



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Serrano and Leaders Call on Governor Paterson to Lead the Nation in "Stimulus Accountability"

JOSÉ M. SERRANO May 4, 2009

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### Legislators and Watchdogs Call for New York to be the Nation's "Transparency Capital"

(Albany, NY) - A coalition of state elected officials praised Governor Paterson for being a champion of the federal stimulus package today, and strongly urged him to comprehensively address oversight and accountability in stimulus funding. The state officials were joined by members of the NYS Stimulus Oversight Working Group, including Common Cause/New

York and NYPIRG.

"Governor Paterson showed tremendous vision in his advocacy for both fiscal responsibility and also federal stimulus," said Senator José M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx). "I believe he can now build on that vision, and establish a real model of accountability for this nation."

"With such a vast sum of money at issue, the public has a right to know how decisions regarding federal stimulus monies are being made," said Assemblyman Michael Gianaris (D-Queens). "Accountability and transparency are crucial elements to ensure that the billions of dollars we receive in federal stimulus money are spent wisely to further New York's economic recovery."

"We appreciate Governor Paterson's navigation of New York State through difficult economic times, and his success in working with the Congressional delegation to obtain ARRA funds," said New York City Councilmember Gale Brewer (D-Manhattan). "It is now our request that the allocation of funds to the cities and towns of New York be carried out in a transparent and accountable process, with an expanded online infrastructure that allows for the tracking of monies. Then it will be clear to the public that the funds are being spent to foster job creation and economic development."

"New York officials have said they want the state to be a national leader regarding stimulus oversight and transparency, and it's now time to take decisive action to make that happen," said Chris Keeley, Associate Director of Common Cause/New York, which convenes the NYS Stimulus Oversight Working Group. "Independent oversight, an open decision-making process, meaningful information for public review - these are some of the things that will make New York the 'Transparency Capital' of the country."

"In order for New Yorkers to have confidence and trust the economic recovery plan, the state must ensure that information about stimulus fund spending is accessible, timely, detailed, usable and meaningful," said Russ Haven, Legislative Counsel of New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). "Ultimately the stimulus monies come out of the pockets of current and future taxpayers and they need to be able to tell whether the money is being spent wisely and achieving the goals of getting the state's economy back on track and softening the harsh consequences of the economic crisis."

The officials outlined their proposals in a formal letter sent to the Governor earlier this week, which called on the Governor to:

- 1) Establish an independent Inspector General to conduct reviews and audits, prevent fraud and waste, and ensure compliance with federal requirements;
- 2) Create a more transparent and participatory decision-making process;
- 3) Expand online infrastructure to help the public track investments, making certain that funds are being spent to foster real job creation and economic development.