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AARP Mobilizes Thousands of Its Active Members to Call Governor Pataki to Sign into Law the “Energy Consumer Protection Act of 2002.”

Albany, NY. AARP announced today a statewide grassroots campaign in New York to encourage Governor Pataki to sign the Energy Consumer Protection Act of 2002 into law. The New York State Legislature unanimously passed the Energy Consumer Protection Act of 2002 (Senate Vote 61-0/Assembly Vote 145-0) earlier this year.

The AARP campaign will consist of contacting thousands of its most active members statewide to call the Governor, using a toll free number 1-800-635-1910, urging him to sign this important consumer protection legislation into law. In addition, the Association will be running radio spots encouraging the general public to contact the Governor as well.

The bill provides the same consumer protections and rights to all New York households when they switch from their public utility to a private energy service company (ESCO) for their electric and/or natural gas supply.

“It is imperative that Governor Pataki sign this legislation into law as upstate public utilities and the Public Service Commission are encouraging people to switch their energy providers and are not informing them they may lose some basic consumer protections,” said Lois Aronstein, AARP New York State Director. “The Governor should sign this bill into law and demonstrate to all New Yorkers he supports consumer protections and rights for people regardless of where they buy their energy this winter.”

In a move to increase energy competition in the state, the Public Service Commission, through agreements with several upstate New York public utilities, is using ratepayer funds to finance media campaigns to get ratepayers to buy their gas and/or electric service from an ESCO instead of their public utility. However, the utility campaigns have not notified people they do not have the same rights when they switch to private energy service suppliers.

If the Governor signs the Energy Consumer Protection Act into law, ratepayers would be guaranteed the following consumer protections and rights when contracting with an ESCO for their energy supply: being offered budget plans; not requiring a deposit or prepayments for service connection; settling billing disputes and complaints through the Public Service Commission; capping late fees; continuing service, despite owing money, through a deferred payment agreement; and consumer protections for continued service to persons experiencing medical emergencies and for the elderly, blind or disabled.

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AARP has over 2.5 million members in New York State. AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people 50 and over. We provide information and resources; advocate on legislative, consumer, and legal issues; assist members to serve their communities; and offer a wide range of unique benefits, special products, and services for our members. These benefits include *AARP Webplace* at www.aarp.org, the AARP lifestyle magazines, the monthly *AARP Bulletin*, and a Spanish-language newspaper, *Segunda Juventud*. Active in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP celebrates the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP celebrates the attitude that age is just a number and life is what you make it.

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