



## Probation Association of New Jersey

Serving New Jersey Since 1904

An affiliate of the American Probation and Parole Association

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Dear Union Members,

We have been getting many calls from you about the new components of the "Christie Reform Agenda." There are 33 bills included in his proposal, and only yesterday two have been introduced in the Legislature. Thus far, the two measures that have been introduced call for constitutional amendments to establish a 2.5% cap on annual appropriations increases for certain State and local units of government. The language of these bills will become available next week.

I provided you all with a bulleted list of the Governor's 33 proposals, most of which affect municipal and county employees. Please be mindful that the language for all of the bills is not available at this point, but we will continue to keep a close eye on any potential movement of the bills. As we all know, the devil is in the details. Also, keep in mind that the Governor will need Legislative approval to move his "Reform Agenda" forward and we are still gauging whether or not that support exists in the Legislature.

We are also keeping a close eye on other legislative matters of importance to you. There was legislation released from committee yesterday, which would require all future state employees to reside in New Jersey. We registered our opposition to the bill. We are also aware that proposals have been recently introduced that would have a major impact on us. We are not in favor of any of these measures and will lobby against them.

Additionally, PANJ is monitoring the possibility that the Democrat controlled Legislature and Republican Governor Christie are headed for a stalemate over several legislative matters. It appears also that Governor Christie is not going to change his position on certain issues, and the Democrats are not going to pass a budget or agree to any of the Governor's proposals to cap municipal spending until he agrees to rescind his refusal to impose the so called "millionaire's tax." Constitutionally, a budget is supposed to be passed into law by June 30<sup>th</sup> 2010. PANJ is optimistic that the legislative and executive branches will come to some sort of agreement and not suffer a government shutdown. However, there are concerns that Governor Christie will not reimburse State employees if one occurs, as was previously done by Governor Corzine in 2006. Governor Christie has indicated previously to PANJ that he considers Probation Officers a "critical part of our law enforcement team." In any event, PANJ will consider all activities and remedies available to us if such circumstances were to occur.

Please check the PANJ website ([www.panj.org](http://www.panj.org)) for updates on all matters discussed.

Yours in PANJ,

George P. Christie, President

## GOVERNOR CHRISTIE'S COMPREHENSIVE REFORM AGENDA

- Governor Christie presented the Legislature with a 33-bill package of reforms aimed at solving New Jersey's property tax crisis.
- The centerpiece of this legislative package is "Cap 2.5," a constitutional amendment creating a 2.5% cap on the increase in the property tax levy by municipal, school and county taxes and a 2.5% cap on spending for State government operations.
  - The 2.5% hard cap comes with recommendations ("tool kit") from the Governor for municipalities, school districts, higher education institutions and county governments to control costs and live within the cap.
  - The recommendations are in the areas of civil service, collective bargaining, employee pensions and benefits, red tape and unfunded mandates, election reform and shared services.
- The 33 municipal and county legislative reforms are:
  - 1) Constitutional amendment to impose a 2.5% cap on increases in the property tax levy increases for municipal, school and county taxes, cap banking is allowed.
  - 2) Constitutional amendment to place a 2.5% cap on spending for State government operations (excluding state aid to municipalities and school districts and direct property tax relief); cap banking is allowed.
  - 3) Reform in selection of arbitrators for union contracts.
  - 4) Arbitrators are mandated to consider impact of union contracts on property taxes, no such requirement in current law.
  - 5) Arbitrators are barred from making contract awards that exceed 2.5% cap, inclusive of all salary, benefit and other economic contract provisions
  - 6) Pension benefit reform - eliminate eligibility for State retirement systems for non-government groups and associations.
  - 7) Pension benefit reform - cap sick leave and carry forward of vacation for current employees.
  - 8- 9) Shared services reform - when local units decide to share services current law requires buyout of union contracts, bumping and other civil service protections that destroy the efficiencies of the merger; this proposal eliminates certain civil services protections when services are shared. (2 bills required to amend different statutes).
  - 10) Allow furloughs by local government to save costs.

11) Allow counties and municipalities to opt out of civil service municipalities by ordinance or referendum initiated by 15% of the voters.

12) Public employee discipline reform – reclassify many offenses as minor to avoid lengthy and costly hearings for relatively trivial infractions.

13) Police employee discipline reform – reclassify many offenses as minor to avoid lengthy and costly hearings for relatively trivial infractions.

14) Firefighters discipline reform – reclassify many offenses as minor to avoid lengthy and costly hearings for relatively trivial infractions.

15) Employee discipline reform – revise appeal process of employee disciplinary hearings to reclassify many offenses as minor.

16) Revise layoff rules to allow less senior, but more essential employees to avoid bumping.

17) Give Civil Service Commissioner more day-to-day control as when the Department of Personnel was a freestanding department.

18) Increase testing and appeal fees for civil service promotional exams.

19) Allow Civil Service Commissioner to make seasonal appointment for 9 months.

20) Allow municipalities to offset property tax refunds against State income tax refunds.

21) Expand parties that may bring challenges to Council on Local Mandates to include groups, like the League of Municipalities. (Currently, only individual municipalities can do this and is too costly for one town to "go it alone.")

#### EDUCATIONAL TOOL KIT

22) No school contract award in excess of 2.5% cap, inclusive of all salary, benefit and other economic contract provisions.

23) School districts could once again impose a "last best offer" contract under certain circumstances.

24) Executive county superintendents approval of all union and superintendent contracts. No approval of contracts with:

- Salary/benefit increases exceeding the 2.5% cap;

- Pupil contact time per day as set by regulation;

- Minimum number of work as set by regulation;
- Prohibition on contracting out auxiliary/ancillary services.

25) Executive county superintendents would be required to implement sharing of school business functions across districts and with municipalities.

26) Pension reforms similar to those affecting municipalities.

In addition to the bills primarily affecting municipalities, school districts and county government, the Governor has also recommended a number of key reforms to assist higher education institutions in New Jersey lower costs, economize, and manage their budgets more effectively. Governor Christie is proposing the following reforms for higher education:

#### HIGHER EDUCATION TOOL KIT

27) Revise fact finder decision standards (when awarding a new employee contract) to account for decrease in state aid level, effect on tuition, and benefits already provided to employees

28) Designate State colleges and universities as employer of record for collective bargaining.

29) Allow state colleges and universities to hire faculty members for a probationary period.

30) Remove classified employers from Civil Service status and include them within each institution's personnel system.

31) Allow separate workers compensation program management for college and universities.

#### ELECTION REFORM

32) Require only single ballot to each household instead of multiple ballots to all voters residing in household.

33) Move school and fire elections to November.