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FOR JUSTICE

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Common Cause/NY and the Brennan Center for Justice issued the following joint statement this afternoon:

It has been reported that the New York State Senate Democrats have been conferencing behind closed doors to consider proposed ethics legislation and that these negotiations may be leading to the bill's ultimate demise. The need to change the ethics oversight regime in Albany has been editorialized by nearly every newspaper in the state and is well established among the electorate. Governor Paterson made it a cornerstone of his State of the State address earlier this month.

Irrespective of our groups' position on this bill (Common Cause/NY has stated its opposition and The Brennan Center has called for more public input) we strongly believe that S6457, which is supposed to improve transparency and set high ethical standards, should not die behind closed doors. It must be brought out into the sunlight through public hearings and, ultimately, a floor vote. In this way, details would be debated and the bill itself perhaps even strengthened, before it would receive an up or down vote by every member of the legislature.

This proposal should not suffer the same fate as the congestion pricing proposal did in 2008, which was suffocated behind closed doors. New York demands better. It is time for the legislative leaders and their members to conduct public business in public view, whatever the outcome of their debate. The fate of this bill, which is supposed to shed light, should not be decided in the shadows.

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