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Governor Christie Announces Bipartisan Legislative Compromise To Ensure Support For People Looking For Work

Monday, April 18, 2016

Tags: [Bill Action](#)

Trenton, NJ - Governor Chris Christie today conditionally vetoed S-993/A-2777 (Vitale, Pou, Gordon, Wimberly, Vainieri Huttie, Sumter), pursuant to a bipartisan agreement that preserves the availability of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for people in struggling communities while upholding the requirement that those participants capable of working be involved in work activities.

"This bill, instead of promoting work participation, which is in the best interests of the recipients and the entire State, would require the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services to apply for a waiver of the work requirement for the State or any area of the State whenever SNAP participants might be eligible under federal law," Governor Christie wrote in his conditional veto. "While I am committed to supporting the SNAP program and ensuring that those individuals in need of benefits receive them, our goal as a State should be to find ways to fulfill the ultimate objective of the work requirement – to assist individuals in achieving self-sufficiency."

To advance that commitment and the ongoing efforts of his administration to help people achieve self-sufficiency through employment, Governor Christie has worked with Senate Democrat Joseph Vitale, the bill's prime sponsor, to develop an alternative approach that provides the Commissioner of Human Services discretion on SNAP benefit waiver requests for ABAWDs (able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 50 without dependents). Their compromise solution, backed by Senate Republican Leader Tom Kean Jr., also creates more efficient and effective reporting requirements.

"I acknowledge the sponsors' concern that individuals may lose SNAP benefits for failing to fulfill the work requirement if there are insufficient work opportunities for able-bodied SNAP beneficiaries," Governor Christie wrote. "I am recommending that the bill be amended to require the Commissioner of Human Services annually to review data on labor and employment in the State and then make a decision on whether to apply for a waiver of the work requirement. In addition, I am recommending that the Department of Human Services monitor the success of the current work requirement initiatives by reviewing data on ABAWD SNAP recipients."

A copy of the Governor's CV is attached.

Some background on ABAWDs and SNAP:

In 1996, the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act established that ABAWDs must be involved in a work activity to receive full SNAP benefits.

In 2008, due to the Great Recession, the federal government gave states a waiver for what is known as the "3/36 provision," which stipulates that ABAWDs must be employed or involved in work activity, such as training, education or job searches, for at least 20 hours per week to remain eligible for SNAP benefits. Unless otherwise exempt from the 3/36 provision, people who do not comply with the work requirement are eligible for SNAP assistance only for three months in a 36-month period.

The 2008 federal waiver for the 3/36 provision expired in 2015, and in February, New Jersey gained federal approval to phase in the 3/36 provision through December 2016.

Ongoing State Initiatives to help ABAWDs find jobs:

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with Social Media

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More Information

[S-993/A-2777 \[pdf 30kB\]](#)

Officials in the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (LWD) continue to help individuals with those impacted by the 3/36 work requirement, providing them information and assistance in finding work or a qualified work activity.

LWD is conducting an assertive outreach strategy with print and online efforts, and by engaging public, private and nonprofit partners, to help eligible ABAWDs receive benefits and workforce training and employment. The department is committing additional state funds and resources to county partners for existing and new services to expand work opportunities in areas of high demand.

LWD is also working with community colleges to create Skills Enhancement Centers. When combined with self-directed work search activities, that program will allow ABAWDs to meet the 20-hour weekly work requirement through literacy and occupational training.

ABAWDs can visit here for more information: <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/lwdhome/content/abawd.html>.

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