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June 15, 2001

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### **FERRER & NOLAN TEAM TO HELP SENIORS KEEP THEIR HOMES**

Borough President Fernando Ferrer and Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan of Queens today announced legislation to make more seniors eligible to participate in the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Senior Citizen Homeowner Exemption (SCHE) programs. The officials unveiled their legislation before a group of seniors at Sunnyside Community Services Center, 43-31 39<sup>th</sup> Street, in Queens.

The bill, A.4143, introduced on Ferrer's behalf by Assemblywoman Nolan, would apply an annual cost-of-living adjustment to the existing income eligibility limits for the SCRIE and SCHE.

Ferrer said, "We must go further to help senior tenants and homeowners. New York State and City must recognize the compelling connection between housing costs, malnutrition and poverty among our seniors, and look to assist seniors in the most basic way. That means affordable housing."

Nolan said, "It remains an important goal to qualify more seniors for SCRIE and SCHE. It also remains important to support these and other benefits that can assist our seniors in living a dignified, affordable, and healthy life in their current homes."

"Programs like SCHE and SCRIE help seniors – who often provide the glue that holds together neighborhood groups – stay in their communities," said Ferrer. "In a time of both parents working, and having what little volunteer time they can find available for their own children, communities rely on our seniors to help stabilize our neighborhoods. These modest benefits will pay back many times over as our communities gain from the continued spirit and commitment of our seniors who stay in the community longer."

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Based on income levels written into law and increased sporadically more on political whim rather than real need, SCHE and SCRIE provide needed help for senior citizens reducing property tax burdens or holding rents constant. As a senior's income increases due to inflation, they become ineligible for these programs even though their real income adjusted for inflation has remained the same or decreased.

This Ferrer-Nolan legislation represents one of several Ferrer proposals that build on New York's tradition of providing subsidies to help the elderly remain in their homes. Ferrer proposed legislation by Assemblywoman Ann Margaret Carrozza, to reduce rent increases and homeowners taxes by extending SCRIE and SCHE benefits to cover water and sewer rates. Another Ferrer bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Mark Weprin, would inject accountability in the setting of those (water and sewer) rates. Ferrer also has a plan to would build 150,000 affordable housing units over 10 years.

"All New Yorkers, not just our 1.3 million seniors, ought to support these measures that enable more seniors to remain in their communities," said Nolan.

"Let's put in place these needed programs and strengthen existing programs to give our elderly the resources they require to remain in their homes and lead successful, comfortable, and healthy lives," said Ferrer.

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According to the Independent Budget Office (July 24, 2001), only 44,481 Senior households participate in SCRIE, one third of the 133,388 eligible households.