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## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

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### **Ethics Reform: Lost Opportunity**

Stronger ethics reforms are required to end the climate of corruption in Albany. The weak reform package passed by the legislature late last night was not released until 4:00 pm, providing little time for consideration and debate by the legislators voting upon it.

Increased disclosure of outside income is incorporated as a piece of the reform package, but may not be comprehensive enough with respect to all types of income received by attorney legislators. The League believes that these measures, as well as existing questionable enforcement of ethics laws, are still insufficient to adequately protect the public interest.

The League commends the reform measure that will allow forfeiture of pension benefits for all public officials convicted of a felony related to public office.

Reform of the per diem system will require legislators to prove their presence in Albany for legislative business, but does little to ensure reimbursement is issued for actual expenses. The League continues to believe that requiring receipts and only reimbursing legislators reasonable and related travel expenses that are actually incurred while in the performance of their duties is necessary.

The changes related to personal use of campaign funds accomplish little and the League will continue to support more stringent limitations on personal use of campaign funds.

The League believes that JCOPE's structure and powers must be strengthened to restore public faith in the commitment of our state government to true ethics reform. With the proposed increase in disclosure requirements, and other reforms, the resources allocated should be devoted to strengthening the agency's ability to interpret, review and enforce the new statutory requirements.

Still absent from this package of ethics reform are significant campaign finance reform measures including closure of the LLC loophole, reduced limits on contributions and housekeeping accounts, and transfers from party committees to candidates.

The League will continue to advocate for stronger and more meaningful ethics reform to restore public trust in NYS government.