

## Office of the Governor

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### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES KEY MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ELLIS ISLAND**

Stating that historic preservation leads to a higher quality of life, Gov. Christie Whitman today announced the appointment of key members of the Advisory Committee on the Preservation and Use of Ellis Island. The committee will be responsible for investigating all potential uses of the structures on Ellis Island and considering the best methods to maintain, restore, and put the structures to beneficial use.

The Governor also signed an executive order expanding the number of public members on the advisory committee from four to seven.

"Hundreds of thousands of immigrants once walked where we walk today," the Governor said. "They fled persecution, pogroms, and potato famines. This island - their oasis in a shattered world - gave them new hope and promise of a better future."

"As New Jerseyans, we take great pride in our history," Gov. Whitman said. "But we must also take care of our history so that future generations can share our pride and visit these landmarks of our national journey."

The Governor said the proposal for open space preservation that will be voted on statewide next month will help protect New Jersey's history and heritage as well as preserve open space and farmland. Under the open space proposal, nearly \$100 million in state funds would be allocated annually for ten years to preserve one million acres of open space and farmland within the next ten years.

"Passing Public Question No. 1 will be another way to leave our mark on New Jersey's history. It will be another way to continue to ensure that we never forget that a state is only as rich as its people and its heritage," Gov. Whitman said.

"The Advisory Committee on the Preservation and Use of Ellis Island will now begin the work of determining the best methods of preserving Ellis Island and its precious buildings," the Governor said. "Everything this committee does will preserve the history of this island and the memories of those who passed this way on the road to what I call the `promise of America.'"

Governor Whitman announced that Finn Caspersen, of Andover, will chair the Advisory Committee on the Preservation and Use of Ellis Island. Caspersen is the former Chief Executive Officer of Beneficial Corporation and formerly headed Prosperity New Jersey, the statewide public/private partnership that promotes New Jersey's economy. Caspersen's father and his mother's parents came to the United States through Ellis Island.

Other members of the committee appointed by the Governor were:

- Dr. Barbara J. Mitnick, of Morristown, a collector, conservation consultant and designer of 19th Century period rooms. She has organized several exhibitions of American 19th Century historic prints, including an exhibition at the West Point Museum, and had chaired the Governor's Task Force on History. Dr. Mitnick's mother and her family immigrated from Russia to the United States through Ellis Island.
- Clement Price, of Newark, a Professor of History and Chair of the Afro-American Studies at Rutgers Newark. Price is also Director of the university's new Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and Modern Experience. He has served on both the New Jersey Historical Society and the New Jersey Historical Commission.

- Robert Currie, of Summit, former Vice President of HCC Science and Technology Company, Incorporated, a subsidiary of Hoechst Celanese Corporation. He is the founder and President of the Clan Currie Society, a non-profit society promoting Celtic arts, history and genealogy. Mr. Currie recently assisted the National Park Service with historical research at Ellis Island.
- Richard A. Cheu, of Fair Haven, owner and operator of a private consulting firm. He has also developed workshops on Asian-American immigrant and historical contributions for clients that include McDonald's Corp., AT&T, and the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Mr. Cheu's father immigrated to the United States through Ellis Island.
- John Celardo, of Fanwood, an Archivist for the National Archives and Records Administration-Northeast Region. Celardo conducts monthly workshops at Ellis Island on genealogy and trains volunteers for the Ellis Island Foundation. Mr. Celardo's grandparents immigrated through Ellis Island from Italy.
- Catherine D. Burke, of Atlantic City, co-owner of the Irish Pub and Inns in Atlantic City and Philadelphia. An accomplished actress, Ms. Burke established one of the top three casting companies in New York City that provides talent auditions both domestically and internationally. Both of Ms. Burke's parents came to the United States through Ellis Island - her mother from Italy and her father from Ireland.

The remaining members include Assembly Member John V. Kelly (R-Bergen/Essex/Passaic), Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler, the Attorney General, State Treasurer, Secretary of State, member of the state Senate, State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Director of the Division of Taxation.

The Governor announced the creation of the Advisory Committee on the Preservation and Use of Ellis Island following a decision of the U. S. Supreme Court in May that declared that the majority of Ellis Island belongs to New Jersey.

The decision ended a dispute that spanned over 160 years. As a result New Jersey's laws will now apply to 22.5 of the island's 27.5 acres. Part of the main building and several other buildings, including the hospital complex, now belong to New Jersey.