

**CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMON CAUSE/NY
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS/N.Y.S.
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP**

Contact:

DeNora Getachew 917 912-5471
Susan Lerner 917 670-5670
Barbara Bartoletti 518 465-4162
Blair Horner 518 436-0876

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

CIVIC GROUPS URGE GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATIVE LEADERS TO RESPOND TO MOUNTING ETHICS CONTROVERSIES AND SCANDALS BY PASSING SWEEPING ETHICS REFORMS

GROUPS CALL FOR NEW ETHICS COMMISSION, GREATER FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE AND A BAN ON "PAY TO PLAY"

Civic groups today called on Governor Paterson and the state's legislative leaders to react to the mounting ethics controversies at the state Capitol by agreeing to enact new and sweeping ethics reforms. Citizens Union of the City of New York, Common Cause/NY, the League of Women Voters/N.Y.S. and NYPIRG issued their call as Albany has been reeling from a series of scandals and indictments stemming from corrupt and unethical behaviors that have plagued the state Capitol in recent years.

The groups pointed out that what is clear about these cases is that those involved believed no one was watching, and that the government's internal ethics enforcement system was unlikely to catch them or even identify a problem. In fact, Albany's systematic failure is underscored by the fact that for the most part, the aggressive prosecutions that led to the convictions have come not from Albany's governmental watchdogs, but from federal attorneys and local district attorneys.

The groups offered draft legislation to the governor and the leaders that encompassed a four point plan to dramatically strengthen New York's ethics law by urging that the governor and the legislative leaders agree to:

- **Create a new, independent ethics oversight agency, *the Commission on Governmental Ethics*, with jurisdiction over both the executive and legislative branches.**
- **Establish more stringent requirements for financial disclosure for public officers.**
- **Strengthen the ban on the personal use of campaign contributions.**
- **Restrict campaign contributions from lobbyists and those receiving government contracts ("pay to play").**

###

Attached are the letter to the governor and legislative leaders, a summary of recommended ethics disclosure changes, and a briefing paper describing our support in greater detail.