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NYPIRG STATEMENT ON HOUSE PASSAGE OF H.R. 1

CALLS ON GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE TO SHOW THE NATION WHAT NEW YORK CAN DO BY PASSING A VOLUNTARY, SMALL DONOR SYSTEM OF PUBLIC FINANCING

ALBANY'S "PAY-TO-PLAY" CULTURE MUST COME TO AN END

(New York, N.Y.) NYPIRG today applauded passage of H.R. 1 by the House of Representatives. Yet one House approval doesn't mean a new law; the U.S. Senate and the President must agree as well.

New York State should show the nation how to pass comprehensive changes in reducing the risk of corruption as well as pulling back on the power of wealthy interests.

The Governor's plan, included in his budget proposal and currently under debate in both houses, would establish a new campaign finance system, one that matches small, private donations of \$175 or less with \$6 in clean public resources. Thus, a \$100 private donation, would be matched with \$600 in public support. Currently, New York has the highest campaign contribution limits of any state with limits. An individual can give nearly \$70,000 to a candidate for governor, for example. Who writes such big checks? Those with business before the government.

A system relying on small donors matches with public resources would dramatically shift the state's campaign financing system away from the wealthy few to the many. As a result, the corrupting influence of big money would be reduced and the power of the average New Yorkers enhanced. New York doesn't have to look far for a national model praised by experts nationwide. New York City's voluntary campaign finance matching program has been a success for decades.

The fate of the governor's plan is expected to be determined next week. New Yorkers desperately hope that Albany will finally deliver real reform that reduces corruption and boosts democracy.

Background on H.R. 1:

H.R. 1 would improve voter registration by automatically registering citizens to vote any time they interact with a government agency. Currently, 15 states have programs that track the

federal proposal. Experts predict that if H.R. 1 becomes law an additional 50 million new voters will be added to the rolls.

In addition, the bill would allow for same-day registration, which allows eligible voters to register at the polls on Election Day. Again, the Congressional plan is based on successful programs at the state level, offered in 16 states.

H.R. 1 would strengthen anti-discrimination powers in how voting is done. The bill would restore power to the 1965 Voting Rights Act by reversing a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that gutted public oversight of the way elections are run in parts of the nation that have had a history of voting discrimination.

The bill would also ensure that all voters have at least two weeks of early voting before Election Day, including weekend hours.

H.R. 1 also attacks problems in the nation's campaign financing system. It would establish a voluntary, small-donor matching system of public financing for Congressional races and strengthen the existing public financing system for presidential elections.

The bill would reform the way in which legislative districts are redrawn during the redistricting process by mandating that states draw congressional districts using independent redistricting commissions and establishes that they use fair redistricting criteria.