

Leaders closer to finishing state budget

By DAN JANISON
Advance Albany Bureau

ALBANY — Legislative leaders appear to be moving closer today to a tardy finish for a yearly task affecting most New Yorkers: Enactment of a multi-billion-dollar state budget.

An army of fiscal staffers worked marathon hours on various items throughout the Capitol complex last night, after agreement was announced on a 10 percent increase in welfare payments and a hike in education aid.

More than 20 appropriations for Staten Island programs funded last year, from handicapped aid to cultural projects, were expected to make it into the final budget, many with increased funding.

Several new spending items were under consideration by legislative leaders. These include funds for recreational facilities on the Staten Island Development Center grounds in Willowbrook.

Mentally disabled people who will live on the grounds in group homes after the institution is phased out in 1987 would benefit from the facilities, according to Assembly Mental Health Committee Chairwoman Elizabeth A. Connelly.

Like other lawmakers, the West Brighton Democrat said she could not tell if the requested funds would come through until actual budget bills are printed. The bills won't be printed until final agreement is reached on the budget.

A major rise in tax revenues for the state has expanded the overall budget pie and paved the way for an assortment of tax cuts announced here last week, including slashes in personal income tax and rollbacks in auto

registration fees.

Gov. Mario M. Cuomo was expected to meet again today with the two elected officials responsible for getting a package of spending agreements ratified — Assembly Speaker Stanley Fink and Senate Majority Leader Warren Anderson.

Fink warned the 150 members of his legislative house to be ready to meet next week, which was to have been the second week of their spring break.

They met last night to approve emergency, temporary spending bills that will keep state government functioning pending passage of a full budget.

Left to be nailed down in closed-door negotiations resuming today were these major items:

- How much New York City will receive from the local assistance portion of the state budget. Anderson and aides by last report were seeking more for upstate and the suburbs, Fink for more for the five boroughs.

- Whether to charge sales tax on petroleum to importers rather than those who sell the fuel, as is now the system — a change sought by Fink.

- Whether large companies and banks should receive "amnesty" for tax delinquency. Such amnesty is designed to produce new millions in state revenues by getting delinquents to turn themselves in and pay up.

Other items were reported yesterday to have been "taken off" the negotiating table. These include funding of environmental enforcement jobs through unclaimed nickel deposits on bottles and cans, and a measure to make a tax on phone company "long lines" temporary. The tax is expected to become permanent, parties to the talks said.