

# TAXATION & FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

## - POLICY STATEMENT -

To achieve a balanced budget, either government spending must be reduced or more tax dollars must be raised. Economic growth can be encouraged by wise government spending; however, the Grange supports a prudent fiscal policy by curtailing expenditures in several areas. We recommend action be taken to move toward balanced general fund budgets and reduction of fraud at all levels of government. Future generations should not be burdened with the expenditures of today. The growth of government debt must be stopped.

Fraud is a waste of money that affects all aspects of life. We all pay for fraudulent practices through higher costs at the store, higher insurance premiums and higher taxes. Authorities should vigorously prosecute those who commit fraud at all levels of Government.

Local governments are burdened by the weight of mandates. These mandates must be fully funded by the government of origin. We call upon the Governor and State Legislature to repeal unfunded mandates. We favor legislation to bar the state and federal governments from imposing any new mandated services on local governments unless they fully fund these mandates.

Alternative tax sources should be explored that are fairer and more equitable than our current tax policies. Dedicated funds must be used solely for the purpose for which they were intended.

Timely passage of the New York State Budget is a necessity. The development of the budget should be a fair and open process.

Should the Federal Government not pass budget bills in a timely manner before their expiration date, the government and its many necessary departments will be forced to shut down, cease vital services or force employees to work without pay. This should not be allowed to happen. Should this happen, Congress should not receive their salaries until such time as all funding bills are in place and salaries are not to be retroactive.

October 2023

## **BANKS AND SAVINGS/LOAN ASSOCIATIONS**

### **DORMANT BANK ACCOUNTS**

We support legislation requiring financial institutions to notify account holders that their accounts are inactive. (2021)

### **MUNICIPAL DEPOSITS IN CREDIT UNIONS AND THRIFT INSTITUTIONS**

We request the State Legislature to enact legislation that amends all applicable state laws to allow local governments to deposit public funds in credit unions, savings banks and savings and loan associations. (2021)

## **BOTTLE DEPOSITS**

### **DRINK CONTAINER LABELS**

We support legislation or regulation that requires all drink containers requiring a deposit have labels that are not easily removed. (2022)

### **EXPANDED BOTTLE BILL**

We support a legislative change that would approve a five-cent deposit on all beverage bottles and cans including wine, liquor, sports drinks, and juice to further help keep our highways and roadsides clean. (2022)

### **UNCLAIMED BOTTLE DEPOSIT MONEY**

We support legislative action to make sure that the unclaimed bottle deposit money (when available) is dedicated only to help fund environmental programs (cleanup, educational outreach programs and needed coordinators) all necessary to keep us in compliance with state mandates that each community must have an active solid waste and recycling program with a high percentage of resident participation. (2019)

## **BUSINESS/INDUSTRY**

### **9-1-1 EMERGENCY SERVICE FEE ON TELEPHONE BILLS**

We support legislation that would require that all monies collected from the 911 emergency service fee collected on telephone bills in a county be allocated directly to 911 emergency services in the same county. (2019)

### **CARBON FARMING TAX CREDIT**

We support legislation that would establish a tax credit for farmers who maximize carbon sequestration potential through a “carbon farming” land management strategy; directs the DEC to develop regulations related to certifying the amount of carbon sequestered or emission reduced and that we support the creation of a new financial incentive for land management practices undertaken by farmers which help improve soil health and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. (2022)

## **CASH AS PAYMENT**

*We support legislation at the state/federal level that would ensure that every consumer has the right to use cash at retail businesses who accept in-person payments, including self-checkout stations. (2023)*

## **JUNK FEE PREVENTION ACT**

*We urge Congress to pass the “Junk Fee Prevention Act” or similar legislation which would help protect consumers from excessive, hidden, and unnecessary fees as often happens when purchasing entertainment tickets, communication service fees, and the seating of young children adjacent to an accompanying adult on an aircraft. (2023)*

## **NEW YORK STATE POPULATION OUTFLOW**

We urge our elected officials to take into consideration the need to lower the taxes in New York State that cause vibrant industries to leave the state for areas that present a better financial return because of lower taxing demands. (2020)

## **ELECTED OFFICIALS**

### **DISTRICT ATTORNEY (DA) INCREASE IN PAY**

We support legislation that would amend section 183a of judiciary law to require the state to reimburse the counties for the entire cost of any increase in the annual salary of the District Attorney due to an increase in the annual salary of a justice of the Supreme Court or county judge. (2021)

### **REIMBURSEMENT FOR STATE LAW MAKERS**

We favor legislation that requires state lawmakers be reimbursed only the amount verified by submitted receipts, not to exceed federal guidelines, and that the State Comptroller post lawmakers’ total monthly reimbursement on the [OpenbookNY.com](http://OpenbookNY.com) website where the office currently posts agency spending. (2020)

## **FEDERAL PROGRAMS/FUNDING**

### **FUNDING FOR FOOD BANK DISTRIBUTION CENTERS**

We support increasing the available funding for food bank distribution centers from the United States Department of Agriculture. (2022)

