



Governor Christie Vetoes Minutes of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority

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Trenton, NJ – Today, Governor Chris Christie again used his veto power to place a check and balance on spending practices by state authorities, this time by vetoing minutes of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority in the hiring of a law firm without seeking proposals or competitive bids – after HESAA had already expended tens of thousands of dollars for the handpicked firm's services.

Governor Christie vetoed minutes of HESAA September 8 meeting, during which it approved a resolution engaging the services of the law firm Pashman Stein, P.C., and ratifying the payment of \$32,374 for services already rendered. The resolution further ratified payment to Pashman Stein for future costs associated with the law firm's review of HESAA operations in response to the critical report issued by the Office of the Inspector General regarding HESAA.

The same resolution set the top hourly rate of \$525 per hour for legal services, and rates of other attorneys at between \$247.50 and \$495 per hour. In his veto letter, Governor Christie noted that the hiring of the firm was done without soliciting proposals and bids from other firms.

"Instead," the Governor wrote, "Pashman Stein, P.C., was handpicked by HESAA staff, and the unilateral decision to engage the firm was only presented to the Board for approval over three months after the engagement, and after \$32,374 had been paid for services rendered. Going forward, professional services contracts such as this should be competitively bid."

This becomes Governor Christie's fifteenth veto taken against various state authorities and commissions since taking office. Meeting minutes are scrutinized by the Governor's Office Authorities Unit to flag potentially troublesome issues.

- [Veto letter \[pdf 35kB\]](#)

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