**Legislative Packet**

TO: Local League Presidents/Action Chairs  
FROM: Sally Robinson, VP Issues and Advocacy, sally.s.robinson@gmail.com  
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       Jennifer Wilson, Deputy Director, jennifer@lwny.org

As usual, we are providing key information on current legislative issues and asking you all to meet with and lobby your legislators on these issues. Enclosed please find the annual legislative packet to assist with your lobby visits with your state Senators and Assembly Members. Pre-budget legislative lobbying in legislators' district offices should be scheduled between February 14th and February 21st. This year our legislative packet covers funding for voting and New York's independent redistricting commission, ethics, and court reform. We expect that some of these items (not directly impacted by the budget) will likely be the primary focus of our post-budget lobbying as well.

**Summary of Reforms:**

**Funding for Voting**
Last year, we asked local Leagues to advocate for early voting implementation funding in the 2019 budget. This year, we will continue our efforts to secure funds for early voting and new electronic poll book equipment. The Governor has included in his budget proposal $41,000,000 to cover the costs of new election upgrades and early voting in 2020.

**Executive Budget Proposal:**
$10,000,000 ............ for early voting for county boards of elections  
$15,000,000 ............ for the purchase of electronic poll books  
$16,000,000 ............ for the creation of an online voter registration portal

Although this is a significant investment, we are concerned that this funding will not be enough to cover the cost of three periods of early voting in 2020. Last year, counties spent well over $25,000,000 on a single period of early voting. In our legislative packet we have included a document explaining some of the new costs that may be linked to early voting in 2020 and the need for a larger investment in 2020. We have also included our report on early voting in 2019 and a joint letter sent to legislative leaders in December regarding the need for funding. Feel free to leave behind any of these documents at your lobby visit.

**Independent Redistricting Commission**
Following the completion of the census count, New York State will redraw its legislative district lines using a constitutionally mandated independent redistricting commission. This commission will require funding so that it can hire staff, acquire map making software, hold public hearings, and deliver maps to the legislature by the constitutional deadline of January 1st, 2022.

The legislature is mandated by the constitution to form the commission by February 1st of 2020. The League believes that this commission must be funded sooner rather than later so that the commission can begin hiring staff and making arrangements ahead of the release of the final census count. Included in this packet is a factsheet about the constitutional mandates of the commission, a letter sent to legislative leaders.
regarding the importance of forming the commission in a timely manner, and an estimate of what the commission could cost is executed correctly.

**Ethics**
Although the Public Campaign Financing Commission proposal has become law, there were many critical campaign finance reforms that were not addressed. The League believes that the new law is lacking in several significant aspects and we are continuing to advocate for additional restrictions on contributions to political parties and contributions from those doing business with the state.

The League believes that the current system of ethics enforcement in New York is ineffective and lacks independence. It has completely failed to address the continuing corruption scandals in state government. It should be replaced with a new entity that oversees both the executive and legislative branches.

The legislature and the Governor should move immediately to limit the outside income of legislators in the wake of the court’s overturning a Commission imposed ban.

**Court Reform**
New York State has one of the largest and most complicated trial courts in the country. Many venerable and disadvantaged citizens have found the system to be completely unworkable. Some have even forgone legal action because of the onerous burden of having to navigate many different courts for one problem. Victims of domestic abuse, families dealing with separation, individuals with disabilities, and those living in poverty, have all found the system to be too costly and too complicated to have their needs addressed.

The Governor has proposed an amendment to Article VII of the Constitution that would unify New York State’s trial court system. It would consolidate 11 different kinds of trial courts (excluding the Justice Courts) into the existing Supreme Court and create a new statewide Municipal Court.

The League is supportive of this amendment to establish an integrated, statewide court system consisting of a minimum number of trial courts of broad jurisdiction and believes that it will provide the needed agility and flexibility to assure equal access to justice through our court system. Included in this packet is a one-page document explaining the cons of our current court system and voicing support for the Governor’s proposal.

**Final Thoughts:**
Although we have presented you with several options for discussion with your legislator, you do not need to cover all included topics. This exchange of information benefits the state League in its efforts to develop strategies that promote our advocacy at the Capitol. Our influence in Albany depends on your contact with your state Senator and Assemblyperson(s). They know you elect them! If you haven’t done so already, set up an appointment to see your state Assemblyperson(s) and Senator. Seeing a staff person is fine.

