



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### NEWS RELEASE

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## Gov. Whitman Signs Bills, Creates Teen Pregnancy Advisory Council

Gov. Christie Whitman today signed legislation, including a bill that establishes an Advisory Council on Adolescent Pregnancy to develop a prevention and education outreach strategy for adolescents.

The Governor signed legislation that creates an Advisory Council on Adolescent Pregnancy, which is charged with reviewing and developing policies that will prevent adolescent pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births and improve services to at-risk, pregnant and parenting adolescents.

"All New Jerseyans need to get involved and work together to prevent teenage pregnancy and make adolescents aware of the help that is available if they find themselves in this most difficult situation," said Gov. Whitman. "With the creation of this council today, we are taking another step in coordinating government resources to end this tragic cycle."

The council, which will be located in, but not of, the Department of Health and Senior Services, will consist of 23 members. Included will be the Commissioners of the Departments of Health and Senior Services, Human Services, Education, Community Affairs and Labor. Of the 18 public members serving on the council, four will be teenagers, including two teenage mothers. The public membership of the council will also include representation from community-based religious organizations, and the health, social service and education communities.

The legislation includes a \$95,000 appropriation for the council.

In June, Gov. Whitman unveiled a \$1.1 million state initiative to combat teenage pregnancy which included funding for grants to community organizations and peer groups, a media campaign to promote awareness and a \$100,000 grant from the Governor's discretionary fund to increase personnel on the state's Family Help Line (1-800-THE-KIDS).

The legislation, S-1388/A2312, was sponsored by Senators Wynona Lipman (D-Essex/Union) and Senate President Donald DiFrancesco (R-Middlesex/Morris/Somerset/Union) and Assembly Members Loretta

Weinberg (D-Bergen) and Charlotte Vandervalk (R-Bergen).

Gov. Whitman also signed the following bills:

S-1036, sponsored by Senators Ronald Rice (D-Essex) and Gerald Cardinale (R-Bergen) and Assembly Members Anthony Impreveduto (D-Bergen/Hudson) Alfred Steele (D-Passaic), authorizes lawsuits for damages by persons who have been mistakenly convicted and imprisoned. In order to receive damages, the claimant must establish by clear and convincing evidence that he or she was convicted and imprisoned for a crime that he or she did not commit. The bill limits the damages that could be awarded to twice the claimant's income in the year prior to incarceration or \$20,000 for each year of incarceration. The claims must be brought within two years of the claimant's release from prison.

A-1982, sponsored by Assembly Members Charlotte Vandervalk (R-Bergen) and Carol Murphy (R-Essex/Morris/Passaic), repeals the statute that requires blood tests for syphilis as a condition for receiving a marriage license. The bill requires that a woman be tested for syphilis at the time of delivery of an infant. Current law also provides that a woman be tested for syphilis at the time of her first medical examination for the pregnancy.

S-360, sponsored by Senator Joseph Bubba (R-Essex/Passaic), and Assembly Members Ken LeFevre (R-Atlantic) and Carmine DeSopo (R-Burlington/Camden), provides for the collection of delinquent assessments and restitution for the Victims of Crime Compensation Board (VCCB) through the Set-Off of Individual Liability Program (SOIL). SOIL will have the ability to collect delinquent monies from debtors' state tax refunds and homestead property tax rebates. The criminal courts impose VCCB assessments and restitution as part of the sentencing process. The VCCB uses funds to compensate innocent crime victims for injuries sustained as a result of crimes committed against them. In FY 1996, VCCB paid out over \$7.3 million in compensation.

A-2416, sponsored by Assembly Members Alex DeCroce (R-Essex/Morris/Passaic) and Nick Felice (R-Bergen/Passaic) and the late Senator William Haines (R-Atlantic/Burlington/Camden), permits loans to be made from Airport Safety Fund to aviation enterprises and certain airports for capital and related purposes. The fund is administered by the Department of Transportation.

S-1093 / A-2060, sponsored by Senators Wayne R. Bryant (D-Camden / Gloucester) and William L. Gormley (R-Atlantic) and Assembly Members Nilsa Cruz-Perez (D-Camden / Gloucester) and Raul Garcia (D-Hudson), makes it easier to evict drug offenders from public housing projects. The bill calls for an amendment to the state's eviction law. It clarifies that federal guidelines take precedence over state law.

A-2741 / S-1964, sponsored by Assembly Members Jack Collins (R-Salem / Cumberland / Gloucester) and John A. Rocco (R-Camden) and Senators John O. Bennett (R-Monmouth) and C. Louis Bassano (R-Essex / Union), appropriates \$8.127 million to public school districts in the state. The bill returns to school districts the amount of state aid that was deducted from their aid entitlement as administrative penalties during the 1996-1997 school year. The money will be given to the districts during the 1997-1998 school year.

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