

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Distributes Property Tax Relief Checks; Pledges to Keep Working To Combine Tax Relief and Reform

Gov. Christie Whitman demonstrated her commitment to property tax relief in New Jersey when she distributed property tax rebate checks today to some residents during a visit to Old Bridge Township. The first batch of rebate checks under the NJ SAVER program reached mailboxes yesterday.

"When New Jersey citizens asked for relief from the burden of property taxes, I promised that state government would help provide that relief. I'm proud to say we are keeping that promise," the Governor said.

"This week, homeowners across New Jersey will be receiving their first property tax rebate checks," she said. "Since the rebate is based on a community's school tax, the exact amount of the rebate check will vary from town to town, but on average it will be about \$120."

"And the best news for our families is that this is just the beginning. Next year they will receive a check for roughly double the amount they get in 1999. What's more, the rebate will increase each September until it reaches a statewide average of \$600 in the year 2003," Governor Whitman said.

"Now that the rebate checks are in the mail, we have to refocus our efforts on property tax reform. That means finding sensible ways for towns to provide services more efficiently without compromising quality. During my tenure as Governor, I've worked hard to encourage local governments to implement the long-term reforms that will reduce taxpayers tax bills on the front end," the Governor said.

"As long as taxes remain a burden for New Jersey families, I will keep working to combine reform and relief to ease that burden," she said.

Gov. Whitman pointed out that she has formed and dispatched local budget review teams made up of government experts to help communities cut costs without skimping on services and she has urged passage of a constitutional amendment that now requires state government to provide funding for any new mandates the state imposes on local governments.

She said her administration has pursued many of the ideas recommended by the Property Tax Commission she formed last year. One of the ideas has resulted in a new, \$35 million incentive program to encourage local governments to consolidate or regionalize their services where it makes sense and benefits taxpayers.

Taxpayers have saved nearly \$9 billion as a result of the 34 tax cuts enacted during her administration, the Governor said. At the same time, the state has achieved its largest surplus in history and welfare rolls have been cut in half.

Gov. Whitman presented NJ Saver checks to long-time Old Bridge residents, Robert and Wendy May; Robert and Cindy Bell; Bob and Regina Verney, Joe and Joann Arena and Steve and Liz Klein. This year, eligible Old Bridge homeowners will be receive a property tax rebate check of \$163 under the NJ SAVER program. In the year 2003 and every year after, Old Bridge homeowners rebate checks will total \$816 a year.

The NJ SAVER (School Assessment Valuation Exemption Relief) rebate is based on the amount of school taxes that a homeowner pays on the first \$45,000 of equalized property value of their home. Because the rebate is based on a community's school tax, the exact amount of the rebate check will vary from town to town.

Homeowners entitled to receive a Homestead Rebate will receive an NJ SAVER rebate only if is greater than the Homestead Rebate. New Jersey residents who owned a home and paid property taxes on their principal residents on October 1, 1999 can still file for a rebate until September 15, 1999.

Homeowners can check the status of their NJ SAVER rebate through an interactive site at www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/. The internet site will also provide general information on the NJ SAVER program. Taxpayers who have not yet filed for a rebate can also file online.

Homeowners can call the NJ SAVER hotline at 1-877-658-2972 for automated services or to speak to agents between 8:30 a. m. and 9 p. m. Monday through Friday and Saturday and Sunday from 8:30 a. m. to 4 p. m.

*Attached are lists of the mailing schedule by county and rebate amounts by municipality.

