



*independence!*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 10, 2010

Contact: Melanie Shaw (518) 465-4650; cell (518) 209-2343

### Disability Advocates Applaud Senate Disability Legislation Package

(Albany, NY): The New York Association on Independent Living applauds the Senate's leadership in ensuring the fundamental civil rights of New Yorkers with disabilities of all ages by today passing a disability legislation package. We are also grateful for the Senate's recognition, in a resolution, of the work of the Independent Living movement in the passage 20 years ago of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and also of the work of Independent Living Centers in New York to protect the civil rights of people with disabilities of all ages. The legislation package includes five bills which are priority bills for NYAIL and the Independent Living network in New York.

"The bills passed today are particularly significant to the disability community in this year of the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act," noted Melanie Shaw, Executive Director of the New York Association on Independent Living. "The Independent Living community in New York State has been in the forefront of the fight for the full integration of people with disabilities into their communities for decades, including the passage of legislation creating the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council and the Nursing Facility Transition and Diversion Medicaid waiver program. Indeed, two of the bills passed in the Senate today which disability advocates in New York have been working on for years would require state law to conform with existing requirements under the ADA."

One bill, S.7860 (Addabbo), would require all polling sites to comply with accessibility guidelines of the ADA. When people with disabilities are denied their right to vote because their polling site is inaccessible, their right to participate in civic life becomes empty. This bill would update state election law consistent with ADA and Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requirements, increasing enforcement procedures and the likelihood of compliance of local boards of election, and eliminating outdated provisions permitting waiver of accessibility requirements for non-compliant polling sites.

A second bill, S.7482 (Huntley), incorporates the provisions of Title II of the ADA into state law, clarifying the scope of protections against discrimination in the provision of services, programs and activities of public entities, requiring reasonable accommodations, and allowing individuals with disabilities to gain

critical access to the administrative enforcement mechanisms through the State Division of Human Rights.

These two bills were unanimously passed by the legislature in the 2009 session, but were vetoed by Governor Paterson. They were again passed by the Assembly earlier this year. Maria Dibble, Chair of NYAIL and Executive Director of the Southern Tier Independence Center in Binghamton said, "NYAIL thanks the Senate leadership for continuing to support the civil rights of all people with disabilities by passing these bills again this year, and we urge Governor Paterson to make an equally strong commitment to our civil rights by signing these essential bills into law."

Also included in the Senate's package was a housing-related bill sponsored by Senator Squadron: S.7800, which would incorporate the housing provisions of Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act into state law. "The lack of accessible, affordable, integrated housing is the most significant barrier to individuals with disabilities living independently in the community and staying out of institutions," said Mel Tanzman, Chair of the NYAIL Housing Committee and Executive Director of Westchester Disabled on the Move, an Independent Living Center in Yonkers. "This bill will ensure people with disabilities of all ages do not face discrimination when they seek safe, affordable, and accessible housing in their communities. NYAIL thanks Senator Squadron and all Senate members who helped make this legislation the law of our state."

In addition, the Senate passed S.2933, sponsored by Senator Duane, which would cap fares for paratransit at levels no higher than the base fares for transportation of non-disabled adults utilizing the transit system. This bill would impact transit systems throughout New York State, as well as in the New York City metropolitan area.

*The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) is a statewide membership organization of Independent Living Centers, community-based not-for-profit providers of advocacy, services and supports for New Yorkers with disabilities of all ages, which are controlled by people with disabilities. NYAIL works to strengthen local Independent Living Centers and protect the civil rights of all people with disabilities.*