

## **Lock up paid leave**

### **Assemblyman Webber seeks to protect funds**

February 13, 2009

New Jersey began collecting a payroll tax for paid family leave in January. You may have noticed it coming out of your pay check. The funds will be used to give some financial support for those on leave for any family emergency, whether it be the birth of a child, or a sick relative.

Let's put aside the argument over whether paid leave exists. It does.

**To that end, Assemblyman Jay Webber, R-Morris, who opposed paid leave, has a good idea. He wants the state to guarantee that funds collected for paid leave are used only for that purpose.**

**"I urge the Legislature to put the trust back in trust fund and bring a constitutional amendment to the Assembly floor protecting the paid-leave trust fund before the governor has the chance to propose a raid of the fund in his budget address on March 10."**

To a certain extent, Webber is playing politics. He does not know if the governor plans "to raid" the fund. But at the same time, he has a point.

As he notes, the state has taken \$4.7 billion from its unemployment fund over the last 15 years to meet budgetary shortfalls and to pay for other programs. Now with unemployment in the state at a 15-year high, that could pose a problem.

The amount of money to be raised by a paid leave fund would not come anywhere close to the billions raised by the unemployment fund. But that money should be protected and should be used for the purpose it is being collected, which is to help people dealing with the birth of a child or a family emergency.

Sponsors of the paid leave initiative pledged at the time to constitutionally protect the funds. It is about time for that to happen.