

# STATE ISSUES

## - POLICY STATEMENT -

The health and vitality of State and local economies continue to be a top priority.

Local governments are finding it necessary to pay for “unfunded mandates” by passing the costs on to local citizens. Specifically, local property owners are seeing continuing increases in their school and property taxes. These increased taxes are a hardship for rural landowners, particularly farmers. Farmers are major landowners who rely on their land to generate their livelihood while they pay a disproportionate share of property tax. We therefore support legislation that would lessen the financial burden imposed by unfunded, mandated programs affecting local and rural citizens.

We strongly support the agricultural industry which makes vital contributions to the quality of life in our State by creating jobs, generating revenue, producing safe and wholesome products, and allowing us to sustain open spaces and beautiful rural landscapes. New York State continues to maintain approximately one-quarter of the total land area in this great State for agriculture.

We encourage the research and development of safe, economical, and environmentally friendly alternative energy sources. We support improving recycling practices and encourage all citizens to do their part to protect our environment.

Tax relief is essential to the revitalization of rural communities. We support legislation that addresses this issue.

On time passage of the annual New York State budget is very important. We support a timely annual New York State Budget.

The power of eminent domain should be used only for public projects, to exclude the taking of property for private economic development.

We favor the election of our judges and the retention of our town and village justice courts.

The safety of everyone using our public highways is important. We support the enforcement of New York State Vehicle and Traffic Laws. We encourage public education of distracted driving and driver awareness through the utilization of the Governor’s Traffic Safety Council, Driver Education Programs and Public Service Announcements.

The New York State Grange has an ongoing concern for the safety of children, families, and other vulnerable individuals. It is important that local communities be provided with information regarding sexual and domestic violence offenders living there, to be able to better protect those who may be at risk. We support prompt reporting to the proper authorities of missing children. We support legislation that prevents human trafficking.

New York State Government should not infringe on any rights guaranteed in the United States or New York State constitutions.

October 2023

## **ALCOHOL/E-CIGARETTES/MARIJUANA/TOBACCO**

### **ALCOHOL BEVERAGE ADVERTISING**

We support legislation for alcoholic beverage advertising to be curtailed with special sensitivity given to its effect on our youth. (2019)

### **DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS**

We support legislation to increase the penalties for any law enforcement personnel employed by any law enforcement agency in New York State who are found guilty of violating the Driving While Intoxicated/Driving While Ability Impaired Laws of New York State while on duty, and further, we support legislation that any law enforcement personnel found in possession of a loaded weapon while in an intoxicated condition be immediately suspended until afforded a proper hearing to determine eligibility to continue employment. (2021)

### **DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED (DWI)/BOATING WHILE INTOXICATED (BWI)**

We support legislation that would allow the courts to consider information of prior convictions of Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) and Boating While Intoxicated (BWI) against the individual during sentencing. (2022)

### **E-CIGARETTES AND VAPING**

We recommend that Federal Legislators pass a law to ban television, radio, and social media advertising of E-cigarettes and vaping devices containing nicotine. (2019)

We support legislation that prohibits vaping, vaping devices, and e-cigarettes. (2019)

### **LEAVING THE SCENE OF AN ACCIDENT**

We support legislation that modifies the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law in relation to leaving the scene of a personal injury or fatal incident so that drivers illegally operating their vehicle under the influence of drugs or alcohol are held accountable when leaving the scene of an incident. (2022)

### **LEGALIZATION OF RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA**

We oppose the legalization of recreational marijuana use and sale. (2019)

### **LIMITING NICOTINE IN CIGARETTES**

We support legislation that would limit nicotine in cigarettes and tobacco products. (2022)

## **PROMOTION OF WINE IN NEW YORK STATE AGRICULTURE**

We join New York Farm Bureau in support of legislation which makes it easier for small wineries to sell their products to restaurants by removing the requirement to register as a wine wholesaler and the record keeping requirements and would enable wineries to rent their space to home wine makers, which will bring in additional revenue that is currently enjoyed by wine producers in other states, including California and Washington. (2021)

