

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor's Weekly Radio Message Focuses on Services for New Jersey Seniors

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 services and supports New Jersey has put in place for our older citizens. The Homestead Rebate program, property tax freeze and New Jersey EASE programs are all services available to our seniors. These programs reduce the tax burden on our seniors and offer them the kind of information they need day to day. New Jersey is doing its best to make sure that they always want to call this state their home.

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 AUGUST 7, 1998 SENIORS

Did you know that, today, more than 1.4 million men and women over the age of 60 call New Jersey home? In fact, older adults are one of the fastest growing populations in our state.

Our older citizens are an extremely diverse group, defined not by their birthdates but by their values, experiences, and lifestyles.

And let's face it: what we do for older citizens we do for ourselves. The services we put in place and the supports we offer will contribute to a better future for all of us. And since I'll be giving you a couple of 800 numbers today for important services, you may want to grab a pen and some paper.

One of these services is our Homestead Rebate program. In recent days we've mailed more than 1.2 million checks, totaling more than 304 million dollars, to eligible New Jersey residents.

These checks are important sources of much-needed income for eligible citizens, including seniors.

I've made it the hallmark of my administration to cut taxes and provide property tax relief for the people of New Jersey. These checks are another way we can reduce the tax burden on our seniors. The average 1997 Homestead Rebate is for almost \$250. And if you want to know the status of your check, you can call the automated Homestead Rebate Information Line at 1-800-323-4400. That's 1-800-323-4400.

Homestead Rebates are just one of the services we offer our older citizens.

We know that for seniors on limited budgets rising property taxes erode their independence, erase their savings, and can price them literally out of house and home.

That's why I signed legislation in January that reimburses eligible citizens every penny of the difference between what they paid in property taxes last year and the amount they will have paid by the end of 1998 and every year onward.

Nearly 280,000 people qualify for this program, which locks in their property tax bill at last year's amount. If you want to find out more about this program, you can call

1-800-882-6597. That's 1-800-882-6597.

Of course, finding out about what services are available for seniors can be a formidable task. Seniors need to know who to call and where to go.

That's why I'm very pleased that we've now opened our eighth New Jersey EASE project, in Essex County.

New Jersey EASE stands for our Easy Access, Single Entry project for senior services. The program promotes wellness, independence, choice, and dignity for seniors.

New Jersey EASE provides seniors with easier access to services at the local level. It gives them one place to go and one number to call for the assistance they need, whatever their income or health status.

We now have 8 New Jersey EASE counties that offer seniors the kind of information and help they need day to day. Whether it's getting a ride, finding a nursing home for a loved one, seeking a job, taking a college course, receiving home-delivered meals, getting protective services, or hearing just a friendly voice on the other end of the line - New Jersey EASE is as close as the nearest telephone.

If you would like more information about the New Jersey EASE program, just call 1-800-792-8820. That's 1-800-792-8820.

Finally, I would like to thank our older citizens. Your knowledge and insight are making New Jersey all it can be. You're living proof of Satchel Paige's memorable line, "Age is mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

You do matter - which is why we are doing our best to make sure that you will always want to call New Jersey home.