

## HELPING NEW YORKERS WEATHER THE STORM: CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES EXPERTS DISCUSS RESPONDING TO THE RECESSION

### *Speaker State Senate Majority Leader John Sampson Says Need for Legal Services Critical During Tough Economic Times*

New York – Today, LEAP, a coalition of ten organizations that provide civil legal services to low income New Yorkers, will host a first-of-its-kind conference on the challenges of supporting the growing tide of low-income New Yorkers, as the economic downturn and wave of unemployment continue to hit the city.

“We are thrilled to bring together the people on the front lines of the city’s recession for this first conference on how to serve New York City’s neediest,” said **Harvey Epstein, project director of the Community Development Project at the Urban Justice Center**, on behalf of the member groups of LEAP. “Having a leader like Senator Sampson join the discussion is a testament to the need to prioritize legal services for those most impacted by these economic times.”

State Senator and Democratic Majority Leader John Sampson will give the keynote address to the approximately 200 attorneys and civil legal services providers gathered at the “[Answering the Call: Civil Legal Services Respond to the Economic Crisis](#)” conference. In last year’s state budget, the State Senate added \$4.4 million in funding for critical civil legal services.

“As more New Yorkers fall on hard times— and their rough patches extend beyond anything we’ve seen in a long time— the need for a wide and strong safety net has never been clearer,” said **Senator Sampson**. “Civil legal services protect our most vulnerable neighbors who are seeing a lost job snowball into a lost home, or are facing the prospect of living without health insurance. New York City residents, as well as those across New York state, are experiencing trying times in this downturn economy, but it’s critical at this moment to make sure our legal safety net does not dissipate.”

“The demand for civil legal aid services in our communities is higher than ever as we face the impact of today’s contracting economy,” said **Senator Kevin Parker, who will moderate the conference’s plenary session**. “The delivery of legal assistance to working families is more important than ever and I am fully committed to working with community partners to address this effort.”

The conference’s dozen workshops will focus on civil legal services for low-income New Yorkers facing tough times, including foreclosure help, health insurance for the unemployed, and a discussion of the economy and domestic violence.

The conference is hosted by the law firm Weil, Gotshal + Manges, LLP. **Miriam Buhl, Weil Gotshal’s Pro Bono Counsel**, said the firm is proud to support the conference: “This economic environment has made it tougher than ever for underserved communities to have access to justice. As lawyers, we all need to do whatever we can to make sure ‘justice for all’ has real meaning.”

LEAP was founded five years ago by groups ranging from community based providers to public interest advocacy groups, in order to collaborate on the services they offer to low income New

Yorkers. Together, the groups provide legal assistance to over 60,000 low income households in New York City every year.

*Member groups of Leap: [CAMBA Legal Services](#) • [Goddard Riverside Community Center SRO Law Project](#) • [Housing Conservation Coordinators \(HCC\)](#) • [Lenox Hill Neighborhood House](#) • [Make the Road New York \(MRNY\)](#) • [MFY Legal Services, Inc. \(MFY\)](#) • [New York Lawyers for the Public Interest \(NYLPI\)](#) • [New York Legal Assistance Group \(NYLAG\)](#) • [Northern Manhattan Improvement Corp \(NMIC\)](#) • [Urban Justice Center \(UJC\)](#)*

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