

NASW-NYS Political Post

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Mr. Paterson Goes to Washington - This week Governor David Paterson reached out to New York's Congressional Delegation since the first time taking office. Paterson traveled to Washington, DC to discuss financial relief for New Yorkers facing home foreclosure. Home foreclosures in New York reached 14,183 during only the first quarter of this year, with rates of foreclosure well over twenty percent in some areas. House Representative Kirsten Gillibrand (D - Greenport) did some lobbying of her own during Governor Paterson's visit, asking him to reduce the property tax burden for her upstate constituents. This visit was a surprise to some people who did not expect Mr. Paterson to leave New York State at all during his term, as with the absence of a lieutenant governor to fill in, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno (R - Brunswick) becomes *de facto* executive when the serving governor is out of NY State.

Another Hat in the Ring - After months of speculation on whether former Assembly member Paul Tonko was eyeing the 21st Congressional District seat being vacated by longtime incumbent Mike McNulty (D - Green Island), Mr. Tonko appears to be joining the race. Mr. Tonko resigned from his current post (a necessary step to run for office) and will be interviewed for recommendation by the Albany County Democratic Committee this weekend, according to the Albany Times Union Capitol Bureau. Mr. Tonko served the 105th Assembly district in NY State until June 2007, when he was tapped by then Governor Eliot Spitzer to become President and CEO of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. Mr. Tonko was sponsor and longtime champion of Timothy's Law, mental health parity legislation that was enacted in January 2007. He will join an already crowded field of Democratic candidates, including Tracy Brooks, former aide to U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton. Ms. Brooks has been running for several months, picking up endorsements from Emily's List and from the outgoing McNulty.

Continuing Efforts for New York's Veterans - Last week, the "Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Summit" met to discuss the health and mental health needs of soldiers returning to the Fort Drum area in Jefferson County. Summit speakers discussed the need for more mental health services in the area, which is currently overburdened due to the high number of troops stationed at the home of the 10th Mountain Division and in the outlying hinterlands. The Governor's Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Services, Dennis Whalen discussed solutions to the workforce shortage, reported the Watertown Daily Times. Also, according to a source inside the governor's office, Mr. Whalen mentioned the NASW-NYS Veterans' Mental Health Training Initiative, for which funding was provided in the 2008-9 state budget.