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## NEWS RELEASE

### **CIVIC GROUPS URGE NEW GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATIVE LEADERS TO EMBRACE ETHICS REFORMS IN RESPONSE TO “UNPRECEDENTED” NUMBER OF SCANDALS**

#### **2007 IS 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF ETHICS LAW, GROUPS URGE IT IS TIME FOR “RADICAL OVERHAUL”**

Leading civic groups today urged Governor Eliot Spitzer and state legislative leaders to seize a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity and embrace a package of ethics reforms in the 2007 legislative session. The Brennan Center for Justice, Citizens Union, Common Cause, the League of Women Voters and NYPIRG released their “Top 10” list of reforms and urged action in 2007 – the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the state’s ethics law.

The groups’ call came after series of controversies and scandals involving state lawmakers. In a letter to the governor and the legislative leaders, the groups wrote,

*As you know, the last few years in Albany have been marked by a series of ethical lowlights. Three members of the Assembly, one Senator and one cabinet-level agency head have been convicted of political crimes. Two Assemblymembers and two Senators are currently under investigation. And the state Comptroller has been forced to resign.*

*Lawmakers would normally respond to such controversies by holding hearings, drafting legislation and advancing reforms. Yet in Albany, little significant change has occurred*

The groups urged action on a package of reforms that would create an independent ethics watchdog to replace the current State Ethics Commission’s and Legislative Ethics Committee’s oversight of state law; ban “pay to play” activities, strengthen ethics guidelines and boost openness (a summary of the proposals is attached).

The groups urged noted that despite an “unprecedented” series of ethical controversies and scandals, little had been done in response. The groups called for action, “such reforms are long overdue and must be tackled early this session.”