

# BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE

*at New York University School of Law*

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## Brennan Center and Good Government Allies Call on State Senate to Adopt Rules Reforms

PRESS RELEASES

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### Brennan Center and Good Government Allies Call on State Senate to Adopt Rules Reforms

*“Time for the Legislature to Do its Part for Reform”*

**Albany** - Leaders of good government groups released an [open letter to New York’s State Senators](#) before session today calling on them to support proposed reforms to the internal operating rules of the State Senate. Several senators introduced a resolution to finally reform the Senate’s rules to make the body more open, transparent and democratic.

“Last week, in his State of the State speech, Eliot Spitzer went right at the heart of the Albany establishment and laid out a truly breathtaking set of reforms. Now it’s time for the State Senate to do its part,” said Michael Waldman, Executive Director of the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.

Two years ago the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law declared the New York State legislature the most dysfunctional in the nation. At the time, the report exposed in detail the pervasive deficiencies in New York’s legislative process and offered a blueprint for reform. In response, both houses of the legislature made modest reforms and pledged to do more.

In August, 2006 the Brennan Center released an update on its now infamous report, aptly titled [“Unfinished Business.”](#) The problems it found in Albany two years ago persist today: bills still get little debate in committee, they reach the floor only with leadership approval, and once they get there they are adopted without exception.

“New York’s government has been mired in a long era of stagnation and stasis, with critical problems unaddressed and key opportunities missed. Both parties bear responsibility. Both pledged action. Unfortunately, to date both the Assembly and Senate have failed to take action to reform their rules and make New York’s state legislature more effective and responsive to voters,” stated Lawrence Norden, Counsel at the Brennan Center and author of the report [Unfinished Business: New York State Legislative Reform 2006 Update](#).

“Today, the Senate has a chance to earn the distinction of having taken some of the first government reform-focused legislative action of 2007. The Senate can either defeat dysfunction by making positive changes to the rules that govern its day-to-day operations, or it can sustain the roundly criticized status quo. We hope that Senators will take this opportunity to be the vanguard of reform,” stated Rachel Leon, Executive Director of Common Cause New York.

“The new year is upon us and with it comes the impetus for reform. It’s time for real change at the state Capitol, starting with the rules,” said Blair Horner, Legislative Director for the New York Public Research Interest Group. “At the end of the day, rules reform isn’t just an issue for civics class. Ending gridlock in Albany means finally having a real debate about how to reform Medicaid and fix New York’s public schools. It means an honest discussion about lowering property taxes and ending out-of-control state debt. But New Yorkers will not see any of that until we make Albany work.”

[Read the open letter to New York state senators](#)

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