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June 18, 2006 Update

1. Since the 2006 Regular Legislative Session is scheduled to end on Thursday, June 22, 2006, all bills must be in print by midnight of Monday, 6/19/06, or they can't be passed next week, unless the Governor offers a "message of necessity" to suspend the 3-day waiting period in the State Constitution, allowing new bills to be voted on. There is also widespread speculation that the Legislature will return for a Special or Extraordinary Session in November, after the General Election, to vote itself a pay raise and take-up any bills of import that were left dangling.
2. It's still unclear at this juncture, what will happen, if anything, with the so-called Wal-Mart "Fair Share" Health Care bills. Both the Assembly & Senate have held public hearings on the topic, and collected testimony pro and con. The Retail Council, representing the state's department stores, including Wal-Mart, has met with representatives of the Working Families Party, which is the progenitor of the main bill, A.10583 (Gottfried) / S.7090 (Spano):  
<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A10583&sh=t> The Council has also had recent meetings with Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno and Sen. Nick Spano, in an attempt to let them know how devastating the bill would be to the retail sales industry. At a minimum, amendments increasing the minimum size of affected employer from 100 employees to some larger number, and decreasing the per hour assessment from \$3.00/hour worked to some lower number, are being considered.
3. A brand-new bill, S.8310 (Leibell) (copy attached), was just introduced that would establish the New York State Health Insurance Authority, that would be charged with providing universal health care to all New Yorkers by purchasing it in the private market. There is currently no Assembly companion bill.
4. Senator Martin Golden (R-Brooklyn), Chair of the Senate Aging Committee, held an invitation-only, long term care insurance roundtable in Albany on 6/14/06. NYSAHU member Larry Feldman was one of the invited participants. Sen. Golden is sponsoring the Long Term Care Insurance Compact bill, S.3530-B:  
<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=S03530&sh=t> . The bill is currently in the Senate Finance Committee. The Assembly companion bill, A.10634 (Englebright), remains in the Assembly Aging Committee.

5. A.1305-A (Nolan) / S.3798-A (Leibell):  
<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A01305&sh=t>, which would increase the statutory disability benefits payable to employees for non-occupational conditions (including pregnancy), injuries or disease, from the current weekly maximum of \$170, to \$380 in 2007 & to \$440 in 2008, is currently on the Senate calendar and is in the Assembly Ways & Means Committee. Efforts to pass this long needed bill (DBL benefits have not been increased since 1989), are being hampered by opposition from the NYS Business Council and the AFL-CIO.

6. The Assembly continues to press the Senate to pass A.2912-A (Tonko):  
<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A02912&sh=t>, popularly known as "Timothy's Law" or the so-called "mental health parity" act, mandating health insurance coverage of all emotional and physical mental health disorders. See the joint Silver/Tonko Press Release:  
<http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/Press/20060608/> The Senate companion bill, S.6735-A (Duane), is sponsored by a Democratic minority member and will not pass the Senate.

The Senate version of the mental health parity, S.1672 (Libous), which would mandate health insurance coverage of physical mental health disorders, remains committed to the Senate Insurance Committee.

7. Also attached, please find the NAHU Legislative Activity Report from 6/10/06 to 6/16/06.