

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor's Weekly Radio Message Urges Parental Involvement

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 the importance of parental involvement and support in their children's lives. Last year, the Governor signed legislation that strengthened New Jersey's child support enforcement efforts. The law is focused on getting back some of the \$1.4 billion in child support payments that are overdue in New Jersey. This legislation makes it easier to establish paternity when a question exists, allowing child support payments to be established and collected. The law also helps authorities track down delinquent parents if they have a professional license or a bank account. In the first quarter of 1999, there was an 8.5 percent increase in child support collections, totaling about a 13 million dollars.

The Governor also supports new public service announcements that will run soon. The theme of the announcements are "It's more than just money." They convey the message that non-custodial parents should be involved willingly and readily in the children's lives. Paying child support is just one part of being involved.

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 ADDRESS MARCH 26, 1999 CHILD SUPPORT

We all know that children do best when they have the personal involvement and support of their parents.

Of course, being a good father or mother can be one of the most demanding jobs any of us will ever have, but also one of the most rewarding.

But the sad fact today is that too many parents aren't even trying. Too many parents, for whatever reason, fail to support their children.

Last year, I signed legislation that put real muscle into our child support enforcement efforts. A law that focused on getting some of the \$1.4 billion in child

support payments that are overdue in New Jersey.

That law makes it easier to establish paternity when a question exists. Once we establish paternity, it's easier for us to establish and collect court-ordered support payments.

The law also helps us track down delinquent parents if they have a professional license or a bank account. If they're getting a paycheck - or win the lottery - we are there to collect. And if they skip across the state line to avoid us, we can locate them and make them pay.

It's a tough law. And it's paying off for children across New Jersey.

In the first quarter of federal fiscal year 1999, we saw an 8.5 percent rise in child support collections. That's about a 13 million dollar increase. And 6 million dollars of that comes from a provision in the new law that requires employers to report the hiring of new employees to the state within 20 days - 15 days if they report electronically.

But a tough law should be just part of our effort to support kids. That's why we have a new ad campaign with the theme: "It's more than just money."

These public service announcements, which will soon run on television, convey the message that non-custodial parents should be involved willingly and readily in their children's lives. Paying child support is just one part of being involved in a child's life.

One of the ads you'll be seeing soon features a young boy calling his dad - who is not living at home - and leaving a message on his answering machine. What the boy doesn't know is that his dad is sitting right next to the phone, listening to the message the boy is leaving.

As the boy talks about hitting two home runs in his baseball game, the father quickly picks up the phone and starts to talk with him.

The message here is, if you are a non-custodial parent, be involved in a child's life. It's simply not enough to just send a support check - although that's a good start.

There's nothing like having a non-custodial parent in the picture - actively paying child support and actively, constructively involved in a child's life.

Unfortunately, of the half-million children in New Jersey who depend on child support payments, more than 250,000 aren't getting the support they deserve - financial or otherwise.

That's not right. It's not acceptable. And we hope - with this campaign - to get a lot more non-custodial parents to see their way clear to giving their kids what they deserve: total support from both parents.

My message to those who are shortchanging their children is this: be a real parent.

Don't let your kids down. Pay your child support. And call your kids before they call you.

You'll find it's a lot harder to walk away from your child support responsibilities when you're part of your child's life.

And if you know a parent who isn't doing his or her part, why not remind them in a nice way that their kids need them.

If we all pitch in we can help all our children get all the support they need.