

MEMORANDUM

TO: George Christie, President
NJ Probation Association

FROM: Amy Dempster
Princeton Public Affairs Group

DATE: April 30, 2008

RE: Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee – Judiciary

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee took testimony from Judge Philip S. Carchman, Acting Administrative Director of the Courts this afternoon, Wednesday, April 30, 2008 regarding the proposed budget allocation for the Judiciary in the FY09 budget.

The proposed NJ state budget requires the judiciary to absorb a reduction of \$27 million for FY 2009. While there is a reduction in the allocation for the Judiciary, there was an increase (\$7 million) in the money allocated for the Drug Courts. While much of the money for the Drug Courts is passed through to the Department of Human Services Division of Addiction Services, the studies on drug courts versus incarceration result in a savings for the state if initial money is spent on drug courts.

Other issues discussed by Judge Carchman in his testimony include the problems resulting in the judicial branch with a decrease in funding and resources including a backlog of cases; the support the Judiciary has for the early retirement initiative (ERI) and the benefits the advances in technology has brought the Judiciary including the traffic ticket system currently in place.

Legislators such as Leonard Lance and Chairwoman Barbara Buono raised concerns about the ERI and especially the details in the plan regarding who from Judiciary would be eligible. The ERI proposed plan would only allow a 10% backfill and the Judge noted that he expects about 300 employees from the Judiciary to take advantage of the plan.

Other questions were about the drug court program and the pilot gun court program. Currently, the Attorney General is measuring the success of the gun court program in Essex, Mercer and Camden Counties and will make a determination shortly about whether or not to expand the program to other counties. The Judicial pay raise was another concern of the committee members as they stated that the legislature would not be supportive of another pay raise in the near future.

A copy of the testimony from Judge Philip S. Carchman is attached. At this time the Judiciary is not scheduled to testify before the Assembly Budget Committee.