This Packet is available on the state League homepage, [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org). Please return the attached form to the League office following your meeting, by mail, fax or email with an attachment. You should feel free to rely on the main points in this document and the handouts for your visit, but more background information is available online on our website for your reference. For any questions or concerns please contact Jennifer at [jennifer@lwvny.org](mailto:jennifer@lwvny.org)

League of Women Voters of New York State  
62 Grand Street, Albany NY 122013  
(518) 465-4162 [lwvny@lwvny.org](mailto:lwvny@lwvny.org)
Funding for Voting

Funding for 2020 Elections
In 2020, voters will have the opportunity to vote in two primaries and the general election. With the newly passed mandate for all elections to have a 9-day period of early voting, there will be a minimum of 30 days of voting during this election cycle. Last year, counties spent above and beyond the $25 million of funding allocated to them by the state for a single period of early voting. These counties are estimating that the total cost for early voting in 2020 could be well over $200 million.

The Governor has proposed $10 million in Aid to Localities to help cover the costs of early voting in 2020. He has also proposed $15 million in Capital Projects for the purchase of new elections equipment, and $16 million for the creation of an online voter registration portal. We applaud the Governor for making these proposed investments but urge the legislature to consider increasing this funding.

In addition to tripling the number of days of voting, county boards of elections discovered several unforeseen costs related to early voting in the prior year. These costs included issues with location, electrical power, the need for additional equipment and staff, and the expected increase in voter turnout in 2020. Below are summaries of each of these cost barriers that have the potential to drive up the cost of early voting in 2020.

Location
Although counties tried to use public sites to save costs, a large majority of counties have been told by these public facilities that they do not wish to serve as poll sites in 2020. Some sites raised concerns around security issues, while other sites said they felt that having their space taken up by voting equipment, staff, and voters for 9 days was far too onerous. County Commissioners have already asked for guidance from the State Board for procuring site locations in 2020.

The legislature has also proposed several reforms to the selection of site locations that may force some counties to open more locations that they had in 2019. This will again increase costs not only for site rental and overhead, but also for staff and additional equipment.

Electrical Power
In addition to location issues, electrical power capabilities were an issue for many counties. Counties who were able to purchase new voting equipment found that many public sites did not have adequate power capabilities. In several counties, commissioners had to bring in generators to power equipment. Renting these generators and paying for gasoline each day of early voting was a huge cost for counties. The New York City Board of Elections reported paying as much as $147,000 for the use of generators and fuel at poll sites. Changing poll site locations to larger, private spaces may address the need for additional power sources, but this could cause an additional overhead cost.

Equipment
In 2019 only 52 of New York's 62 counties purchased electronic poll books. On Election Day, 34 of these counties continued to use electronic poll books while the remaining 27 reverted back to using paper poll
books, with one county using a hybrid of both. These counties used several different tactics to update their poll books on the Sunday and Monday before Election Day to ensure voters who had already voted early would not be on the voter rolls. Some printed them at their offices, others had the books printed before the election and had staff update them using a stamp. Regardless of the method, reverting to paper poll books was difficult and costly for counties. Many of these counties have said they hope to have electronic poll books for their entire county in 2020. The 10 counties who did not purchase electronic poll books have also said they are interested in purchasing the equipment.

**Staff**

With 30 days of voting in 2020, the cost of staff will undoubtedly increase for all counties in New York. Counties will be better able to make predictions about the need for staff during the 2020 early voting periods and adjust for time frames when they expect lower turnout but counties will still have to consider the three periods of voting when hiring their poll workers.

**2020 Voter Turnout**

With a major election taking place in November, the number of voters voting early is expected to far exceed the totals seen in 2019. In 2019, roughly 9% of New York’s 3 million voters voted early. In 2020, the Board of Elections is expecting a record turnout of 8 million voters. If only 10% of these voters choose to vote early, close to one million voters will turn out to one of New York’s 248 early voting poll sites. Having such an incredible turnout would be a major achievement for New York State which typically sees low voter engagement, but without proper funding, counties will be ill prepared to accommodate this upsurge in voters.

