

# NASW-NYS Political Post

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### And they're off...

The 2008 legislative session was kicked off with Governor Eliot Spitzer's State of the State Address on Wednesday, January 9, 2008. In it, Governor Spitzer gave the broad brush strokes of his priority issues for the upcoming year, which, given the projected \$4.3 billion dollar deficit facing the State, promises to be a difficult balancing act.

Among the Governor's top budget priorities were education, health care and upstate economic revitalization. His **Education** platform focused on continued support for universal pre-k, public schools accountability through Contracts for Excellence, commitment to innovative technology programs at our state's higher educational institutions and a full scholarship program for our returning soldiers. **Health Care** priorities included full funding of SCHIP, prevention programs and rate restructuring in Medicaid, reducing childhood obesity, a physician recruitment program entitled Doctors Across New York. Upstate **Economic Development** initiatives included \$600 million for stem-cell research, reinvigorate the Buffalo area by turning its State University of New York campus into a flagship university specializing in the medical sciences, and reducing the cost of doing business in New York State.

The Governor's legislative agenda included the advancement of legislation such as the Paid Family Leave Bill, the Healthy Schools Act, the Reproductive Health & Privacy Protection Act, Amendments to the State Foreclosure laws, Enhanced Anti-fraud laws and a bill to fast track building of power plants.

Unfortunately there was nary a mention of social services or mental health care in the Governor's State of the State, so, until the executive budget proposal is released on January 22, we'll be in the dark on the administration's priorities, however, Our 2008 Legislative priorities have been identified by our Chapter's Advocacy and Government Relations and include: amending Timothy's Law to include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), expanding the Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus programs to include the benefit structure offered in Timothy's Law, and expansion of the social work student loan forgiveness program. In addition, the Chapter's Policy Team will continue their work on reproductive rights, statute of limitations as it relates to professional misconduct, inclusion of social workers as providers in the States workers' compensation program, and the Safe Harbour Act.

**On the national front**, in an surprising upset, Barack Obama won Iowa's Democratic caucus by seven percentage points, and Mike Huckabee came from behind to defeat Mitt Romney on the Republican side, while Clinton turned things around in New Hampshire, in spite of pundit predictions and John McCain's win in New Hampshire put him back in the race. Buckle up folks...this one's going to be one heck of a roller coaster ride!