

# Second Annual Message

OF

# ROBERT B. MEYNER

Governor of New Jersey

TO THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTIETH  
LEGISLATURE OF NEW JERSEY

January 10, 1956



**GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL MESSAGE  
TO THE LEGISLATURE**

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January 10, 1956

*Mr. President, Mr. Speaker and Members of the Senate and  
General Assembly:*

I take pleasure in greeting the members of the 180th Legislature of New Jersey and in reporting to you, in accordance with the Constitution, the condition of the State and the measures which are deemed desirable in the year to come.

The general theme of this message is that most of the problems that confront the State are products of our growing population and expanding economy. If we were not enjoying a period of progress, we would not need — as we do — more schools, more highways, more recreational facilities and many other things, nor would we be obliged to increase our present services. Fortunately, New Jersey is not stagnating, but it is forging ahead and, in the process, it is up to you and to me to see that State Government meets the demands that come with the impact of growth and change.

**WHAT NATURE ABHORS**

In our classic system of checks and balances, the Executive and the Legislature each acts in its own sphere, but something like anarchy would result if the spheres were to become separate vacuums. If New Jersey is to have an effective democracy, you and I must work together, putting aside selfish motives and narrow sectional considerations in the interest of the State as a whole.

Rivalry between political parties, at its best, is a sound and wholesome thing, because it is an appeal for the moral and intellectual approval of the people. But, at its worst, it descends to the frustration of the democratic process and to the denial of worthy and badly-needed measures.

In an effort to increase cooperation between the Executive and the Legislature, I established a bipartisan Conference. On the morning of every legislative day, I meet with the Senate President and the Assembly Speaker and the ma-

majority and minority leaders of the Senate and General Assembly. At these meetings, I outline the measures which in my opinion are needed, at the same time inviting the views of the conferees. I will continue to do my best to assure that these meetings are not a mere matter of form or ceremony, but that they will serve to promote a constructive exchange of ideas and to arrange for cooperative action between the two branches of government.

#### AN OPEN DOOR POLICY

My office door is open not only to the leaders but to any member of the Legislature who wishes to consult on State matters. And this holds true for the members of the Cabinet, division and bureau chiefs and all other State officials who have facts at their disposal of value to members of the Legislature. I am a firm believer in the sovereign quality of facts as a condition precedent to legislative action, since many of the disputes over measures arise from a lack of knowledge of the underlying problem. The facts as I have them are yours for the asking.

In my two years in office, it has been the practice of the Legislature to remain in continuous session. If this practice is to continue, I merely request that the Senate take prompt action on appointments, either in confirmation or in rejection, in order that the work of the State may proceed in an orderly manner. When an appointment collects dust in a pigeon hole, it often means that important State business is neglected for want of an official to fill the post.

In the past two years, I have vetoed measures that would have cost New Jersey millions of dollars, not only in immediate expenditure but also in annual recurring obligations. Many of these bills were of local and special nature and of no value to the State as a whole. There is no magic possible in the operation of the State Treasury. All funds come out of the taxpayer's pocket. My policy will continue to be that bills requiring expenditure of public funds must be predicated on the availability of revenue.

#### A DUTY NEGLECTED

Since proper representation is at the root of the democratic process, I urge you as one of your first tasks in this

session to remedy a long-neglected situation, namely, reapportionment of the Assembly in accordance with population changes. This is a task enjoined upon you by Article 4, Section 3, of the State Constitution, which provides that "apportionment of the members of the General Assembly shall be made by the Legislature at the first session following the next and every subsequent census . . ."

Though the last census was taken in 1950, five sessions of the Legislature have come and gone without action in this vital matter, in marked contrast to the historical pattern. Looking back to the middle of the nineteenth century, the Assembly was reapportioned every decade until the present one, and except in one case the Legislature acted promptly in the year after the decennial census. Reapportionment involves some painful choices and some difficult judgments. Even so, it cannot justly be longer deferred.

Similarly, it is incumbent on the Legislature to redistrict the State for congressional purposes. Though this also is a duty of the Legislature, it has not been done since 1931, a quarter of a century ago. Meanwhile, there have been wide population shifts, with the result that many of our sections are either over-represented or under-represented in Congress.

