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Governor Christie Calls on Legislature to Finish the Job of Delivering Property Tax Relief and Pass Real Sick Pay Reform

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Governor Urges Continued Bipartisanship Cooperation on One Year Anniversary of Interest Arbitration Reform

Trenton, NJ – At a town hall with residents today in Spotswood, Governor Chris Christie today called on the legislature to finish the job of providing relief to property taxpayers, most critically by enacting real reform to end the payout of taxpayer dollars for unused sick days. One year ago today, Governor Christie signed comprehensive arbitration reform legislation into law, fulfilling a critical element of his property tax reform agenda to control the cost of the government and curb property tax costs for New Jersey families. The Governor urged the legislature to continue building on the record of bipartisan success in New Jersey by taking action on unfinished relief measures for taxpayers before the end of the legislative session.

“Working together for nearly two years, we have demonstrated what can be done when we look past party lines and work to achieve reform in the best interests of the people of our state. One year ago, I signed into law bipartisan interest arbitration reform legislation that continues to stand as a bold example of what we can accomplish when we put people ahead of politics,” said Governor Christie. “Now, I am urging the legislative leadership to continue that spirit of bipartisanship and progress in enacting important, common sense proposals to reform sick pay, civil service and the remaining tool kit items to provide sustainable property tax relief. It’s time to finish the job.”

Interest arbitration reform was a significant victory for New Jersey taxpayers and the result of good faith, bipartisan work among Governor Christie and the legislative leadership of both parties to provide long-overdue, fundamental reform to the interest arbitration process.

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In June, a Spotswood police arbitration case, subject to the 45-day fast tracking provisions in the Governor's enacted reform, was resolved with a three-year contract with raises of 0%, 2% and 2% for 2011, 2012, and 2013, respectively. Though the original contract expired in 2010 and the case was not subject to the 2% arbitration cap, the arbitrator in the case acknowledged the 2 percent property tax cap in rendering his decision. Under the Governor's reforms, 23 cases have been fast tracked, saving time and money for parties participating in arbitration, with 16 cases decided within the 30-day fast tracked appeals process.

Overall, since the enactment of the 2 percent property tax cap and interest arbitration reform that has fast tracked decisions, the average of salary increases for 2011 arbitration awards is 1.90%, nearly a full percentage point down from 2010's average of 2.88% in 2010, and nearly two points down from 2009's average of 3.75%.

Governor Christie, in cooperation with the Democrat-controlled legislature, has acted on a commitment to deliver property tax relief to New Jersey families by fixing the underlying causes of the state's property tax crisis. Through compromise and bipartisan effort, Governor Christie enacted some of the biggest achievements in recent New Jersey history, including landmark pension and health benefits reform, a 2 percent hard cap on property tax increases, and the interest arbitration reform signed into law one year ago exactly.

"We have disagreed with each other – loudly and publically at times – but working together to forge compromise, Senate President Steve Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver, Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean and Assembly Minority Leader Alex DeCroce, and I have achieved significant, necessary reforms that were once thought impossible. But our work is not done, and the people of our state will not simply accept political differences as an excuse for inaction. We must continue working together to get results for New Jersey. Now is the time to finish the job," said Governor Christie.

The Governor has called on the legislature to continue working together to achieve bipartisan consensus and progress on critical items for New Jersey taxpayers, including sick and vacation pay reform, civil service reform, disability pension abuse reform, and the remaining property tax tool kit items.

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