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Governor Christie Marks New Era Of Reform At Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission

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Trenton, NJ – Citing multiple reforms and a team of new board members, Governor Chris Christie today signed Executive Order No. 191, rescinding Executive Order 55, which he imposed on Jan. 25 2011 after six of the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission’s seven board were suspended from their positions and ultimately resigned, following the emergence of facts and allegations regarding unethical, self-serving conduct during the prior decade. In addition to rampant nepotism and cronyism found at the PVSC prior to Executive Order 55, two Commissioners were charged with and ultimately convicted of official misconduct and theft for assigning PVSC workers to fix the homes of friends and relatives on agency time.

Over the ensuing years came a period of overhaul and reform undertaken by then-Executive Director Wayne Forrest, an appointee of Governor Christie, to root out waste, abuse and mismanagement, resulting in ratepayer savings, a leaner and more efficient organization, and a rebuilt public trust.

Today’s action follows those reforms to clean up the agency’s operations, as well as state Senate confirmation of several nominees selected to replace the board members.

The PVSC, the 5th largest wastewater treatment plant in the nation, provides wastewater treatment and removal services within the Passaic Valley Sewerage District, serving approximately 1.4 million people in 48 municipalities in the Counties of Bergen, Essex, Hudson, and Passaic.

Among the reforms and changes undertaken at the PVSC while the State of Emergency was in effect include:

Budget, Staff and Operational Reforms:

- Reduced staff and unnecessary positions to approximately 525 employees from an all-time high of 758
- Budgeted salary expenses have decreased from over \$51.3 million in 2010 to \$47.2 million in 2015
- Total user charges have essentially remained flat since 2012 and are down by 4.1% (\$5.4 million) since 2010.
- PVSC received the NACWA Silver Award for Outstanding Permit Compliance, as well as two awards from the NJAEA for best management practices and forward thinking.

Ethics Reform and Training:

- Adopted revised ethics policies, including the restriction of certain political activity and the ban on accepting gifts from vendors, etc.
- Implemented an anti-nepotism policy to prevent some of the abuses that led to the Commissioner suspensions from recurring in the future.

Increased Safety Oversight:

- Adopted new safety measures and workplace procedures in order to reduce the incidents of workplace accidents and also reduce the number of worker’s compensation claims.
- Realized substantial savings in worker’s compensation claims, which have dipped to a 10-year low. PVSC’s total claims payout decreased from an average of more than \$600,000 per year between 2001 and 2010 to just under \$250,000 for the period 2012 through 2014.

A PDF copy of Executive Order No.191 [pdf 10kB]

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