**Funding for the State Board of Elections**

The New York State Legislature should be proud of the progressive slate of voting reforms that has been passed over the last year. In time, these new operational and procedural changes will increase voter turnout and overall voter satisfaction. However, the agency charged with implementing these policies, the State Board of Elections (BCE), has seen repeated cuts to its already constricted budget and has little to no funding to execute these policy changes.

Online voter registration, automatic registration transfer, and pre-registration of 16 and 17-year olds all carry some implementation cost. In December it was reported that these costs had forced the BOE to divert funding dedicated for cyber security to cover the cost of their everyday operations. The Governor has sought to address this deficit by proposing $16 million for the creation of an online voter registration portal. Although a thoughtful investment, there are many other new programs that will need increased funding.

The Board of Elections has historically been an underfunded and understaffed agency and we cannot expect this body to continue to operate on a shoestring budget with constant funding cuts while we simultaneously increase their responsibilities and operational demands. If the legislature does continue to pass voting reforms such as automatic voter registration and same day voter registration, these will need another investment in order to be implemented.

The State Board of Elections and county boards of elections need a serious funding commitment to realize the goals of the legislative leaders and Governor. We urge the legislature to consider the importance of voting when drafting their budget revisions, and to ensure that their progressive elections reforms are not unfunded mandates.
Ethics - MIA For 2020

There is very little on Governor Cuomo ethics agenda this year, most notably legislation mandating some public officials publish their tax returns. This stands in contrast to previous years when he called for reforms to address the perennial corruption in New York politics, only a few of which have been accomplished. Lawmakers can and should take up the challenge this year. The job is far from done.

Campaign Finance

After a year of controversy, the state’s Campaign Finance Reform Commission released its proposal on November 25, 2019. The League along with many others was disappointed in it but it become law when the legislature failed to return last year to modify all or part of it. It left out two key reforms in particular: reducing contributions to political parties and reducing contributions from people doing business with the state. Lawmakers can and should address these reforms this legislative session. Governor Cuomo has called in the past for both to be addressed.

Contribution limits are reduced from the current sky-high limits but are still far too high. Most disappointing, the Campaign Finance Reform Commission reforms did not address party committee contribution limits ($117,300 from an individual or union), party “housekeeping” contributions or contain any additional restrictions on contributions from individuals or unions doing business with the state, i.e. “pay to play.” Contributions to parties can be passed along directly to candidates circumventing the lowering of individual contribution limits. The League believes that Limits should be significantly lower, closer to the maximum contribution for federal office of $2,700 and most importantly party contributions and contributions by those doing business with the state should be curtailed.

Changes to the public financing system could also be done at any point before the new system becomes effective. The public funding portion of the proposal is not slated to be effective until the 2024 election for legislative races and the 2026 election for statewide races. It is likely that there will be legal challenges to any and all of the proposal.

Enforcement

The most critical ethics issue facing the state is ineffective enforcement. The League believes that the Joint Commission on Public Ethics and the Legislative Ethics Commission (“LEC”) need to be replaced with one effective and independent ethics enforcement agency. They have not served well in their purpose of being a deterrent to corruption. Top state legislative leaders have been convicted of corruption as have top state employees entrusted by the Governor with great responsibilities. Too many other legislators have been convicted of corruption or pleaded guilty. JCOPE and the LEC have failed to deter corruption because they were designed to fail.

JCOPE Structure- It has become obvious since the creation of JCOPE in 2011 that executive and legislative branch employees should be subject to the jurisdiction of one agency, not two. Since its formation, it has played no role in the corruption scandals that have rocked Albany.
JCPOPE and LEC Independence—They lack needed independence and protection from political control. All their members are appointed by the officials they regulate and four members of the LEC are legislators.

Voting procedures—As few as two of the Governor’s appointees and three of the legislative leaders’ JCOPe appointees can veto an investigation or adverse finding. Even after a finding of probable cause, hearings are secret. Appointing authorities are free to tell their appointees how to vote. Executive Directors can be and often are top aides to the Governor. The Chair serves at the pleasure of the Governor.