#### THE INCREDIBLE SEVENTH

One of the districts — the Seventh — is a graphic example of the gerrymander, that type of districting designed to keep an individual or a party in office without regard for the basic needs of the constituents. This district begins north of Trenton, comprises all of Hunterdon, all of Warren, all of Sussex, and parts of Passaic and Bergen. It starts on the Delaware and ends up in dog-leg fashion on the banks of the Hackensack.

I hope that the 180th Legislature will make itself memorable by Assembly reapportionment and congressional redistricting in accordance with the basic philosophy of American democracy.

While the voting machine system is now established in twelve of our counties, nine are still using the old-fashioned paper ballot. I continue to favor legislation to make the use of voting machines mandatory in all counties as the most accurate, quickest, most convenient and most trusted of all voting

methods. The initial cost of the machines is made up in time by economies in the voting process.

#### THE LIABILITIES OF PROGRESS

We have at this time an increasing and highly mobile population, industrial and residential growth, a minimum of unemployment, large cash incomes and heavy spending.

As I have said, to a large extent the State's problems arise out of these very conditions. When population grows, more schools are needed for the young and more care for the old. When industries and residential areas expand, and when income is high, more cars and trucks congest our highways. The assets of progress are always accompanied by certain liabilities.

#### THE STATE HIGHWAY PROBLEM

Each year the highway needs of New Jersey grow more critical; indeed, in some sections, we are approaching strangulation. Last year 140,000 new registrations played a part in adding one billion miles of motor vehicle travel within the State — and that figure does not include our expanding interstate traffic. Many of our State highways are already burdened with more than twice their designed capacity.

#### THE COST

It will cost some two billion dollars, over a ten-year period, to modernize our State highway system, as estimated by the State Highway Department. It will take \$600,000,000 to improve the existing interstate system; \$300,000,000 for new interstate routes; and more than one billion for new State roads and improvement of existing roads not in the interstate system. In this estimate, provision is made for freeways — that up-to-date form of limited access thoroughfare so vital to the convenience and economic health of our urban areas.

#### WHAT WE ARE SPENDING NOW

Against this two-billion-dollar requirement, we will spend only \$34,000,000 on construction during the current fiscal year, and of this \$12,500,000 represents federal aid. The State is entitled to an additional \$14,000,000 in Federal aid for which no State matching funds have been made available. It is apparent that no real relief of our traffic-choked system is possible unless additional funds are made available.

In the last session of Congress, there was much debate over various proposals for a major national attack upon the nation's traffic congestion. Congress was unable to agree last year on a national highway measure, but the issue is certain to be given due consideration during the 1956 session of Congress. Unless Federal assistance in generous degree is forthcoming, some means must be found to provide needed funds at the state level, perhaps in the form of a bond issue.

#### CONTRIBUTIONS TO SAFETY

Meanwhile, our Highway Department is stretching the construction dollar to the utmost in its effort to provide new roads, as well as to improve existing roads.

It is making contributions to safety by the erection of center island barriers, building creeper lanes for trucks and painting white strips on the outer edges of pavements. These innovations, we believe, have already paid dividends in accident prevention. New life is being breathed into the highway system by dualizing existing two-lane and three-lane roads; construction of more overpasses; closing islands; removal of thousands of encroachments; banking of curves; designating speed and no-passing zones; improving road signs; and other changes.

#### WHERE GRASS DOES NOT GROW

I think we should approach our highway problem not in a sense of dismay over its cost but in gratitude for the progress which has created it, and in the sense of the old chestnut that grass does not grow on a busy street. Our job is to adapt the highway system to the affluence that has permitted so many more people to own cars and that has created the vast new commerce by truck and trailer. It is a liability of expansion. And that theme, in a far deeper and more meaningful sense, may be applied to our educational needs.