## **UNIVERSAL AGE FOR ALCOHOL/TOBACCO PURCHASES**

We promote legislation what would set a universal age to purchase tobacco products and alcoholic beverages. (2022)

## **BUSINESS/INDUSTRY**

### **EMPLOYEES ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

We oppose any legislation that would require the New York State Department of Labor to identify and disclose on their website the names of any companies whose employees receive public assistance. (2020)

### **FREEDOM OF BRAND CHOICE**

We oppose any practices by any company that requires exclusivity to carry their product except in the case of a legal franchise agreement. (2019)

### **PREVAILING WAGE RATES**

We support legislation that would eliminate the mandated prevailing wage rates in New York State and allow municipalities and school districts to enter into competitive bids for both wage rates and materials. (2020)

### **RIGHT TO REPAIR ELECTRONIC PARTS**

We support legislation that would require manufacturers of digital electronic parts to offer for sale diagnostic and repair information in the same manner as such manufacturer provides diagnostic and repair information to such manufacturers' repair channel. (2021)

### **RURAL BROADBAND INITIATIVE**

We support legislation that would establish tax incentives and/or funding for telecommunication providers to install and provide broadband internet service to rural, low-income areas not currently serviced by the telecommunication providers. (2021)

## **SALE OF MAILING LISTS**

We support privacy legislation and do-not-call list laws. (2019)

## **WAGE INFORMATION ON JOB APPLICATIONS**

We support legislation that would prevent hiring managers from ascertaining an applicant's previous salary in the interviewing and hiring process, thereby achieving pay equity based appropriately on the values of the applicant's work, his/her skills and merit and the demand of the job. (2022)

## **CEMETERIES**

### **STATE VETERANS' CEMETERY**

We encourage New York State to select Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery as New York State's first State Veterans Cemetery. (2020)

### **YEAR-ROUND BURIAL REQUIREMENTS**

We oppose any legislation that mandates year-round burial be available at all cemeteries, leaving the practice of providing such service optional to each cemetery association. (2020)

## **ELECTIONS, ELECTED OFFICIALS, ELECTION PROCEDURES**

### **ABSENTEE BALLOTS**

We support the passage of the following amendment to the New York State Election Law, Article 8, Title IV, Section 8-406: "If the board shall find that the applicant is a qualified voter of the election district containing his residence as stated in his statement and that his statement is sufficient, it shall as soon as practicable after it shall have determined his right thereto, mail to him at an address designated by him or deliver to him or to any person designated for such purpose in writing by him (except if the designated person is a candidate in that specific election,) at the office of the board, such an absentee voter's ballot or set of ballots and an envelope therefore..." (2019)

### **FILLING A VACANCY IN THE STATE OFFICE OF COMPTROLLER OR ATTORNEY GENERAL**

We support legislation to amend the New York State Constitution (Article V, Section 1) to stipulate that if a vacancy should occur in the offices of either the State Comptroller or Attorney General during their four-year term, the Governor shall make an interim appointment with such person only serving in the office until the very next general election, when they could choose to serve out the remainder of the term, thus giving back to the electorate the right to choose statewide public officials. (2022)

## **INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM PROCEDURES**

We are opposed to any Initiative and Referendum proposals. (2023)

### **POLITICAL SIGNS**

We encourage political candidates and political election committees who have political signs displayed be responsible to see that said signs are removed within two weeks following the elections, and that Pomona and Subordinate Granges work to see that political signs are being removed by bringing them to the attention of political candidates and/or county political election committees. (2021)

### **POLITICAL SPENDING**

We support legislation that would place strict limits on how politicians spend their campaign money. (2019)

### **PRIMARY VOTING**

We support legislation that would move our state's primary voting day to coincide with a Congressional primary day or in June when there is no Congressional primary and that the state government reimburses local governments for the cost of operating separate primaries. (2019)

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

### **ENGLISH AS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF NEW YORK STATE**

We support legislation that would designate English as our official state language. (2019)

## **FIREARMS**

### **GUN OWNERSHIP FEES**

We oppose any attempt by the state to require additional registration and renewal fees for gun owners. (2021)

