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Probation Association of New Jersey

Serving New Jersey Since 1904

An affiliate of the American Probation and Parole Association

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June 15, 2006

Dear Editor:

As the statewide labor union representing the 2,800 probation officers and supervisors in New Jersey, we are deeply troubled by recent proposals to degrade the salary and benefits of hard-working employees. Legislators who support cutting wages and benefits claim that New Jersey state employees are given more lucrative benefits than our counterparts in Pennsylvania and other states. When taking a fact-based look at salaries and benefits of probation officers in New Jersey versus Pennsylvania, however, this claim is clearly untrue.

As of July 1, 2005, an entry-level probation officer in New Jersey receives a salary of \$36,298 with a full benefits and pension package. Comparatively, an entry-level probation officer in Pennsylvania receives a starting salary of \$35,949 with a benefits package that exceeds that of New Jersey's by offering tuition reimbursement. The Pennsylvania probation officer's salary rises to \$41,000 after just six months on the job, whereas, the New Jersey officer's salary takes an estimated three years to increase to the same salary. Moreover, officers in New Jersey must work until age 55 -- as opposed to age 50 in Pennsylvania -- to qualify for a full retirement package.

If you look to other states, facts show that the median salary for Delaware probation officers is \$51,797 which is \$6,487 more than those officers in New Jersey. The reality also remains that the cost of living in New Jersey is significantly higher than that in neighboring states.

Balancing the state's budget problem by devouring the salaries and benefits of hard-working employees such as probation officers neither addresses the real problem nor honors the contractual commitment to these individuals. We believe that Governor Corzine is on the right track to putting the state on the proper financial footing while keeping the state's covenant with state employees. Any effort to the contrary is an unfair attack on state employees including probation officers.

Sincerely,

George Christie
President
The Probation Association of New Jersey