Under the Anti-Corruption Constitutional Amendment, S.594, a minority of the members of a new enforcement body will be appointed by the Governor and the legislative leaders, a majority will be appointed by the judiciary, and a new structure and voting procedures addresses a number of these issues of independence. This approach is currently being discussed with legislative leaders by a coalition, including the League, pushing for effective and independent enforcement.

Outside Income
A limit on legislators’ outside income imposed by a different Commission has been struck down in the courts. It is up to the legislature and the Governor to accomplish the same thing through legislation and thereby limit conflicts of interest and possibilities of corruption.
Governor Andrew M. Cuomo  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Speaker Carl E. Heastie  
LOB Room 932  
Albany, NY 12248

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
188 State Street Rcom 907  
Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Minority Conference Leader John Flanagan  
Room 315, State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Brian Kolb  
Assembly Minority Leader  
LOB 933  
Albany, NY 12248

October 23, 2019

Re: Act to Limit Outside Income Following Court Decisions Undoing Pay Commission’s Restrictions

Dear Governor Cuomo, Speaker Heastie, and Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins:
We write to urge you to act to limit the outside income of lawmakers, consistent with the recommendations of the 2018 New York State Compensation Committee, when the legislature next meets.

Our groups were pleased when the New York State Compensation Committee last December acted to restrict outside income earned by lawmakers at 15 percent of the legislative base salary, or $18,000, consistent with limits for members of the United States Congress. The Commission also completely prohibited the earning of compensation when lawmakers have a fiduciary relationship to a client or employer (such as legal or financial work or serving on boards of nonprofits, corporations or associations) or lending their name to a firm, corporation or other entity. These restrictions are consistent with those imposed on the United States Congress.

Unfortunately, the binding recommendations issued by the Compensation Committee regarding outside income were struck down by the courts, even while lawmakers received a raise to $120,000 from $79,500. We understand Attorney General Tish James is no longer pursuing appeals of the different cases involving outside income restrictions.²

It is therefore incumbent on you as the state’s leaders to act to curtail outside income by lawmakers to address the corruption problem in Albany and restore the public trust.

As you know, the state legislature has been plagued by too many instances of corruption and conflicts of interest related to outside income. Most notably, former Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and former State Senate President Dean Skelos were both convicted for crimes in which official acts resulted in personal gain related to their own outside jobs or their family’s.

This is why the Commission concluded that restricting outside income “will eliminate both the perception of and any actual conflicts of interest” and “eliminates the possibility for the public to question whether the citizens of this State are being properly served.”³

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Available at: https://nyscompensation.ny.gov/docs/CompensationCommitteeReport.pdf
² Lombardo, Dave. "State drops appeals in cases challenging pay raise commission’s work
, Albany Times Union, October 10, 2019. Available at:
Available at: https://nyscompensation.ny.gov/docs/CompensationCommitteeReport.pdf
The Commission’s conclusions are no less true than they were a year ago. The state’s leaders must act to fulfill them.

Sincerely,

Betsy Gotbaum  
Executive Director  
Citizens Union

Susan Lerner  
Executive Director  
Common Cause

Laura Ladd Bierman  
Executive Director  
League of Women Voters New York State

Blair Horner  
Executive Director  
New York Public Interest Research Group

John Kaehny  
Executive Director  
Reinvent Albany
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 25th, 2019

NEWS STATEMENT
League of Women Voters Statement on New York State Public Campaign Financing Commission Proposal

“The League continues to believe that comprehensive campaign finance reform is the change New York’s state government desperately needs above all. This Commission had before it a historic opportunity to make significant improvements to our broken campaign finance system, centered around a small donor matching system that would actually work. Instead, they are leaving the job half-done and have allowed themselves to be distracted with issues that are tangential to their mission. The complex small donor matching system proposed by this commission in some ways may be seen to be designed to favor incumbents. The League believes that much lower campaign contribution limits for all candidates and parties and better enforcement are necessary for any new public financing system to function as intended and fix how elections work in this state.”
Independent Redistricting Commission

Following the 2014 constitutional amendment to Article III, Section 5-b of the New York State Constitution, legislative maps will now be drawn by an independent redistricting commission. Although the census counts will not be delivered to the states until March of 2021, the state legislature is mandated to form the commission by February 1st, 2020. As of February 3rd, 2020, six of the 10 commission members had been appointed by the Senate Majority and Minority and Assembly Majority. The commission will now begin to plan its actions for the coming reapportionment cycle.