### **GUN SHOWS**

We oppose any legislation that might infringe upon our Second Amendment right to bear arms but supports criminal background checks and enforcement reducing the opportunity for firearms sold at gun shows to potentially dangerous or criminal individuals. (2022)

### **NYSAFE ACT**

We urge our State Representatives to convene public hearings to gain information which would be used to amend, replace, and repair flaws in the NYSAFE Act and that these changes would be made to not infringe upon our Second Amendment rights. (2023)

## **SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR VEHICLES TRANSPORTING WEAPONS AND/OR AMMUNITION**

We are opposed to legislation that would require all motor vehicles transporting five or more weapons and/or ammunition to have separate storage areas secured by padlock or combination lock. (2021)

### **SALE OF FIREARMS**

We discourage lawsuits being brought against the legal manufacturing, distribution, and sale of firearms. (2021)

## **GOVERNMENT - LOCAL & STATE**

### **KEEPING NEW YORK STATE ONE STATE**

We are opposed to separating New York City from upstate New York, maintaining the diversity and unity of one Empire State as we have known it since becoming a state in 1788. (2019)

### **MUNICIPAL CODE CHANGE FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES**

We support legislation that requests a change in the language of the municipal code on emergency services to classify them as essential services for the purposes of applying for and receiving state aid. (2019)

### **NEGLECTED STATE-OWNED PROPERTIES**

We urge New York State to take responsibility to clean up state-owned properties, remove all hazardous materials, and rehabilitate the buildings or dismantle them and to expend more effort to find uses for these properties or to sell them, putting them back on the local property tax rolls which would reduce the financial stress on the communities and improve the ambiance of the community, making a more pleasant area for which families could live. (2023)

### **NEW YORK STATE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTIONS**

The New York State Grange is opposed to a constitutional convention. (2022)

### **OUTSOURCING NEW YORK STATE JOBS**

We encourage all New York State government agencies that contract with private businesses to efficiently conduct business, contract with private New York businesses rather than seek out of state vendors. This would help New York's unemployment and set a good example to all New York citizens to do business at home. (2021)

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT/COURT SYSTEM/CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES**

### **BAIL REFORM**

We urge the Legislature to revise the new bail reform law to include provisions for repeat offenders who commit the same or a new misdemeanor or nonviolent felony after being arrested and released. (2020)

### **CRIMINAL VERSUS VICTIM LAWSUITS**

We support legislation that would prevent a criminal from bringing a civil lawsuit against a victim or a concerned citizen who might injure that criminal while defending themselves or trying to prevent a criminal act. (2019)

### **DISCOVERY LAW**

We urge the New York State Legislature to revise the new “Discovery Law” to include provisions that would protect the identity and personal contact information of those who will testify in the trial as well as any witnesses who are involved in the case. (2020)

### **LIFE SENTENCE WITHOUT PAROLE FOR CONVICTED KILLERS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

We support legislation for a life sentence without parole for convicted killers of law enforcement officers in New York State, as the preferred deterrent for such heinous crimes. (2022)

### **MANDATORY SENTENCING**

We support legislation that would require a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years imprisonment for a felony conviction of leaving the scene of an incident that results in the death or serious injury under Section 600 of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law when the driver is also convicted of driving while intoxicated. (2019)

### **PAROLE ELIGIBILITY**

We support legislation that would allow the Board of Parole to evaluate all inmates over the age of 55 who have served at least 15 years of their sentence for parole and that a public safety assessment be made to ascertain if the inmate is safe to be released under parole supervision. (2021)

### **RETENTION OF LOCAL COURTS/ELECTION OF JUDGES**

We urge our State Legislature to retain our local town and village courts, and to have all our judges elected by the people whom they serve. (2022)



## **SCAFFOLD LAW**

We support changing “absolute liability” to “comparative negligence” in the Scaffold Law thereby establishing liability in proportion of actual fault. (2019)

## **STRENGTHENING HOME RULE**

We call upon our state leaders to preserve and strengthen home rule and strongly oppose any state initiative to eliminate or weaken our state’s long-standing tradition of home rule and local government authority. (2023)

