

## State budget benefits the Island

We're pleased to see the state Legislature, in approving a \$12-billion budget for the state fiscal year that began on Saturday, included in the spending plan an extra \$4.2-million for two very important programs on Staten Island.

The bulk of that sum — \$4 million — is earmarked for the Staten Island and Developmental Center in Willobrook to prevent the layoff of as many as 2,000 of the institution's 4,000 employees.

When Gov. Carey first proposed that reduction and a proportional reduction in the center's resident population over the next year, we observed that he seemed to be expecting too much too soon. We recognize that the institution must be

scaled down under the terms of a 1975 court decree, but the drastic reduction in staff and population advocated by the governor was wholly unrealistic.

The Legislature also set aside \$200,000 for operating expenses at the Snug Harbor Cultural Center, continuing the practice of direct funding begun in the last fiscal year. The state Council on the Arts was to have funded the Livingston cultural center this year but seemed prepared to renege on its promise, so the Legislature's decision to make a direct appropriation was vital.

Our borough also received an unexpected bonus in the form of a special appropriation for the conversion of Susan E. Wagner High

School's athletic field into a professional quality stadium. The existing field is to be overlaid with AstroTurf and lined with new spectator stands and high-intensity lights.

Though some might be quick to claim the money should have been spent on something else, the fact is that the Island's athletic fields have suffered from extreme neglect since the city's fiscal crisis began in 1975.

The \$1-million facility, which is to be open to the general public on weekends, is a blessing for Islanders in general and high school athletes in particular. As far as we're concerned, such an amount of money spent to encourage physical fitness is money well spent.