

# NASW-NYS Political Post

## February 15, 2008

Karin Moran, MSW

Jeremy Darman, MSW, MA

**Governor Tweaks Budget Proposal** - In the wake of economic uncertainty and the recent roller coaster ride that is Wall Street, Governor Spitzer amended his Executive Budget Proposal earlier this week to reflect a \$384 million decrease in tax collections. The pared down budget still increases State spending by 4.8 percent over last year's \$121 billion budget; however, it is drawing both criticism and concern from the Legislature. As outlined in the Governor's Press Release the new proposal includes savings actions such as:

- **State Government Efficiency Management**: Taking various actions to improve the operational efficiency of state government agencies including reducing non-essential activities, managing overtime, maximizing federal revenues, and others. (Additional 2008-09 Savings: \$36 million)
- **Environmental Protection Fund**: Increasing the amount of Environmental Protection Fund money available to the General Fund. (Additional 2008-09 Savings: \$25 million)
- **Covered Lives Assessment**: Increasing the covered lives assessment by an additional \$50 million from \$990 million to \$1.04 billion. The initial 2008-09 Executive Budget Proposal contained an increase of \$140 million (from \$850M to \$990M). (Additional 2008-09 Savings: \$50 million)
- **Public Health**: Funding various public health programs (including cervical cancer vaccine, lead poisoning prevention, immunization, and obesity prevention) through assessments on insurance companies. (Additional 2008-09 Savings: \$25 million)
- **EPIC**: Requiring prior authorization of prescriptions not covered by Medicare Part D and increasing the use of generic drugs in the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) Program. Under this proposal, an individual's physician will continue to have final say on which drug is prescribed. (Additional 2008-09 Savings: \$19 million)
- **Trend Factor Reduction**: Reducing the trend factor increase for hospital, nursing home, and home/personal care reimbursement by 10 percent more than was initially projected in the Executive Budget. (Additional 2008-09 Savings: \$18 million)

**Let the Campaigning Begin!** - With the majority on the line, the Senate Republican Campaign Committee went live with a website called New York's in Jeopardy! The site outlines the Democratic seats they'll be gunning for. For a look, log onto <http://www.nyinjeopardy.com/index.html>

**On the National Front** - Senator Barack Obama swept the "Potomac Primaries" in Virginia, Maryland and Washington DC on Tuesday, setting up a must win scenario for Senator Hillary Clinton in Texas and Ohio. Obama's wins were not necessarily the headlines, since he was projected to take the three states, but the margin with which he accomplished it (2-1 in Virginia and Maryland) came as a surprise to both camps! On the Republican side, John McCain continued to widen his lead over Mike Huckabee with a clean sweep of his own Potomac Primary States.