



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: June 17, 2010
Contact: Sonia Ossorio
212-627-9895

NOW-NYC Applauds Important Divorce Reform Legislation *Reform Bills on Post-Marital Income and Counsel Fees Pass Senate* *Women Senators Lead the Way for Reform*

New York, NY, June 17, 2010 – The National Organization for Women-New York City applauds the passage of Post-Marital Income and Interim Counsel Fee legislation in the New York State Senate. The bills were introduced by State Senators Ruth Hassell-Thompson and John Sampson, respectively, and passed with overwhelming support on Tuesday.

“We applaud the extraordinary leadership of Ruth Hassell-Thompson, Liz Krueger, Diane Savino and Majority Leader John Sampson on these important reforms,” said Sonia Ossorio, Executive Director of the National Organization for Women in New York City. “We urge the Assembly to join the Senate in bringing real reform to New York families. It would be a travesty to let these critical reforms not become a reality.”

The new post-marital income guidelines will help bring economic stability to many New York families upon divorce and reduce the legal costs and court time it takes to litigate post-marital compensation settlements. The counsel fees legislation will help to alleviate the disadvantages faced by non-moneyed spouses, most often women, who do not have access to family funds to hire an attorney.

“The new legislation will ensure that women have equal access to legal representation and get a fair settlement on post-marital income,” Ossorio said. “Guidelines for post-marital income will eliminate the unpredictability and subjectivity that currently make it a source of much litigation.”

In divorce cases, post-marital income (also known as maintenance) is often the wildcard. With the new guidelines, a woman seeking a divorce does not have to rely on the subjective opinion of a judge. Having post-marital income guidelines in place will make the process predictable, allowing parties to settle divorces in an equitable, consistent way throughout the judicial system.

The Interim Counsel Fees legislation will help to ensure that there is an even playing field between spouses when there is a significant disparity in available resources. It will require judges to make early arrangements for the provision of legal fees for the non-moneyed party. In situations where one spouse is controlling the money, it is necessary to provide for upfront payment of attorneys’ fees for the non-moneyed spouse. Only about one-third of motions for upfront fee reimbursement are granted, and judges are not always sympathetic to the women requesting them.

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 5,000 members locally and 35,000 statewide. NOW-NYC works to promote women’s reproductive rights, secure women’s economic empowerment, and end violence and discrimination against women.