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NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Whitman Signed Legislation A-2219, A2231, A2357, A-2457, S-2281, S2170

Gov. Christie Whitman today signed the following pieces of legislation:

A-2219, sponsored by Assembly Members Joseph Charles, Jr. (D- Hudson) , and Joseph V. Doria, Jr. (D-Hudson) and Senators Edward T. O'Connor, Jr. (D-Hudson), revises the definition of autocab in counties of the first class -- those having a population density of over 10,000. In such counties, autocab will mean any automobile or motorcar with a carrying capacity of not more than nine passengers, excluding the driver, which is issued special registration plates bearing the word livery. Autocabs operating in counties of the first class may engage in the same type of activities as autocabs operating in other counties. However, the law specifies activities that an autocab may engage in only in a county of the first class. Specifically, the law notes that the autocabs operating in counties of the first class may be hired on a pre-arranged basis for proms, weddings, funerals or to transport passengers to and from airports, other passenger stations or motels and hotels and for which a price is agreed upon in advance. The change will preclude livery cars from acting as taxicabs in certain cities.

A-2231, sponsored by Assembly Members Alex DeCroce (R- Bergen/Essex/Passaic) and Joseph V. Doria, Jr. (D-Hudson) and the late Senator William Haines (R-Atlantic/Burlington/Camden), makes it unlawful for any person using public transportation services to fail or refuse to pay a prescribed fare, or to attempt to evade payment of the fare. Violation of the law will result in a fine not exceeding \$100.

A-2357, sponsored by Assembly Members Nicholas Asselta (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland) and John C. Gibson (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland), provides legislative authorization and approval for the Delaware River and Bay Authority to lease the property of and operate the Millville Airport Utility in Millville. The bill further provides that the leasing and operation of the airport shall be considered a project of the Delaware River Bay Authority. The bill also requires the authority to maintain airport operations in Millville.

A-2457, sponsored by Assembly Members Richard H. Bagger (R- Middlesex/Morris/ Somerset/Union) and Neil M. Cohen (D-Union), and Senators Joseph M. Kyriillos, Jr. (R-Middlesex/Monmouth) and Jack Sinagra (R-Middlesex), amends the law to allow the state to recover reasonable costs of suits, including attorneys' and filing fees, for successful actions brought by the Attorney General under the consumer fraud law. Currently, the court may award such costs to private litigants who successfully sue under the law, but the state must absorb its courts costs regardless of outcome.

S-2281, sponsored by Senator Andrew Ciesla (R-Monmouth/Ocean) and Assembly Member David Wolfe (R-Monmouth/Ocean), validates school bond authorization proceedings for Brick Township. The \$4.4 million bond issuance was approved by the voters of the district. However, because the Township did not follow certain technical bond authorization requirements, bond counsel requested legislative approval of the bond act.

S-2170, sponsored by Senator Lou Bassano (R-Essex/Union) and Assembly Members Charlotte Vandervalk (R-Bergen) and Nick Felice (R-Bergen/Passaic), revises Medicaid eligibility requirements for legal aliens consistent with federal law. The federal law provides states with the option of providing Medicaid assistance for legal aliens who entered the United States prior to August 22, 1996. The federal law also allows states to provide Medicaid assistance after the five-year ban on eligibility to lawful permanent residents who entered the country on or after August 22, 1996. The bill ensures consistency in providing Medicaid and WorkFirst New Jersey welfare benefits to legal aliens. The same standards for determining eligibility for WorkFirst New Jersey will apply to eligibility for Medicaid benefits.

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