

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor's Weekly Radio Message Celebrates A May in the Life of New Jersey

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week the Governor discusses how this month has held some of the sunniest days New Jersey has seen all year. On May 19th, Gov. Whitman signed legislation that will truly reform the state's auto insurance system, reversing a quarter century of frustration for all New Jerseyans. This month the state also received more good news when the New Jersey State Supreme Court accepted the Governor's plan for improving schools in the state's poorest districts. Now education, not money, is the driving force for funding. The Governor also proposed a plan this month to provide a stable source of funding for transportation improvements and preserving open space, so that new Jersey is more attractive and accessible. And the final piece of good news for New Jersey this month: The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that New Jersey has a right to our side of Ellis Island. "Yes, this was a very bright May in the life of New Jersey," the Governor said.

Attached is the text of the message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend

Governor's Weekly Radio Message May 29, 1998 A May in the Life of New Jersey

Remember how this month began - with New Jersey soaked in rain for days upon days? Well, the second half of May made up for all that with some of the sunniest days our state has seen all year.

Along with the sunshine, New Jersey was drenched in good news on many fronts. May 19th was a bright day indeed. We reversed a quarter-century of frustration when I signed legislation that will truly reform our car insurance system and lower rates for good drivers.

As I said then, you've waited too long for lower rates - and now your wait is over.

As soon as the regulations are drafted, good drivers in our state will see real savings - substantial savings - on their insurance policies. It's no longer a promise; now it's the law.

We received more sunny news this month when the New Jersey State Supreme Court accepted my administration's comprehensive, education-centered plan for improving schools in our state's poorest districts. This ended a 28-year school funding case which began in the Cahill administration.

As the Court itself wrote, "This decision should be the last major judicial involvement in the long and tortuous history of the state's extraordinary effort to bring a thorough and efficient education to the children in its poorest school districts."

The Court's decision means, in effect, that we are entering a new era of education that will benefit every child. We're going to keep spending more money on education, but now education, not money, is the driving force. That's a welcome change not only for our taxpayers but also for every child who attends a public school in our state.

Lower car insurance rates will make New Jersey more affordable. A successful school system will make New Jersey more productive. Now I want to make New Jersey more attractive and accessible.

That's why I announced this month my proposal to create a stable source of funding for transportation improvements and for preserving open space and farmland.

That stable source will allow us to repave our roads, fix dangerous intersections, repair crumbling bridges, improve our ports, and expand our mass transit system. That stable source will also help achieve the goal I set in my Inaugural Address of preserving 1 million acres of open space and farmland within the next 10 years.

The need for this stable source is urgent.

Right now, more than one-third of our state's bridges are structurally deficient. Right now, two out of every five NJ Transit buses are too old and need to be

replaced. Right now, well over 10,000 more acres of natural land disappear each year, and we have almost no money left for preservation.

We have to fix what's broken. We have to keep New Jersey from becoming so overrun with sprawl and congestion that our families won't want to live here and our businesses won't want to stay here. But we have to make sure you have a say in shaping our future.

That's why I want to put this decision in your hands. I want the Legislature to ask you, the voters, to dedicate an additional 7 cents in our state's gas tax for this purpose - 5 cents for transportation, 2 cents for open space. I hope that this November, you will have the choice of constitutionally dedicating this important source of funding.

It's always hard to propose a tax increase - especially when you're a Governor who's proud to have cut taxes 17 times. But I believe it is the right tax to increase, since out-of-state drivers share in the cost. I also believe that the voters of our state, who have consistently supported both the Transportation Trust Fund and the Green Acres open space preservation fund, will once again vote "yes" for safer roads, better transportation, and more acres of permanent open space and farmland.

I'm confident that the stable source of funding we are proposing will bring good news to the generations that will follow us. Of course, they will also read - maybe in their history books - about a final piece of good news for New Jersey this month: the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that New Jersey has a right to our side of Ellis Island.

Yes, this was a very bright May in the life of New Jersey.

I wish you a great June!