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NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Whitman Celebrates New Jersey History at Bill Signing, Viewing of Famous "Washington Crossing the Delaware" Painting

Joining colonial-garbed fife and drum players and youngsters from the Old Barracks Summer Day Camp, Gov. Christie Whitman today marched from the State House to the New Jersey State Museum Auditorium to lead a celebration of the importance of preserving New Jersey's history.

At the auditorium, the Governor performed a ceremonial signing of A-1854, sponsored by Assembly Members Richard Bagger (R- Middlesex/ Morris/ Somerset/Union) and Leonard Lance (R- Warren/Hunterdon/Mercer) and Senators Robert Littell (R- Sussex/Hunterdon/Morris) and Joseph Kyrillos (R-Middlesex/ Monmouth). The bill creates a stable source of funding to support activities about New Jersey history and requires the New Jersey Historical Commission to award grants to museums, historic societies and agencies and to historic sites. In addition, the bill calls for funding of research and publications projects on the state's history. The bill, which was signed privately by the Governor in June, appropriates \$4.5 million for the two projects.

"Preserving our state's historic treasures is important because it helps us build a sense of place and a sense of pride in our state. This legislation is another historic achievement in the ongoing effort to preserve New Jersey's remarkable past," said Gov. Whitman.

The bill signing took place in front of a massive oil painting, "Washington Crossing the Delaware," by artist Robert Bruce Williams of Washington DC. The painting is a one-of-a-kind- copy of the world-famous image of General George Washington standing in the front of his Durham boat leading his troops across the Delaware River to surprise the Hessians at the Battle of Trenton. The original painting by Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze (1816- 1869) hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

"This painting symbolizes the spirit in which our nation battled for independence. I know that all visitors to the museum, particularly school children, will come away from viewing this magnificent work with a renewed appreciation of our nation's history and New Jersey's place in that history," Whitman said.

Secretary of State DeForest B. Soaries, Jr., who will oversee the development of the grant program created by A-1854, said, "Today is a great day for New Jersey History. In the Garden State, we have always enjoyed a history that is as rich and as diverse and as vibrant as the people who call it home. It is an integral part of who we are."

"I firmly believe that the path to our future is found in the footsteps of our past. I am proud to join Assemblyman Bagger and Senator Littell, who crafted this important legislation, and Gov. Whitman, who signed it into law," he said.

"Through This legislation, we are committed to preserving New Jersey's history and ensuring that it continues to pave the way for a better and brighter tomorrow for generations to come," Soaries said.

Bob Shinn, commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), said, "This is yet another crowning achievement of this administration in its efforts to create a stable source of funding for historic preservation and provides a nice complement to the whole million acre open space protection and historic preservation effort."

"The historic projects to be funded will preserve and protect significant historic and cultural resources including those that meet the criteria for the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places," said Shinn who serves as the state's historic preservation officer.

Additionally, Shinn noted that the pathways of the American Revolutionary War offer exceptional preservation opportunities. He said that the DEP's Green Acres program has already played a significant role in achieving historic land preservation acquisitions including easements and trail corridor rights adjacent to Princeton Battlefield State Park and Washington Crossing State Park, and purchases adjoining Monmouth Battlefield State Park as well as others.

The Washington Crossing Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the leadership George Washington provided to the nation, has loaned the Williams painting to the New Jersey State Museum for a period of at least five years. This is the last stop of a national tour.

Following the ceremony at the museum, the Governor marched with the children back to the State House, where she presented each of them with a newly-issued New Jersey quarter. The youngsters have been learning about New Jersey history during the Revolution through daily activities re-enacting colonial times.