

Ombudsman urged for handicapped

ADVANCE ALBANY BUREAU

ALBANY — Legislation to create an office of ombudsman for the handicapped in New York State was introduced in the Legislature yesterday by State Sen. William T. Conklin and Assembly Minority Leader Stanley Steingut.

Conklin and Steingut have also sponsored legislation this year which would require the decentralization of all state schools for the retarded, such as Willowbrook State School.

Conklin said yesterday, "Although New York State has done much to provide for the individual needs of both the mentally and physically handicapped, in the utilization of one central office the handicapped will be able to cut through the morass of administrative red tape."

The proposed ombudsman would receive complaints, consult with public and private agencies, and act as an advocate for the handicapped.

Conklin has received a letter from Mental Hygiene Commissioner Alan Miller, stating that he basically agrees with the bill.

Miller said his office has been studying the ombudsman proposal and is working toward implementing a plan decentralizing the state schools.

A report released last month by a state commission called for the "unitization" of the state schools into smaller entities.

Conklin said earlier this week that he will push hard for adoption of the two measures this session, but that he is not confident the Assembly will approve the bills.