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Governor Christie Calls Blocking of Essex County Nominations Unacceptable and Inexcusable

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County Delegation Stalls Qualified Nominees for as Long as 577 Days

Trenton, NJ – Citing the failure and refusal of Essex County senators to fulfill their duty in the nominations process – and the impact of that failure on operations of the Superior Court and state government – Governor Chris Christie today said using senatorial courtesy as an excuse to unnecessarily delay confirmation for qualified nominees must come to an end. Today, 20 nominees from Essex County have been stalled in the legislature because senatorial courtesy is being used explicitly to block their nominations from moving forward. The average gubernatorial nominee from Essex County has waited 231 days since their nomination was submitted to the Senate, with some being delayed over a year and a half.

“The behavior of certain legislators in blocking well-qualified nominees for their own narrow, often personal interests is completely unacceptable and now affecting the administration of justice for the citizens of Essex County,” said Governor Christie. “Highly qualified nominees from Essex County have been delayed an average of 231 days with some sitting dormant for more than a year and half.

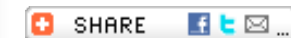
“To deny confirmation of an extraordinarily qualified individual like Chris Cerf, who has already established a record of accomplishment at the Department of Education, is totally unacceptable. It’s time for the legislature to fulfill its constitutional duties, move these nominees through the approval process for an up or down vote, and end the unprecedented abuse of senatorial courtesy. Once these legislators end the games and we have agreement on all

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nominations, I will nominate qualified individuals for vacant judgeships in the county.”

The delays of these nominations have little to do with the qualifications of individuals and everything to do with disruptive, parochial, even personal, interests of particular senators, who seek leverage for themselves rather than progress for their own constituents. For example, waiting 577 days for action on her nomination to the UMDNJ Board of Trustees is Dr. Eve Elizabeth Slater, a former Senior Vice President of Worldwide Policy for Pfizer, Inc. and the first woman to serve as Assistant Secretary of Health in the US Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. James Orsini, whose nomination to the UMDNJ Board of Trustees has been delayed for 381 days, is a physician with over 30 years of experience in New Jersey, including in UMDNJ’s Department of Medicine, Hematology/Oncology since 1985.

Acting Education Commissioner Chris Cerf, who has been refused a hearing for his confirmation as commissioner of the department for nearly a year, has already established a track record of accomplishment, including the implementation of a teacher evaluations pilot program, the submission of New Jersey’s No Child Left Behind Waiver application, and detailing a new accountability system to turn around failing schools.

Speaking at a morning press conference, the Governor called on Senators Codey and Rice to stop the abuse of senatorial courtesy.

“The standoff is now affecting the citizens of Essex County. Anybody who’s affected by that standoff should get on the phone today to Senator Rice and Senator Codey and tell them to stop playing political games and put the judiciary ahead of their own personal political interests.”

20 of Governor Christie’s Nominees who reside in Essex County Remained Stalled in the Legislature as a Result of Abuse of Senatorial Courtesy:

BOARD NOMINEE DAYS WAITING

Board of Tree Experts	Richard S. Wolowicz	28 days
Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund Commission	Phyllis Shanley Hansell, Ed. D., RN, FAAN	162 days
Commissioner of the Department of Education	Christopher D. Cerf	353 days
Ellis Island Advisory Commission	William Halperin, MD, MPH	28 days
Ellis Island Advisory Commission	Norman A. Feinstein, Esq.	105 days

Essex County Board of Taxation	Joseph A. DeFuria, Esq.	381 days
Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse	Gisele C. Pemberton	395 days
Kean University Board of Trustees	Douglas Keller	28 days
New Jersey Cemetery Board	David M. Soulen	7 days
New Jersey Health Care Facilities Financing Authority	Elisa Charters, CCIM	178 days
New Jersey State Council on the Arts	Gary W. Blackman	577 days
New Jersey State Council on the Arts	Marilyn Harkett Dore	178 days
Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission	Thomas Tucci, Jr.	451 days
Police and Firemen's Retirement System of New Jersey Board of Trustees	Steven K. Brisgel	105 days
Site Remediation Professional Licensing Board	Benjamin Alter, P.G.	577 days
State Council on Developmental Disabilities	Elizabeth Smith, Ed.D.	7 days
State Council on Developmental Disabilities	Safiyah A. Muhammad	7 days
State Lottery Commission	Patrick P. Toscano, Jr., Esq.	80 days
University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey Board of Trustees	Eve Elizabeth Slater, M.D.	577 days
University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey Board of Trustees	James M. Orsini, M.D.	381 days

Average Wait 231 days

Press Contact:
Michael Drewniak
609-777-2600
Kevin Roberts



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Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000