



**MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT
S.3287 (Krueger)/A.1835 (Ortiz)
February 26, 2019**

Title

An act to amend the legislative law, in relation to creation of the non-partisan legislative budget office

Summary

The legislation adds a new Article 4-B of the Legislative Law and amends Section 30 of the Legislative Law to create a non-partisan Legislative Budget Office (LBO). The bill also specifies the appointment of the office's director, who would be selected without regard to political affiliation by the majority leaders of the senate and assembly, in consultation with the minority leaders of the senate and assembly. The director would then be appointed by a joint resolution requiring a two-thirds vote of both the senate and assembly, with removal of the director through a two-thirds vote from the members elected to either house of the legislature.

The LBO would provide a report to the temporary president of the senate, minority leader of the senate, speaker of the assembly and minority leader of the assembly on the first of March regarding estimated revenues, projected economic factors, summarization of the governor's budget, and alternative revenue sources. The LBO would also respond to requests for information from the chairs and ranking members of senate and assembly committees, as well as members with regard to fiscal notes for bills they sponsor. A priority processing system would be developed for requests from members by the LBO's director in consultation with the chairs and ranking members of the Senate Finance Committee and Assembly Ways and Means Committee. The legislation also provides the LBO with access to all state government entities for the purpose of obtaining information on state operations and financial conditions.

Statement of Support

Citizens Union supports S.3287/A.1835, as it would help to remove some of the partisanship from the legislative budget process and result in greater accuracy in budgeting. The majority and minority parties of each house of the legislature currently have separate fiscal and budget staff to provide them with insight into the financial matters of the state, and the LBO would replace many of their reporting functions. The LBO would provide an objective, unified revenue estimate for the legislature and the associated costs of proposed programs, which will help to prevent protracted debate regarding disagreements on such estimates. To ensure that the office remains independent and empowered to carry out its mission, it would be advisable to set the budget of the LBO as a percentage of the state Division of the Budget, similar to New York City's model (see Section 259(b) of The New York City Charter).

This legislation is modeled on successful legislative budget offices in other states and New York City, as well as the Congressional Budget Office, which is widely respected as a non-partisan and objective

entity in the federal budget process. Our groups believe that S.3287/A.1835 would increase public confidence in the budgets and revenue estimates presented by the legislature, given its non-partisan and more independent structure.

Our groups urge the legislature to promptly pass this legislation, and consider giving the office further responsibilities after its implementation once it has the opportunity to build its credibility and its experience can be evaluated.