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No Need for Groundhog Day this year! Spring came early to U.S. citizens this week as President Barack Obama took the oath of office on Tuesday. Despite the frigid temperatures and the somber tone in much of his address (“America is in crisis, he said. The nation is at war. The economy is badly weakened. Health care is too costly, American schools fail too many, and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet. There is a sapping of confidence across our land—a nagging fear that America’s decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights”) our new president brought a renewed sense of hope to the millions who watched his swearing in. And though expectations are extremely high for our new commander in chief, and fears run deep amidst our growing financial crisis, support for our new leader appears to eclipse our shared sense of concern and allows room for a spirit of YES WE CAN! Welcome Mr. President, welcome.

Tax Day – If a number of legislators have their way, April 15th may hit some New Yorkers harder than others (though not likely this calendar year), as support grows for a millionaires tax in an effort to close the state’s budget deficit. Citing such support amongst many of his colleagues, Senator Eric Schneiderman (D-Manhattan) stated he planned to introduce a bill in the near future that would increase taxes on the rich. “There are a lot of us who feel that for the last 30 years we’ve been shifting the tax burden from the wealthy to middle-class families,” said Schneiderman on Tuesday... “Our conference is operating through consultation and discussion, and I expect we’ll be talking about restoring some additional tax brackets for upper-income New Yorkers as well as a lot of other options.” Meanwhile, the freshly minted Senate Majority Leader, Malcolm Smith was not exactly “enthusiastic” about the idea but did note he looked forward to “a vigorous debate on the subject.” Assembly Democrats have consistently supported such an initiative and while the governor has been less than supportive of such a tax, he seems to be warming to the idea noting recently that “taxing the wealthy is probably going to be part of the solution if the deficit gets any worse and all indications are that it probably will.”

Judgment Day (Of sorts) According to a number of media sources “A federal grand jury investigating former state Senate Majority Joseph L. Bruno is expected to vote today to indict Bruno on public corruption charges.” Latest reports coming from downtown Albany note that grand jurors are assembling in the federal courthouse and while the work of the jury is confidential, speculation suggests there will be press conference on the subject later this afternoon.

Appointment Day – Governor Patterson just appointed upstate congressional representative Kirsten Gillibrand to fill Hillary Clinton’s vacant U.S. Senate seat. Though recognizing that Gillibrand is to many a new name, the governor noted “I believe I have found the best candidate to become the next senator from the state of New York, she is dynamic, she is articulate, she is perceptive, she is outspoken.” Sounds like a good mix to me!