## **LEGISLATIVE REFORM**

### **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR IN NEW YORK STATE CONSTITUTION**

We support current legislation that would allow a Governor to appoint a Lieutenant Governor that would be approved by both houses of the State Legislature, create a mechanism to allow the Lieutenant Governor to assume the powers of a Governor when he or she is unable to discharge his or her responsibilities, and establish that a Governor remains a Governor even when absent from the state. (2019)

### **NEW YORK STATE REFORM**

We support legislation that would have meaningful reform for our state government addressing the following:

1. If the legislative body is not meeting as prescribed by our constitution, the Governor and Comptroller have the authority to withhold all salaries from that body until such time that they resume their deliberations.
  2. All legislative sessions to be open to the public.
  3. The budget process is open and not finalized behind closed doors by those in power.
- (2019)

### **STATE LEGISLATOR PAY RAISES**

We support legislation that would favor a voter/taxpayer voice in the decision regarding New York State Legislator pay raises. (2019)

### **TERM LIMITS**

We support legislation that would create term limits voted upon by the people for the people as a state referendum. The term limits would be as follows:

1. New York State Senators would be four (2) year terms for life.
2. New York State Assemblymen/Assemblywomen would be four (2) year terms for life.
3. New York State Governor and Lieutenant Governor would be two (2) 4-year terms for life.

4. New York State Attorney General and Comptroller would be two (2) 4-year terms for life. (2019)

### **VOTING TIMES IN NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE**

We support legislation that would prohibit voting on legislation between 9:00 PM and 9:00 AM. (2023)

## **MINORS**

### **GRANDPARENTS GUARDIANSHIP ACT**

We support the Grandparents Guardianship Act or similar legislation that would provide that all grandparents shall receive notice of any proceedings involving a grandchild and a non-parent party, including foster care proceedings and adoptions, and upon the removal of a child from a parent's home by Child Protective Services, all grandparents shall be notified and informed of the opportunity to become a foster parent. It also would provide that any grandparent who does not seek to become a foster parent must sign such a waiver. (2021)

### **PRESERVING FAMILY BONDS ACT**

We oppose the passage of the "Preserving Family Bonds Act" or similar legislation that would give the birth parents legal recourse to obtain visitation rights of a child after their parental rights were terminated and an Order of Adoption has been finalized. (2019)

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **2-1-1 SERVICE SUPPORT**

We ask for more promotion and awareness of the 2-1-1 service in New York State by entities that are involved in its operation. (2023)

### **FREEDOM LOUNGES AT AIRPORTS**

We support all efforts to have a Freedom Lounge at major airports in New York State. (2021)

### **GENDER NEUTRAL SINGLE OCCUPANY RESTROOMS**

We support legislation that would require all single occupancy restrooms in New York State to be gender neutral. (2022)

### **PREDATORY LENDING PRACTICES**

We support legislation that will provide protection against predatory lending practices. (2022)

## **RIGHT TO REPAIR**

We support any proposed Right to Repair legislation that would make it necessary for manufacturers to provide the schematics of their equipment, giving the ability local repair businesses to purchase needed parts or technology that would repair the item or product locally at the owner's discretion and that state and federal legislators address the practice of manufacturers prohibiting local dealers from repairing a product that needs servicing or significant repair to resume operation. (2022)

## **PROPERTY OWNERS' RIGHTS**

### **LANDOWNERS' LIABILITY**

We support legislation that relieves landowners of liability for injuries sustained on their property by flagrant trespassers. (2023)

### **LIMITATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY TO UTILIZE EMINENT DOMAIN**

We support legislation that would limit the use of eminent domain power to public projects. (2020)

## **SAFETY/PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES**

### **HOTEL AND MOTEL SAFETY**

We promote and encourage that all motel and hotel rooms be installed with safety grab bars in bathrooms. (2021)

### **REQUIRED BUILDING NUMBERING**

We encourage all residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and recreational buildings in New York State to prominently display four-inch reflective numbers on the structure. Numbers shall be visible from the road or at the access point of the property and on the structure, if they are not visible from the road. (2021)