The League believes that this commission will require funding in order to fulfill its constitutional duty to create maps that are fair and unbiased. The commission is constitutionally required to consider the following when drafting district lines:

1. "Whether such lines would result in the denial or abridgement of racial or language minority voting rights, and districts shall not be drawn to have the purpose of, nor shall they result in, the denial or abridgement of such rights.
2. Districts shall be drawn so that, based on the totality of the circumstances, racial or minority language groups do not have less opportunity to participate in the political process than other members of the electorate and to elect representatives of their choice.
3. To the extent practicable, districts shall contain as nearly as may be an equal number of inhabitants. For each district that deviates from this requirement, the commission shall provide a specific public explanation as to why such deviation exists.
4. Each district shall consist of contiguous territory.
5. Each district shall be as compact in form as practicable.
6. Districts shall not be drawn to discourage competition or for the purpose of favoring or disfavoring incumbents or other particular candidates or political parties. The commission shall consider the maintenance of cores of existing districts, of pre-existing political subdivisions, including counties, cities, and towns, and of communities of interest.
7. In drawing senate districts, towns or blocks which, from their location may be included in either of two districts, shall be so placed as to make said districts most nearly equal in number of inhabitants. The requirements that senate districts not divide counties or towns, as well as the 'block-on-border' and 'town-on-border' rules, shall remain in effect."

For this commission to properly function and adhere to these mandates, it must hire professional staff capable of drawing maps and researching relevant statistics within communities, acquire relevant computer software for creating maps, and secure locations for 12 public hearings. The League has highlighted the following potential cost factors:

**Staffing:** The commission will need to hire a minimum of two co-executive directors and two assistants to these directors, a legal counsel, demographer, numbers analyst, and experienced map maker.

**Travel:** Over the course of the commission’s work they will be required to hold a minimum of 12 public hearings in Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, White Plains, Bronx County, Kings County,
New York County, Richmond County, Queens County, Nassau County, and Suffolk County. Travel costs will be incurred for all 10 commissioners as well as staff.

*Software:* Although the commission will likely be able to use some existing state software, there will be additional costs for the creation of a public website for the commission’s work, map making programs, and live-streaming of public hearings.

The commission may rely on the legislature to provide staff services, hardware, software, travel, and space rentals. However, it is to truly be independent it should have the ability to hire its own staff and make its own arrangements for public hearings.

In keeping with the predicted calendar of commission and legislative actions, the League recommends that the legislature consider appropriating funds to the redistricting commission so that it can begin its work as quickly as possible.

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New York State Independent Redistricting Commission Facts

The New York State Constitution was amended in 2014 to replace the legislature-controlled New York State Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment (LATFOR) as the entity responsible for drawing new state legislative and congressional lines. The constitution now designates an Independent Redistricting Commission to conduct redistricting and reapportionment after the completion of the census count.

The state constitution includes the following mandates regarding the Independent Redistricting Commission:

**The 10-member commission must be appointed on or before February 2020**

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**These members must not be enrolled in either of the two political major parties.

Members shall represent the diversity of residents of this state with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, language, and geographic reference.

Members cannot within the last 3 years:

1. Be or have been a member of the NYS legislature or US Congress, or a state-wide official
2. Be or have been a state officer or employee or legislative employee
3. Be or have been a registered lobbyist in NYS
4. Be or have been a political party chairman
5. Be the spouse of a statewide elected official or of any member of the US Congress or state legislature

The legislature shall provide by law for the compensation of the members, including compensation for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

The commission shall appoint two co-executive directors by the majority vote of the commission. The co-executive directors must represent the republic and democratic parties (one of each). The co-executive directors shall appoint staff to perform assigned duties. The directors must also create a staffing plan.

No fewer than 12 public hearings shall be held in the following areas:

Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, White Plains, Bronx County, Kings County, New York County, Richmond County, Queens County, Nassau County, and Suffolk County.
The commission is required to consider the following when drafting district lines:

1. "Whether such lines would result in the denial or abridgement of racial or language minority voting rights, and districts shall not be drawn to have the purpose of, nor shall they result in, the denial or abridgement of such rights.

