

NASW-NYS Political Post

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Happy Birthday - Chapter Policy Staff, a handful of Timothy's Law advocates, Tom O'Clair, Governor Patterson, OMH Commissioner Mike Hogan, Senator Thomas Libous, and Assembly members, Rivera and Lupardo gathered at the capitol earlier this week to celebrate what would have been Timothy O'Clair's 21st Birthday. The moment was bittersweet though as Tom O'Clair remembered both his youngest son and the ensuing battle fought in Timothy's name to provide comprehensive mental health benefits to New Yorker's; a battle that was temporarily stemmed with the enactment of Timothy's Law in January of 2007. The statute, while a huge victory for advocates and citizens alike, came with an expiration date of December 31st 2009 pending results of a cost analysis. While waiting for the study results, chatter around the legislature was that the law was headed for a one year extender as opposed to permanency; however, upon release of the preliminary study, the Governor called for the law to be made permanent. Speaking to the Albany Times Union, Paterson noted ..."The impact of Timothy's Law has been far-reaching." He went onto draw a parallel between the law and "break[ing] down the stigma surrounding mental illness and those with mental-health conditions that too often causes people to go without care." For his part, Tom O'Clair noted that the governor's "endorsement of a permanent law is a gift to all New Yorkers. It just makes good sense." The actual bill is expected to be formally introduced in the coming days. State Insurance Department Superintendent Eric Dinallo said the report shows the law has been successful and prevents any increase in small businesses' costs. To view the Governor's press release and a copy of the report simply log onto... <http://www.ins.state.ny.us/press/2009/p0905051.htm>

Happy Cinco De Mayo! Tuesday, May 5, also brought the introduction of a universal healthcare bill sponsored by Senator Tom Duane and Assemblyman Richard Gottfried. Though the initiative finally has two majority member sponsors in each house, word around the capitol is that it's unlikely to pass this session, but it's a start! The construct of the measure is reportedly "to finance universal coverage by a Social Security-style payroll tax, plus a surtax on the unearned income, such as dividends and interest, of wealthy people." Policy Staff will be analyzing the hefty bill in the coming days.

Happy Sweetest Day (in Maine) ... (And yes that's a real "holiday," though not until October 17th but we have a theme going here.) Maine became the fifth state in the nation to legalize same sex marriage and New Hampshire is said to be on its heels (though speculation abounds regarding the Governor's willingness to sign such a measure in the "Live Free or Die" state). If New Hampshire does in fact enact such a measure, all of New England (except Rhode Island) will have legalized same-sex marriage. Come on New York!