

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Continuing to Make New Jersey a Better Place to Live, Work and Raise a Family

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week the Governor discusses a number of initiatives proposed in her State of the State address that will help maintain New Jersey's economic health and quality of life. The Governor proposed a \$1 billion property tax relief program which will provide the average New Jersey homeowner with more than \$600 a year. In addition, she will make funds from the stable source of funding for open space available to towns and counties to restore their own local parks. She also has committed \$12.4 million to improve facilities in state parks. The Governor also proposed expanding New Jersey KidCare, an affordable insurance program for children, and establishing several programs to help seniors remain in their homes and get the services they need as they age.

Attached is the text of the message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend.

Governor's Weekly Radio Message January 15, 1999 State of the State

As I said in my State of the State speech: the state of New Jersey is vibrant and vigorous.

More New Jerseyans are working than ever before. Unemployment is at its lowest rate in ten years. More than 315,000 new jobs have been created in the state, and our welfare roles are at their lowest level in three decades.

Quality of life is as strong as our economy. Our crime rate is the lowest in a quarter century, and our state is well on its way to preserving one million acres of open space and farmland.

Culture and arts are flourishing in cities like Newark, New Brunswick and Trenton.

Our economic health is vibrant. Our quality of life is high. But you can't take these things for granted, just as you can't take good health for granted. You have to work to maintain good health.

So in my State of the State address, I've proposed a number of initiatives to help maintain our economic health, and keep our quality of life high.

For economic good health, I'm proposing \$1 billion in property tax relief. In this proposal, I'm fulfilling my promise to New Jersey voters, who said they wanted an end to rising property taxes.

My proposal will help New Jersey homeowners with the biggest part of their tax bill - school taxes. My plan will help to offset the school taxes each homeowner pays on the first \$45,000 of assessed value on their home.

When the program is fully implemented after a five-year phase-in, the average New Jersey homeowner will receive more than \$600 a year, which is equal to about one-third of the average local school tax bill in New Jersey.

This tax relief fulfills a promise I made to voters, and it's in addition to another promise I kept of income tax cuts of 30 percent.

This tax relief package will allow New Jersey families to use their hard-earned money for what matters to them, like college tuition, a new home, or a secure retirement. And this comes in addition to my efforts to help reduce the cost of local government.

Tax cuts are good for the economy, and good for our fiscal health. But quality of life includes more. In November, voters endorsed my vision of preserving one million acres of farmland and open space through a stable source of funding for open space, farmland and historic preservation.

Some of that funding will be made available towns and counties to develop and restore their own local parks, while I've committed \$12.4 million to improve facilities in our state parks, as well as the hiring of more park rangers, and maintenance staff.

I also want to expand New Jersey KidCare., our affordable insurance program for children, so that comprehensive health care benefits can be accessible to more families.

And I want to cut the waiting time so kids can become eligible for this program more quickly.

KidCare helps to ensure the well-being of our state's youngest residents. I also want to do the same for our oldest residents.

Many seniors prefer remaining in their homes or in their communities as they age. But as their health status changes, seniors may need help to remain in their homes and neighborhoods.

That is why I'm proposing a series of programs to help seniors get the services they need to live as independently as possible.

New Jersey's economy is strong and its quality of life is high. But you have to work to stay healthy.

My property tax relief proposal will help maintain our economic health, while my open space preservation program, expansion of KidCare, and programs for the elderly, will help keep New Jersey a great place to live, work, and raise a family.
