



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 16, 2007
Sonia Ossorio
President, NOW-NYC
212.627.9895

GOVERNOR, SENATE, ASSEMBLY REACH AGREEMENT ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING LAW

NOW-NYC Campaign to End Business of Human Trafficking Reaches Milestone with New Law

New York, NY—The National Organization for Women in New York City applauds Governor Spitzer, the Assembly and Senate leadership for making human trafficking legislation a priority issue this legislative session. The bill that has been agreed on is strong and comprehensive.

NOW-NYC has lobbied for a strong, comprehensive anti-trafficking law for two consecutive years. The current terms of the pending legislation address all components NOW-NYC and the New York State Anti-Trafficking 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.

“This law has been a long time coming,” said Sonia Ossorio, president of NOW-NYC. “Under current New York State law traffickers operate in a felony-free zone. Once signed, this new law gives prosecutors the means to go after traffickers and begin breaking up trafficking rings and rescuing victims. It’s a new day in New York and trafficker’s free reign on our streets is over.”

New York City is consistently named as one of the top cities that traffickers use as both a point of entry into the U.S., transit location, and as a final destination point for their victims. The largest trafficking case in the country prosecuted by the federal government was a 10-year operation that brought young, poor, uneducated women from Tenancingo, Mexico to Queens where they were beaten, raped and then forced to work in prostitution seven days a week. Federal prosecutors secured 50-year sentences in this case. At the state level, 29 states have criminalized trafficking in the last four years.

“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.”

NOW-NYC understands that combating this pervasive problem will take more than a long-awaited apology. This year, NOW-NYC launched its campaign ***Ending the Business of Human Trafficking in New York City*** by raising community awareness of human trafficking throughout New York State; advocating on behalf of exploited victims by lobbying for comprehensive and effective legislation; tracking traffickers and educating local businesses about their role in this illegal industry.

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.