

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, March 27, 2007

For more information contact:
Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNYS, 518-465-4162

BUDGET PROCESS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS AGAIN

The League of Women Voters of New York State expressed great dissatisfaction today with the current budget deliberation process. In the absence of meaningful joint conference committees and open leader's meetings, substituted with what appears to be "two men in a room" taking turns, New York has yet to see the fresh face of Albany described by then-candidate Spitzer; in fact, this budget process takes us backward in the journey to a more transparent, open state government.

If Governor Spitzer truly wishes to salvage this closed budget process, he must spend the remainder of the week, as well as the weekend, visiting living rooms across the state to explain to the public what their representatives will be considering as early as this weekend. Without public awareness of policy decisions concerning matters of dire importance, such as education finance and the systemic changes being made to the health care system, the public will be completely shut out, and legislators will not have the benefit of informed constituents, who may then provide input to their representatives.

This Legislature and Governor cannot begin a new, more open and transparent era in Albany without first putting forth these efforts. If the deliberation process continues in this fashion, the Governor has not only failed to live up to his promise to New York's citizens – he has become a part of the problem. This first-year budget process will be a missed leadership opportunity to craft the open and transparent government New York State deserves. If he is to fulfill his "Day One" promise, Governor Spitzer must act now, rather than allow state government to continue down this path.