



Legislative and Agency Update January 2009

Governor's News

Chief of Staff to Governor Corzine

Ed McBride was recently named Chief of Staff by Governor Jon S. Corzine. McBride replaces Lisa Jackson who was tapped by President Barack Obama to serve as Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. As Chief of Staff, McBride serves as advisor to the Governor on matters related to carrying out the Governor's agenda of reform, oversees policy matters, and supervises the staff members of the Administration.

State of the State Address

On Tuesday, January 13, 2009 Governor Jon S. Corzine delivered his State of the State address in the General Assembly Chamber. Below are excerpts from his speech.

"...We have been in the grips of a national recession since the fall of 2007. Our country's financial system hovers near collapse. Home values, personal savings, and the securities markets have plunged. The national unemployment rate has soared to over 7%, with expectations of a 9% to 10% rate in the year ahead. Our citizens' economic security has been compromised. Our people did not cause this meltdown; its causes are beyond their control and are national, even global, in scope.

I don't have to tell you, you can recall quite vividly, the 2009 budget cut spending by \$600 million year-over-year, as we anticipated a gathering national recession and shrinking revenues. By the close of the calendar year, the deepening recession had required us to cut spending by another \$800 million. That's a total of \$1.4 billion in cuts in this fiscal year alone. Let me repeat, \$1.4 billion. Not in the rate of growth, but in absolute dollars. It's been painful, and we've had to make many ugly choices. But together with my partners in the Legislature, we are making the hard choices. Getting our state through this national economic crisis is my Number One, Number Two, and Number Three priority.

Current economic circumstances dictate that we take steps which in normal times I would not. It's regrettable that over a period of at least 15 years, when the sun was shining and the economy was strong, New Jersey failed to put its financial house in order ... particularly our public pension system. It's only because of today's financial crisis that I've recommended giving local governments the option of deferring a percentage of their employee pension payments. To be sure, I hope you've learned, I've demonstrated a commitment to the solvency of our pension system. Over the past three years, we've contributed more money to that system than previous administrations have in the preceding 15 years combined, 15 years. Our plan doesn't require towns to put off pension payments -- it simply gives them a tool to work through this financial emergency. Some may not need to exercise their option. But others will have to either seek cap waivers, leading to significant property tax hikes, or impose unacceptable cuts in public safety and other vital services.

Even as we've cut the budget by \$1.4 billion, we've continued to reshape and reduce the size of government. Today, there are nearly 4,000 fewer employees on the state payroll than when I took office. We've also scrubbed line-by-line state government for inefficiencies and implemented departmental consolidations... We are truly doing more with less..." You can read the address in its entirety or view it on video at <http://www.nj.gov/sos2009/speech.html>

Legislative News

The Assembly Education Committee invited Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy to present testimony on the Department's High School Redesign Proposal. Following the testimony, the Committee conducted a roundtable discussion on the proposal.

Legislation to permit municipalities to defer payment into the public employee retirement system during the current financial crisis has yet to be enacted. This legislative has been proposed by Governor Corzine and is expected to be posted for action in the near future.

Department of Education News

Spending Freeze Recommended

Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy issued a letter to chief school administrators calling for a voluntary freeze on non-essential and discretionary spending and careful review of the necessity of all other spending for the remainder of this school year. This request reflects the Governor's concern over the state's projected budget deficit for the current year and the seriousness of the global economic crises. It also signals local school districts that they must be mindful of the state's current and projected budget deficit as they begin to prepare their budget proposals for the coming school year.

Reorganization of the Department

In keeping with the overall reduction in state government, and certain budget reductions the department must implement, the Commissioner has reorganized the department to improve efficiency and to create capacity to address initiatives such as High School Redesign. In the coming months the department will seek input on mandates and requirements that pose financial burdens on local school districts and conduct an

evaluation to determine which mandates and requirements might be lifted to help reduce costs to local districts. <http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/overview/orgchart.pdf>

Revised Curriculum Standards

The department announced that new standards in nine content areas would soon be posted on the department's web site along with online evaluation and feedback forms. The new standards reflect the department's philosophy and goals for the redesign of New Jersey's high schools and recommendations from the 21st Century Skills Task Force.

Once implemented, the standards will support the integration of multiple content areas into instruction at all grade levels, particularly grades 9 through 12. Also, the new standards will serve as the foundation for the development of multi-performance assessments designed to allow students to demonstrate both their grasp of specific content and their ability to apply concepts and content to real world situations.

State Board of Education

The State Board of Education approved a resolution to appoint or reappoint educators to the state's Professional Teaching Standards Board. You can view the resolution at [Professional Teaching Standards Board](#)

High School Graduation Amendments

The State Board of Education continued its discussion of the proposed amendments to the requirements for high school graduation and the department's High School Redesign initiative. The proposed revisions in the high school graduation requirements are based on recommendations made by the New Jersey High School Redesign Steering Committee. Some of the changes involve specific courses, the content of which either has been identified (i.e., biology and algebra II) or will be identified prior to the phase-in. The content of the mathematics courses is being developed as part of a multi-state collaborative through Achieve, Inc. The department's proposal emphasizes that all of the changes aim to better prepare high school students for meeting the demands of postsecondary education and the demands of the twenty-first century workplace.

Assistant Commissioner Jay Doolan noted that the department is eliminating the proposed graduation requirement for "at least one on-line course" from the draft regulations. Alternatively, the department plans to present a policy on virtual learning to the Board in the coming months.

Finally, Dr. Cathy Pines reported that in the near future the Professional Teaching Standards Board will look at incorporating 21st Century Skills into the professional teaching standards and code. [High School Graduation Amendments](#)

Submitted by:
Peg Lawlor
Government Relations Consultant
pegl812@comcast.net

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