a result, clean energy from developers cannot get to the communities that need it. The permitting process for transmission lines is backlogged and cost prohibitive. Congress must act to centralize the approval process through a federal body while ensuring that community input be taken into account. We need permitting reform through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that values input from local governments and citizens.

CLEAN WATER

We have made tremendous progress in cleaning up our waterways and drinking water supplies due to decades of federal commitment, but recent crises have shown how far we still have to go.

Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (CWSRF & DWSRF): The SRFs are federal-state partnership projects that provide low-cost financing for water quality infrastructure projects to communities across the nation. Increased funding for these programs will help ensure safe, clean water for New Yorkers through improved drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater management projects and will continue our progress in removing lead from drinking water. It is also important that the funding allotment formula for the SRFs continues to provide New York with an adequate share of federal funds.

Other important clean water bills, regulations, and funding:

- The EPA should propose and finalize a strong Lead and Copper Rule that truly protects public health by mandating full lead service line replacement across the country in 10 years, prioritizing environmental justice communities who have been disproportionately impacted by lead contamination, and lowering the action level.
- The EPA should quickly finalize their proposal to list PFOA and PFOS as hazardous under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (Superfund), and list other PFAS that pose a danger to the health of our families.
- Congress should pass legislation to address military PFAS contamination, such as the Safe Water for Military Families Act, including increasing funds for clean-up, requiring greater community involvement and consultation, and expanding notification programs to service members and veterans.



FOOD AND FARMS

The Farm Bill is up for renewal and funds a wide variety of critical environmental programs including land and water conservation, bio-energy, and nutrition. The Inflation Reduction Act also increases funding for the land conservation programs listed here and presents the opportunity for this Farm Bill to combat climate change through climate-smart agricultural policy.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to “implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, plant, animal, air and related natural resources” on agricultural and private forestland for agricultural producers with annual income under \$900,000. Protecting New York’s farmlands for smaller-scale farmers ensures healthy resources for future generations, helps local ecosystems, and fosters local economies.

A climate-smart Farm Bill would focus conservation programs on climate mitigation and resilience, including dedicating 80% of EQIP funds towards practices that reduce GHG emissions, prohibiting EQIP funding for practices that increase emissions, and converting the Conservation Stewardship Program into a Climate Stewardship Program that is primarily focused on reducing emissions. It would also make equitable and reparative justice a focus by ensuring that farmers of color, new farmers, and others who have historically been excluded can access Farm Bill programs.

Other important agricultural programs:

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP): ACEP provides technical and financial assistance to non-profit organizations and state, local,

and tribal governments to conserve agricultural lands and wetlands. The continuation of funding for this program aids in New York’s long-term sustainability of food supply, wildlife habitats, environmental quality, and related economic and recreational benefits by promoting sustainable use of these working lands.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP): This Farm Service Agency program pays an annual rental fee to farmers for removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production, instead planting flora that will improve ecosystem health. The CRP develops sustainable, ecologically beneficial land cover, and its continued funding is important to improve wildlife habitat and water and soil quality across New York.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Federal environmental spending across a range of agencies protects local ecosystems, fosters interstate cooperation, and strengthens New York’s economy.

Highlands Conservation Act: Through this 2004 Act, the US Forest Service has identified priority lands in New York and three neighboring states (CT, NJ, PA) to allow the states to acquire land of high conservation value. Any cuts for land acquisitions under the National Forest System would endanger the health of ecological, recreational, economic, and cultural resources of New York.

Delaware River Basin Conservation Initiative: This multi-level program joins federal, state, and local agencies and organizations to promote watershed health and revitalize communities along the river that have historically suffered economic and environmental losses from river degradation. The Delaware River supplies valuable drinking water, habitat, and recreational opportunities. Any cuts to the program would negatively affect the health of the Delaware River, and consequently the New Yorkers that depend upon it.

National Estuary Program (NEP): The EPA's National Estuary Program protects and restores 28 estuaries nationwide, including the New York/New Jersey Harbor. The continued funding of this program is important for coastal research and management programs and will improve New York's environmental health and coastal resiliency.

Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act: The Long Island Sound Restoration and Stewardship Act would bolster current water quality and shore restoration programs in the Long Island Sound, improving coordination and management of the programs and allocating over \$65 million. The increased funding and improved oversight would help protect New York's recreation, tourism, and shipping industries, and the long-term health of the Sound and the nine million inhabitants of its surrounding communities.

Plum Island Protection and Preservation: New Yorkers have mobilized to take action to preserve undeveloped lands on the ecologically significant Plum Island, an 840-acre island off the eastern coast of Long Island. The federal government must take steps to protect this valuable hub of biodiversity in perpetuity by making it a national monument.

Conservation

The SHADE Act: Introduced in 2021, the "Saving Hazardous And Declining Environments Act" or the "SHADE Act" would require the Department of Housing and Urban Development to award grants for government entities and nonprofit organizations to plant trees in low-income communities and environmental justice communities. This bill would reduce the heat island effect felt in our densely populated urban areas and it must be passed to help relieve this burdensome heat felt by New York's frontline communities.

The COAST Anti-Drilling Act: Introduced in 2021, this act would prohibit the U.S. Department of Interior from issuing leases for the exploration, development, or production of oil or gas in the North, Mid-, or South Atlantic Ocean, the Straits of Florida, or the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, helping to end drilling in the Atlantic Ocean.

The Hudson River Protection Act: Introduced in 2023, this legislation would permanently protect the barge ban in the Hudson.

Environmental Justice

Superfund Polluter Pays Restoration Act of 2021: This act would reinstate the Hazardous Substance Superfund financing rate and increase the rate from 9.7 cents to 17.2 cents per barrel of crude oil (adjusted for inflation after 2021). It would also reinstate and increase the tax rates on taxable chemicals. This legislation must be passed to adequately fund the superfund clean up efforts throughout New York.

The Environmental Justice for All Act: Drafted through an inclusive, community-led process, this comprehensive bill prioritizes the voices, health, and safety of communities most impacted by pollution from fossil fuels, toxic substances, and exploitative practices by allowing them to hold polluters accountable, restructuring permitting processes to consider cumulative impacts and ensure Tribal consultation, investing in these communities, and enacting other policy shifts that seek to achieve environmental justice.

Justice40: We must also push the Biden-Harris administration to deliver on its Justice40 initiative, ensuring that 40% of the benefits from climate, clean energy, transportation, pollution remediation, clean water and other federal investments flow to low-income communities and communities of color that have been disproportionately burdened by pollution and lack of investment.



SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Reliable, affordable, low-carbon transportation is important to both economic growth and environmental protection, and it requires federal investment to succeed.

Highway Trust Fund (HTF): The HTF, sourced from a federal fuel tax, is a Federal Highway Administration program that funds the development of highways and mass transit systems. Projects funded by the HTF could suffer if the Department of Transportation's budget were cut. Any changes to the HTF should reorient it towards increased mass transit projects and the development of more sustainable forms of transit.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) is the largest infrastructure investment in a generation. It is funding the rebuilding of America's infrastructure, the investment in public transportation, and the remediation of dangerous and outdated infrastructure such as lead service lines. This funding must now get to those who need it to rebuild New York and the United States.

Investment in Transportation: Mass transportation reduces congestion, fuel use, pollutant and GHG emissions, and commuter costs while creating jobs and benefiting local and regional economies. The continued prosperity of the entire northeastern corridor of the United States is dependent upon federal investment in projects including the Gateway Tunnel, the Second Avenue Subway, and other mass transit projects around New York.

Setting Consumer Standards for Lithium-Ion Batteries Act: This legislation would require the Consumer Product Safety Commission to establish a final consumer product safety standard for rechargeable lithium-ion batteries used in personal mobility devices, such as electric scooters and bikes, to protect against the risk of fires caused by such batteries.

Implementing Congestion Pricing: Congestion pricing will reduce current extreme levels of traffic, and will raise at least \$15 billion in dedicated funding for the MTA. It was first authorized by the State legislature in 2019 and finalized by the MTA in 2024. This is a critically important tool for meeting New York's environmental goals.

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NEW YORK LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

NYLCV is the only nonpartisan, statewide environmental organization in New York that fights for clean water, clean air, renewable energy, and open space through political action.

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NYLCVEF educates, engages and empowers New Yorkers to be effective advocates for the environment.

