



MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the General Government & Public Protection Budget Subcommittees
From: Blair Horner, Executive Director, NYPIRG
Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director, League of Women Voters of NYS
Date: March 21, 2002
Re: Reactions to “one-house” budget bills regarding democracy

Ethics. *Support:* Governor Hochul called for the replacement of the Joint Commission on Public Ethics. Her plan relies on law school deans to be the selection panel for her new commission. While we do not oppose such a mechanism, we are agnostic as to who sits on the selection commission as long as there is a prohibition on those regulated by the new entity from directly appointing the new commissioners. We also recommend additional measures to strengthen the Governor’s plan. *Oppose:* Both one-house budgets continue funding of JCOPE. While the Senate’s proposed budget allows for the funding of a successor agency, it also allows for continued funding of JCOPE. **A budget that continues funding JCOPE without reform is a vote in support of New York’s failed ethics status quo.**

Voting. *Support:* The Governor proposed to (1) lower the voter registration deadline from 25 days to the constitutionally-required minimum of 10 days; and (2) require that colleges with dorms are required to have polling places for the General Election. The Senate does *not* include the Governor’s proposals since they had *already approved legislation* in each of these areas. The Senate has also added \$10 million to increase resources for early voting. The Senate has also added \$5 million for an Office of Voting Rights, which is an important investment if the Legislature decides to approve the “Voting Rights Act” in New York (S.1046A/A.6678A).

Campaign financing. *Support:* The Senate increased funding beyond the Governor’s and Assembly’s budgets for the state’s upcoming public financing of elections.

Accountability. *Support:* Both houses’ budgets included a “database of deals” and bolstered the state Comptroller’s oversight of state contracting. Support the Senate plan to require an independent analysis of economic development-related tax benefits, tax incentives, and tax deductions.