

NASW-NYS Political Post

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The First Furlong...

The first week of the 2008 legislative session began with a bang, as one of our top priority issues gained early momentum. Efforts to amend Timothy's Law to include coverage of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) found sponsorship in each of the houses as Senator Thomas Morahan (R-Nanuet), Chair of the Senate Mental Health Committee and Assemblyman Peter Rivera (D-Bronx), Chair of the Assembly Mental Health Committee have each agreed to champion the cause and sponsor legislation in their respective houses.

Although the Timothy's Law Campaign (TLC) had originally advocated for inclusion of PTSD coverage in the initial statute, it fell off the table during last minute negotiations primarily because it was assumed that returning service members received treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder through their VA health benefits. However, since over half of the 77,000 enlisted personnel from New York State are National Guard or Reserve, many return directly to their employer-sponsored health plan and thus, rely on such coverage.

Not only are returning veterans relying on coverage of PTSD but as we are well aware, New York is also home to thousands who still struggle with PTSD related to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. In addition, victims of rape, severe child abuse and other criminally violent attacks are also highly susceptible to developing PTSD, but none are guaranteed access to necessary treatment.

We expect introduction of the legislation within the next few days and will keep you up to date on our associated activity.

In other news, after many months of negotiation, the Senate and Assembly passed legislation to ban the use of solitary confinement for inmates with serious psychiatric disabilities. The new statute establishes specialized residential mental health treatment units for persons suffering from psychiatric disabilities in state correctional facilities. The Governor is expected to sign the bill shortly.

On the national front

Mitt Romney took his first noteworthy win in Michigan's primary earlier this week, further iterating that there is no clear GOP frontrunner. The victory gives Romney a temporary boost and a lead with respect to delegate points. The Republican nominee will need 1,191 total delegates. Currently Romney has 42; Huckabee holds 32 and McCain, at a distant third with 13. The Democratic nominee will need a total of 2,025. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are only separated by one delegation point with Obama at 25 and Clinton at 24. John Edwards holds 18.