



NEWS RELEASE

SPEAKER'S ARREST PROMPTS CALL FOR SWEEPING ETHICS REFORMS

REFORMERS SAY NEW YORKERS SHOULD NOT HAVE TO RELY ON FEDS FOR ETHICS ENFORCEMENT

New York's leading reform groups today urged Governor Cuomo and the Legislative leaders to make fixing the state's broken ethics enforcement system their top priority. Common Cause/NY, the League of Women Voters N.Y.S. and the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) urged changes to the Joint Commission on Public Ethics and the Legislative Ethics Commission – both agencies charged with monitoring political ethics in the state.

The arrest of the Assembly Speaker by the United States Attorney stands in sharp contrast to the inaction of New York's own so-called ethics watchdogs.

The groups urged that lawmakers advance a plan that includes the following 4 points:

- **Overhaul of ethics oversight:** Merging of the Legislative Ethics Commission into JCOPE. Changes for the new JCOPE board, including: a smaller number of members, bans on membership by elected officials, a prohibition on executive or legislative staff becoming JCOPE staff until a “cooling off period” has ended, JCOPE compliance with FOIL and Open Meetings Law, a strict requirement that board members are sworn to protect the interests of the public – not the interests of their appointing authorities, and an end to the so-called “legislative veto.”
- **Better ethics disclosures:** Full disclosure of outside business clients for all lawmakers, including lawyers as proposed by the New York City Bar Association.
- **Stricter oversight of lobbyists:** Broadening of the definition of lobbying to include public relations efforts in support of government actions. New, much lower campaign contributions for lobbyists and those receiving government contracts as well as enhanced disclosures of such contributions.
- **Changes to the campaign finance system:** Eliminating the LLC loophole, lowering contribution limits, and strict controls over the “personal use” of campaign contributions, as well as a voluntary system of public financing of elections.