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Teamwork Makes the Dream Work – Controversial redistricting maps for the State Senate and Assembly were released on Thursday by the NYS Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment (LATFOR). The new maps are rife with criticism and have prompted a promise of veto by the governor. "At first glance, these lines are simply unacceptable and would be vetoed by the governor," said the governor's spokesman, Josh Vlasto. Governor Cuomo continues to call for redistricting to be conducted by an independent commission. This notion had previously been supported by the legislature but has since been abandoned. Under the current redistricting, the Senate Republicans have proposed the creation of a 63rd district; an act they say is a requirement of the state's Constitution. The creation of a 63rd seat has come under fire by the Senate Democrats who claim that the creation of a new seat is a calculated move to preserve the Republican majority in the Senate. Other concerns have emerged with regards to neighborhood splitting and the division of various groups of voters. The released maps are preliminary and must first be approved by the legislature. Public hearings on the new legislative lines begin Monday in Albany. While negotiations are likely to intensify, it seems the redistricting issue has spilled over into the sports arena. Governor Cuomo wants to know which state the New England Patriots belong to. "Massachusetts Patriots. Vermont Patriots. New Hampshire Patriots. They all have semi-deniability, that's what I think this is" said Cuomo. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie joined the debate when he suggested that the Giants belong to the Garden State because that is where they play and practice. Regardless of the Giants and Patriots state allegiances, Cuomo has formally advised "bet all your money on the Giants." Click the following link to view the proposed 2012 District maps: www.latfor.state.ny.us/maps/

Unfinished Business – On Wednesday the Governor's Mandate Relief Council congregated for the first time. The 11-member Council, created by the legislature, announced their long-term agenda of reducing ineffective or burdensome mandates and regulations imposed on local government and school districts in an effort to reduce sky-rocketing property taxes. The council also announced the creation of a process of appeals of which local governments can apply to the council for a waiver from a law or rule, in instances where they were denied a waiver from an appropriate state agency. Larry Schwartz, Governor Cuomo's secretary, who has headed the Mandate Relief Team, and now the Mandate Relief Council announced that the Council plans to "really do a deep dive into the regulatory process." The Chapter will continue to monitor this mandate relief initiative as the process unfolds.

It's Hard to Play Against Us, It's Hard to Play for Us – While the 2012-13 executive budget proposal provides schools with 4.1% increase in aid, it may not be enough, according to the State Education

Commissioner John King. At a recent state hearing on the education budget, King testified that numerous districts throughout New York face insolvency within the next few years. King also expressed concerns that districts may be forced to cut back so heavily on academics that they will no longer be providing a quality education. Last year, the state enacted an unprecedented \$1.2 billion in cuts to education. In an already dismal fiscal climate, rising pension and healthcare costs are leaving many districts short as they prepare their own budgets for 2012-13. Although there are numerous strings attached to the funding increase (such as the adoption of a new teacher-evaluation system) higher-need districts, and districts which suffered the greatest from last year's budget cuts will receive a larger portion of the money.