



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

### NEWS RELEASE

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

TRENTON, NJ 08625  
RELEASE: February 20, 1998



---

### MEDIA ADVISORY

#### Governor's Weekly Radio Message

Gov. Christie Whitman's radio message this week focuses on her commitment to making government more accountable to its citizens. The Governor addresses her proposals to give New Jerseyans the ability to vote on municipal tax hikes that rise above the rate of inflation and to require future state tax increases to be subjected to a super-majority vote of the Legislature. Under this proposal, two-thirds of each house of the Legislature must approve a tax increase, rather than just a simple majority, as is currently the case.

The text of message is attached.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available tonight, beginning at 7 p.m., and will run through the weekend.

#### Governor's Weekly Radio Address

#### February 20, 1998

The old saying goes that the only sure things in life are death and taxes.

Well, I can't do much about warding off the Grim Reaper, but I hope I can do something about the grim reality of tax increases.

If you live in New Jersey, you know what problems a tax increase can create. We saw what trouble a major increase in state taxes caused in the middle of the last recession.

Perhaps you were one of the hundreds of thousands of New Jersey men and women who lost their jobs when businesses fled the state. Maybe your family was already struggling to make ends meet and suddenly had to spend even more hard-earned dollars paying taxes.

That wasn't fair to you - and it certainly wasn't good for New Jersey.

It's too easy to increase taxes in our state. It's time we made it harder.

I have already proposed we give local voters the final say on municipal tax hikes that rise above the rate of inflation. Under my proposal, if a town council wanted to raise taxes by, say, 6 percent, that tax increase would have to go on the November ballot for the voters to decide.

I want to provide a safeguard against state tax increases as well.

In my recent budget message to the New Jersey Legislature, I recommended that we amend the Constitution to make all future state tax increases subject to a super-majority. A super-majority would mean that unless two-thirds of both houses of the Legislature vote to raise a tax, that tax will not increase.

What will these changes mean to you? I am convinced they will make our state more affordable and our public officials more accountable.

If a town council has a good reason to raise taxes above inflation because of some special circumstance, voters will approve. But if the increase can't be justified, it shouldn't happen - and now you the voters will be able to say no.

We should see the same kind of accountability on the State level. If the Legislature has a good reason to raise taxes, the votes will be there. We saw just that kind of thing happen last year with the cigarette tax.

The Legislature voted overwhelmingly to increase that tax because the money was needed for charity care and school repair.

New Jersey voters are willing to invest their tax dollars where they are needed. We've shown that time and again.

Every time a statewide Green Acres bond issue to preserve open space has appeared on the ballot, we've approved it by large numbers. Citizens in 13 counties have voted to dedicate a portion of their taxes to preservation. And most school budgets in most towns have earned the approval of voters as well.

Clearly, our citizens recognize that taxes serve a useful and productive purpose in addressing critical needs and common objectives. But every time someone raises a tax, it affects the way people conduct their lives.

So what my proposals say to lawmakers is, simply, think twice. New Jersey quite literally cannot afford a system that makes it too easy to reach into the wallets of our families and businesses.

Get in touch with your legislators and let them know what you think about these ideas. Let's make New Jersey more affordable. Let's make our public officials more accountable. Let's keep working to make New Jersey the best place to live in America.

####