

Hold That Toast To Magic Mike

Keep the champagne chilled for about another week and hold the toasts for the remarkable job our mayor did in getting the school construction funds he demanded from the state legislature.

GOP senators, who knew the mayor had the money to back up his threats and demands.

In bringing Bruno into line, the mayor got a major boost from Silver, a Democrat who saw the opportunity to get the court-ordered funding that was due New York City and seized it. With Assemblymember Catherine Nolan (D-Ridgewood), Education Committee chair, doing the nuts-and-

bolts negotiating with the GOP senators, Silver's operatives fashioned a package that is long overdue for the New York City school system.

The big loser up to this point is the lame-duck governor, who had been stonewalling and blocking the funds the courts had approved repeatedly in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity suit. It would be ironic if the governor can't undo the budget passed by the Assembly and senate. What he was able to do by ignoring the court order was overturned by Bloomberg, Silver and Bruno, who have been a major thorn in his side in recent years.

Realistically, Bruno took advantage of the only course open to him. With the state tilting to the Democrats in this year's elections, and with Eliot Spitzer a strong favorite to become governor while his party holds on to the other top state offices, the only semblance

of Republican power would be that party's continuing as the majority in the upper house.

With Bloomberg out of the picture (if Pataki doesn't scuttle the deal somehow), it's likely Bruno can hold on to the majority leader's post and give the GOP some relevance in the state capital beginning next January and into the next four or eight years.

In working out the agreement with Silver and the Democrats on the mayor's school construction package, Bruno was also able to salvage some other goodies, like the real estate tax rebate which will benefit homeowners in heavily Republican areas, so he didn't concede completely to Bloomberg and Silver.

Meanwhile, Pataki doesn't have much firepower left if he tries to scuttle the gains the mayor made in the Silver-Bruno budget. His vetoes should be meaningless and subject to easy override by both houses, judging from the almost unanimous votes of approval the Assembly and senate registered in passing the dozens of budget bills on Friday.

The governor might be able to contain some of the damage he may see resulting from the approved budget, but only if the legalities are in question here and there and he has to go into court to straighten these matters out.

We're sure he's harboring no illusions at this point in the game that his vetoes, if he makes any, will stand up and not be overridden.

So, as we said at the start, keep the champagne on ice—there'll be plenty of time to toast magic Mike once the budget is signed, sealed and delivered.

PATAKI WINS ONE: Pataki won a victory last week when a state appeals court upheld his right to confine dangerous sex offenders in mental hospitals after their prison terms are finished.

In a statement, Pataki noted that 49 convicts have been in civil confinement since October. "The 5-0 decision underscores our belief that there are no special rights for sexual predators, despite what the lower court said, and we knew that keeping them away from people when they pose a threat to again engage in violent sexual acts, is the right thing for New York and the right thing to make us safer," the governor said.

POLL RESULTS: A day after state GOP Chairman Stephen Minarik endorsed former Yonkers Mayor John Spencer as the Republican Party nominee against United States Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, Spencer got creamed by Kathleen McFarland in a Quinnipiac University poll, 55 percent to 22 percent.

However, poll officials noted McFarland may have had an advantage because the polling question asked linked her to former President Ronald Reagan.

CUOMO LEADS GREEN: In another Quinnipiac U. survey, former U.S. Housing Secretary Andrew Cuomo led Mark Green by a 37-25 percent spread in a poll

of the Democratic candidates for state attorney general. In other pairings, the pollsters found either Cuomo or Green would defeat Republican attorney general candidate Jeanine Pirro in an election.

AVELLA AGAIN PUSHES LEGALIZED BETS: Citing recent arrests and the breakup of an illegal sports betting organization in Brooklyn making \$45 million a year, City Councilmember Tony Avella (D-Bayside) again called for passage of his resolution asking for legalized sports betting in New York state.

Avella stated: "The recent bust of another illegal gambling operation just reinforces the need to undermine organized crime's illegal sports betting industry and use the money to address the urgent need for additional education funding."

MALONEY TOWN HALL ON IRAQ WAR: Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-Queens/Manhattan) is holding a Town Hall meeting on the war in Iraq next Monday night. It will feature Congressman John Murtha (D-Pennsylvania) the leading voice in Congress in calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq as soon as practicable.



There's still a major hurdle Mayor Michael Bloomberg will have to leap over—Governor George Pataki—before he can really start partying and putting the shovels into the ground.

With that cautionary note out of the way, we can say that Bloomberg's brief campaign to get an \$11.2 billion school construction package from Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno was nothing short of sensational.

We've been covering City Hall and Albany shenanigans for about 40 years, through Mayors Lindsay, Beame, Koch, Dinkins and Giuliani, and never did we see a display of power such as Bloomberg unleashed.

He threatened Bruno's continuing to be a major player in the state capital, promising election challenges to Senator Serphin Maltese (R-C, Middle Village) and other

Sabini Hosts Women's History Month Event



Senator John Sabini held his First Annual Women's History Month Event on March 25 aimed at honoring "Women of Distinction" in his District. The Senate holds such an event in the Capitol each year, however, notable women are disqualified from recognition by the Republican Majority if they are represented by a Democratic Senator. Borough President Helen Marshall, Senator Sabini's constituent, was a special Guest of Honor at the standing-room-only event. This year's

honorees were: Lula Brown, community activist from Lefrak City; Betty Cruz, owner of Betty's Total Events on Corona Avenue; Suleika Cabrera-Drinane, Founding Executive Director of the Institute for Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly; Annie Henderson, Director of the Elmcot Senior Citizens Center in East Elmhurst; and Mary Vavruska, business owner and community leader from Jackson Heights. In-Memoriam Recognition was given to Lefrak City's Helen Brooks, Elmhurst's Rose Renda-Rothschild and East Elmhurst's Sylvia White.

The Town Hall will be held at The Community Church of New York Unitarian Universalist, 40 East 35th St. between Park and Madison Aves., Manhattan on Monday, April 10 from noon to 1:30 p.m.