



For Immediate Release: December 17, 2009

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GOVERNOR PATERSON TO ACCEPT FINAL REPORT ON STATE LIQUOR AUTHORITY REFORMS FROM THE LAW REVISION COMMISSION

Commission's Findings Show Substantial Progress at Reforming the SLA

Governor Calls for Elimination of Licensing Backlog by October 2010

Governor David A. Paterson today will accept the New York State Law Revision Commission's Report on the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Law and its Administration. In the report, the Law Revision Commission notes that the progress made under the leadership of recently appointed Chair Dennis Rosen has been remarkable, and acknowledged the enormity of the task of reforming the State Liquor Authority (SLA) while confronted by Prohibition-Era alcohol control laws.

Administrative reforms implemented by Chairman Rosen have increased efficiency, accountability and bolstered efforts to protect the public. Over the past two and a half months the SLA has reduced its application backlog by over 21 percent. The adoption of initiatives to streamline the application process, as well as the increased use of technology, has played a significant role in reducing the backlog.

"The SLA is taking great strides in making our communities safer, and I am very pleased with the progress Chairman Rosen has made in the short time since his confirmation. I want to thank the Law Revision Commission for their diligence in developing this extensive report," Governor Paterson said. "However, for far too long, the backlog of pending license applications has hampered local business efforts, which is why I am calling for the SLA to eliminate this substantial backlog by October 2010. I have called for fundamental reform to make all levels of State government more accountable to taxpayers, and the SLA must be part of this effort."

Governor Paterson noted that his office is reviewing proposed departmental legislation, some of which is also recommended in the Law Revision report. Among other changes, the proposals would make it easier for New York State wineries to produce and sell their wine and would remove a Prohibition-Era requirement that package stores be located at street level.

Chairman Dennis Rosen said: "We recognize the tremendous economic development role our licensees play in the State, and eliminating the application backlog is our top administrative priority. I look forward to reviewing the recommendations of the Law Revision Commission. I know that their efforts were exhaustive, and I congratulate the Commission on submitting a report that will help guide our continued efforts to reform the SLA."

In addition, the SLA has instituted an expedited disciplinary process, which allows individual board members to impose penalties for minor violations. This change has allowed the full Board to focus its attention on more serious problems such as underage drinking, service of intoxicated patrons and the conduct of criminal activity at licensed premises. So far in December, the SLA has issued four emergency license suspensions to bars due to underage sales, the sale of drugs on premises or for patrons implicated in violent crimes near the premises. Since August, the SLA has issued dozens of license suspensions, cancellations and revocations for problem premises and establishments that have become focal points for local law enforcement.

The Law Review Commission delivered an initial draft of the report to the Governor and the Legislature on September 31, 2009.

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