

# NASW-NYS Political Post

April 24, 2008

Karin Moran, MSW

Jeremy Darman, MSW, MA

**All's quiet in Albany** - The legislature is off this week in observance of Passover and as such the biggest downtown attraction for we lobbying types has been the vending carts that sprout up every spring in Capitol Park. But in between bites of my "Bird Salad" I have managed to scrounge up a few scrumptious political and legislative tidbits...The Governor signed budget bills yesterday, however, earlier in the week, he called upon all State agencies to cut spending by 3.35 percent. He followed that directive with a letter to Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver in the same vein...In an excerpt of the letter, the Governor says "Given the current economic difficulties facing the state, one of my first acts as Governor was to propose \$800 million in across-the-board reductions in all agencies' budgets. With the concurrence of the Legislature, the Enacted Budget reflects savings from a 2 percent reduction in most local programs and a 3.35 percent reduction in the operating budgets for all State agencies. It is essential that we achieve these savings to ensure that the State's Financial Plan remains balanced as we move through the fiscal year. In these uncertain times, careful management of State spending by all government partners is essential." Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli echoed the Governor's sentiment when he later told media sources "The Enacted Budget spends too much in light of today's economic realities. Governor Paterson has rightly called for state agencies to cut spending. This is a necessary step. But Albany should keep the erasers handy because we have more to do. Every day New Yorkers are facing hard choices; government must do so, too. My office began examining our spending weeks ago and I expect to meet the goal of 3.35 percent."

**Senate Democrats Take On Insurers** - Through the introduction of legislation, the Senate Democrats are attempting to prevent health insurers from implementing a prescription drug pricing system in New York that has substantially increased consumer co-payments in other states. Currently, most Health Maintenance Organizations and Pharmacy Benefit Managers function under a typical three-tier system - \$5 for generic, \$10 or more for "preferred-brands," and \$25 or more for "non-preferred brands" - a system common to most privately insured people. However, in a number of other states, insurers have created a 4-Tier system, which puts highly specialized drugs on a separate tier, with differing co-pays depending on the plan. This bill, if enacted, would preempt such a program in New York.

**Campaign Chatter** - As I am sure you know by now, Senator Hillary Clinton took the Pennsylvania primary by almost 10 percentage points, moving the battle on to Indiana and North Carolina. In the meantime, Senator John McCain denounced an ad being run by the North Carolina Republican Party showing Senator Barack Obama's former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr., making controversial statements.