



State of New Jersey

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

PO Box 001

TRENTON, NJ 08625-0001

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

April 12, 2010

Dear Mayor Hughes:

Since taking office a little more than two months ago, I've spent a lot of time talking with mayors from around the state. I've found out a lot more talking to mayors in Bayonne, Vineland and Mount Laurel than I've found in talking to the "experts" in Trenton.

From our conversations, I know that you are experiencing difficult challenges as you craft your budgets and try to provide the services your residents need with far fewer resources. In these tough times, I've been heartened by the willingness of so many to step forward and share in the sacrifice and adjust to the economic realities we must all confront. These are extraordinarily difficult times and the years of failed policies in Trenton have finally brought the long-standing problems to bear on the people of our state. Today, our problems cannot be papered over any longer, nor can we avoid the big-picture decisions and changes that are necessary to get New Jersey back on sound fiscal footing and our economy moving once again.

Nearly a month ago, I proposed a budget to the Legislature designed to restore fiscal stability to our state. I know you've read my proposals, so I won't repeat them all here. The long and short of it is this: after years of neglect and avoidance, my proposals are tough but needed medicine. It's not easy when you have to close a \$10.7 billion deficit in a \$29.3 billion budget. And in this budget filled with tough decisions, few choices were tougher to make than the reductions in municipal aid and direct aid to schools. But the bottom line is this – we simply can't afford to spend money we don't have. It's how we've gotten into this mess in the first place. It's not how you prepare your budget in your own home. It's certainly not how you prepare your budget in your own town. And it's not how we can afford to budget for our state any longer.

There has been much discussion and debate on the specifics of our budget proposal. But these are only part of the plan in my budget to lower costs and reduce spending while maintaining the level of services New Jerseyans expect. A critical, but less publicized aspect of my budget proposal is a long-overdue package of reforms I've called for to finally address our state's property tax crisis. This "tool kit" of reforms is designed to empower you and your local government and school district to manage budgets more effectively by holding down costs and providing much-needed flexibility in your budget.

These reforms include:

- **Collective Bargaining Reform.** More than anyone else, mayors understand that the current interest arbitration law is in desperate need of reform. The current system tips the balance in favor of public sector unions, with decision making failing to take into account the basic consideration of how the contract will impact property taxes or spending caps. To level the playing field, I've called for changes that prohibit any new labor contract, including all salary and benefits costs, from exceeding a 2.5 percent cap; provide for arbitrators to be selected by the Executive Branch of state government; and require the impact on property taxes to be taken into consideration when making their decisions.
- **Civil Service Reform.** I have also called for changes to civil service in our state to eliminate obstacles to cost-saving and consolidation, permit furloughs at the municipal and county levels and allow for local governments to opt out of civil service altogether.
- **Employee Benefit Reform.** Simply put, we must move closer to parity between the private and public sector employee benefits in our state. In many parts of the state right now, public sector employees enjoy full benefit packages, including healthcare, with no salary contribution of their own. Under legislation I recently signed into law, all public employees in New Jersey will contribute at least 1.5 percent of their salary toward the cost of their health benefits no later than when their existing contracts expire. This is a good first step, but more needs to be done.
- **Red Tape & Unfunded Mandates.** Some of the most impactful cost-drivers at the local level are unfunded mandates from Trenton. One of my first actions as Governor was to sign a series of executive orders to freeze 172 pending rules and regulations that were set to take effect and order a review of them to determine their impact and necessity. Additionally, through Executive Order, I have sought to limit the downpour of additional state mandates by requiring that any new mandate have express authorization from the Governor's Office.
- **Pension Reform.** Finally, while the recent pension reform bills I signed into law last month are a good and encouraging start, we must go further. Among other things, additional legislation must roll back the 9 percent increase in pension benefits granted by the Legislature in 2001 for all pension service credit earned in the future and cap payouts for accumulated sick leave at \$15,000 for current as well as future employees to the extent permitted by law.

In addition to these tools, I am proposing a constitutional amendment to impose a hard cap of 2.5 percent on property taxes imposed by municipalities, counties and school districts that will serve as the centerpiece of our efforts to ease the burden on property taxpayers. This proposal is modeled after Proposition 2.5 in Massachusetts, a cap implemented in 1982 that achieved remarkable results in slowing the growth of property taxes on that state's residents. After implementation, Massachusetts went from having the 3rd highest local tax burden in the nation to the 33rd highest. While imposing a firm limit on property tax growth, the proposal also encourages localities to cut property tax growth even more by giving the flexibility to "bank" the unused portion of the cap if an increase in a given year is less than 2.5 percent. This cap would provide flexibility and accountability in the other direction as well; should a municipality wish to exceed the cap, it can be accomplished through a voter referendum.

I am also making sure that state government is playing by the same rules: the state would also be constitutionally barred from increasing its own spending on direct state services by more than 2.5 percent per year. Over time, with renewed economic growth, if state revenues grow by more than 2.5 percent, additional state funds will become available for tax cuts or additional property tax relief. We're all in this together, and everyone – local, county *and* state government

– must all share in the sacrifice. I won't ask you to do anything I won't ask state government to commit to myself.

