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The Week That Was

03-17-17

1. Senate Opens the Spigot

Our Spin:

The budget blizzard packed a 1-2 punch this week with one-house budgets being considered on the Senate floor from both the Senate Majority Conference and the Independent Democratic Conference. While there was some discussion about the substance of the proposals, the real debate appeared to be a product of the increasing tension between the mainline Democrats and the IDC. Ultimately, Senate Majority Leader Flanagan's 2017-2018 budget plan was passed. Included in the plan is a robust proposal to invest nearly \$8 billion in clean water initiatives, eclipsing both the Executive and Assembly proposals. In Dickie Vitale terms that is a real Dipsy-doo Dunk-a-roo!

The Story:

On Monday evening the State Senate released their one-house budget legislation, offering some substantial changes to proposals made by Governor Andrew Cuomo in his executive budget. The Senate proposal intends to create more economic opportunity through targeted investments in infrastructure, tax reductions, and continued fiscal discipline. Their plan continues a record of restrained state spending without new taxes and

makes sensible and important changes which will make the next few weeks of negotiations even more important if Governor Cuomo wants another "on-time," budget. Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan said, "The Senate's budget addresses the serious challenges facing our communities, the capability of our economy to grow, and the ability for middle-class families to better make ends meet. This fiscally responsible plan is balanced without new taxes or fees, makes a historic investment in protecting water quality, and provides tax relief and other resources to businesses and hardworking New Yorkers that will help them achieve brighter futures." The historic water quality investment proposal Flanagan referenced includes spending nearly \$8 billion on clean water and sewer projects, including a \$5 billion infrastructure bond and creation of an institute to set state standards for unregulated contaminants. Echoing Flanagan's statements, Senator Catharine Young, Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, said, "Our budget is designed to give all New Yorkers the opportunity to succeed by creating good-paying jobs, cutting the heavy tax burden on families and job providers, and investing in education and infrastructure.

[Times Union](#)
[NY Senate](#)

2. More Money, More Problems

Our Spin:

The Assembly Majority, embracing its historical ideals to tax and spend more money, released a one-house budget proposal agreeing with the Governor's major revenue initiatives. Included in the plan was the millionaire's tax, "Raise the Age," and the DREAM Act; what would an Assembly budget be without the Dream Act in it. It's now up to the Final Four of the Legislature (Governor Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Flanagan, IDC Leader Jeff Klein and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie) to make the final call. Stay tuned folks!

The Story:

On Wednesday the Assembly passed their \$153.8 billion one-house budget proposal, a plan which is \$1.2 billion more than Governor Cuomo's executive proposal. Like many had assumed, the major parts of the plan include expanding the millionaire's tax on high income earners, enacting the DREAM Act, which would provide tuition assistance to undocumented immigrants, and raising the age of criminal responsibility to 18 years old. "As I have said, there is no higher priority for me than raising the age of adult criminal responsibility in New York State," said Speaker Heastie. "An effective criminal justice system that reduces crime and recidivism can present fiscal challenges, but the Assembly Majority's budget proposal includes legislation and appropriations that address these challenges and bring our state's criminal justice practices into the 21st century." There is a general consensus among Democratic lawmakers that children as young as 16 should not be charged as adults for nonviolent offenses, but tensions remain over what concessions can be made to Senate Republicans, who are open to the reform, without compromising the fundamental aspects of the legislation. Heastie said he has made his conference's position clear to key lawmakers, including Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan and Sen. Jeff Klein, head of the Independent Democratic Conference. "They clearly know where myself and Assembly Democrats are on this issue," he said. Some other issues addressed in the Assembly's proposal were expanding the state Tuition Assistance Program to offer up to \$5,500 in

maximum assistance, accepting the governor's free SUNY/CUNY tuition proposal with a modification to allow students to use one-third of their Pell grants to pay for non-tuition educational costs and an increase of \$50 million over the executive budget's proposed \$765 million in aid to municipalities. That includes the \$12.5 million spin-up money that the City of Albany is seeking.

Politico

Capitol Confidential

3. Keep Calm... It's March Madness

Our Spin:

It is clear tensions between factions of state Senate Democrats have not been settled after a debate on the Senate floor got nasty and personal Wednesday afternoon. In what was supposed to be a debate over the Independent Democrat's budget resolution, Senator Marisol Alcantara and Deputy Minority Leader Mike Gianaris engaged in a heated exchange that electrified the Senate chamber. Alcantara took issue with Gianaris needling the eight-member IDC, accusing the conference of being in agreement with "Trump Republicans," in the chamber. After this exchange one question remains...do Alcantara and Gianaris really not like each other or were emotions just running high due to being snowed-in to their generic Albany hotel rooms all day Tuesday thanks to winter storm Stella.

The Story:

On Wednesday morning the Independent Democratic Conference in the state Senate released its own budget resolution separate from the Republican conference. The measure included language in support of raising the age of criminal responsibility, support for the extension of tax rates on millionaires that expires at the end of the year as well as the backing of the DREAM Act, a measure that provides tuition assistance to undocumented immigrants. The move marks the first time the IDC has backed a separate budget resolution, a non-binding aspirational document that lays out goals for the budget negotiations, since its formation in 2011. "We are committed to advance progressive issues and this is the logical step for a conference

that's growing in size," IDC Leader Jeff Klein indicated in a statement. "Our one-house sets a clear slate of positions that will serve as a foundation during four-way negotiations during the budget debate." The resolution includes issues Senate Republicans are either broadly opposed to, such as the DREAM Act, or have had concerns about, including juvenile justice reform for 16 and 17-year-old defendants. The IDC, however, insisted the one-house budget resolution of its own should not be read as a break with the Senate GOP as liberal advocacy groups press for juvenile justice reform

and other long-sought issues this session. Instead, Klein indicated the resolution is intended to continue the policy debate with about two weeks to go before a budget agreement is expected. "The state's budget is due on April 1 and members of the IDC are committed to ensuring that the final document addresses the concerns of our constituents and all New Yorkers," Klein said.

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