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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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July 5, 2006

Dear PANJ Members:

As you are likely aware, in an unprecedented and extraordinary turn of events, Governor Jon S. Corzine signed an executive order on Saturday July 1st, calling for the orderly shut down of state services. This means that the state lottery, road construction projects, motor vehicle services, and non-essential state agencies were closed first. In addition, casinos, horse racing tracks, state parks and beaches are now closed.

On July 3rd the Governor signed a third executive order calling for another special session of the Legislature to convene in an attempt to resolve the state budget crisis. He addressed a joint session of the Legislature regarding his opinion on how the state budget should be balanced. There are only speculations as to how soon a budget bill will be presented and evaluated in the assembly budget committee then on to the senate.

This current state shutdown is a result of the on-going stalemate between Governor Corzine and Assembly Speaker Joseph J. Roberts Jr. primarily over increasing the sales tax from 6 to 7 percent, and if it were to be raised how it should be used to provide property tax relief.

There are alternative revenue raising measures also being considered at this time. Senate President Richard Codey remains part of negotiations while seeming to side more with the Governor.

Probation Association of New Jersey board members convened July 5th with an aggressive approach evaluating the current status of all union members and the short and long-term effects on Judicial employees deemed "essential" and "non-essential." Strategies include monitoring all legislation including communicating closely with key officials and representatives in support of the dedicated work of probation officers, other case related professionals and supervisors.

Representatives have already shared valuable data which provides crucial information on health care benefits, expected dates of payment, retroactive pay for employees who were forced home and those in the offices, and legal differences surrounding lay-offs versus involuntary furloughs.

This action is being designated as a involuntary furlough by the Department or Personnel and the Executive branch. This would appear to mean that the D.O.P. rules on voluntary furloughs will be applied so that such things as health benefits and accrue of pension benefits will continue. Along with accruing leave time as if the employee is in pay status. However, since the furlough is involuntary, PANJ is exploring many other options to protect our rights and to insure we lose no pay.

According to reports, all employees will be paid retroactively for any uncompensated time regardless of status. Employees who worked within the pay period ending on June 30<sup>th</sup> will be paid normally without interruption, because that money was appropriated in Fiscal Year 2006. However, employees who reported to work or were forced home thereafter; are expected to be paid in full once a budget is adopted by the state for Fiscal Year 2007. Consequently, there is no projected date for the budget to be adopted, thus exact dates of payment are currently unclear.

George Christie, president of the Probation Association of New Jersey, offered these remarks in support of the CWA rally taking place outside of the State House. “We must have a balanced budget now to protect the cornerstone of New Jersey, which is public safety and state employment.”

He continued, “State employees want to go back to work to protect public safety, to protect the integrity of this fine state. We have done our fair share to help New Jersey during recent trying times. The integrity of this state rests on us; hard working dedicated state employees, like probation officers, law enforcement, firefighters, teachers and more.”

PANJ believes our members will be paid retroactively after the budget is adopted, but there are time limits on filing for unemployment benefits. Therefore, members may wish to file for unemployment benefits immediately at <http://www.state.nj.us/labor/ui/apponline.html> or calling (201) 601- 4100 , (732) 761-2020 or (856) 507-2340 to file over the phone. Usually, the claim will be backdated no further then the previous Sunday of the week you applied.

As developments arise relative to issues of specific importance, PANJ board members will be in direct contact with legislators and key representatives. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the board regarding the current status of the department of probation.

Please contact your local legislators and ask them to work with Governor Corzine to pass a acceptable budget!