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## Governor Chris Christie Signs Revolutionary Bipartisan Tenure Reform Legislation Into Law

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**Trenton, NJ** – Marking the first extensive reform of New Jersey's tenure law in over 100 years, Governor Christie today signed the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act, a sweeping, bipartisan overhaul of the oldest tenure law in the nation. The legislation transforms the existing tenure system to now provide powerful tools to identify effective and ineffective teachers, strengthen the supports available to help all teachers improve their craft, and, for the first time, tie the acquisition, maintenance, and loss of tenure to a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. The new law, S-1455, is the result of nearly two years of consistent and vocal advocacy for real education reform by Governor Christie and good faith, bipartisan cooperation with members of the legislature, education reform advocates, and stakeholder groups. Governor Christie called on the legislature to take the next step in ensuring New Jersey has the best educators in the country by reforming the antiquated practice of Last In, First Out (LIFO), supporting differentiated pay for teachers, and banning forced placement so principals and teachers agree to all teacher assignments.

"This is a historic day for New Jersey and this new tenure law is an important step towards ensuring we have a great teacher in every classroom. After more than 100 years in existence, this Administration, Legislature and key reformers have done together what many considered to be impossible. For their leadership in this effort and for their partnership, I thank Senator Ruiz, Assemblyman Diegnan, the sponsors in each chamber, and the Legislature as a whole in this long, difficult, but bipartisan, effort to bring real and meaningful change to our education system," said Governor Christie. "We are taking a huge leap forward in providing a quality education and real opportunity to every student in New Jersey. But our work to develop laws that put students first is not done. Now is the time to build on this record of cooperation and results to put in place further reforms focused on our students by ending the flawed practice of Last In, First Out and supporting both differentiated pay and banning forced placements of teachers."

The signing of TEACHNJ represents the completion of another item in the bold education reform agenda Governor Christie outlined in September 2010 and has pursued aggressively over the last two years. The Governor's reforms are aimed at ensuring that all students in New Jersey, regardless of zip code, graduate from high school ready for college and career.

"With this historic signing we are revamping a century-old tenure law and creating fundamental changes that will help to ensure our students have the best leaders in the classroom," said Senator Teresa Ruiz. "This law represents nearly two years of work. It demonstrates that no matter what side of an issue you are on, when people are truly willing to work together - and to continue to work regardless of the disagreements that may take place - extraordinary things can happen."

"Tenure reform represents one of the most significant and landmark pieces of legislation this Legislature has acted upon," said Senate President Steve Sweeney. "Working in a bipartisan fashion and thanks largely to the guidance, dedication, and leadership of Senator Ruiz, we are overhauling an outdated law that brings reform to our educational system and protects the educational future of our students."

The TEACHNJ bill enacts three measures essential to improving the quality of educators in front of New Jersey classrooms.

The law for the first time in New Jersey history ties the acquisition of tenure to effectiveness rather than simply on how long an educator has been in the profession. Tenure will now be awarded only after two years of effective or highly-effective ratings, and will take four years instead of three years to attain, while providing a year of mentoring for all new teachers. Similarly, revocation of tenure will be predicated on effectiveness and tenure charges will automatically be brought against teachers and principals after two consecutive years without a rating of effective or highly-effective, except in circumstances where an educator has demonstrated modest improvement during that span and may be granted an additional year to achieve an effective rating. These provisions will help ensure that only those teachers who are consistently demonstrating success in serving our students remain in the classroom.

The law also dramatically reduces the time and cost it takes to remove educators who are repeatedly ineffective in improving student outcomes. Formerly, the process to remove a teacher could take several years and cost more than \$100,000, providing a disincentive for districts to bring tenure charges against ineffective teachers. Over the past ten years, less than 20 teachers have lost tenure after charges of "inefficiency," which was most closely aligned with the

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definition of "ineffective." Under the new system, the time would be limited to 105 days from the time the written tenure charges are received by the Commissioner and is capped at \$7,500 per case – which will be paid by the state.

Additionally, the law outlines requirements for providing support to help all educators improve by developing more meaningful evaluation systems and tying the results of those evaluations directly to professional development. In addition to mandating mentoring in a teacher's first year, the new evaluation systems will provide more meaningful feedback on teacher practice and will incorporate measures of what matters most – how well students are actually performing. Professional development will be tied to those evaluations, and corrective action plans will be mandatory when a teacher is rated ineffective or partially ineffective – providing the opportunity for improvement before tenure charges are brought for ineffectiveness.

"The passage of this bill, which was unheard of only a year ago, demonstrates that education reform is not a partisan issue. If we really put children first, the right thing to do is in reality quite simple," said Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. "Now, let's continue to move forward and take on the hard work to make sure that every child in our state graduates from high school truly ready for college and career."

Over the past two years, the Department of Education has worked with principals and teachers across the state to improve evaluation systems in order to help all educators continuously improve their practice. There are currently 30 districts scheduled to pilot new teacher and principal evaluation systems this coming school year in preparation for statewide rollout in 2013-14, as outlined in the TEACHNJ law.

"This is meaningful tenure reform that does what's best for our children while balancing the protection of due process for our principals and teachers," said Assemblyman Patrick J. Diegnan Jr. "This is real change that will ensure new teachers are properly trained and evaluated and that tenure charges are handled in a timely and professional manner. Our focus will be where it should be - making sure that our students have the best teachers in the classroom."

Since taking office, Governor Christie has worked to secure critical education reforms to better serve all New Jerseyans. These reforms include an expansion of charter school application approvals paired with more aggressive management and oversight for charter performance, the implementation of the Interdistrict School Choice program, making common sense changes to the school funding formula to increase fairness and attack fraud and abuse, raising state support to education to the highest level in history, and moving forward with bold reforms in the No Child Left Behind waiver to put in place a better accountability system and more effectively turn around failing schools. Earlier this year, the Governor signed the Urban Hope Act, establishing a pathway for the creation of high-quality alternatives for students in three low-performing districts.

Primary sponsors of the bill are Senators M. Teresa Ruiz (D-Essex), Kevin J. O'Toole (R-Bergen, Essex, Morris and Passaic) and Assemblymembers Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr. (D- Middlesex) Ralph R. Caputo (D-Essex) Jay Webber (R-Essex, Morris and Passaic), Albert Coutinho (D-Essex), Mila M. Jasey (D-Essex, Morris), Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-Hunterdon, Mercer), and Craig J. Coughlin (D-Middlesex).

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