



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

PO BOX 004
CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Gene Herman
(609) 777-2600

TRENTON, NJ 08625
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Gov. Christie Whitman today signed the following legislation:

A-691, sponsored by Assembly Members Charles Zisa (D-Bergen) and Loretta Weinberg (D--Bergen), and Senators Jack Sinagra (R-Middlesex) and Byron Baer (D-Bergen), creates the New Jersey Human Relations Council. The council is designed to promote anti-prejudice education and to address the problem of bias and violent acts based on the victim's race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or disability.

S-1886, sponsored by Senator Robert J. Martin (R-Essex/Morris/Passaic) and by Assembly Members David C. Russo (R-Bergen/Passaic) and Wilfredo Caraballo (D-Essex), requires each municipality to have a public defender. The bill, an initiative of the New Jersey State Bar Association, is designed to provide higher quality legal representation for indigent defendants in municipal court. Current law permits, but does not require, municipalities to employ a public defender. The League of Municipalities supports the bill, which allows municipalities to charge fees to recoup their costs.

A-2180, sponsored by Assembly Members Richard H. Bagger (R-Middlesex/Union/Morris/Somerset) and Charlotte Vandervalk (R-Bergen/Passaic), and Senators C. Louis Bassano (R-Essex/Union) and William Codey (D-Essex, provides a range of community-based services which would allow for persons who might otherwise require continued institutionalization to return to the community. Any funding from the developmental center placement not needed to fully fund the community placement for an individual shall be directed toward the reduction of the Division of Developmental Disabilities waiting list. The "Community Mental Health and Developmental Disability Services Investment Act" directs the Commissioner of Health and Human Services to ensure that all funding derived from the closure of a mental health facility is redirected to support services within the community.

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