2. Districts shall be drawn so that, based on the totality of the circumstances, racial or minority language groups do not have less opportunity to participate in the political process than other members of the electorate and to elect representatives of their choice.

3. To the extent practicable, districts shall contain as nearly as may be an equal number of inhabitants. For each district that deviates from this requirement, the commission shall provide a specific public explanation as to why such deviation exists.

4. Each district shall consist of contiguous territory.

5. Each district shall be as compact in form as practicable.

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7. In drawing senate districts, towns or blocks which, from their location may be included in either of two districts, shall be so placed as to make said districts most nearly equal in number of inhabitants. The requirements that senate districts not divide counties or towns, as well as the 'block-on-border' and 'town-on-border' rules, shall remain in effect."

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### Calendar of Legislative and Commission Actions

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Court Reform

New York has one of the largest and most complicated court systems in the country with many trial courts of overlapping jurisdiction. Many different trial courts create an exhausting, chaotic, confusing judicial system that despite its best efforts cannot provide New Yorkers with the best justice. Our state as the pre-eminent financial and commercial center of the world, must ensure that we have high-quality, efficient courts that protect the rule of law and equal access to justice for all.

What's Wrong:

1. New York has more trial courts than any other state in the country
   - New York has 11 different trial courts, many with overlapping jurisdiction

2. The court system is not trusted by everyone because the structure creates obstacles, confusion, and a lack of transparency for people seeking to resolve their legal issues.
   Because of its structure:
   - The court system is wasteful of time and resources
   - The court system is difficult to navigate
   - The court system is not understandable

3. The court system’s resources are not equitably distributed to reflect the nature and volume of the cases. This inequality disproportionately affects the courts where the resolution of cases is a matter of safety, security, liberty, due process and economic stability:
   - Housing cases
   - Criminal matters
   - Family cases often involving children
   - Consumer cases

4. The current New York court structure perpetuates inequality in our justice system, and its impact extends beyond the courtroom:
   - The chronic case overload in housing, criminal and family courts causes delays, limits the time available for a judge to hear and consider a case, results in multiple court appearances, which can cause devastating disruption of work and home life which impacts not only litigants but also their children and their families.
   - The system makes it difficult for low income and unrepresented people to attain justice.

5. Matters that currently require multiple court appearances before different judges who then render conflicting decisions, creating barriers to resolution of complicated cases. The court system structure:
   - Creates confusion among the people the courts are supposed to serve,
   - Gives judges only limited ability to see the full picture of the case,
   - Wastes time for litigants, which often results in loss of work and wages.

6. Many efforts have been made over the last 50 years to reform the court structure, but all failed because of vested political interests.
Who is Impacted?

- Unrepresented individuals with few if any resources, who faces a system that they simply do not know how to navigate,
- Survivors of domestic violence who must make frequent court appearances in multiple courts for inter-related issues, having to retell the story of the violence they experienced, again and again,
- People in criminal, housing or family court where court calendars are overloaded,
- Families burdened by having to appear in multiple court venues, being represented by different lawyers on each case and trying to abide by multiple, often conflicting court orders,
- Those who lose wages and miss work,
- Businesses who waste time and money in an inefficient system,
- Individuals with disabilities who face additional and often insurmountable challenges related to travel and access; some have abandoned their legal cases,
- All litigants suffer as a result of the multiplicity of courts in New York, with the resulting confusion and expense and the lack of clarity as to where a dispute should be litigated, and

The Real Impacts of Reform:

- Simplification would end a system created in the 19th century that works against equality and the dignity of everyone who enters the courtroom.
- It would create a more streamlined court system that has the authority to better distribute resources and to provide them where they are needed the most, reduce court appearances and give all litigants a better and more equal justice system.
- Interrelated issues could be decided in one court.
- There would be more judges in civil and criminal courts, and more judges in the system overall. There would be opportunities for greater diversity and expertise in appellate courts.
- A 5-year implementation period would allow an orderly process for change. Court Administration could be standardized and streamlined.