#### OUR NEEDS IN EDUCATION

Last year, in Harper's Magazine, Peter F. Drucker made this striking statement: "The most important economic event of 1954 went almost unreported in the newspapers. It was the announcement that 4,060,000 babies had been born in this country during the past year — the largest baby crop ever." This figure will be approximated, if not exceeded, for 1955. The

baby boom is no new thing. It has been going on since the Second World War, and it means, according to the Census Bureau, that this country, with a present population of about 166,000,000 will increase to 190,000,000 by 1965 and 207,000,000 by 1975.

The increased birth rate has already affected New Jersey schools, and will continue to do so for years to come. It is welcomed as a new mark of national strength and as a source of increased wealth. Since the beginning of the school year 1952-53, enrollments have increased by more than 112,000. It has been necessary to add nearly 5,000 to the teaching staff, and in the past two years the citizens of the local school districts have approved the expenditure of \$131,000,000 for capital purposes — a sum, as it happens, greater than the total of all such expenditures for the entire decade 1940 to 1950. It is estimated that an additional \$100,000,000 will be approved by local districts for school construction during the present school year.

#### NEW STATE AID

As we all know, and as the State Government has already recognized, the burden of increased educational costs upon local districts has become most difficult. That is why the new State Aid formula went into effect this current school year, by which \$63,500,000 in State funds was distributed to the schools. This is more than twice the sum distributed during the last year of operation under the old formulas. And, as a footnote, about \$1 of every \$3 collected in taxes by the State goes for educational purposes of all types.

#### CONSTRUCTION NEEDS

But the flood tide of needs continues to pour in upon us. In spite of the large sums recently spent for school construction, more than 50,000 pupils are on a part-time basis or are housed in temporary or substandard quarters, while many classes are too large. And these conditions will increase in intensity as time goes on. It was this subject which inspired the eighth report of the State Tax Policy Commission, submitted to the Governor and the Legislature in May, 1955.

After an awesome array of facts and figures about school needs and growing school populations, the Commission proposed a school construction aid program. Estimates have been

made that the cost to the State could run as high as \$15,000,000 for the first year, and increased amounts thereafter as the school population increases. The commission said that adoption of the program will acquire additional revenue, but it did not recommend a means for raising it. No action has as yet been taken by the Legislature on the proposal of the State Tax Policy Commission, but it continues to hold a high claim on your deliberations.

#### AT THE UPPER LEVEL

Many of the boys and girls who yesterday, so to speak, entered the elementary and secondary schools in such phenomenal numbers, tomorrow will be seeking admission to colleges.

New Jersey presently sends more than half of its college-bound youth out of the State. Already, institutions in other states, faced with the on-coming wave of applicants for admission, are beginning to sound warnings that future limits will be set on the numbers from New Jersey who can be accommodated.

The State Board of Education has authorized an extensive investigation in this area and, by June, expects to publish a study which will give us some idea of the problem we shall have to face in higher education.

The Board of Trustees of Rutgers has drawn a plan for reorganization of the State University which will doubtless be submitted to you at this session.

As in the case of the highways, the Federal Government last year gave some evidence of awareness of its responsibilities in the field of education. The concrete measure offered by the administration, however, fell so far short of the nation's needs that it gathered little support either in Congress or from the States. It would have benefited New Jersey not at all. But the impetus for Federal aid without impairing State and local control of schools will continue to grow. It was the overwhelming decision of the recent White House Conference on Education in Washington, attended by citizen delegates from all the States, that Federal aid should be granted for school construction.

But Federal aid or no Federal aid, New Jersey cannot shirk what is at once its duty and its opportunity to provide

adequately for its children's education. They are the State's true wealth — its greatest resource — whether estimated in sentimental and spiritual values or in stark economic terms as the producers and consumers of tomorrow. Education is the life blood of democracy.

#### WATER IS STILL A PROBLEM

In turning to the subject of water, here again is a need brought about by an expanding economy, for if the State were not growing in population and industrially, we would not be too concerned about the assurance of future water supply. Last November, the people rejected at the polls the proposal of a \$100,000,000 bond issue to build a reservoir at Chimney Rock in Somerset County and to provide water storage elsewhere in the State, particularly in South Jersey.

