

# NEWS RELEASE

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NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS

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MERCER COUNTY COURTHOUSE

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Remarks Before COMMITTEE ON APPORTIONMENT OF THE LEGISLATURE Thursday, April 21, 1966  
In Sessions of the 1966 State Constitutional Convention, The Gymnasium  
Rutgers-The State University, New Brunswick, N.J., at 2 P.M.  
Senator Joseph M. Keegan (Passaic) presiding

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## THE ADEQUATE BASE OF REPRESENTATION

by John Jay Sullivan  
President, NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS  
Passaic County Freeholder

I HAVE REQUESTED this appearance here today as President of the New Jersey Association of Chosen Freeholders, representing the 21 County governments. My aim is not to recommend a specific plan of legislative apportionment, but to urge your Committee to recommend the County as the valid basis of representation in our State Legislature.

IN YOUR MANDATE to comply with the will of the U. S. Supreme Court of an apportionment plan which will accomodate 'one man, one vote', we strongly recommend 'one County, no less than one vote', with a reasonable multiple in recognition of populations. We declare the Counties themselves as opposed to weighted or fractional voting, and consider that numerical size is not the prime consideration, but rather a properly balanced Legislature which will recognize the rights of all and deny proper representation to none.

YOUR TASK cannot be achieved without courage and imagination. You can strengthen the heritage of fair and equitable representation which reaches back to 1675, by devising a means of preserving what Governor Richard J. Hughes has wisely called "the integrity of the Counties." At the same time, you must erect a balanced legislative structure which will recognize the rapid population shifts taking place in New Jersey, which is the nation's most urban state.

OUR CREDO is well put by Governor Hughes, when he says: "County lines must be considered in governmental decisions, because Counties do reflect the needs and aspirations of the diverse geographical areas in New Jersey." He emphasizes this by declaring: "Each County's voice ought to be distinguishable, instead of just being cut up into a hodge-podge of non-County areas."

"THERE OUGHT TO BE a direct line of communication between any County at all times and its state government. This is necessary because one County has traditional problems existing which are different from those of other Counties, ranging

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from highways, to welfare or law enforcement. In other Counties, these same pressures may not exist, at least not in the same form. Therefore, it is tremendously important for the identify of the Counties to be preserved.

THE GOVERNOR continues: "If our Counties are to continue to be distinguishable, and to continue to have an identifiable voice, then the integrity of County lines has to be preserved in New Jersey." Integrity can be defined in relation to the Counties as a 'sense of wholeness' or 'completeness'. The founding fathers in their wisdom in creating the several Counties along natural physical lines, have managed to serve us well in modern times. By erecting Counties on geographical bases such as river basins, coastal plains or around hill country, they provided us with what have become fully recognized planning regions in our present society.

WE SUBMIT that the most adequate and serviceable units of legislative representation in New Jersey are its Counties. Our Counties have a recognizeable community of interest, each differing from the other, which makes it a unique creature of local home-rule government, responsible to the specific needs of its people, living in a definite region of our state. The factors which underline the separate community of interest of each of the several Counties are three: geographical, cultural and economic. First, the regions of nature where men settled and worked out their livelihoods, helped to shape the size and type of County region which was to emerge. Second, this physical basis of life affected the development of cultural advantages, which followed lines of interest, access and desire. Third, the work of men in the various regions developed into trade climates, in which industries grew up, jobs became available, banking and investment worked to provide a distinct economic atmosphere in relation to that County.

NOW LET US look at the great resurgence of responsibility placed upon the several Boards of Freeholders as the elected managers of the Counties by acts of the Legislature. This, in itself, confirms the Counties as valid creatures of the state, best suited to enact its will. In the past ten years, the average number of departments of County government has grown from 20 to 30; its statutory services jumping from less than 1,000 at the time of World War II to more than 3800 today - all this in response to the Legislature's confidence in the ability of the County to serve the legitimate needs of our citizens.

GOVERNOR HUGHES puts it this way: "Increased responsibility has fallen on all levels of government and nowhere is that increase more obvious than within the historic unit of New Jersey government - the County. We are witnessing today a renaissance in County government. County government has improved its efficiency in carrying

Sullivan - 4/21/66 (3)

out traditional responsibilities and now has taken on new challenges, including everything from the promotion of economic development to the two-year County College system.

"COUNTY GOVERNMENT has responded to the new times in another way. It recognizes the new working relationship which has emerged between County, municipal, state and the Federal governments. This new relationship is based on a realization that regionalism - area-wide solutions to area-wide problems - is a fact of life in this most urban and highly developed state in the country."

I STRESS AGAIN that the size of the New Jersey Legislature is not important, nor should it be the controlling factor in your task of apportionment of either one or two houses. Its composition must recognize the validity of those regional units, the Counties, which are the most dynamic units of government in our state today, even as Counties are increasingly the 'get-it-done' form of government all across America.

IT IS IMPERATIVE that the sound unit of home-rule government, the New Jersey County, be the keystone of any workable system of fair representation which the Constitutional Convention of 1966 may devise. Any other system will be unrealistic, requiring a whole new body of statutes - a patchwork quilt which will deny the vast community of interest inherent in each of the 21 Counties, and so valid a factor in the welfare of our people.

THE 1947 CONSTITUTION provides (Art. IV, Sect 3, Para. 1) that "The General Assembly shall be composed of members elected biennially by the legally qualified voters of the Counties. ." This says that the County constitutes the regions or districts for members of that house of the State Legislature. Your task is to fashion a thoroughly legal and workable Legislature of one or two houses which recognize this same principle of the integrity of the County, as the only sound, valid and legal basis of legislative representation. Thank you.