

## Governor Christie Conditionally Approves Sandy Bill of Rights With Recommendations to Improve Bill and Eliminate Conflicts with Federal Law

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### ***Governor Recommends Changes to Eliminate Redundancy, Conflicts with Federal Law, and Unnecessary and Costly Administrative Burdens to Aid Distribution***

Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie today conditionally approved S-1306, also known as the “Sandy Bill of Rights”, with recommended changes that improve upon the original legislation. These improvements will ensure the continued distribution of federal recovery and rebuilding aid in a manner that is legally consistent with federal laws and requirements and that does not add duplicity or wasteful administrative burdens that will hamper ongoing recovery efforts.

“Since the devastating events of Superstorm Sandy eighteen months ago, New Jerseyans have come together in remarkable ways as a united and determined family dedicated to the recovery and rebuilding of our home. In this bill, the Legislature laudably seeks to join those efforts, but has done so by proposing a series of new administrative procedures and spending requirements accompanied by a raft of partisan political findings, all styled as ‘rights,’” said Governor Christie. “The result is unfortunately a series of post-hoc mandates that are violative of state and federal law, rife with illegal priorities and unquantifiable administrative costs, that would prove impossible to implement, frustrate sound future disaster planning, and all but certainly exceed federal funding for program administration.”

“I favor an approach that further increases transparency and ensures fair access to benefits, but that does not impose undue administrative burdens and costs. Accordingly, I recommend that the bill be amended to improve upon some of the Legislature’s proposals,” added the Governor.

#### **The Governor’s Recommended Changes to S-1306 Include the Following Improvements:**

Guarantees those who have not appealed a denial of benefits another opportunity to file an appeal for 120 days after enactment, and requires the State to respond to an appeal or seek an extension within 120 days.

Requires call centers and at least one physical office to be open on Saturdays to assist applicants and answer questions.

Requires program information to be available in Spanish over the telephone or in-person.

Provides denied or waitlisted applicants with the reasons for their denial or waitlisting.

Provides waitlisted applicants with a numbered position on the wait list and an estimated wait time.

Assures applicants the ability to check their application status.

Expands information available on websites concerning transparency.

Prioritizes applications of those who are not living in their homes as a result of substantial damage.

Prioritizes those with low-to-moderate incomes consistent with law.

If the State is aware that an applicant’s pending application under one program could delay the payment of benefits under another, requires the State to so inform the applicant. State will also inform applicants whether commencement of rebuilding could impact their ability to receive benefits.

Prohibits discrimination; prohibits the denial of benefits because the applicant receives public assistance; and requires that State employees treat victims with dignity and respect.

Requires DCA Commissioner to conduct study of implementation within 6 months.

**Conditional Veto:**

S-837/A-1272 (Norcross/Dancer, Riley, McHose, Moriarty) - CONDITIONAL - Extends "Right to Farm" protection to certain agricultural tourism activities and events; requires adoption of agricultural management practices therefor; permits special occasion events that promote agricultural tourism conducted at wineries under certain circumstances

**Copies of the Governor's recommended changes:**

S-1306 [pdf 50kB]

S-837 [pdf 78kB]

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