



## Probation Association of New Jersey

Serving New Jersey Since 1904

An affiliate of the American Probation and Parole Association

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## **PANJ: SHUTTERED COURTHOUSES WILL HURT COMMUNITY SUPERVISION OF OFFENDERS**

*Probation Officer Union Concerned over Potential Impact on Offender Supervision,  
Frustrated by Disregard for Employee who Make Probation System Function*

**Trenton, N.J. – May 21, 2009** – While court rooms will sit empty on Friday, May 22 observing the Judiciary's first furlough day, the Probation Association of New Jersey (PANJ) today cautioned the impact of these closures on the supervision of offenders in the community. Probation services such as making home visits, processing child support payments, or ensuring the completion of addiction treatments will be suspended on the furlough days.

George P. Christie, president of PANJ, said that probation officers and other professionals involved in probation system should have been exempted from furloughs as allowed for other law enforcement units.

"There has been a great deal of focus on whether or not judges will sit in their court rooms on Friday. But, the real concern needs to be focused on who will be supervising offenders on these furlough days and how these days will affect backlog and caseloads in the probation system.

"Essentially stopping probation system for one day a month poses a threat to public safety. We do not take our responsibility lightly therefore temporarily stopping these responsibilities from effectively happening should not be taken lightly," added Christie.

Christie noted that the Judiciary also is slated to close on June 29, 2009 to observe a second furlough day. In addition, the Civil Service Commission is poised to adopt additional rules to continue the furlough policy throughout Fiscal Year 2010.

(MORE)

There are an estimated 130,000 adults and 20,000 juveniles in the state's probation system. Probation officers and staff are deeply involved in multiple judicial functions that will stop one day a month through June 2010 if rules by the Civil Service Commission are enacted as anticipated.

Functions carried out by officers include supervising convicted criminals such as sex offenders and repeat offenders, overseeing juvenile offenders, ensuring that child support orders are followed, working with pre-trial court services, and remanding offenders to jail for violating sentences. Other services include attending to emergent bail matters in the criminal division and servicing domestic violence issues in the Family Court. PANJ members are in two separate bargaining units and perform vital and essential services to the Courts. These services include public safety priorities. Our professional staff are assigned to all divisions of the Superior Court. i.e. Criminal, Family, Civil, and Probation. Without these professional services, the Courts could not function smoothly and efficiently.

"Before the State was even able to assess the impact of these furloughs, it planned on moving full steam ahead with fourteen months of potentially debilitating closures. The Judiciary should not be halting operations because of the potential risk to the public's safety," said Christie.

Last month, PANJ and other labor unions filed suit to stop the implementation of Civil Service Commission rules that authorized temporary layoffs of public employees. Staggered furloughs were struck down, however, the emergency rules of the Civil Service Commission led to full departmental closures including those at the Judiciary. As a result of the furlough rules, PANJ also filed an unfair practice charge with the Public Employment Relations Commission which was ultimately rejected.

PANJ now is participating in further legal action along with other State and Judicial labor organizations to challenge the action of the State in causing these department-wide shut downs. These actions will involve appeals through contract violations through arbitration and appeals to State agencies and the courts.

PANJ represents an estimated 2,800 probation officers and supervisors employed by the Judiciary through two collective bargaining units which also include other professional personnel.

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