In the last month, legislation to eliminate the so-called “tampon tax” has been passed in Connecticut, Illinois, and New York.

The push to exempt tampons, pads, and other feminine hygiene products from state sales taxes has come amid criticism that the tax unfairly affects women. Supporters argue that menstrual products should be treated like other medical necessities, which are currently tax exempt in most states.

Currently just five states – Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey and Pennsylvania – have exempted tampons and pads from sales taxes.

On May 25, the New York General Assembly has approved a bill (Assembly Bill 7555 [2]) that will eliminate the state sales tax on tampons and other feminine hygiene products. It aligns the products with other medical products that are deemed necessities, such as bandages, medicine, and condoms, and are consequently untaxed. If enacted, it would go into effect on September 1, 2016. Governor Andrew Cuomo has said in a statement [3] that he will sign the bill because “repealing this regressive and unfair tax on women is a matter of social and economic justice.”

New York Assembly sponsor Linda Rosenthal said in a statement [4] after the bill’s passage that “tampons are hardly a luxury good and should not be taxed as such. Feminine hygiene products are medical necessities that enable women to participate fully in everyday life while they menstruate. The state should not tax menstruation.”

In Connecticut, the language exempting feminine hygiene products from state sales taxes was part of the budget implementer bill (S 502 [5]), and goes into effect on July 1, 2018.

The Illinois General Assembly passed legislation (Senate Bill 2746 [6]) that will exempt “menstrual pads, tampons, and menstrual cups” from the state’s sales tax, beginning January 1, 2017. The bill now awaits action from Governor Bruce Rauner, who has not given any indication on whether or not he will sign the bill into law. The General Assembly’s action came one month after the Chicago City Council unanimously voted to define such products as medical necessities that are exempt from the city’s 1.25 percent sales tax.

Similar legislation also has been passed by the California Assembly (AB 1561 [7]) and is awaiting action by the Senate.

Other bills have also been considered this year in Michigan, Missouri, Rhode Island, Mississippi, Tennessee, Utah, Washington and Wisconsin.

In January [8], President Barack Obama expressed surprise upon learning that so many states tax feminine hygiene products. “I have no idea why states would tax these as luxury items,” he told Ingrid Nilsen, a YouTube personality. “I suspect it’s because men were making the laws when those taxes were passed.”