The people's verdict was not against the solution of the water problem. It only ruled out Chimney Rock as a site. The lesson to be learned from the Chimney Rock proposal is that there are human values involved in setting aside land for water storage that cannot be calculated by the slide rule or the mathematics of an engineer. And, while any site that is eventually chosen is bound to affect the lives of some people, the cost in those terms should be fully considered.

#### A FRESH APPROACH

It is up to you, the Legislature, and to me, the Governor, to make a new approach to the water problem and to find a solution which will be acceptable to the people. If I may state the situation again in simple terms, it is that New Jersey, with an average rainfall of about 45 inches a year, receives all the water it needs; the only question is storage that it may be used as required. We have the resources. We need only to store them.

It is my conviction that the State should acquire sites for storage of water before development makes their acquisition prohibitive.

If anything were needed to dramatize the situation, it was last year's weather performance. After a protracted drought in the first part of the year, reaching serious proportions in July, we were visited in a little over two months by a series of four

floods. One of these was by far the most damaging in the State's history. These floods and the series of droughts since 1949 have proved that the storage of water is essential to the welfare and safety of our people.

#### TRAGEDY OF FLOOD LOSSES

Although insurance of all kinds is almost a fetish with the American people, last year's floods again highlighted a serious hiatus in the insurance picture. Thousands of people suffered tragic losses of property for which there was no possibility of recovery. In many cases, homes were lost on which mortgages must still be paid. I suggested then, and I repeat, that if the private insurance companies cannot work out a plan to indemnify citizens against flood losses, the Federal Government should devise means to do so.

I suggest, too, that the U. S. Weather Bureau should cooperate more closely with state agencies to release flood warnings to the public and to all disaster relief officials.

A study is in the process by the Department of Conservation and Economic Development to determine whether municipalities should be authorized to mark flood areas and to establish a system of flood zoning, so as to discourage building and development in areas subject to overflow.

#### HOUSING NEEDS

A report released by the Department of Conservation and Economic Development last month revealed a shortage of housing for certain income groups. There are in the State more than 108,000 substandard dwelling units, a term that means a house lacks toilet or bath or has no piped running water. This is a reminder that the slums are still with us, with their festering sores of misery, crime and delinquency. The report estimated that 120,000 dwellings are needed for families of moderate income.

At the close of the last session, I signed into law a resolution to create a special study group to investigate the problem of middle income housing. It is my hope that the special study group will take advantage of the work done by the Department of Conservation and Economic Development and its advisory committee, so that needed legislation can be expedited.

### IMPACT OF GROWTH

The face of New Jersey continues to change rapidly with new construction and development everywhere. Outward-thrusting communities, new areas of industrial and commercial enterprise testify to the State's vitality and growth. There are only three States smaller in area than New Jersey, but we rank eighth in population, sixth in per capita income and seventh in manufacturing production. Our 11,000 industrial firms have an annual output valued at five billion dollars. The year 1955 saw much new industry of diversified nature enter the State.

Under the impact of this growth, new problems arise as older formulas for meeting the needs become inadequate, if not obsolete. The need for intelligent planning becomes more and more urgent in order to make full use of our physical resources, to maintain a strong base for our economy and to fulfill demands for housing, education, transportation and recreation.

### NEED FOR PLANNING

The proper use of land cannot be taken for granted and we have revitalized our state planning agency to take a fresh look at this aspect of the State's welfare. The lack of proper planning underlies many of the difficulties encountered in the expansion of our towns and cities. By participating in the Federal program of urban planning assistance, the State will be able for the first time to give technical aid to communities struggling to lay the groundwork for orderly development. The new emphasis on state planning also holds the promise of more efficient use of available physical assets in the operation of State Government.

The State has recently acquired three valuable areas: Island Beach, the Worthington Tract and the Wharton Tract. All of them possess immense possibilities for the health and welfare of the State. It seems to me, what with these new areas plus our system of parks and forests, we should now be concentrating on the development stage. A statement of policy is needed from the Legislature as to the uses to be made of our lands for recreation and other purposes in this most highly urbanized State of the Union.

