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Assemblymembers Scott Stringer, Sam Hoyt and Fifteen Other Majority Members Introduce Landmark Assembly Rules Change

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ASSEMBLYMEMBERS SCOTT STRINGER, SAM HOYT AND FIFTEEN OTHER MAJORITY MEMBERS INTRODUCE LANDMARK ASSEMBLY RULES CHANGE

Brennan Center for Justice, NYPIRG, Citizens Budget Commission, Citizens Union and Business Groups Support Reform Proposal

New York, NY - Assemblymember Scott Stringer (D-Manhattan) today introduced a binding resolution to change the rules of the State Assembly that will increase transparency, participation and effectiveness in the operations of the chamber. Assemblymember Sam Hoyt (D-Buffalo) and fifteen other majority members of the Assembly co-sponsor what is the most significant legislative reform measure to enjoy serious support in Albany.

The Stringer proposal is based on the major recommendations of the Brennan Center for Justice in its landmark report, [*The New York State Legislative Process: An Evaluation and Blueprint for Reform*](#). The resolutions key provisions would:

- Give each Committee the power to hire and fire its own staff. Currently, that authority resides with the Speaker.
- Require all floor votes to be slow roll call votes, with members votes counted only when members are present in the chamber and personally indicate whether they wish to vote aye or nay. Few votes are currently subject to such a requirement and empty chair voting is a commonplace.
- Require a public hearing upon the petition of one-quarter of a committees members, unless the petition is rejected by a majority vote of the committees members.
- Require a two-thirds vote of the Assembly to accept a Message of Necessity, a parliamentary tool that is used to force votes without giving legislators time to read last-minute budgets and legislation.

EX 20-1

- Make Motions to Discharge a viable tool to release bills from committee gridlock.
- Make attendance at committee meetings mandatory.

Stringers proposal was introduced as a binding resolution, rather than a bill, because it can be passed and implemented in the Assembly without Senate action, thus avoiding the chamber-to-chamber finger-pointing that is often used to defend legislative inaction. And while most reform measure enjoy scant support from members of either chambers majority party, the Stringer resolution was co-sponsored by Democratic Assembly members from across the State, including four committee chairs. If history and the experience of other states serve as a guide, then it is reasonable to expect that reform in one house of the Legislature may be followed by reform in the other.

Business and civic organizations from across the State that support Mr. Stringers effort include the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership, Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, Westchester Chamber of Commerce, Brennan Center for Justice, New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), Citizens Budget Commission and Citizens Union.

Assemblymember Stringer said: When we fail to fix school funding, fail to increase the minimum wage or fail to pass an on-time budget, the Legislature fails New Yorks working families. The call for reform has now reached a fevered pitch. It has created a unique window for action, a perfect storm for Albany reform. After a century of dysfunction, we are stepping up and seizing this tremendous opportunity. I hope all of my colleagues, and the Speaker, will join us in our effort change the way we do business in Albany and better serve our constituents.

Assemblymember Hoyt said: This resolution will give real power to individual legislators, not just the leadership. Well be able to take votes and hold hearings on the issues that our constituents care about. And well be held accountable. The resolution will enable voters to know where their representatives stand and if we are, in fact, standing in the Assembly chamber when votes are being taken. Taken individually, these may seem like technical changes, but together, they represent historic reform.

Scott Schell, of the Brennan Center, said: Since our proposals were made public in July, support from around the state has exceeded our greatest hopes. Today, longtime Albany observers who said reform was a pipe dream are being proved wrong. With these measures introduced by Scott Stringer and Sam Hoyt, every member of the Assembly now has a clear choice: sign on to the resolution and become part of historic change demanded by the people of New York. Or remain part of the problem.

In a prepared statement, The Business Council of Westchester said that it applauds all the legislators who have taken a leadership role to begin this crucial reform process.

Blair Horner, NYPIRG, said: The proposed rule changes constitute important reforms. Obviously, the next steps must include agreement within the Assembly and with the Senate if they are to have any impact. Once the legislature acts, all eyes should turn to the executive which also needs to be more open and accountable.

Diana Fortuna, President, Citizens Budget Commission, stated: The reform proposal being introduced today is a major step towards fixing New York States fiscal practices.

For a complete list of the resolutions sponsors and text of the resolution, click [here](#).

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The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, founded in 1995, unites thinkers and advocates in pursuit of a vision of inclusive and effective democracy. Its mission is to develop and implement an innovative, nonpartisan agenda of scholarship, public education, and legal action that promotes equality and human dignity, while safeguarding fundamental freedoms.

Please visit www.brennancenter.org.

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