## **SEXUAL OFFENSES**

### **LEVEL II AND III SEXUAL OFFENDERS**

We support requiring all Level II and III sexual offenders to wear a lifetime monitoring device. (2021)

## **STATE FAIR/COUNTY FAIRS**

### **LOCAL PURVEYORS AT COUNTY FAIRS**

The New York State Grange will work with the New York State Association of Agricultural Fairs to encourage the New York State Fair and each of the County Fairs in New York State to contract with local purveyors of food and supplies whenever possible and practical to support and stabilize local economies. (2023)

## **STATE PROGRAMS/FUNDING/MANDATES**

### **ALL-ELECTRIC HOMES IN NEW YORK STATE**

We oppose any mandate proposed by the New York State Governor that would require all appliances and heating systems in newly constructed homes be all electric by 2030. (2023)

### **INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS**

We support legislative action that would ensure the Industrial Development Funds will be used only for small or new businesses for which the funds were originally intended. (2023)

### **MANDATE RELIEF**

We call upon the Governor and New York State Legislature to enact comprehensive mandate relief legislation that would take into consideration the following among other relief measures:

1. inventory existing mandates
2. fully fund all future mandates (2023)

We urge the Governor and State Legislators to help minimize county financial burdens by:

1. passing the state budget on time
2. trimming government costs
3. eliminating unfunded mandates. (2023)

## **TRANSPORTATION/HIGHWAYS/VEHICLES**

### **ALL-ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN NEW YORK STATE**

We oppose any requirement that all new vehicles sold in New York State be all-electric vehicles. (2023)

### **AUTOMATED SPEED CAMERAS IN HIGHWAY WORK ZONES**

We support legislation for automated speed cameras in highway work zones. (2021)

## **BICYCLE HELMETS**

We support changes in the laws governing bicycling to require all cyclists to wear a safety helmet while riding a bicycle. (2019)

## **BIKE/WALK LANE ON CHAUTAUQUA LAKE BRIDGE**

We urge the New York State Department of Transportation to add bicycle and pedestrian lanes to the Chautauqua Lake Bridge during reconstruction. (2023)

## **BRUSH OBSTRUCTIONS ON RURAL ROADS**

We urge that all highway departments of the State of New York keep brush obstructions trimmed to give a clear view of the crossroads. (2019)

## **CELL PHONE USE WHILE DRIVING**

We support more stringent enforcement of the law forbidding the use of hand-held phones while driving. (2022)

## **CHILDREN AS PASSENGERS - STRICTER PENALTIES FOR DWI**

We support legislation that doubles the fines of speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or texting while driving when there is a minor child (under the age of 16) in the vehicle at the time of the arrest or infraction. (2019)

## **CONSOLIDATED HIGHWAY PROGRAM (CHIP) FUNDS**

We request our State Government to return all road use funds to a dedicated highway fund for the repair of roads and bridges only, to eliminate the need for property or other taxes to replace these CHIP funds. (2019)

We call upon the Governor and State Legislature to continue their support of the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) and to explore every way possible to increase highway aid and, further, to enact appropriate enabling authority for Local Road Classification as recommended by the New York State Local Road Classification Force which will permit local governments to rationally reduce to more appropriate levels, the costs of maintenance and repair of such low volume roads. (2021)

## **DRIVING WITH UNRESTRAINED PETS**

We support legislation that would prohibit a driver from allowing a pet to remain unrestrained/unrestricted in the vehicle, including prohibition of an animal on the driver's lap. (2021)

## **EXIT NUMBERS –INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS**

We urge New York State to change its exit marking system on Interstate roads so that the exit numbers are the same as mileage markers. (2021)

## **FARM TRACTORS/SELF-PROPELLED MACHINES**

We support legislation that would amend the vehicle and traffic law by changing the definition of a motor vehicle as it relates to farm tractors and self-propelled agricultural equipment from used “exclusively” to used “primarily” for agricultural purpose to allow farmers to aid distressed motorists/citizens. (2023)

