

## Governor Submits 30 Day Amendments

On February 28, 2003, Governor Pataki submitted 30-day amendments to the Executive Budget, marking the submission of a completed budget to the legislature. The governor's amendments make no significant changes to the fiscal plan unveiled last month. Rather, the changes largely reflect refinement of budget proposals, technical adjustments and an amended Financial Plan that indicates slightly lower revenues for the balance of the fiscal year. The only two areas that received substantive revision were pensions and the Empire Work Zone.

### **Pension Reform**

The Governor's pension reform plan seeks to eliminate the additional nearly \$1.8 billion state and local pension costs that have materialized since the Budget was introduced. Currently, governments across the state face unprecedented increases in pension costs due to hefty pension benefit enhancements enacted in 2000 combined with the negative performance of New York's Pension Fund. The assets of the Fund have declined to an estimated level of \$97 billion, down from a high of \$127 billion in March of 2000.

### **Empire Work Zone**

The Governor's 30-day amendments will also remove a provision originally included in the Executive Budget that would have modified the Empire Zones program, requiring local taxing jurisdictions to pay 50% of the Real Property Tax Credit allowed under the Empire Zone program. The 30-day change will effectively repeal this provision.

### **NYS Office for the Aging**

The sole amendment to the Office for the Aging Budget Bill (*Health & Mental Hygiene, S.1404/A.2104*) is: "The amendments reconfigure recommended Federal State operations appropriations to reflect Federal grant period."