

STATE HOUSE NEWS - MAY 2008

A monthly recap for GluckWalrath's government and public relations partners.

UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE

Earlier this week, the Senate Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee favorably released S-1557 (*Vitale/Singer*), which expands eligibility under the New Jersey FamilyCare Program and establishes healthcare coverage for uninsured children under certain circumstances. Under the legislation, parents earning up to 200% of the federal poverty level, or \$42,400 in annual income for a family of four, will be eligible for health care coverage under the Program. The legislation also expands outreach and marketing of FamilyCare to eligible children under the age of 18; and within one year after its enactment, requires all children to have some form of health care coverage. Finally, this legislation makes various reforms in the individual and small employer insurance markets to ensure affordability and stabilize costs. The Senate State Budget Committee will likely consider the matter at one of its upcoming committee meetings and conduct a comprehensive cost benefit analysis.

STATE REVENUE PROJECTIONS

The State Treasurer and Office of Legislative Services (OLS) Budget Director, updated Senate and Assembly Budget committees this week on the latest revenue projections for the State. Earlier this year, OLS feared the State might be facing a \$134 million revenue gap during the remainder of the current budget year, which ends on June 30th. OLS now expects a net windfall during the same period of nearly \$370 million. This number assumes current year revenue as nearly \$600 million higher than Administration projections made in February due to higher than expected income and business tax collections.

TOBACCO CONTROL ADVOCACY DAY

Please join the American Cancer Society (ACS) on May 22nd at the State House for a much anticipated advocacy day to support funding for New Jersey's Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program (CTCP). The State is set to cut at least \$1.0 million from the \$11.0 million Program that should be funded at approximately \$120.0 million, according to guidelines established by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). In light of the fact that the tobacco industry spends an estimated \$314.0 million per year for its marketing and advertising activities in New Jersey alone, the continued reduction in CTCP funding becomes even more alarming. As has been well documented by other states, a substantial investment in tobacco control leads to lower tobacco use simply because it allows states to enhance mass media anti-smoking campaigns and expand community based cessation assistance programs. So please join ACS on the 22nd between 10:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M. in the State House Annex Tunnel - followed by a 1:00 P.M. press conference in committee rooms 101-103 in the State House Annex.

STATE HOUSE TRIVIA

Did you know that the official State colors of blue and buff were used by New Jersey troops during the Revolutionary War and were chosen by George Washington in 1779?

The Firm, on behalf of OnStar by General Motors Corporation, would like to thank the sponsors of A-1002 and Assembly Consumer Affairs committee members for amending the legislation to exclude motor vehicles from the "Consumer Electronics Warranty Lemon Law," as motor vehicles are already subject to one of the toughest motor vehicle lemon laws in the nation.