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**"The Empire State Strikes Back"** In a State of the State unlike any we've seen before, complete with high security, animated graphics, heavy doses of symbolism and a dash of humor, our new Governor laid out the broad brushstrokes of his intentions to alter the culture of Albany politics and re-charter the State's course, citing "We're going to have to reinvent government...the old way wasn't working anyway, let's be honest" Cuomo told the standing room only crowd at the Convention Center. He began by laying out the many problems currently facing NY including the current \$10 billion budget deficit, the ever increasing tax burden (66 percent above the national average), the great exodus (2 million people over the last decade) and our dismal education rating (34<sup>th</sup> in the nation). Responsibility for the situation was evenly distributed among the ever expanding state government infrastructure, Medicaid, Education funding and of course the legislature and special interests. In what has been referred to as the most comical component of the 55 minute speech was his description of our current budget negotiation process as "two ships passing in the night" ...cue the slides of three battleships, one helmed by "Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos," another by "Commander Silver" and the Governor himself, each donning captain hats. Completing the visual were the special interest missiles all of which were aimed at the Governor's battleship. His message was clear...business as usual is not in his lexicon and he has every intention of rightsizing and streamlining government, reformation of the Medicaid system (Medicaid Redesign Team reports to work today) and the school aid formula's, the pay to play mentality of Albany politics and the campaign finance. And while the audience of legislators, advocates, lobbyists and citizens seemed entertained and even hopeful by some accounts, the reality is that all will need to learn how to play in the same sandbox, and that folks, would lend itself to one heck of a slide show! Should you be interested, you may view the presentation in its entirety by simply logging onto <http://www.governor.ny.gov/stateofthestate2011>

**"The dysfunction of Albany, the gridlock of Albany, the corruption of Albany -- this is not the true story of the New York State Legislature. It's not who we are, it's not what we do, it's not why we're here. The New York State Legislature is the best legislature historically in the nation -- the most talented people, that's who we are."** Said Governor Cuomo during his State of the State mere hours after four Senators (Savino, Klein, Carlucci and Valesky) broke with Senate Democrats (hours before the SOS) to form an Independent party. Hmm, this could alter the one sandbox theory.

**"We're not just going to build back, we're going to build back bigger, stronger than ever before," the governor said, his voice building. "That's what we're going to do together."** Speaker Silver referred to the address as "a great speech, a strong vision for New York," While Senate Majority Leader noted that "the members of the NY State Senate will be working closely with our new Governor Andrew Cuomo and the members of the NY State Assembly to meet the significant challenges that lie ahead."