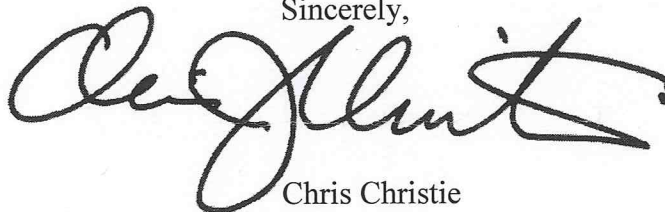
Each of these reforms is necessary and addresses a different concern that has been ignored for too long in Trenton. By providing the tools to you at the local level along with a cap to limit property tax growth, we can not only make our state more affordable for our residents in the long run, but fundamentally change the course of our state for the better.

Our state's complex problems can't be fixed with simple or piecemeal solutions. Past Governors – Republican and Democrat – have tried this and it's only worsened our problems. Tough times like these provide real, rare opportunities for us to join together to enact meaningful, long-lasting reform. So let's come together and finally do it. Join me and support this toolkit of reforms to give *you* the power to govern with empowerment and without handcuffs. And, I have asked both the New Jersey Conference of Mayors and the New Jersey League of Municipalities to assemble recommendations from mayors and other municipal officials on additional tools that will enable you to reduce costs and improve local government efficiency. We can bring our state back to greatness, but we're only going to do it if I have partners at the local level with the ability to do the jobs you were elected to do – not to be needlessly stifled by unfunded mandates, red tape and interest arbitration.

Let's get started today by doing two things: first, call your local legislators to make sure they know that you're on board with our "tool kit" of reforms and the 2.5 percent property tax cap. You hold enormous influence with your representatives and making sure they are aware of your support is critical. And second, send me back the enclosed reply card so I know you support our efforts for reform. I can't do this without you, so knowing that you're standing with us is critical.

We may never have another opportunity to reform our state like this again. Let's not let it pass us by.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Christie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

Chris Christie
Governor

P.S. – Join me in supporting these reforms that will give both you and I the power to change our state. Fill out and return the enclosed card so I can keep you updated as our reforms progress.

Enclosure



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

“Today I am introducing in this budget a series of proposals that constitute a toolkit to protect taxpayers...At the same time, my plan will give local governments and school districts the tools to cut costs so they too can reduce taxes for New Jerseyans....This taxpayer’s toolkit for property tax reform is one piece of a broader reform agenda that must accompany the spending decisions we are making in this budget. Both “r” words – reduction and reform -- must be covered as we try to control spending for the long term and attack this budget.”

- Governor Chris Christie, Address to the Joint Session of the State Legislature
March 16, 2010

Yes, Governor, I, _____, now serving as Mayor of
(Full Name)
_____ support the proposed
(Municipality)

“Tool Kit” of Reforms and Proposition 2.5. These reforms will protect taxpayers and help local governments manage their budgets more effectively by reforming collective bargaining, pensions and benefits, civil service and unfunded mandates.

Signed,

(Signature)

(Dated)

(Address)

(City) (Zip)

(Phone)

(Email)

For more information or details on the plan, please call 609-777-2592.

Please return signed form via fax or mail to:

The Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Fax: (609) 777-0944

Mail: The Office of the Governor, Post Office Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625-0001



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

Green Acres Program
P.O. Box 412
Trenton, NJ 08625-0412
Tel: 609-984-0570
Fax: 609-984-0608

BOB MARTIN
Commissioner

April 2010

Dear Municipal/County Clerk:

Thanks to the passage of the 2009 Open Space Referendum, funds are available from the Department of Environmental Protection's Green Acres Program for land preservation and park development projects. I am pleased to extend an invitation to all interested municipalities and counties to apply for Green Acres funds. Approvals will be made using these newly available funds, as well as supplemental funding from project cancellations and withdrawals. I ask that that you provide a copy of this letter to each member of your governing body.

Green Acres will accept applications until July 30, 2010. Funding is extremely limited, and we anticipate that competition will be intense. As a result, we will only consider funding requests from **new applicants** or from applicants who have **completed or are making significant progress** on previously approved projects.

Eligible land acquisition projects include the purchase of natural areas, historic sites, conservation areas, water bodies, and open space for active or passive recreation. Eligible recreational projects include facilities that provide boating, fishing, swimming, outdoor games and sports, biking, picnicking, camping, or nature interpretation. Related costs incurred as part of the acquisition or development project also may be eligible for reimbursement. More detailed information about funding categories is provided in the enclosed attachment.

Since 1961, the Green Acres Program has assisted municipalities and counties in the acquisition of open space for recreation and conservation purposes, as well as the development of outdoor recreational facilities. The Green Acres Program is committed to preserving New Jersey's natural resources statewide and is proud to be able to continue the tradition of partnering with local and county government to serve the people of our state.

On behalf of Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin and the entire staff of Green Acres, thank you for your continued support of our program.

