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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GOVERNOR'S VETOES OUTRAGE DISABILITY ADVOCATES

(Albany, NY): New Yorkers with disabilities were stunned last night when Governor Paterson vetoed not one, but two critical pieces of civil rights legislation. Both bills were passed overwhelmingly by the state legislature, and would require state law to conform with existing federal requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). In response, disability advocates are calling on the state legislature to override the Governor's vetoes and ensure people with disabilities in New York are treated as fairly in New York State as they are under existing federal law.

"By vetoing these bills, the Governor is denying millions of people with disabilities fundamental civil rights," said Melanie Shaw, executive director of the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL). "We are appalled that the Governor would veto two civil rights bills passed by a proportion of the Legislature sufficient to override a veto, bills that simply write existing federal rights into state law for clarification and enforcement."

"It is unconscionable and highly ironic that a governor with a disability has vetoed these bills. We are very disappointed that, by these actions, he has failed to offer the leadership we hoped he would bring to the governor's office," said Christine Zachmeyer, NYAIL board member and chair of the New York State Independent Living Council (NYSILC).

One bill, A.781-B (Paulin)/S.5396 (Huntley), adds federal American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II language into state statute, clarifying the obligations of government officials and strengthening the civil rights protections for people with disabilities. Title II of the ADA protects people with disabilities from discrimination on the basis of disability in services provided by public entities, including state and local governments. In the proposed bill, public entities would be required under state law to make reasonable accommodations—the same accommodations already required by federal law—and individuals with disabilities would gain critical access to the administrative enforcement mechanisms through the State Division of Human Rights. **This bill imposes no new or additional requirements upon local governments or businesses.**

Another bill, A. 584 (Cahill)/S.1058 (Addabbo), would require all polling sites to comply with the accessibility guidelines of the ADA. Across the state, polling sites are notorious for violations of the ADA, infringing on people with disabilities' right to vote. The new law will update state election law consistent with federal requirements, eliminate outdated waiver language, increase the likelihood of compliance, and increase procedures for enforcement. Inaccessible sites can either be moved, consolidated, or modifications can be made and **counties can be reimbursed**

from pre-existing state and federal HAVA funds for costs incurred in making polling places accessible to individuals with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired.

The Governor's vetoes come just ten days after the state was found to have violated the ADA and the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision by discriminating against people with psychiatric disabilities in adult homes in New York City. In response to that ruling, disability advocates are calling on Governor Paterson to direct the state not to appeal the decision, and to redouble efforts to produce an Olmstead plan which meets the court's requirements and a budget that implements the plan as soon as possible.

Disability advocates now call on the New York State Legislature to override these vetoes and ensure the civil rights of all New Yorkers with disabilities:

- ✓ Override the Governor's veto of A.781-B (Paulin)/S.5396 (Huntley) to incorporate the provisions of Title II of the ADA into state law and strengthen protections for people with disabilities against discrimination in New York State!
- ✓ Override the Governor's veto of A. 584 (Cahill)/S.1058 (Addabbo) to ensure that the state's 3.3 million voters with disabilities have access to their most fundamental citizenship right to vote!

The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) is a statewide membership organization of Independent Living Centers, community-based not for profit organizations run by and for New Yorkers with disabilities of all ages. NYAIL strengthens local Independent Living Centers and is a leader in the civil rights movement for all people with disabilities.

NYAIL executive committee members include Bruce Darling, Center for Disability Rights, Rochester; Maria Dibble, Southern Tier Independence Center, Binghamton; Sue Hoger, Resource Center for Accessible Living, Kingston; Mel Tanzman, Westchester Disabled on the Move, Yonkers; Christine Zachmeyer, Catskill Center for Independence, Oneonta.

The Center for Disability Rights, Inc. (CDR) is headquartered in Rochester, NY, with satellite offices in Geneva, NY and Corning, NY, and a policy office in Albany, NY. CDR is a statewide organization providing services and advocacy devoted to the integration, independence and civil rights of all people with all disabilities.