### STATE EMPLOYEES

During the past year, I asked several members of my Cabinet to form a Personnel Committee to study the conditions of state employment as compared to employment in similar positions in private business and other organizations. Based on this study, as well as a recognition of specific needs indicated by our experiences in State Government, I will make specific recommendations in my forthcoming Budget Message.

### STATE OFFICE BUILDINGS

I have repeatedly called attention to the need of more space for State offices. You need only to make a tour of Trenton to find out how badly we are crowded and in how many different and inconvenient places the State's functions are discharged. Some of the quarters would be condemned by our own inspectors if they followed the rules applicable to private buildings. And we are paying more than \$1,000,000 in rent in the Trenton area. I have suggested a number of buildings to remedy the condition, but another proposal is for a multi-storied type of building on the State House grounds.

While I have no pride of opinion as to the course to be taken, I think we should be careful to choose the right one. A multi-storied building on West State Street would create difficult traffic and parking problems. As for a building for the Department of Labor and Industry, funds for such a building are already available from fines and penalties under the Unemployment Compensation Act. I am sure the Federal Government, which has a stake in these funds, would contribute liberally to a separate building for the Department, making payments in lieu of rent. I do not know what financial responsibility Washington would assume if the department were housed in a general office building. A relevant factor, also, is the position that Federal defense officials have taken with respect to encouraging dispersal and decentralization policies in urban areas.

To help me in arriving at my own ultimate decision, I have asked some experts in private business, who have had much experience in constructing office buildings, to advise me of their conclusions on cost and location. This information will be made available to the Legislature when it is forthcoming.

## THE NEED FOR A POLICE TRAINING PROGRAM

It seems to me unsound to give a man a badge, a club and a gun and send him out for police duty unless he is properly screened and trained.

With increasing population in New Jersey, the burden on local law enforcement officers continues to mount. Modern conditions of travel and improvement in methods of criminal detection make the task of local officers far more complicated than it used to be. Today a criminal can traverse the State from north to south within three hours and from east to west in one hour.

The job of police officer has lost its traditional concept of being local in nature. I recommend that we inaugurate a police training program, similar in nature to that already employed by the State Police and various local training programs, to apply to all municipalities. Such a program would require a potential police officer to receive a thorough course with academic subjects, clinical experience and physical training.

Aside from the State Police Academy, the Newark Police Academy has maintained a fine standard of compulsory training; in Union County, the Chiefs of Police Training Association since 1947 has offered training courses to county agencies; the South Jersey Suburban Police Association, established in 1927, has conducted a series of training courses; the City of Jersey City has a police training school.

What I am proposing is that a movement which has already gained headway and public acceptance be broadened so that all police officers be properly trained before they assume their duties or after they have been appointed for a probationary period and before their appointment becomes permanent. A recent survey shows much sentiment for this action. Of 512 inquiries, 392 were answered. Of these, 128 municipalities said they were participating in a voluntary program, or had too small a staff for training. Two replied that compulsory training was in force. The remaining 262 municipalities replied they would welcome training.

The legislation I request would not be designed to infringe upon local control but is advocated solely to aid the municipality in improving its service to our citizens.

## CRIME REPORTING

I should like to repeat a recommendation made in my first annual message for an adequate system of crime reporting. Intelligent law enforcement requires an ability to review accurately past and present criminal experience so that, at any given time, law officers may measure the results of their efforts. I hope you will establish an adequate system of compulsory crime reporting centering in the State Police.

## STATUTE REVISION

There has been no overall revision of the statutes of New Jersey since 1937, and even in that year much of the work consisted of compilation, rather than thorough going revision. At the time, it was contemplated that the laws would be subjected to a continuing course of revision, year by year, but that expectation has not been fulfilled.

Since 1937, many amendments and exceptions have been made in the laws, which have come to represent a jungle growth rather than an orderly development. As a result, it is often very hard to find out what the law actually is in many areas. A lawyer almost has to be a soothsayer to supply answers to his clients and to prepare his cases.

