



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 20, 2007
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President Sonia Ossorio Receives Outstanding Public Service Award

Honored by New York Attorney General for Trafficking Campaign

New York, NY— September 20, 2007 Attorney General Andrew Cuomo honors Sonia Ossorio, President of the National Organization for Women in New York City for her work leading an effort to bring an end to human trafficking in New York State.

Ms. Ossorio launched the “End the Business of Trafficking in NYC Campaign” in the fall of 2006. The campaign includes public education , strategy sessions with law enforcement and government agencies, monitoring of criminal trafficking cases and a push for passage of a tough anti-trafficking law. In June of 2007, the New York Legislature passed the first such law in New York making human trafficking for sexual exploitation a B felony and labor trafficking a D felony.

NOW-NYC, with the New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition, lobbied for a strong, comprehensive anti-trafficking law. The new law addresses all components the Coalition were seeking: a comprehensive definition of trafficking; tough penalties for traffickers; comprehensive services for victims, clearer laws on sex tourism operations, and increased penalties for patronizing prostitution from a B to an A misdemeanor.

“There are few states that have as compelling and immediate need for tough anti-trafficking laws. It is happening throughout our community, in our neighborhoods,” Ossorio said. “New York is no longer a laggard. With the leadership of the new Governor, and agreements with the Senate and Assembly, New York can now begin to work to be a leader in this global fight to end this misery of modern-day slavery.”

The next phase in NOW-NYC’s campaign against human trafficking is aimed at ending newspapers and magazines’ reliance on advertisement revenue from illegal massage parlors and brothels. NOW-NYC is asking local publications to stop doing business with the organized commercial sex industry by signing an anti-trafficking pledge ***Trafficking Free, NYC!***

These ads are for illegal businesses. In New York, massage parlors must be licensed by the state. If they are not licensed, they are prohibited from advertising or operating. Newspapers understand this. *New York Magazine* and the *New York Press* explicitly make the distinction between legitimate spas and illegal massage parlors by featuring two separate ad categories and by charging up to three times the normal rate for the illegal businesses.

“We’re simply asking publishers to do basic due diligence and use common sense,” Ossorio said. “If someone calls asking for a classified ad that reads ‘Russian Girls, Young, 24/7’ what’s there to check out? Take the contact information and call the police.”

Ads provide buyers of commercial sex access to trafficked women. In March 2006, a large brothel in Flushing, Queens was shut down after an investigation by federal prosecutors. The house had secret passageways, and the vault held the women’s passports, \$800,000 in cash and a supply of the drug ecstasy. This brothel was advertised regularly in the *World Journal*, a daily Mandarin newspaper.

“There aren’t enough American women willing to do high volume assembly-line sex work to meet demand, so foreign women are brought to New York,” Ossorio said. “Brought under the false pretense that jobs await them as babysitters, housekeepers or waitresses, they quickly find out their job recruiters are pimps.”

NOW-NYC applauds *Time Out New York*, *The Brooklyn Paper*, *Hoy*, *Our Town*, *Westside Spirit*, *The Westsider*, *Our Town Downtown*, *City Hall*, *Chelsea Clinton News*, *AVENUE*, *New York Family*, *The Queens Courier* and *The L Magazine* for taking the pledge and ensuring that their paper does not profit from trafficking. Note: New York Magazine no longer accepts sex ads as of Jan. 1 2008.

The National Organization for Women is the nation’s largest organization working to advance women’s rights and improve women’s lives. The New York City Chapter of NOW, founded in 1966, is the largest chapter in the country with 7,000 members locally and 35,000 statewide. NOW-NYC works to protect women’s reproductive choices, end violence against women and eliminate sex discrimination in our schools, workplaces, and the justice system in New York.