

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Spends Day at New Jersey Military Sites Reaffirms Commitment to Supporting Defense Efforts

Gov. Christie Whitman today visited two of New Jersey's military installations, reaffirming her commitment to defense efforts and New Jersey's operations. The governor visited both Fort Monmouth and the USS Detroit, stationed at the Earle Naval Weapons Station.

"New Jersey military installations play a key role in keeping the United States military on the cutting edge," said the Governor. "We must make sure our men and women know we stand behind them and have confidence in their capabilities. The sacrifices these men and women have made and continue to make each and every day for their country is commendable"

The Governor first stopped at Fort Monmouth where she observed military displays and vehicular equipment. Fort Monmouth is a 1,100-acre installation that houses the Army Material Command's Communication and Electronics Command (CECOM). In addition, the fort houses West Point's preparatory school and other military tenants. CECOM provides Communications and Intelligence capabilities for the military as well as Command and Control, Computer, Electronic Warfare and Sensor capabilities.

Fort Monmouth is Monmouth County's largest employer. The fort currently employs 5,900 people, consisting of both civilians and military personnel.

Following her visit to Fort Monmouth, the Governor visited the USS Detroit. The USS Detroit is currently stationed at the Earle Naval Weapons Station. The Governor toured parts of the ship and then joined some of the ship's sailors for lunch. Thirty- eight of the sailors aboard the USS Detroit are from New Jersey. The USS Detroit recently returned from a six-month cruise in the Arabian Gulf and Mediterranean and Adriatic Sea.

Governor Christie Whitman Supports Our Veterans

- **Property Tax Relief.** Gov. Whitman added \$5.5 million to the Fiscal Year 1999 budget to refund disabled veterans who paid property taxes not knowing that they were exempt from such levies. Under state law, veterans who are fully (100 percent) and permanently disabled because of a wartime, service-related injury or disease, are not required to pay property taxes.
- **Veterans Homes Funding.** Gov. Whitman increased funding for New Jersey Veterans Homes by more than \$1 million in Fiscal Year 1999.

- **Veterans Homes.** The Governor has worked to ensure that the state's three veterans homes are providing the best care possible while operating efficiently.
 - A new \$42 million, 332-bed veterans home in Menlo Park was completed in early 1999. This facility also provides for adult day care to reduce the number of institutionalized veterans.
 - The Veterans Haven for homeless vets at Ancora was expanded from 30 to 50 beds.
 - All three veterans homes in New Jersey received the state's highest level of certification for long-term care facilities, putting veterans homes in the top 10 percent of all nursing homes in the state.
 - Improvements in management and operations were implemented, reducing the cost to residents by an average of \$1,000 over the past three years.
 - Plans to privatize Paramus Veterans Home were rejected by the Governor.
 - She allowed the exclusion of federal VA compensation for service-connected disability from consideration in determining the amount of maintenance a family should pay to keep residents in NJ Veterans Homes. For 1997, this initiative saved veterans in New Jersey a total of \$278,000.
- **Income Tax Exemption.** Gov. Whitman signed a law to exempt military pensions from New Jersey state income tax.
- **Veterans Preference for Personnel.** Veterans preference was extended for state appointments and promotions for former members of the Coast Guard who have received the Medal of Honor or Navy Cross, and for veterans of Somalia and Bosnia.
- **Veterans Affairs Clinic.** As the federal government has focused veterans health care funding to the warmer regions of the South and West, Gov. Whitman has fought vigorously along with the state congressional delegation to retain health care benefits for veterans in the Northeast. These efforts led to the dedication a Veterans Affairs Clinic at Fort Dix in 1998.

