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Budget Talks Making Progress?

Calendar Says Its Getting Close

With the deadline for an enacted budget looming at the end of this week, three-way negotiations continued through the weekend. At this point, most major policy differences between the Legislature and the Governor remain including those related to bail reform, the housing plan, Medicaid reimbursement, and the implementation of the Medicaid prescription drug carve out shifting from managed care to fee for service, known as 340B.

A number of different timing scenarios have been floating around the Capitol in the past week with some saying the plan will likely be to have a budget done by Passover, which begins on April 5th, but break for the holidays if there were no agreement and return after Easter (Sunday, April 9) to finish. Other scenarios include finalizing an agreement earlier to ensure state payroll deadlines can be met. The consensus seems to be that there are a wide range of budget components that need to be agreed on before there is a sound sense of timing for an enacted budget.

Per reports, the NYS Comptroller has indicated the state budget must be passed by April 3rd, to avoid delays in institutional payroll which would impact approximately 56,000 workers. State Lawmakers will be paid this Wednesday, meaning their first paycheck that could be impacted by a late budget would be April 12th. The coming week will be a busy one as the deadline approaches and priorities rise to the top as advocacy efforts surge for last minute solutions to complex problems.

Office of Cannabis Management: The Coalition for Access to Regulated & Safe Cannabis, composed of registered organizations, which are parties that planned to pursue a dispensary license when the application window first opened, filed a lawsuit alongside physicians and others against the Conditional Adult-Use Retail Dispensary (CAURD) program asserting that the Office of Cannabis Management should have opened the application process for dispensary licenses to everyone at the same time instead of prioritizing applicants that had a criminal background with marijuana related crimes. Coverage on the lawsuit can be [found here](#).

CANY: The Cannabis Association of NY, a PSLLC client, will be in town this week for their legislative advocacy day, meeting with state legislators to highlight budget and legislative asks such as repealing the potency tax, or supporting civil penalties against illegal cannabis operations.



Final Four up next.

Legislative News

Legislative Activity

The Legislature is slated to be in session every day this week and is not scheduled to be in session next week, however, that will likely change if there is not a budget agreement in place. The legislature has already introduced approximately 11,989 bills. The Senate and Assembly passed 42 bills last week, of particular note:

~ [A836 \(Dinowitz\)](#) Prohibits an employer from requesting that an employee or applicant disclose logins an electronic personal account such as social media. This bill passed the Assembly, but does not have a Same-As companion in the Senate yet.

Public Hearings

There are no upcoming public hearings scheduled as of publications.

From the Governor

Governor Hochul Proposes New Legislation to Crack Down on Illegal Cannabis Stores

Governor Kathy Hochul [proposed](#) new legislation to increase civil and tax penalties for the unlicensed and illicit sale of cannabis in New York. Additionally, it would clarify and expand OCM's authority to seize illicit product, establish summary procedures for OCM and other governmental entities to shut down unlicensed businesses, and create a framework for more effective cross-agency enforcement effort. Violations of the law could lead to fines of \$200,000 for illicit cannabis plants or products and would allow OCM to fine businesses \$10,000 per day for engaging in cannabis sales without a license.

Executive Orders:

The EO related to healthcare workforce shortage, was extended to April 22, 2023, via EO 4.19.

State Agencies

From the Office of the Attorney General

AG Announces Indictment and Arraignment of Westchester Caseworker in Elder Abuse Case

New York Attorney General Letitia James [announced](#) the indictment of Chantel Chenault, 46, of Danbury, CT, on charges of grand larceny and identity theft for stealing more than \$300,000 from a 95-year-old woman with dementia while she was under Chenault's care. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) alleges that from March 2017 through April 2022, while employed as a caseworker with Westchester County Adult Protective Services (APS), Chenault transferred funds from the elderly woman's retirement accounts to the woman's checking account and would bring the woman to the bank to make withdrawals multiple times per month. Chenault is also alleged to have regularly used the woman's ATM card at casinos without permission.

From the Office of the Comptroller

Comptroller: MTA Must Prioritize Safety and Service to Win Riders Back

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) continues to make progress on bringing back riders, but ridership remains well below pre-pandemic levels, putting a major strain on its budget. A [report released](#) by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli highlights key areas of transit service – safety, reliability and frequency – where the MTA can take steps to improve riders' experience and encourage their return, to effectively fulfil its mission and stabilize its fiscal position. According to the MTA's [fall 2022 rider survey](#), 41% of subway riders said they use transit less than they did pre-pandemic and gave two main reasons: the ability to work from home and fear for their personal safety. Straphangers cited those reasons nearly twice as often as they blamed service. Among bus riders the predominant causes for riding less were working from home and service reliability, according to the report, and commuter rail riders mainly said working from home was their main reason for not riding.

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