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*DiNapoli to propose budget process changes*

*By James T. Madore*

ALBANY - Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli is expected today to propose more changes to the state's convoluted budget process including new restrictions on public authorities, realistic debt limits and budget documents written for laymen.

DiNapoli, a former assemblyman from Great Neck, will call for public authorities to limit spending to their core mission, returning unused funds to the state. Limits would be placed on borrowing and authority board members couldn't serve more than four years without reappointment, according to an outline of his speech released by his office.

DiNapoli also will suggest a new "hard cap" on the state's debt, which totals \$51 billion. The current cap doesn't include billions of dollars in obligations.

"We need a hard cap that is linked to the state's ability to pay," he will say.

The comptroller is set to unveil these and other budget-reform proposals here at SUNY's Rockefeller

Institute of Government. The initiative comes 10 months after Gov. Eliot Spitzer outlined steps to make the budget process more transparent and speedy - measures approved by lawmakers.

However, DiNapoli will promise to publish spending reports, beginning this spring, that "lay out in easy to understand terms how the state spent taxpayer money from the year before."

The reports will detail how much the state spent on travel, on fuel for vehicles, to heat buildings and other information previously not disclosed.

DiNapoli also intends to post all new state contracts on his Web site, and believes spending for bridges, highways and other infrastructure projects must reflect need - to be determined by an in-depth survey. "The current system is piecemeal and doesn't allow us to prioritize our needs," he will say.

Lastly, DiNapoli will argue that if his office is asked during budget negotiations for a revenue forecast because the governor and lawmakers cannot agree on a number, the comptroller's figure should be binding.