

# Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004  
TRENTON, NJ 08625

CONTACT: Gene Herman  
609-777-2600

## NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Christie Whitman today conditionally vetoed the following pieces of legislation:

SCS For S-1220, sponsored by the late Senator Wynona M. Lipman (D-Essex/Union) and Senator Joseph A. Palaia (R-Monmouth) and Assembly Members William D. Payne (D-Essex/Union) and Joseph V. Doria, Jr. (D-Hudson), establishes an at-risk youth mentoring program for public school students in the Department of Labor (DOL). The bill appropriates \$750,000 from the work First New Jersey - Work Activities account in the Department of Human Services to the Workforce Development Partnership Fund in the DOL to implement the provisions of the bill.

The Governor commended the sponsors of the legislation, especially the late Senator Lipman, for their efforts to establish a mentoring program for at-risk youth. She said the recommendations in her conditional veto would enhance the program's effectiveness. The Governor recommended that the bill be amended to create a three-year pilot program to allow for evaluation of the program's success and its role in relation to other public and private mentoring programs that are currently offered to at-risk youth. She said the mentoring programs also should use existing resources. The Governor recommended that the programs be designed to utilize public and private community organizations that provide employment, mental health, substance abuse, and family planning services to provide training for mentors and services for the at-risk youth served by the mentoring program. In order to provide for the effective use of available funds, Gov. Whitman recommended that the DOL have the authority to provide grants of up to \$50,000 instead of \$25,000 and that the maximum number of students served by a program be increased from 25 to 50 students.

S-2008, sponsored by Senator Diane B. Allen (R-Burlington/Camden) and Assembly Member Guy R. Gregg (R-Sussex/Hunterdon/Morris), would have amended current law to reduce the surcharge levied annually on workers' compensation insurance policy holders and self-insured employers. The bill would have modified the assignment formula to reduce the estimate used to calculate the surcharge from 150% to 125% of the estimated cost of the program. Use of an overestimate ensures that moneys will be sufficient to cover any unanticipated claims against the fund. In her conditional veto, the Governor recommended limiting the assessment formula to 100% of estimated administrative costs and requiring the Commissioner of Labor to submit an informational copy of the assessment to the Joint Budget Oversight Committee. The Governor said her action will serve to reduce the financial burden on employers and avoid overfunding, while maintaining adequate reserves for benefit payments and administrative costs.

S-912, sponsored by Senators Joseph A. Palaia (R-Monmouth) and Martha W. Bark (R-Atlantic /Burlington/Camden) and Assembly Members Joseph J. Roberts, Jr. (D-Camden/Gloucester) and George E. Geist (R-Camden/Gloucester), would have authorized certain changes to the offices of the county fire marshals and allowed for the creation of arson investigation units. The bill would have amended current laws to require county fire marshals to conduct investigations pertaining to the elimination of fire hazards. The bill would also have amended certain statutorily defined responsibilities of a county fire marshal that a freeholder board is authorized to approve.

In her conditional veto, the Governor said that after a unanimous vote on the bill in both the Senate and Assembly, the sponsors requested that she issue a conditional veto in order to allow the part time fire marshals that serve the state's smaller counties to have greater flexibility within the new mandates. She commended the sponsors for their work in amending existing law in order to more accurately reflect the role of county fire marshals. The Governor recommended amending the bill to allow the fire marshals to determine whether to conduct or assist in an investigation pertaining to the cause and origin of a fire when requested by the fire department having jurisdiction over it.

She also recommended changing the entity to whom the fire marshal reports from the entity with control over the executive functions of the county to an authority designated by that entity. Also, the Governor recommended limiting situations for which a fire marshal may be required to render coordination and control to those for which a fire department has responsibility by way of local ordinance.

S-235, sponsored by Senator James S. Cafiero (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland) and Assembly Members Nicholas Asselta (R- Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland) and John C. Gibson (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland), would have made certain changes in the requirements for an enforcement of cancellation of mortgages of record. Currently, when a mortgage is paid and satisfied, a mortgagee (lender) must request the mortgage be canceled as of record by the county recording officer (typically the county clerk). Upon payment of the requisite fee, the county clerk marks the mortgage cancelled and returns a copy to the mortgage. The bill would have placed additional requirements upon the mortgagee/lender by mandating that the lender send the borrower the following three items at the same time the lender requests the mortgage cancellation from the county clerk: (1) the original mortgage noted marked "paid in full."; (2) a copy of the mortgage marked "canceled"; and (3) a copy of the mortgagee's letter to the county recording officer requesting that the mortgage be canceled of record.

In her conditional veto, the Governor said ensuring that New Jersey citizens and their families will be free from unwarranted clouds on the titles to their property is a worthy goal. However, she said, several financial institutions, lending institutions and the New Jersey State Bart Association have expressed concern that this bill will place New Jersey in a unique position by requiring lenders to send copies of canceled mortgages and original promissory notes to borrowers.

The Governor recommended the deletion of the requirement that mortgagees forward mortgages with the original note and a copy of the mortgage marked canceled. She recommended retaining the requirement that mortgagees forward

to mortgagors copies of their transmittal letters requesting cancellation of mortgages by county recording officers.

S-1492, establishes a Physician-Dentist Fellowship and Education Program within the University of Medicine and Dentistry (UMDNJ) to provide health care to persons with developmental disabilities. The program will train physicians and dentists in providing medical and dental services to individuals with developmental disabilities to ensure that these services are accessible and available to such individuals. The training will occur at the residency, post-doctoral fellowship and continuing education levels. The bill would have appropriated a \$5 million grant to the UMDNJ for the costs associated with the program.

The Governor commended the sponsors of the bill for addressing the serious health care needs of the developmentally disabled community by establishing the program. She said, however, that it was essential that the program be administered by an agency that has the expertise to effectively respond to the unique needs of the state's developmentally disabled community. She said the Department of Human Services, working through the Division of Developmental Disabilities, has significant experience in identifying those needs.

The Governor recommended that the funds to administer the program be appropriated to DHS to ensure that the DHS and UMDNJ work together to achieve the program's goals. In addition to taking advantage of DHS, Gov. Whitman said she believed it was important that the program utilize existing resources at UMDNJ, as well as other institutions, to assist in providing training to physicians and dentists in caring for the developmentally disabled. Further, the Governor said, she believed the state can make a significant commitment and accomplish the objectives of this program with a \$2.5 million appropriation rather than a \$5 million appropriation.

The bill was sponsored by Senators Jack Sinagra (R-Middlesex) and C. Louis Bassano (R-Essex/Union) and Assembly Members Nilsa Cruz- Perez (D-Camden/Gloucester) and Charlotte Vandervalk (R-Bergen).

