

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR SIGNS LEGISLATION ESTABLISHING \$45 MILLION GRANT PROGRAM FOR LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION

Gov. Christie Whitman today demonstrated her commitment to improving educational facilities in New Jersey when she signed legislation establishing a \$45 million grant program to assist municipalities and counties in building new libraries or improving existing ones.

"With this legislation, state government steps forward to provide critically needed money to help our libraries continue their vital services," the Governor said. "We are answering the need many libraries have for serious infrastructure repair, as well as significant renovation to wire for new technology and to make libraries compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act."

"This is not an issue we can `shelve.' We have to think about the thousands of people who rely on public libraries. The library is a primary educational tool for the elderly and retired and a valuable supplement for children. We have to make sure New Jersey's libraries remain a center of learning and advancement for everyone," Gov. Whitman said.

"Libraries have long been a symbol of education and advancement in American society. The need for libraries has always been clear, but in this age of information it is obvious they are essential. And today it seems more and more people are taking advantage of this limitless resource," the Governor said.

"Improving our libraries will help us move to the forefront of the information superhighway. An investment in our libraries is an investment in the future of our state," she said.

The legislation, A-2849, was signed by the Governor at a public ceremony at the Hasbrouck Heights Public Library. The legislation was sponsored by Assembly Members Rose Marie Heck (R- Bergen), Leonard Lance (R- Warren/Hunterdon/Mercer) and Senators Robert E. Littel (R- Sussex/Hunterdon/Morris) and Peter A. Inverso (R- Mercer/Middlesex).

The bill establishes the Public Library Grant Program, which will be administered by a seven-member Public Library Construction Advisory Board. The board will be chaired by the Secretary of State. The program provides \$45 million in bonds that will be financed through the Educational Facilities Authority to be used for the construction, expansion, rehabilitation and acquisition of public library facilities.

Public libraries receiving a grant will be subject to a 3:1 matching requirement. Therefore, a total of \$180 million will be leveraged for library construction in the state.

Following the bill signing, the Governor visited Rutherford Township and participated in a walking tour of Rutherford's Main Street.

