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**For immediate release**

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## **THE VERDICT IS IN**

### **NEW YORK STATE GOVERNMENT HAS A PERNICIOUS PAY TO PLAY PROBLEM AND THE GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE MUST ACT TO RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST**

The conviction of top Cuomo aide Joe Percoco on a federal corruption charge confirms again that New York State has a pernicious problem with pay to play. But the real headline from his trial is that in New York, state laws are so weak that what is unethical is legal. Percoco's trial spotlighted a state government riddled with pay to play, influence peddling and unethical behavior. Under state law, you can legally donate unlimited amounts of money to the Governor and Legislature, while trying to cash in on a giant state contract or get state funding. It's called "Pay to Play."

The Percoco trial revealed stunning failures in New York's laws and ethics oversight system, and leading watchdog groups are demanding major reforms. The groups, Citizens Union, Common Cause, the League of Women Voters, the New York Public Interest Research Group and Reinvent Albany, today called on Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature to pass basic reforms to "Restore Public Trust" in New York State government.

**Ban "Pay to Play."** Enact strict "pay to play" restrictions on state vendors. The U.S. Attorney has charged that \$800 million in state contracts were rigged to benefit campaign contributors to the governor, underscoring the need to strictly limit contributions from those seeking state contracts.

**Close the "LLC Loophole."** This loophole allows essentially unlimited campaign contributions via Limited Liability Companies. LLCs have been at the heart of some of Albany's largest scandals.

**Strict Limits on Outside Income.** Real limits on the outside income for legislators and the executive branch.

**Effective Watchdogs.** Truly independent, effective, well-resourced, ethics enforcement agencies are needed (*e.g.*, JCOPE, SBOE, ABO), including **increased funding for the Authorities Budget Office**, which oversees economic development spending.

**Clean Contracting.** Basic accountability measures that would result in an open, ethical, and efficient way to award government contracts, an area that was identified as a key problem in the indictments of the governor's top aides.

**Real Budget Transparency.** Make lump-sum budget appropriations and the resulting expenditures fully transparent.

**Pass a Database of Deals.** The public should have a "one-stop shop" place to see all the state contracts that have been awarded, the terms and the process that led to the award.