## **FUEL/GASOLINE**

### **NEW YORK GAS TAX**

We oppose the New York State gas tax as part of the Climate and Community Investment Act. (2021)

## **REDUCTION OF GASOLINE TAX**

We urge the New York State Legislature to enact a law reducing the gasoline tax to lower the overall cost of a gallon of gasoline. (2020)

## **HEALTH CARE**

### **TAXES ON HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES IN NEW YORK STATE**

We oppose any new taxes on hospitals and nursing homes. (2019)

## **HIGHWAYS/INTERSTATES**

### **FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION BILL**

We support passage of the MAP-21 Reauthorization Act or similar legislation that increases the federal funding allocation to maintain and repair local bridges throughout the nation and that the legislation include obtaining at least \$121 million per year (this funding to be locked in until 2020) for maintaining and repairing local bridges in New York State. (2019)

### **METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY TAX**

We urge the New York State Legislature to repeal the Metropolitan Commuter Transportation Mobility Tax (MCTMT) for the counties of Rockland, Orange, Putnam, and Dutchess. (2019)

### **MOTOR FUEL TAX**

We recommend the passing of legislation that would establish a dedicated fund for Road Fuel Taxes, and that this dedicated fund would be used solely, as originally intended, for New York State bridge and road repairs. (2020)

## **LOCAL COURTS/GOVERNMENT/SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

### **COMMUNICATION SERVICE SURCHARGE IN ONONDAGA COUNTY**

We support legislation that extends the authorization for Onondaga County to charge \$0.65 per access line per month wireline communication service surcharge to fund the Onondaga County Interoperable Communication System (OCICS) until 2029. (2019)

### **INCREASE IN JUSTICE COURT FUNDING**

We seek legislation to revise General Municipal Law 99-1 that would increase reimbursement fees to Towns and Villages to assist local taxpayers in funding justice court operational expenses. (2022)

## **STATE MANDATE RELIEF**

We support the passage of a constitutional amendment to bar the state from imposing any new mandate services on local governments unless the state pays for the requirements. (2021)

We call upon the Governor and State Legislature to repeal costly unfunded mandates on local government, including:

1. raising the project cost thresholds before WICKS would be applicable
2. reform prevailing wage
3. including the ability to pay, without raising taxes, as a priority consideration for binding arbitration panels. (2021)

## **REPEAL OF WICKS LAW FOR MUNICIPALITIES AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

We seek legislation to repeal the Wicks Law for all municipalities and school districts. (2022)

## **SCHOOL GARDEN FUND**

We support the creation of the New York Farm to School and School Garden Fund that would allow individuals to make a gift on their New York State personal income tax for such a fund. This fund would be used to establish school gardens and purchase equipment and educational materials to promote student's consumption of local products be conducted in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets. (2019)

## **MILITARY**

### **CUTS TO MILITARY PAY AND BENEFITS**

We strongly oppose legislation that would cut the pay and benefits of our active duty and retired military service members. (2021)

### **HELPING OUR MILITARY IN EMERGENCIES (HOME) FUND**

We support legislation that would amend the New York State Tax law and the New York State Finance law in relation to providing for taxpayer gifts for the "Helping our Military Families in Emergencies" (HOME) fund and establishing such fund and that all unexpended "Helping our Families in Emergencies" (HOME) monies are dispersed to current fiscal year applicants prior to the end of the fiscal year. (2019)

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **REMOVING MEDICAL DEBT FROM CREDIT BUREAU REPORTS**

We support the removal of medical debt from credit bureau reports which could make loan approval, employment opportunities, housing, and lower interest rates easier to obtain. (2022)

## **MORTGAGES**

### **GOOD NEIGHBOR BILL**

We support the Good Neighbor Bill or similar legislation which would require a plaintiff in a mortgage foreclosure action to maintain the property in good faith and provide a contact person for the property. (2023)

### **REVERSE MORTGAGES**

We request that the Legislative Committees with oversight of lending practices consider regulations that will protect seniors from the unscrupulous practices of some reverse mortgage lenders. (2022)

## **MOTOR VEHICLES/INSURANCE**

### **COLLISION/COMPREHENSIVE INSURANCE COVERAGE**

We support legislation that would amend New York State Insurance law to prohibit insurers providing collision or comprehensive coverage of motor vehicles from requiring repair shops to use specific vendors or processes for acquisition of vehicle repair parts and materials. (2023)

### **FUEL SURCHARGE FOR MILK PRODUCERS**

We recommend that the Federal Milk Order for the Northeast assess a \$.20/cwt fuel surcharge on all milk when the price per gallon of any fuel goes above \$3.50. (2022)

### **MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPERTY DAMAGE ON AUTO INSURANCE**

We support legislation that would increase the minimum property damage from \$10,000 to \$25,000 on all New York State auto insurance policies. (2023)

