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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor's Weekly Radio Message Urges New Jerseyans to Apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit

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 Governor discusses the Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC), a federal tax break for working families who earned less than \$30,000 last year. It is estimated that up to 20 percent of qualified New Jersey families did not claim the credit they were due because they were not aware of the EIC. Each of these families could have received an average check of \$1,400 from the federal government.

New Jersey's state government is joining with the private sector in a campaign to make people aware of the Earned Income Tax Credit, so that all eligible New Jerseyans will collect the refunds they deserve and have the resources to make it on their own.

Attached is the 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.

GOVERNOR'S WEEKLY RADIO ADDRESS APRIL 1, 1999 EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

With April 15th approaching, I want to make sure citizens know about a federal tax break available to hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans.

Working families who earned less than \$30,000 last year are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit or EIC.

Even if a wage-earner doesn't owe federal income tax, the IRS may owe that person money. A family with two or more children can get up to \$3,756. Families with one child can get up to \$2,271. And even couples with no qualifying children can get as much as \$341.

This credit helps thousands of working families in New Jersey by providing the extra dollars they may need to make ends meet. It rewards hard work and encourages self-sufficiency.

But to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit you have to apply. And that's the problem.

It is estimated that up to 20 percent of qualified New Jersey families didn't claim the credit they were due because they did not know about it. Each of these families lost out on checks from Uncle Sam that averaged \$1,400.

That means as much as \$100 million in tax refunds didn't come to deserving families in our state. That's \$100 million that should be coming into our economy to support working families and help create jobs.

I won't be satisfied until every family who deserves a tax credit gets the credit they're due. That's why, once again, state government is joining with the private sector in a campaign to make people aware of the Earned Income Tax Credit.

As part of this effort, I recently filmed a public service announcement with New Jersey Nets executive and member of the NBA Hall of Fame - Willis Reed.

This spread-the-word partnership will help more families collect the refunds they deserve. With this money they can pay their bills, buy food and clothing for their kids, and pay for child care so they can keep working.

That's what EIC is about: families having the resources to make it on their own.

To get this credit, a family or working individual just has to file a federal income tax return and attach a Schedule EIC.

For more information on the Earned Income Tax Credit, New Jersey residents can call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040.