The League of Women Voters encourages the legislature to support the Governor’s proposal to consolidate 11 different kinds of trial courts (excluding the Justice Courts) into the existing Supreme Court and create a new statewide Municipal Court. The proposal will establish an integrated, statewide court system consisting of a minimum number of trial courts of broad jurisdiction that would provide the needed agility and flexibility to assure equal access to justice through our court system.

Courts which deal with the issues addressing our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens, such as Family Court and Housing Court have been the most in need of extra resources. Under our current judicial system, this was difficult to provide. The consolidation of the trial courts will allow court administrators to deftly and efficiently divert resources to the areas of greatest need so that litigants will be best served, and our state court system will be able to truly provide “justice for all”.

The Simplify the Courts! Coalition is a growing alliance of over 110 organizations from all parts of the state representing a diverse cross section of New Yorkers established to achieve the critical goal of amending the NYS Constitution and simplifying the New York State court system.
Tips for Lobby Visits

PREPARATION

1. **Making the appointment:** Contact the legislator's district office. Ask for a ½ hour of time, but accept less if necessary, and do not overstay your welcome. Notify the legislator of the number in your group as well as their names, if possible. Send a letter or e-mail confirming the appointment, mentioning the issues you will discuss. **If you cannot meet with the legislator, ask to meet with senior staff.**

Try to arrange for three to five League members to attend. If your League meets with several assembly members or senators, be sure to have a League member who is a constituent present. At least one person should be experienced in League. League members well versed on the issues to be lobbied should be included when possible. A new member can be included in this exciting action if accompanied by experienced League members. When more than one local League is involved, try to have representatives from as many of the constituent Leagues as possible.

2. **Assigning roles:** Each member of the lobby team should be assigned a specific role. The following are possible assignments:
   - **Researching the legislator.** Someone should be prepared to brief the other members of the lobby team on the legislator's relationship with the League and his/her voting record (if the legislator is a re-elected incumbent). What are his/her committee assignments and/or leadership positions in the legislature? Is this legislator a member of the League? If this legislator sponsored bills that League supported, you may want to take a moment to express League's appreciation.
   - **Moderator/leader.** This person should be certain that each League member introduces himself/herself. The leader must also watch the clock. Knowing ahead how much time the legislator has agreed to spend with you, the leader must allot an appropriate amount of time for each issue. It is the leader's responsibility to "pace" the visit and tactfully keep everyone (including the legislator) on the subject. **Remember, opinions expressed should be those of the League, not of individuals.**
   - **Researching the issue or issues to be discussed.** Look to the materials on this subject on the league website.
   - **Recording and reporting the legislator's response.** The leader should not be the recorder.

**NOTE:** If you anticipate printing any part of the interview in a League bulletin or newspaper, the recorder is obligated to get the legislator's permission and specific conditions under which you may print.

Write a follow-up thank you after the visit. This is not only a gesture of politeness, but it also allows you to underscore some points made during the visit, answer any questions you were not sure about, or send a League publication to which you may have referred during the course of the visit.
Lobby Check List

Before Your Visit:
☑ Do you know what your “ask” is?
☑ Did you pack extra copies of the Legislative Packet materials?
☑ Did you bring your contact information for the member/staffer?
☑ Are you ready to refute opposition arguments?
☑ Do you have a couple of questions you want to ask?
☑ Is there an upcoming event where you can invite the lawmaker? Or are you sending a student from their area to Students Inside Albany?

After Your Visit:
☑ Did you send them a Thank You note?
☑ Did you send follow up on any questions they had?
☑ Did you send your Lobby Response Form to the State League office?
☑ Celebrate your success!

Use this space for any additional notes:
2020 LWVNYS LOBBY REPORT FORM
PRE-BUDGET LOBBY VISITS

Local League: ____________________  League Member Name: ____________________

Senator: ________________________  Assembly Member: ________________________

• What were the legislator’s biggest concerns?

• Where did you see eye to eye?

• Did they ask for additional information?

Please return completed form to LWVNYS, 62 Grand Street, Albany NY 12207 or fax 518-465-0812 or save as a pdf and attach to an email to jennifer@lwvny.org by March 1, 2020.

League of Women Voters of New York State
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