Among the sections most glaringly in need of revision are Title 40, covering counties and municipalities, and Title 19, covering election laws, though there are many others also in need of attention. A study is being made of Title 19, but no final results have been announced. The Governor and the Legislature should work together to bring about revision of our statutes.

Apart from the difficulties encountered by lawyers and judges, it is easier for laws to be obeyed when their intentions are clear. Evasion and violation are most likely to occur when doubt exists.

We also need an administrative procedures act. It should provide for prompt publication of rules and regulations, and provide minimum requirements of fairness in the conduct of hearings by State agencies. The Constitution states: "No rule or regulation made by any department . . . shall take effect until it is filed with the Secretary of State . . . The Legislature shall provide for the prompt publication of such rules and regulations." We should proceed to carry out the provisions of the Constitution.

### **RAPID TRANSIT IN OUR METROPOLITAN AREAS**

A reconstituted Metropolitan Rapid Transit Commission, financed by an \$800,000 grant from the Port of New York Authority, is conducting public hearings and making a comprehensive study of traffic conditions in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area. Its report, I am sure, will give us a fresh look at the intricate problems surrounding rapid transit in that area, and its findings should likewise prove of value in the Camden-Philadelphia area of South Jersey. The railroads claim that competitive transportation conditions compel them to carry commuters at a loss, yet it is perfectly clear that rail, as well as highway transportation, is needed to carry vast numbers of commuters back and forth. Out of the Commission's study should come clear answers to many of the hard questions involved.

### **THE PORT OF NEW YORK AUTHORITY PROGRAM**

You have before you for action legislation authorizing a gigantic construction program to be undertaken by the Port of New York Authority, including the double-decking of George Washington Bridge, and construction of the Narrows Bridge across New York Bay. Almost a year ago, the New York Legislature approved this program, but it still awaits action by New Jersey. I need hardly describe the benefits that will accrue to the whole metropolitan region from this program, nor do I need to labor the desirability of your prompt action.

### **THE PROBLEMS OF OLD AGE**

The lengthening life span plus the increasing prevalence of public and private pension plans present the nation with a set of problems concerned with making old age pleasant and useful. Numerous organizations are making studies of these problems. The Legislature has established the New Jersey State Old Age Study Commission, which no doubt will make valuable recommendations. The Council of State Governments has issued a most interesting report. There is a veritable ferment of ideas on the subject from one end of the country to the other.

There are in New Jersey some 450,000 persons over 65

comprising nearly a tenth of our entire population. Since economic factors bulk large in any consideration of old age, it is important to point out that 200,000 are receiving private pensions, are self-supporting or are being cared for by their families; some 225,000 are receiving Federal Old Age and Survivors Insurance; only 20,000 are receiving State Old Age Assistance.

A good many old people are committed to State hospitals on the grounds of senility, and I am afraid that some of them are the victims of family neglect and do not belong in institutions. The commitment procedure should be re-examined.

Medical care, of course, is an urgent need of the old and the New Jersey Welfare Council deserves praise for its study of this aspect. The Council asks for the creation of a state commission to consider how to make adequate medical care available on a statewide basis.

There are many ways in which the State, working cooperatively with private groups, can stimulate interest in life for the aged. For one thing, meeting places can be provided in schools, churches and other structures unused in the evenings. Adult education programs can be enlarged and geared to the needs and desires of the aged. Private business, which in some cases has done a great deal for the physically handicapped, might discover new types of employment which could capitalize on the skill and wisdom of older people. Facilities in our parks and forests should be increased to provide wholesome outdoor recreation.

### **MENTAL HEALTH**

I can report to you substantial progress in our fresh attack on mental disease.

With additional staff and with increased use of the so-called wonder drugs, we have intensified our treatment programs. Approximately 3600 patients have been receiving the new forms of treatment. About 45 per cent of these patients, many of whom seemed destined to remain for long years in our institutions, have been able to leave. The relief of human suffering and the financial saving justify continued efforts.

During the coming year we shall complete the conversion of the Bordentown plant to its new use as a research and training center for the mentally retarded. This will substantial-

ly reduce the waiting list and should begin to find new answers to the many unknowns in this important field.

