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NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR CALLS FOR NEW JERSEY COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH COMMISSION

Seeking to cement New Jersey's position as the economic engine of the Northeast, Gov. Christie Whitman today proposed that the New Jersey Department of Commerce be transformed into the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission, an independent commission that focuses solely on economic development and job creation.

"A centralized Commerce Commission will allow the state the flexibility and agility it needs to respond to the changing needs of today's business community," said Gov. Whitman. "State government and the state's private sector businesses share a common goal: economic prosperity for New Jersey. The new Commerce Commission will bring together the best and the brightest of both worlds to help New Jersey develop a successful market-driven approach to economic development."

"States are competing for jobs and business expansion like never before. The New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission will give us the competitive edge we need to maintain our place as the region's leader in economic development through the 21st century," said the Governor.

The Governor announced plans to transform the state Department of Commerce into the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission, a public-private partnership that will focus only on job creation and business development. The independent commission will be headed by a board of directors. The Governor will serve as chair of the board. Commerce Commissioner Gil Medina will serve as Chief Executive Officer of the commission, and will continue to serve as a member the Governor's cabinet. The board of directors will be comprised of public and private sector representatives. For statutory purposes, the new commission will be placed in-but-not-of the Department of Treasury, where it would function independently.

The commission, in conjunction with the Governor, will continue to set economic development policy for the state and will focus on its core mission of creating jobs for New Jerseyans. The new commission will continue to focus on the accounts management system, a proactive problem solving strategy aimed at the retention and expansion of existing business and the attraction of new businesses. The new commission will also assume responsibility for international trade, business advocacy, customer service, the development of small business and women and minority owned business, maritime resources and the development of sustainable business.

"Economic development has been a top priority in this administration since day one. Creating the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission will enhance our effectiveness and strengthen our ability to compete in the world marketplace," said Commerce Commissioner Gil Medina. "This new approach will enable us to reach new heights in creating jobs and attracting new companies to the Garden State."

The creation of the New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission will follow through on the work of the Economic Master Plan Commission and Prosperity New Jersey. The Governor created the Master Plan Commission shortly after taking office in 1994. The Master Plan Commission recommended a dramatic shift in New Jersey's economic development policies toward a more proactive and responsive approach, and the creation of Prosperity New Jersey, a public/private economic development partnership. The New Jersey Commerce and Economic Growth Commission will build on the successful economic development approach employed by the Whitman administration, which has created more than 225,000 net new jobs. Additionally, the new commission will build on the success of Prosperity New Jersey, which will continue under the new commission.

Under the new reorganization, certain programs which are not central to the commission's core economic development mission will be shifted to other state agencies. The Division of Travel and Tourism will shift to the Department of State, where it will focus on showcasing New Jersey's cultural and historical treasures. The New Jersey Redevelopment Authority, which helps finance urban revitalization, will shift to the Department of Community Affairs, where it can share resources and expertise with urban development programs including the Urban Coordinating Council. The new commission will continue to closely coordinate the activities of the Commission on Science and Technology, the New Jersey Motion Picture and Television Development Commission and the Economic Development Authority, which will now function along side the commission in-but-not-of the Department of Treasury.

The transformation of the Department of Commerce into the new commission will be accomplished through legislation.

Gov. Whitman also highlighted the importance of expanding the state's high technology sector, when she committed \$5 million in the 1999 budget for a Technology Transfer program in the Commission on Science and Technology. This program will transfer newly-developed technologies from the university into the marketplace. The program is expected to create approximately 300 new high-skilled, high-paying jobs, and help foster the creation or expansion of some 35 companies.

"The Technology Transfer program will foster the creation of high- paying jobs and new companies across the state, and will help keep New Jersey on the cutting edge of business development," said the Governor.

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