January 26, 2015

VIA E-MAIL

Members of the New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building and NYS Capitol
Albany, New York

Dear Members:

We are writing to point out urgently needed changes that must be made to resolve ongoing, systemic issues of corruption that exist in New York government.

In light of the recent arrest of Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, in light of the seriousness of the charges against the Speaker, and in light of the Speaker's failure to appropriately address sexual harassment within the ranks of the Assembly in past years, we believe that the Speaker's resignation from office would be appropriate. If the Speaker does not resign, we call upon the Assembly to do the right thing and vote the Speaker out of his leadership position. To do anything less would be to make a mockery of our state.

In addition, we are deeply troubled by New York's failure to take official corruption seriously enough to make real change in its political system. The changes that have been made to date have been insufficient to address the scope of the problem (i.e. Gov. Andrew Cuomo's "ethics reform" legislation), and the frequently-discussed possibility of taxpayer-funded political campaigns would only make matters worse. Meaningful steps to address public corruption in New York include the following:

- True nonpartisan redistricting;

- A ban on legislative member items and gubernatorial pork-barrel spending;

- Reform of the use of messages of necessity;

- Full disclosure of all legislators’ outside income, including the names of the clients of practicing attorneys and the amounts paid by each;

- Tenure limits for legislative leaders, as well as term limits for statewide officials and state legislators;
• A ban on the use of campaign funds for non-campaign-related expenses;

• Stricter limitations and reporting requirements in connection with state legislators’ per diem expenses;

• Closing the “LLC loophole” that allows for the circumvention of limits on political contributions;

• Pension-stripping for elected officials currently in office who are convicted of official misconduct; and

• Structural changes that remove legislative leaders’ stranglehold on power in Albany and empower individual legislators.

We ask that you make it the very highest priority to enact true government reforms, including the measures listed herein.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Rev. Jason J. McGuire
Executive Director

cc: Members of the New York State Senate (via e-mail)