

## **PUBLIC POLICY TEAM COMMUNICATION: 2/5/08**

On Tuesday, February 5, 2008, Governor Rendell will give his Budget Message to the State Legislature in Harrisburg. All indications are that it will not be a good one for Families who have Children with Disabilities.

Kevin Casey, two weeks ago, indicated there would be no COLA included in the Governor's Budget. Also, there only would be just a small budget available for a small reduction in the Waiting List.

Estelle Richman has said, any number of times in the past two months, that there would be no COLA this year in the Governor's Budget for the staff of people with disabilities.

Richman did note, however, that if Providers, Families, Advocates and Staff could convince their legislators that a COLA was in order, that the Governor has indicated he would not veto such a COLA - if it came to him from the House & Senate. Note: she hasn't indicated - and wouldn't respond to questions about it - that a permanent COLA would fit into that picture, should we be successful with getting the legislature to pass such legislation. She would not go that far.

Therefore, again, it will be an uphill battle to get a COLA, to keep pace with inflation; yet, we've been there before. We will need to press hard for this one. (See Below)

On Tuesday, the Governor's budget will be loaded with other priorities: Education (an extra \$291 Million); an Economic Stimulus Package to create jobs (no details provided; however, it was hinted that much of it would be devoted to jobs for rebuilding roads, bridges and ports). He is asking for tax increases on cigarettes and smokeless tobacco and cigars. Slots are coming in, well over original estimates; yet, that money will probably end up going for (as originally earmarked) Property Tax Relief.

We'll keep you posted as this legislative season gets moving, following the Governor's Budget Message on Tuesday.