Sincerely,

Rich Boornazian
Administrator



GLEN RIDGE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

240 RIDGEWOOD AVENUE

GLEN RIDGE, NEW JERSEY 07028

TEL. 973-748-5482 FAX 973-748-9350

April 21, 2010

The Honorable Peter Hughes
825 Bloomfield Avenue
Glen Ridge, New Jersey 07028

Dear Mayor Hughes and Members of the Borough Council:

On behalf of the Library Board of Trustees, I am forwarding a copy of a resolution unanimously adopted at last night's meeting in support of dedicated funding for municipal libraries.

Glen Ridge Library joins many other libraries and communities that strongly oppose Assembly Bill A2555. The bill would rescind the minimum funding formula for municipal libraries that has endured for over 100 years, through two World Wars, the Great Depression and economic hardships.

The 1/3 mil formula, as it is commonly known is an equalizer that raises minimum library funding when the economy is strong and lowers funding when the economy weakens. Across New Jersey the cost to support a public library is only 2% to 3% of the overall tax bill, a small price for all that libraries provide. Libraries have also been in the forefront of municipal resource sharing for most of the last century, and, as a result, saved local and state tax dollars.

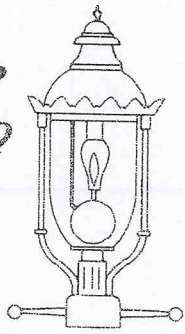
Now, more than ever, citizens need their public library. In 2009, statistics for Glen Ridge Library were higher than any year in its 98-year history: 105,000 visits, an increase of more than 60% from 2008; a 74% increase in items borrowed to 113,000; and over 9,000 users during the year at 10 Internet computers! These figures are not unique; libraries across the country have reported double-digit increases in usage.

I urge you and the members of the Glen Ridge Borough Council to adopt this resolution and alert Senator Gill, Assemblyman Giblin and Assemblywoman Oliver that Glen Ridge opposes this bill.

Respectfully,

John A. Sitnik
Library Director

*Free
Public
Library*



GLEN RIDGE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
240 RIDGEWOOD AVENUE
GLEN RIDGE, NEW JERSEY 07028
TEL. 973-748-5482 FAX 973-748-9350

**A RESOLUTION In Support of Preserving Dedicated
Library Funding For Municipal Public Libraries**

Whereas Assembly Bill A 2555 has been introduced by Assemblyman John DiMaio to eliminate the minimum local funding requirement for municipal public libraries; and

Whereas municipal public libraries have been established by a vote of its citizens through a binding referendum which specified the minimum funding level at 1/3 of a mil; and

Whereas public libraries are vital community centers providing essential services to the residents of their municipalities, **even more so during these difficult economic times**; and

Whereas the current funding formula for municipal libraries has endured for over 100 years providing a stable source of tax support for municipal library services; and;

Whereas the A 2555 would critically weaken the foundation of library services in New Jersey by drastically reducing the minimum funding level which would directly impact library services; and

Whereas the fiscal hardships facing many residents and businesses require access to key information resources available in New Jersey's free public libraries, such as access to computers for educational or business needs, or to find jobs and other opportunities; and increases the use of the other services of the public library, such as borrowing books and other media or attending programs for children and the entire family; and

Whereas nearly 170,000 people visit NJ public libraries on any given day; and 48,000,000 visits were made to libraries in 2009 demonstrating that libraries are supported and valued by the residents of New Jersey;

Now therefore be it resolved by the Board of Trustees (Board") of the Glen Ridge Free Public Library assembled in open public meeting on April 20, 2010, that said Board

Now therefore be it resolved by the Board of Trustees (Board") of the Glen Ridge Free Public Library assembled in open public meeting on April 20, 2010, that said Board

protests against A2555 and forwards this resolution to Assemblyman John DiMaio; to the state Senator and the Assemblypersons representing the district in which is located and to Governor Chris Christie; and

In addition, this Board asks the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Glen Ridge to also adopt a formal resolution to oppose A2555 and that both the Board and the Mayor and Council or Committee forward their resolutions to the state Senator and the Assemblypersons representing the district in which the Library is located;

And be it further resolved that the Board recommends and urges that the elected and appointed officials of the Borough of Glen Ridge take every possible step to persuade the Legislature and the Governor to support the will of the people to continue dedicated funding for municipal libraries;

Carol P. Harpster

Carol P. Harpster 4/20/10
President of Library Board of Trustees

DATED: April 20, 2010

AYES:

7

NAYES:

0

ABSTENTIONS:

0

Michael J. Rohal

From: klum12@att.net
Sent: Tuesday, April 27, 2010 12:48 PM
To: Rohal, Michael
Cc: rsgarrido@verizon.net
Subject: Block Party

Dear Mr. Rohal

This letter is requesting permission to have a Midland Ave. block party between the streets of Carteret St. and Linden Ave. on June 19. There's another Midland Ave block on the same date. Would this cause a conflict? If so, then June 12 would be the alternate date.

Please advise me and if you need any further information, please contact me.

Thank you.

Tonia Oshin