

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor's Weekly Radio Message: A Budget That Delivers to New Jerseyans

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 message focuses on the budget that the Governor will sign on Monday. The Governor discusses the way the Fiscal Year 2000 budget will deliver property tax relief to New Jerseyans and will improve the quality of life in the Garden State.

Education is a top priority in New Jersey and that is reflected in the budget, says the Governor in the address. Nearly one-third of the budget is geared towards education.

In addition, the Governor discusses how the budget makes history by providing the first annual \$98 million payment for open space and farmland preservation.

Attached is a 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.

Radio Message for June 25 Fiscal Year 2000 Budget

Hello, this is Governor Christie Whitman with some good news for the taxpayers of New Jersey.

I am about to sign the fiscal year 2000 budget for the State of New Jersey. And I think you will agree it's a great way to set the tone for a new century.

This budget reflects a healthy and growing economy. It also reflects a state government that understands the source of this prosperity: you, the hard-working people of New Jersey.

With your families in mind, this budget provides record amounts of assistance to our public schools. In fact, nearly one-third of the entire budget funds education. This investment makes clear that education is a top priority for our state. I am proud of that investment, and I'm proud that for the first time we have a capital plan for rebuilding our schools.

While this budget focuses on our future, it also respects our past by funding several important programs to give senior citizens more options for long-term care.

This budget targets good health in the short term by funding a major new anti-smoking initiative with money from the nationwide tobacco settlement. This budget also zeroes in on our long-term quality of life by funding the first annual \$98 million payment in our drive toward preserving another one million acres of open space and farmland.

These are just a handful of the ways in which our spending plan for fiscal year 2000 will benefit all the citizens of the Garden State. However, the big story of this budget is the remarkable array of tax relief measures it contains.

First and foremost, we are paying for the start of a five- year plan to provide one billion dollars in annual property tax rebates directly to our homeowners. You asked for property tax relief, and we're delivering. In fact, the first checks will be delivered to your mailbox in September and will average \$120 statewide. Four years from now, those checks will average \$600.

At the end of this message, I'll give the phone number and Internet address in case you still need to apply for that program.

With this budget, we're also going to give more than 150,000 New Jersey taxpayers a break. We're increasing the income level at which income earners have to pay state income taxes. This year, the cutoff point will move to \$10,000, and it will increase to \$20,000 over the next two years. Working families need all the help they can get, and I believe this exemption will help a lot.

Along with these tax relief initiatives, this budget also provides record amounts of school aid, and for the first time ties municipal aid to the cost of living. And it provides \$35 million for two new programs that encourage local governments to share resources and save taxpayer dollars.

The programs I have mentioned here are on top of the tax cuts we have already put on the books over the past five years - from the 30 percent income tax cut to the property tax deduction to the senior property tax freeze.

In addition to the tax relief that this budget will support, I also want to pay special tribute to the service and sacrifice of our veterans through additional relief in the future. I am working with the Legislature on a proposal that would increase the veterans' property tax deduction from \$50 to \$250 over four years.

Together, these efforts make it clear that the Legislature and I are firmly committed to providing substantial and meaningful tax relief for the people of New Jersey. Let's face it: you've earned it. And you deserve it.

Let me finish with an apology to those of you who have had trouble filing by phone for the NJ SAVER property tax relief program. To accommodate you, we have extended the filing deadline to July 15. You can call the toll-free line at 877-658-2972, or file through the Division of Taxation web page at www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation. Once again, the phone number is 877-658-2972 and the web site is www.state.nj.us/treasury/taxation.

Thank you, and have a great week.

