

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Steffanie Bell
609-777-2600

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Governor Continues Two Day Tour of New Jersey Military Installations

Gov. Christie Whitman today continued to emphasize her commitment to New Jersey's Military installations by completing a two-day tour of some of the state's military sites. The Governor today visited Fort Dix, the Naval Air Engineering Station in Lakehurst, and McGuire Air Force Base.

"It is important to show the men and women of our military that we support them. Every day they demonstrate their commitment to this country," said Gov. Whitman. " It is important they know we have faith in them and their capabilities."

The Governor visited the Picatinny Arsenal earlier this month and yesterday visited Fort Monmouth and Earle Naval Weapons Station.

While visiting Fort Dix, the Governor looked in on the Army Distance Learning Program, a soldier training tool using multiple training media and technologies. Fort Dix mainly serves as a training center for the Army Reserves but also has mobilization and support functions.

Later at the Naval Air Engineering Station in Lakehurst, Gov. Whitman viewed demonstrations of the catapult and arresting gear testing for aircraft carriers and also saw the Jet Car Track Test Site. The site allows engineers to collect data on arresting systems without risk to aircraft or crew.

The Governor completed her day at McGuire Air Force Base where she visited the Youth Center and finished her tour by viewing C-141 and KC-10 aircraft displays. The Youth Center provides a theater, computer room, art room and gymnasium for the children at the base.

Governor Christie Whitman Supports Our Veterans

- **Property Tax Relief.** Gov. Whitman added \$5.5 million to the Fiscal Year 1999 budget to refund disabled veterans who paid property taxes not knowing that they were exempt from such levies. Under state law, veterans who are fully (100 percent) and permanently disabled because of a wartime, service-related injury or disease, are not required to pay property taxes.
- **Veterans Homes Funding.** Gov. Whitman increased funding for New Jersey Veterans Homes by more than \$1 million in Fiscal Year 1999.
- **Veterans Homes.** The Governor has worked to ensure that the state's three veterans homes are providing the best care possible while operating

efficiently.

- A new \$42 million, 332-bed veterans home in Menlo Park was completed in early 1999. This facility also provides for adult day care to reduce the number of institutionalized veterans.
 - The Veterans Haven for homeless vets at Ancora was expanded from 30 to 50 beds.
 - All three veterans homes in New Jersey received the state's highest level of certification for long-term care facilities, putting veterans homes in the top 10 percent of all nursing homes in the state.
 - Improvements in management and operations were implemented, reducing the cost to residents by an average of \$1,000 over the past three years.
 - Plans to privatize Paramus Veterans Home were rejected by the Governor.
 - She allowed the exclusion of federal VA compensation for service-connected disability from consideration in determining the amount of maintenance a family should pay to keep residents in NJ Veterans Homes. For 1997, this initiative saved veterans in New Jersey a total of \$278,000.
- **Income Tax Exemption.** Gov. Whitman signed a law to exempt military pensions from New Jersey state income tax.
 - **Veterans Preference for Personnel.** Veterans preference was extended for state appointments and promotions for former members of the Coast Guard who have received the Medal of Honor or Navy Cross, and for veterans of Somalia and Bosnia.
 - **Veterans Affairs Clinic.** As the federal government has focused veterans health care funding to the warmer regions of the South and West, Gov. Whitman has fought vigorously along with the state congressional delegation to retain health care benefits for veterans in the Northeast. These efforts led to the dedication a Veterans Affairs Clinic at Fort Dix in 1998.

