

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Whitman today conditionally vetoed the following pieces of legislation:

S-88, sponsored by Senators Joe Palaia (R-Monmouth) and Shirley Turner (D-Mercer) and Assembly Members Christopher Bateman, Peter Biondi (R-Morris/Somerset) and Nellie Pou (D-Passaic), which would have required residential dwellings to be equipped with a carbon monoxide sensor device. The Governor commended the sponsors for their efforts, she expressed concern that the law was overly broad at the present time, especially given the changing nature of technology used in the detectors. The Governor stressed that individual property owners have the right to purchase and install detectors in their homes if they determine that current technology will better protect their safety. The Governor recommended that the law be changed to require detectors in multifamily structures, hotels and boarding homes in accordance with rules promulgated by the Commissioner of Community Affairs. She also recommended that the Commissioner conduct a study of the mandate, once in place, to assess its impact and the need for expansion of the law.

S-891, sponsored by Senators Louis Bassano (R-Essex/Union) and Robert Martin (R-Essex/Morris/Passaic) and Assembly Member Sam Thompson (R-Middlesex/Monmouth), which would have required courts to order treatment in county jails for mentally ill defendants who are found competent to stand trial and are in need of mental health services, but not treatment at a psychiatric hospital. The bill would have required the state Department of Corrections (DOC) to provide the treatment.

In her conditional veto, the Governor stressed that the incarcerated inmates in question are not state prison inmates, but pre-trial detainees who are housed in county correctional facilities. The Governor pointed to the existing mental health care services already provided by the 21-county institutions and stated that it would be more practical and efficient for these institutions to continue to provide these services. The Governor recommended that the provision requiring the DOC to provide treatment be deleted, and that DOC instead should be charged with reimbursing the county institutions for the reasonable cost of mental health services.