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Monday, May 4, 2015

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## **Reform Advocates Welcome Ethics Review Panel *Urge Open and Independent Operations***

On Friday, May 1, 2015, Governor Cuomo and state legislative leaders named a panel to review the performance of the Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE) and the Legislative Ethics Commission (LEC). We are pleased to learn of the panel's formation and welcome the appointees to their significant new roles as public watchdogs. As the recent and continuing revelations of scandal in New York demonstrate, strengthening ethics enforcement in this state is imperative.

The appointees have their work cut out for them. New Yorkers were promised a probing review of JCOPE's and LEC's effectiveness when the legislature and governor enacted the Public Integrity Reform Act of 2011. We look forward to working with the review panel and strongly urge it to publicly pledge to conduct its operations openly and independently before it begins. In particular, we urge the new panel to:

- comply with FOIL and open meeting laws;
- maintain a public website, and supply webcasts or archived videos and materials from its meetings, including testimony and minutes, online;
- hold public hearings across the state;
- examine best practices nationwide and apply them to the evaluation of the independence and qualifications of the commissioners and executive directors of JCOPE and LEC;
- evaluate the resources needed for the agencies to fulfill their missions; and
- hire a professional, independent staff to ensure it is able to carry out its mission and duties effectively.

The ethics review panel's report is due November 1, 2015.

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