

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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

A-726, sponsored by Assembly members Paul Kramer (R- Mercer/Middlesex) and Alex De Croce (R-Essex/Morris/Passaic) and Senator Peter Inverso (R-Mercer/Middlesex), increases penalties for stealing or damaging airport, traffic, or railroad crossing signs or equipment. The bill which originated in response to a rash of incidents at Robbinsville Airport, is intended to appropriately punish acts that have potentially dangerous consequences. The bill will make it a crime of the fourth degree to deface, injure or remove an official traffic sign, light or safety device at any airport, landing field or similar facility. If the actor recklessly causes bodily injury or property damage, the offense would be a crime of the third degree. If the actor recklessly causes death, it would be a crime of the second degree. Previous law provided that such criminal mischief was punishable based upon the cost of property damage, with punishment ranging from disorderly conduct to a third-degree charge for the most severe offense.

The bill also upgrades penalties for vandalism of railroad warning signals to crimes of the fourth degree. The bill also makes such actions a crime of the third degree in cases causing bodily injury or property damage and a crime of the second degree for cases causing death.

The bill shifts the violation of tampering with a traffic signal or sign from the jurisdiction of motor vehicle law to the criminal code, and makes the offense punishable as a disorderly persons offense.

SCS-351, sponsored by Senator Louis Bassano (R-Essex/Union), eliminates late filing penalty for motor fuel use tax returns showing no liability. The bill is intended to ensure that individuals who are not liable for any tax during the stated period are exempted from penalties imposed for late filings. Additionally, the bill gives the Director of the Division of Motor Vehicles the ability to waive late fees in cases where there is reasonable cause for a late filing or underpayment.

A-2065, sponsored by Assembly Members David Wolfe (R- Monmouth/Ocean) and Joseph doria (D-Hudson) and Senators Joseph Palaia (R-Monmouth) and Robert Martin (R-Essex/Morris/ Passaic), authorizes boards of education to enter into sale and lease-back contracts on certain instructional materials. The bill will apply to textbooks and non-consumable instructional materials. The bill is intended to provide boards of education with more contractual and fiscal flexibility to ensure the efficient management of school resources.

S-652, sponsored by Senators Norm Robertson (R-Essex/Passaic) and Henry McNamara (R-Bergen/Passaic) and Assembly Members Gerald Zecker (R-Essex/Passaic) and Nelli Pou (D-Passaic), allows members of the Passaic County Employees' Retirement System who elect to participate in Social Security to remain in the retirement system.

A-176, sponsored by Assembly Members George Geist (R- Camden/Gloucester) and Gerald Luongo (R-Camden/Gloucester), transfers a small, unpopulated parcel of land from the Township of Washington in Gloucester County to the Township of Gloucester in Camden County. The transfer of the land, owned by the New Jersey Water Company, clears the way for the historical preservation and recreational use of Blackwood Lake. Under an agreement between the two municipalities, Gloucester Township will take control of the lake in order to clean and restore it for recreational use.

S-233, sponsored by Senator James Cafiero, (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland), Assembly Members John Gibson (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland), and Assemblyman Nicholas Asselta (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland), requires the Uniform Crime Report to include, in addition to the regular statistics, an alternative calculation that takes into account the seasonal population of resort municipalities. The law was proposed by several beach communities which feel their per capita crime statistics are superficially high because only year-round residents were considered when calculating statistics in the Uniform Crime Report. The alternative calculation will be published in addition to the normal per capita crime statistics.

A-2294, sponsored by Assembly members Kip Bateman (R- Morris/Somerset) and Pete Biondi (R-Morris/ Somerset) and Senators Walter Kavanaugh (R-Morris/Somerset) and Diane Allen (R- Burlington/Camden), authorizes the sale of certain surplus state real property in Montgomery Township, Somerset County. The bill will allow for the sale of the state's interest in land and improvements known as the North Princeton Developmental Center. A 12- acre portion of the property, including four buildings, will be purchased by the Montgomery Township Department of Education. The remaining property will be sold by the Department of Treasury. The Department of Treasury will work with Montgomery Township to identify appropriate uses and purchasers.