### **TIGHTENING OF NO-FAULT INSURANCE REGULATIONS**

We support passage of legislation that would address fraud and abuse in no-fault cases, eliminating loopholes that innovative criminal enterprises have used to exploit the system. (2021)

## **PENSION/RETIREMENT PLANS**

### **PENSIONS FOR CONVICTED PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

We support legislation at all levels of government that would strip the publicly funded portion of retirement benefits and/or pension rights from any elected or appointed federal, state, or local official convicted of a breach of public trust. (2019)

### **RETIREMENT BENEFITS FOR OLDER INMATES**

We oppose any legislation that would provide retirement benefits to prison inmates in New York State. (2023)

## **SOCIAL SECURITY INCREASE**

We support legislation that would give an annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increase to Social Security recipients, plus the cost of any increased Medicare premiums. (2021)

## **PERSONAL TAXES/INCOME**

### **EXEMPTION CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

We request the State Legislature to establish additional incentives for emergency service volunteers (firemen and rescue squads), such as greater levels of reduced property tax assessments. (2022)

We support legislation that would amend New York State Tax Law by establishing a graduated credit on New York State income tax for all active volunteer firefighters, volunteer ambulance workers and volunteer emergency medical personnel, beginning with \$200 for one year of qualifying service and increasing by \$100 increments, annually, to a maximum of \$1,100 for ten or more years of consecutive qualifying service. (2021)

## **PROPERTY TAXES**

### **FUNDING DISTRIBUTIONS FROM THE STAR EXEMPTION PROGRAM**

We support the examination of funding distribution to schools for the STAR Exemption Program so that equal distribution is given to upstate schools that are more susceptible to economic factors than are more affluent areas. (2020)

### **PRESERVATION OF LOCAL TAXATION ON CERTAIN LANDS OWNED BY NEW YORK STATE**

We support the present authority for taxation of certain state lands owned by New York State and urge the State Legislature to develop a uniform policy for the taxation of these certain state lands used for private use. (2023)

### **PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

We oppose the passage of legislation for property tax reform that would take away property tax exemptions from non-profit organizations, such as religious orders and land trusts, etc. unless they can prove that the property is used primarily as part of their core mission. (2023)

### **UNPAID BUILDING AND CODE VIOLATIONS AS DELINQUENT TAXES**

We support legislation that would amend the New York State real property tax law to authorize municipalities to treat unpaid building code and fire code fines as delinquent taxes and impose tax liens upon the real property which is the subject of such fines. We oppose legislation that would exempt the property if it were the primary residence for one or more of the property owners. (2018)

## **SOCIAL SECURITY**

### **FEDERAL SEQUESTER CUTS**

We oppose any planned cuts to Social Security or Medicare benefits now or in the future to help reduce the Federal Budget. (2023)

### **PRIVATE SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNTS**

We strongly oppose directing any monies from the Social Security System into private accounts or the stock market. (2022)

### **SOCIAL SECURITY LOCKBOX LAW**

We support legislation that would fully protect and strengthen the Social Security Trust Fund. (2021)

### **SOCIAL SECURITY TAX**

We support leaving the amount contributed to the Social Security tax at its current level. (2019)

## **STATE PARKS**

### **CLOSING NEW YORK STATE PARKS DUE TO BUDGETARY SHORTFALL**

We oppose the closure of parks and historical sites as well as cuts in hours, days and/or season of operation, levels of access to public facilities and levels of service thereof as a method of closing budget gaps. (2020)

## **STAR REBATE PROGRAM**

### **“S” OR “C” CORPORATIONS STAR EXEMPTIONS**

We support the enactment of legislation which would extend the STAR Exemption to farms owned by “S” or “C” corporations or partnerships, provided that a shareholder or partner has his primary residence on the farm receiving the exemption. (2022)

## **STATE BUDGET/FUNDS**

### **CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACT**

We oppose legislation that would add additional carbon taxes and fees while we are in the process of implementing the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act that was signed into law in 2019 and set New York State’s goal of being carbon neutral by 2050. (2021)



## **STATE BUDGET PASSAGE**

We support a timely passage of the New York State budget, and reforms to eliminate the closed door, three-person control of budget development. (2020)

We favor that for every day without an adopted New York State Budget after the April 1<sup>st</sup> deadline, the New York State Legislators be fined two days' pay until the budget is adopted, the fines to be imposed by the Attorney General. (2020)

## **STATE REIMBURSEMENT OF MEDICAID FUNDING**

We oppose the cutting of state reimbursements of Medicaid funding from the state budget. (2023)

## **SWEEPING DEDICATED FUNDS**

We strongly oppose the practice of sweeping dedicated funds for the purpose of balancing the State Budget, and that appropriate legislation is enacted to prevent this practice. (2023)

## **STATE OFFICES/PROGRAMS**

### **LOTTERY MONEY FOR EDUCATION**

We support the prohibition of a resident's lottery winnings being used in any calculations to determine a school district's state aid. (2021)