

NASW-NYS Political Post
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April Fools? Amidst hordes of chanting protesters, Albany lawmakers passed budget bill after bill into the early hours Thursday, making this the first on-time budget in five years. After months of negotiating, public outcry, capitol chaos and the usual detail tweaking, the \$132 billion budget ultimately looks very close to the governor's initial proposal, cutting year to year spending (for the first time in over a decade) without imposing new taxes. However, there was no property tax cap tied to the budget, hence, an increase may ultimately be the backstop employed by districts (all of which, were hit with education cuts) to make up the difference. Also, an extension of the millionaire's tax (pushed by the Assembly) met its fate on the cutting room floor. The Governor was pleased as he noted to the press...“Tonight the Legislature not only passed an on-time budget, but a historic and transformational budget for the people of the state of New York. This bi-partisan and bi-cameral cooperation will give New Yorkers the good budget they deserve. It was an invaluable public service for the state government to ‘function’ so well at this difficult time and I especially applaud the leadership of Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver for this demonstration of competence and performance in state government.”

Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said, “This budget is a responsible budget that meets our goals of cutting spending, reducing taxes, and empowering the private sector to create jobs. By passing this budget on-time, we have shown that Albany can be functional and accountable once again. I congratulate Speaker Silver, and all of the members of the Senate and Assembly, and I thank our Governor for providing the leadership to get a sound bipartisan budget in place for New York.”

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver said, “We are confident that this will be the first of many agreements the Legislature will reach in concert with the Governor; agreements that will restore New Yorkers’ faith in our government, make it more efficient and more productive, and help to make our great state a better and more prosperous place in which to live, to work, and to do business. The final product, the 2011/2012 state budget, is a sobering one. Difficult and painful decisions had to be made to address the fiscal reality facing our state. The Assembly Majority, working with the Governor, was able to achieve some critical restorations that will soften the cuts affecting working families, students, senior citizens and or most vulnerable populations.”

The Governor issued his press release this morning outlining the major components. Log onto... <http://www.governor.ny.gov/press/033111budget>

Important Note - While we understand the leaders are happy with their work and we certainly applaud an on time budget as opposed to the alternative of shutting government down, we are cognizant and

concerned about the realities of such cuts and the reduction of services that will undoubtedly follow. In addition, we are concerned about our workforce, for example, we are currently working with numerous school social workers throughout the state and their boards of education in an effort to stem potential layoffs. We expect such cuts to reverberate through other sectors of our work force as well and as such, we will advocate on behalf of our profession.

Social Work Loan Forgiveness – Extension of the Social Work Loan Forgiveness program (for an additional five years) was achieved through the budget process. We would like to thank the Governor and each house for their support.