

Authority reform law OK'd by Pataki

ALBANY — Gov. Pataki signed a measure yesterday designed to throw sunlight into the shadowy world of New York's public authorities.

The reform legislation, enacted less than a year before Pataki ends a 12-year reign, establishes independent oversight over the state's authorities, which include the MTA and the Thruway Authority.

The measure, passed by the Assembly and the Senate last year, sets up an independent budget office to monitor borrowing and spending by public authorities.

It also mandates that any authority property be

sold at fair market value to curb sweetheart deals for political insiders.

In addition, the law aims to close a loophole that allowed state officials accused of misdeeds to escape prosecution simply by resigning.

In a statement, Pataki said the new law will "further strengthen public authorities by ensuring that strong, uniform standards of openness, accountability and professionalism are followed."

The prime sponsors of the legislation were state Sen. Vincent Leibell (R-Putnam) and Assemblyman Richard Brodsky (D-Westchester).

Joe Mahoney

Gov OKs authorities watchdog

By KENNETH LOVETT
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ALBANY — The state's scandal-plagued public-authority system, which oversees everything from airports to mass transit, will be given closer scrutiny under long-delayed legislation signed into law yesterday by Gov. Pataki.

A budget office will be established, and an inspector general will more closely monitor the hundreds of authorities, which also control

tunnels and bridges and major economic-development programs.

Pataki said his budget proposal would include \$15 million to help implement the law, which will also ban procurement lobbying, strengthen provisions for public access to information, and establish codes of conduct for public-authority officers and employees.

Pataki has been criticized for stonewalling a bill passed in June. Some say he wanted to wait as long as possible to

minimize the impact on his administration in his final year in office. Aides argue he just wanted six months to prepare for the changes.

"This critical new legislation will build on our government-reform efforts and further strengthen public confidence in public authorities by ensuring that strong, uniform standards of openness, accountability and professionalism are followed at all time," Pataki said.

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