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## **NOW-NYC Heralds Passage of Anti-Strangulation Bill** *Urges Governor to Sign Bill on “Terrifying and Life-Threatening” Abuse Into Law*

New York, NY, June 10, 2010 – The National Organization for Women-New York City applauds the passage of new anti-strangulation legislation in New York State. The bill won overwhelming and bi-partisan support, passing in the Senate on June 7, and in the Assembly today. NOW-NYC worked in concert with the bill’s sponsors to secure a strong law that would criminalize strangulation attacks and finally take aim at the abusers who would often get away with this traumatizing—and exceptionally dangerous—form of abuse. The bill was sponsored by State Senator Eric Schneiderman and Assemblymembers Joseph Lentol and Helene Weinstein.

“With this strong and well crafted bill, our legislators have shown real leadership in the fight against domestic violence.” said Jane Manning, president of NOW-NYC. “This will close a gap in the law that enabled abusers to get away with a terrifying and life-threatening form of abuse. We urge the Governor to sign this bill into law without delay.”

Incredibly, under existing New York State law, choking someone by squeezing or compressing his or her neck is not considered assault unless the victim sustains physical injury—as defined by New York’s high legal standard for physical injury. The required level of injury often is not met in non-fatal strangulation attacks.

Strangulation is especially common in domestic violence and sex crime cases, and surviving victims describe strangulation as an agonizing and terrifying ordeal. It is also highly dangerous. It takes only 11 pounds of pressure, applied for just 10 seconds, to choke someone unconscious. With more pressure, death can occur within minutes.

Yet strangulation—when it doesn’t kill—often leaves few or no visible signs. In a study of 100 strangulation attacks, the San Diego District Attorney’s office found that in 62 of them, police officers reported no visible injuries, and in 22 others, signs like redness or scratches on the neck were too minor to photograph. Battered women’s advocates in New York State report that, when a victim of a strangulation attack does not demonstrate visible injuries, police often conclude that there is not enough physical injury to constitute an assault and leave without making an arrest.

The new law would change this, making it a crime to choke or suffocate someone, whether or not the victim sustains physical injury.

Executive Director Sonia Ossorio added, “Choking is often more dangerous than punching. Ten percent of violent deaths are a result of strangulation in the U.S. If we pass this bill, we could intervene in abusive relationships where strangling is used as a form of abuse—and can even save lives.”

Manning added, “We will be able to hold an abuser accountable for the first strangling attack instead of waiting for a subsequent, lethal one.”

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.

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