

Memorandum

To: George P. Christie, Probation Association of New Jersey
CC: PANJ Executive Board
From: Elizabeth A. Meyers, Capital Impact Group
Date: 12/19/2008
Re: December 2008 report to the Executive Board

Transfer Legislation:

We are in the process of scheduling several high level meetings for January to discuss ACR 147/ACR 188. After the recent Holiday Party that George attended at Drumthwacket, we are working on scheduling a meeting with Governor Corzine. We also are setting up dates to meet with Assembly Speaker Roberts and chief of staff to Senate President Codey, A.J. Sabath. It will be imperative to have the support of these top tier leaders going forward and to resolve any misconceptions of the bill that may exist. We are hopeful that the legislation in the Senate will be referenced back to the Senate Law and Public Safety Committee in January where we believe we will have a better chance for a hearing under Chairman Girgenti (D-Passaic).

In addition, we are looking to engage a non-profit research entity in a review of the state's probation system so as to bring an independent eye to the issue. I have spoken with the Vera Institute which may have a conflict in working on the project due to their grant funding. I also will be reaching out to the Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice to see if such a study would be in their purview (they recently did a study on recidivism among parolees). It would be beneficial for our lobbying efforts to have a recent research document as supporting evidence. However, such a project may take longer than our goal of being on the ballot in 2009.

Assembly Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-Mercer) has been hosting a series of public forums to discuss prisoner re-entry, drug sentencing and mandatory minimums. It is my understanding that a hearing in February will focus on "systems" as

part of criminal justice and will include the probation system. We will work to prepare and testify at that hearing and use it as a catalyst to raise our concerns and seek support for the transfer as a means of improving the system.

Pension Deferral:

The Legislature is considering a proposal from the Governor's office – now in bill form under Senate Bill 7 -- that would allow local municipalities to defer pension payments for local employees. The deferral would be allowed on a reverse sliding scale (ie. FY – 2009 50 % of pension contribution; FY 2020 60% of contribution; FY 2001 80% of contribution; FY 2012 100% contribution). The intent of this legislation is to provide relief to municipalities during this tough economic time and allow them to divert these funds to property tax relief or reserve savings to pay unforeseen costs. The bill solely applies to local government therefore it would only apply to pension contributions for local public employees. I do not anticipate this legislation affecting PANJ employees since they are classified as state employees.

Pay raise freezes/layoffs:

There is significant consideration being given to freezing pay raises contractually given to state employees next year. The wage freeze may occur as a result of the budget deficit growing during the troubling economic times. Some in the Administration see raise freezes a way to say the state money without resorting to devastating layoffs. I have not see a number value on the potential amount of savings. At this juncture, there have not been moves to layoff state employees, however, New Jersey is one of 41 states that are facing budget deficits in this economy so they may be a real possibility.

I have contacted the Department of Personnel to determine the possibility of this occurring and what legal authority the Governor's office may have in doing so. I will let the Board know as soon as I receive that information, which has not been verified at this point. The Governor's office has said that he will put forth a budget related proposal early after the new year that addresses the budget deficit. Governor Corzine is scheduled to give the annual State of the State Address on January 13th at which time we could presume that the state's budget problems are addressed.

Public Relations:

We are currently working on an op-ed to be authored by George on the need to include probation in the state's efforts to curb recidivism. There have been a couple of stories recently regarding recidivism in parole but we will talk about working with probationers before many of them escalate their criminal records and end up incarcerated.

All press releases went out regarding the annual awards luncheon. A couple local media outlets expressed interest in the awardees. At this time, I have not yet seen the printed versions of the stories but will send them when available.