

For Immediate Release

**CITING A “SEVERE CRISIS IN OUR JUDICIARY,”
CORPORATION COUNSEL MICHAEL A. CARDOZO CALLS FOR REFORMS
TO IMPROVE HOW STATE JUDGES ARE SELECTED**

TESTIMONY COMES AS CARDOZO ADDRESSES KINGS COUNTY JUDICIAL REFORM ADVISORY PANEL

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New York, Feb. 22, 2006 – Testifying today before an advisory panel on judicial reform, New York City Law Department Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo cited a “severe crisis in our judiciary” and stressed that “something has to be done right now.” The panel, created by Vito Lopez, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kings County Democratic Committee, is devising new judicial nomination rules for the Brooklyn Democratic County Committee in light of recent events that have raised concerns about quality and integrity in judicial selection.

Cardozo urged the panel to adopt rules to ensure a judicial selection system in Brooklyn that will produce – and will be clearly recognized by the public as producing – the most highly qualified and independent judges. Repeating a theme that Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg has repeatedly sounded, Cardozo emphasized four key reforms:

- (1) the creation of a truly independent, broad-based Judicial Qualification Commission comprising a minority of members appointed by the party, to screen all potential nominees;
- (2) a Commission procedure providing for adequate notice and for all potential nominees to be treated equally;
- (3) a Commission procedure whereby only a limited number of names will be nominated for each vacancy; and
- (4) a concrete understanding that the judicial nominating convention must choose, and the party must endorse for the primary, only from the limited number of names recommended by the Commission.

In his remarks to the panel, Cardozo stressed that, “We have a severe crisis in our judiciary and something has to be done right now to improve things.” The Corporation Counsel continued, “We can’t wait for another judge to be indicted; we can’t risk another judge receiving his or her appointment just because he or she did a favor for a powerful politician; and we can’t risk further erosion in the public’s trust by allowing more judges found unqualified for the job to be nominated. Nor can we wait any longer to take steps to ensure basic fairness in the nominating system.”

Cardozo’s comments emphasized the need for reform at this decisive moment following a series of controversial judicial nominations in Brooklyn and a ruling by a federal judge last month that the judicial nominating convention system, as currently run, is unconstitutional.

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