## **FOG LINES/CENTER STRIPING**

We request that towns paint fog lines and center striping on their roads where feasible. (2021)

## **HEADLIGHTS “ON”**

We urge that all motor vehicles be required to have headlights “on” whenever in operation. (2021)

## **INTERSTATE REST AREA SPEED LIMITS**

We request the New York State Department of Transportation to post enforceable speed limit signs in rest areas on Interstate Highways. (2022)

## **MILK TRUCK TRAVEL DURING SNOW EMERGENCIES**

We join with the New York State Farm Bureau to promote legislation or an executive order to prioritize the travel of milk trucks during snowstorms when travel is possible. (2022)

## **PASSING STOPPED SCHOOL BUSES**

We support stricter enforcement of our current laws regarding the passing of stopped school buses be implemented by both law enforcement officers and the courts; that dash cameras on school busses be adjusted to pick up license plates of vehicles passing school buses, giving more positive evidence of the offender; we support increases in penalties for passing a stopped school bus to accomplish positive results, and that the revenues from those fines be dedicated to the purchase and maintenance of camera systems on school buses or stationary cameras located in areas where problems have been noted. (2022)

## **PEDESTRIAN SAFETY**

We support stricter enforcement of New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law, Article 27, Section 1156 (Pedestrians on Roadways) and New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law, Article 34, Section 1234 (Riding on Roadways, Shoulders, Bicycle or In-Line Skate Lanes and Bicycle or In-Line Skate Paths) by State, County and Local Police Departments and other law enforcement agencies to make the road a safer place for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. (2022)

## **SLOW MOVING VEHICLE SIGNS**

We encourage the stricter enforcement of the Vehicle and Traffic laws pertaining to signs on all slow-moving vehicles. (2021)

We support the need that all slow-moving vehicles, on public roads, be required to use the official Slow-Moving Vehicle sign. (2021)

We encourage all operators of animal driven vehicles to utilize safety devices for better visibility by motor vehicle operators. (2020)

## **SNOW/ICE REMOVAL FROM MOTOR VEHICLES**

We support the stricter enforcement of existing New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law pertaining to the removal of accumulated snow and ice from motor vehicles when in motion on public roads and highways. (2021)

## **SNOWMOBILES/ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES AS FARM VEHICLES**

We support legislation to amend the vehicle and traffic law to allow snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles to be registered as farm vehicles if their sole purpose is for farm use. (2023)

## **SPEED LIMIT FOR SCHOOL BUSES**

We support allowing school buses to travel up to the posted speed limit on all highways in New York State as opposed to the Department of Education regulation which limits school buses to a maximum of 55 mph, an unsafe speed on major expressways. (2020)

## **TEXTING WHILE DRIVING FINES**

We support raising the fine to \$400 for first time offenders for texting while driving, \$700 for second time offenders and \$900 plus loss of license for a minimum of six (6) months for third time offenders. (2021)

## **TRAFFIC SIGNS AND SIGNALS**

We support action to always promote maintenance of road signs. (2021)

## **WESTERN NEW YORK AND PENNSYLVANIA CORRIDOR**

We request the New York State Department of Transportation to conduct a feasibility study for the Western New York and Pennsylvania Corridor (Routes 60 and 62 connecting with I-86). (2019)

## **UTILITIES**

### **ELECTRIC CORRIDOR**

We support legislation that would require public hearings for proposed electric corridors to be held in the area affected by the proposed project. (2022)

### **RENEWABLE ENERGY BILL OF RIGHTS**

We support legislation that would establish a renewable energy bill of rights that would grant and protect an individual property owner the right to generate electricity by non-combustion methods for private use while connected to an existing electric grid, as well as the right to receive full credit for any unused electricity that is sent back into the established electric grid and would also require utility companies to respect and comply with these individual property owners' renewable energy rights.

### **UTILITY COSTS FOR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS**

We request that the Public Service Commission of New York State direct electric utility providers to set rates for service for volunteer fire departments equal to the lowest rate for all categories of accounts they serve. (2021)