### AGRICULTURE

Agriculture remains an important segment of our economy despite the expansion of industry and housing developments in our rural areas.

Improved methods of production and marketing, programs for eliminating infectious plant and animal diseases and harmful insect pests, an adequate milk marketing order, planning for agriculture in terms of our state economy are all the proper concern of our farmers and the Agricultural Department. Legislative measures will be submitted to you as the need arises.

### LABOR AND INDUSTRY

During the past year labor and industry have shown continued capacity for adjusting differences and reaching agreements with a minimum of disturbance of operations. Generally, the scene has been peaceful and gratifying.

To assist in the maintenance of industrial activity, we should have a State labor relations act. The National Labor Relations Board is increasingly divesting itself of jurisdiction, and this circumstance underscores the necessity for State legislation which will provide adequate means for resolving disputes involving representation and unfair labor practices at the intrastate level.

I again urge that there be adopted a realistic minimum wage law of universal application to all employees in this State who are not subject to federal law. Presently our statute merely authorizes administrative determinations with respect to women and children in specific industries. At its last session, Congress adopted a bill fixing a minimum wage of \$1.00 per hour applicable to all employees engaged in interstate commerce. We should not further delay an appropriate State-wide minimum wage.

At the last session, the Legislature increased unemployment compensation and temporary disability benefits from \$30.00 to \$35.00 per week. That unquestionably was a step in the right direction, but recent studies indicate that the \$35.00 figure is inadequate to meet the minimum needs of the

unemployed. I urge further study and consideration to the end that a more realistic rate will be adopted.

And since the need of the individual and the public interest in his plight are in no sense related to the number of employees within an establishment, the coverage of these laws should be extended to embrace one or more employees.

So also our existing rates with respect to workmen's compensation benefits are out of line with the needs of an injured employee. There should be a review of the benefit schedules and an appropriate increase in the weekly benefit.

### TAX EQUALIZATION

There has been progress in the use of equalized real property valuations for apportionment purposes. In 1955, for the first time, the costs of county government were apportioned in five counties after equalization of real property values on substantially a full-true-value basis. State-wide equalization at the county level is expected in 1956 so that the apportionment of the costs of operating county government, now in excess of \$95 million annually, will be made on equalized valuations. However, the operating costs of regional, consolidated and joint school districts are not being apportioned on the basis of equalized valuations. I recommend the enactment of legislation specifically providing that the county boards of taxation shall make such apportionment of these costs.

The 1947 Constitution of New Jersey provides that all real property assessed and taxed locally or by the State for allotment to the taxing districts shall be assessed according to the same standard of value and taxed at the general tax rate of the district in which situated. Existing legislation prescribes full true value as the standard for assessment purposes. There is great lack of uniformity in the assessment of such property, resulting in gross inequities in the distribution of the local tax burden. Such property is not uniformly assessed at either full true value or a fixed percentage of true value. Since local property taxes in New Jersey have now passed the half billion dollar mark, it is of utmost importance that this heavy burden be apportioned as equitably as possible. Existing law imposing a duty upon the Division of Taxation to require revaluation of the real property of a taxing district where inequities exist is thought to be vague. I recommend legislation clarifying the

procedure in such cases and at the same time authorizing municipalities undergoing revaluation to meet the cost by emergency financing, spread over a five-year period. The legislative needs in this regard should be carefully studied.

Existing laws relating to the taxation of tangible personal property (inventories, machinery, equipment and household goods) are inappropriate under current economic conditions, for the purpose of fairly apportioning the local tax burden. I believe it desirable that the Legislature carefully study this problem in the hope that more suitable legislation for the taxation of this class of property may be devised.

### CONCLUSION

I have confined my remarks to the most pressing problems. There are other important matters about which I shall communicate to you or your leadership from time to time.

You will have my full cooperation, as I have given it during my two years in office. The Legislative and Executive branches can make 1956 a notable year in the history of the State of New Jersey.

ROBERT B. MEYNER,  
*Governor*

Attest:

ROBERT J. BURKHARDT,  
*Secretary to the Governor*