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**COALITION LAUNCHES EFFORT TO REFORM
NEW YORK'S CENTURY-OLD SCAFFOLD LAW**

Coalition Counters 19th Century Law with New Website, Scaffoldlaw.org

(ALBANY, NY) A new coalition of New York employers, farmers and others has joined together to make a major push to reform New York's century-old "Scaffold Law" to help promote economic growth and recovery throughout New York.

Under New York's Scaffold Law, contractors, employers and property owners are held absolutely liable for "elevation related injuries." When an injured worker sues, the contractor, employer, or owner is automatically liable even if they weren't at fault.

New York remains the only state in the nation where a worker is not held responsible for his or her own negligence. Illinois was the last to reform the law, in 1995, and the effect was immediate: 50,000 new jobs and a sharp decrease in workplace injuries. By reforming the law, workplace safety will be improved.

"New York State's elected officials must confront the fact that simply doing business here is more expensive than in almost every other state. The Scaffold Law is 'Exhibit A' of our outdated and biased legal system," said Tom Stebbins, executive director of the Lawsuit Reform Alliance of New York (LRANY). "Reforming the Scaffold Law will be a first step to getting our economy moving again and sending a message that much-needed change has reached New York State."

The tremendous costs of the Scaffold Law are passed along to all New Yorkers. Since there is virtually no defense against a million-dollar Scaffold Law suit, the cost of general liability insurance in New York is extremely high, driving up costs for all construction projects, including taxpayer-funded projects like infrastructure improvements and school construction. This has a significant impact on New York: construction costs go up, employers hire fewer workers (or must lay off those they do have) and the economy suffers.

The new Scaffold Law Reform coalition is supporting Assembly Bill 2835 (D-Morelle), which would give New York property owners, business owners, contractors and municipalities the chance to defend themselves in court when an injury occurs due to negligence. The bill would not prevent injured workers from suing their employers or prevent injured workers from receiving workers' compensation benefits.

The coalition has launched a new website – www.scaffoldlaw.org – to educate New Yorkers about the issue and to encourage grassroots supporters to contact their legislators to express their support for reform.

“The Scaffold Law is more than 100 years old. A lot has changed in those years to help improve working conditions, including the development of OSHA standards and workers' compensation. We need to modify this antiquated law which now serves as nothing more than an increase to the cost of doing business in New York and a deterrent to the creation of new jobs. In the end, every New Yorker pays the price,” said Stebbins.

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Members of the Scaffold Law Reform Coalition include:

- Lawsuit Reform Alliance of New York
- Associated General Contractors of New York State
- Business Council of New York State
- New York Farm Bureau
- National Federation of Independent Business
- Unshackle Upstate
- The New York State Builders Association