

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Julie Plocinik
609-777-2600

RELEASE: September 1, 1998

GOVERNOR URGES SUPPORT OF OPEN SPACE REFERENDUM IN BUILDING TRADES COUNCIL ADDRESS

Gov. Christie Whitman today spoke at the annual convention of the New Jersey State Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO in Atlantic City and urged support for her proposal to preserve one million acres of open space and farmland within the next ten years. The proposal, which would allocate nearly \$100 million annually in state funds each year for ten years, will be voted on in November.

"One million acres is the amount recommended by the Council on New Jersey Outdoors," the Governor said. "One million acres to preserve our water supply and clean our air. One million acres to keep farming a way of life and a strength of our economy. One million acres for people to enjoy parks, go fishing, go hiking. One million acres so our grandchildren will know the true character of a state we're all proud to call home."

"With the voters' approval we will, for the first time in the history of this state, think about long-term preservation," she said.

"I pride myself on creating jobs and I know that development is essential to a healthy economy," Gov. Whitman said. "This proposal will allow for that. What's more, it will also encourage us to develop in places where we'd all like to see economic growth, in particular our great cities."

Attached is a copy of the Governor's address.

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN NEW JERSEY STATE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL ANNUAL CONVENTION SEPTEMBER 1, 1998

Thank you, Frank (Wade).

This is my third opportunity to address your convention since 1994 and the news on the job front gets better every year I come before you. Maybe we should do this every six months.

Just look at the numbers. Since 1994, we've increased jobs by almost 300,000. We've recovered all the jobs lost in the last recession and continue to hit new job highs each month. Last year, we experienced the best job growth in 15 years -- almost 88,000 jobs.

We've also seen the unemployment rate fall to 4.8 percent, the lowest rate in eight years. And we're making New Jersey the best place to live in the country -- by reforming education, reducing crime to its lowest rate in 24 years, retraining workers and, of course, reducing taxes -- 17 times.

We are attracting good employers and good jobs. We have seen jobs increase almost across the board for workers at all skill levels. And our workers continued to earn the third highest average wage among all states.

Overall, our employment report card is full of A's and B pluses. Moreover, our grades in creating construction-related jobs are moving us to the head of the class. Construction employment rose to more than 136,000 in July. Over the year, construction employment was up by 5,300 jobs.

And we plan on keeping our economic grades high. One way we'll do that is with programs like our H-EASY 2000 housing strategy -- the most comprehensive plan of its kind in the country. H-EASY 2000, which aims at increasing access to

affordable housing, re-building neighborhoods, enhancing efforts to revitalize our cities, and creating jobs, will account for more than 18,000 construction-related jobs.

But we must continue to make it easier for people to get from their homes to their jobs. Our Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Transit System will do just that. The most ambitious public transit project undertaken in New Jersey in more than 60 years, the Light Rail system will provide 25,000 construction jobs and 300 to 400 permanent jobs.

Of course, this city has also been a winning hand for the building and construction trades, with thousands of jobs for the convention center and casino and another thousand construction jobs on the way with the Atlantic City tunnel project.

We want to see construction jobs continue to increase, and we intend to make every effort to keep job creation Job Number One.

My proposal to improve the state's transportation network would have added many more construction jobs. With a proposed five-year extension of the Transportation Trust Fund, we sought to begin a 12-year transportation vision, to improve and expand safety, highways and bridges, transit, and access to ports and airports. And you know what that would have meant for the construction trades. A lot more jobs.

That proposal didn't have the support it needed in the Legislature this year, and that's very unfortunate. I intend to go back to the Legislature with another plan in the coming years because our transportation infrastructure can't be ignored. The longer we hold off on the worse it will get.

But today, I want to ask your support for another proposal, one that had the overwhelming approval of the Senate and Assembly: my proposal to preserve 1 million acres of open space and farmland within the next 10 years, and to establish a stable source of funding to achieve that goal.

For me, preserving open space means protecting and enhancing the character of New Jersey - and making it that much more attractive a place to do business. The one million-acre goal I proposed is the amount recommended by the Council on New Jersey Outdoors. With the voters' approval we will, for the first time in the history of this state, think about long-term preservation.

The key is planning. Not just five acres here and 10 acres there. But intelligent planning is planning that says, let's preserve farmland in a way that farms are contiguous and pose fewer problems with nearby development or right-to-farm issues. Planning that says, let's protect our watersheds so that we can have clean and plentiful drinking water. Planning that says, let's make sure to save the most precious acres.

But let me add this: there's no reason why intelligent planning shouldn't be tied to intelligent development. This proposal is not - I repeat, not - a no-growth plan.

I pride myself on creating jobs, and I know that development is essential to a healthy economy. This bill will allow for that. What's more, it will also encourage us to develop in places where we'd all like to see economic growth, in particular our great cities.

Intelligent planning isn't just about open space. It's about building the kind of communities that can serve the needs of all our people. The roads to those open spaces, the homes that surround those acres, and the infrastructure that must be in place to support those natural resources are just as critical as open space itself.

We need to maintain a vibrant economy. A vibrant economy means that we must develop and we must preserve. Even with the preservation this resolution will provide, we will still have a million acres of undeveloped land. And we will still have cities that cry out for redevelopment, with enough work to keep every construction worker on the job for years to come.

In the polls and at the ballot box, citizens of this state -- time and again -- have supported preservation of open space, farmland, and historic resources. These same citizens have also support sensible development, safe roads, bridges, and tunnels, effective, efficient transportation projects, and development projects that reinvigorate our cities.

I ask your support for this ballot question. Once this land is preserved, that's for life. Not just for today. Not just for you and your children. But for their great-grandchildren. And for the generations that will follow them.

Together we have fought for the kind of economic supports and development that make sense for New Jersey -- in unemployment benefits, in transportation, in construction, and in laws that make sense for your membership. Our partnership has meant a stronger New Jersey economy.

Let's take that partnership a bit further. Let's pass the open ballot question. Let's rebuild our cities. And let's build a New Jersey that those generations to come will treasure as much as we do.

Thank you.