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Report on Paterson Demonstrates Abuse of Power Reveals Broken System for Victims of Domestic Violence

New York, NY, July 29, 2010 – The National Organization for Women’s New York City Chapter expressed outrage with how the Paterson administration mishandled the domestic violence case involving Paterson’s former top aide David W. Johnson. While the state’s investigation into the case found no legal culpability, it was clear from the report that Paterson, the State Police and some top advisors acted recklessly, putting their own interests ahead of domestic violence victim, Sherr-una Booker, and abusing their positions of power to intimidate her from taking steps to protect herself from future abuse.

NOW-NYC Executive Director Sonia Ossorio stated, “Paterson’s actions were an egregious betrayal of the public trust. The report exposed his self-interest and lack of judgment and makes clear that he made the right decision in February to remove himself from office this year.”

NOW leaders called the case a window into the plight of domestic violence victims. “It is nothing unusual for a domestic violence victim, who has already been through a violent ordeal, to face harassment by her batterer, his family and friends, and his attorney,” said NOW-NYC President Jane Manning. “In this case, the terrifying difference is that the harassment had the muscle of state government and the state police force behind it.”

Law enforcement and government officials must be held to the highest standard set forth by the laws of New York State. More than 100 pieces of legislation regarding domestic violence have been signed into law over the last ten years, according to the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.

“These high-profile cases of domestic violence involving government officials show just how much domestic violence is epidemic in our community, transcending class, race and age,” said Ossorio. “Lawmakers, activists and health care workers have worked for decades in this state to create a system that protects victims. We have to hold everyone, especially our leaders, accountable.”

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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