

NASW-NYS Political Post

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Capitol Tidbits - A Siena poll released earlier in the week (included 620 registered voters - with a margin of error of 3.9 percentage points) reported that 56 percent of voters believe “Governor Paterson should take positions he believes are right and fight for them rather than compromise to build consensus across party lines.” The problem with this theory however, is, given the construct of NY State government, the Governor needs consensus from the Senate and Assembly (most notably through their leaders, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver) to move initiatives forward. Comptroller Thomas Dinapoli called on lawmakers to adopt a budget that “controls spending and do it quickly.” Dinapoli went on to say... “New York's slowing economy and the resignation of Gov. Eliot Spitzer have already shaken the public's confidence and made it imperative that lawmakers avoid a lengthy impasse over the budget.” The Governor, however, was quoted earlier in the week as saying he “can’t promise a timely state budget” although very recent reports coming out of the Capitol suggest that leaders are close to agreement on available revenue. Several media sources have reported on the Republican’s “wooing” of ex-Senator Michael Balboni to run for re-election in the 7th Senate District, however, sources close to Balboni have reported that “He wants to stay with Gov. David Paterson after serving Gov. Eliot Spitzer and Paterson apparently won’t accept Balboni’s pro forma resignation.”

In Budget News - Lobbyists / Advocates have descended upon the Capitol like feeding time at the zoo. As legislators continue to grapple over available revenue (aka - “avails”), groups that hope to influence how those dollars are spent (including your very own Policy Team) have spent many hours peddling their wares...Anti-smoking groups are calling for an increased tax on cigarettes (to the tune of another \$1.50 per pack making the total taxes \$3.00per pack...(Wow, sure am glad I quit!), a “Good government group” is calling for a tax on millionaires (Whew, dodged another one!) and Medicaid advocates are calling for “reimbursement reform.” As of press time, our own budget related items (the Veteran’s Mental Health Training Initiative and social work reimbursement in Article 28 clinics) both appear to have legs, let’s just hope they don’t get cut at the knees.

Campaign Chatter - Senator Obama continued to get grief over the remarks of his pastor, Jeremiah Wright. Senator Clinton came under fire for “misstating” an account of landing in Bosnia under sniper fire, and Senator McCain was slammed for answering a question in New Hampshire regarding a timeline for our occupation of Iraq when he responded “maybe a hundred” years. Meanwhile, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who has yet to endorse a presidential candidate, planned to appear Thursday at an event with Barack Obama; hmmm.