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*Office of the Governor*  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Governor Signs Bill to Raise Property Tax Deduction for Veterans**

Governor Christie Whitman today honored New Jersey veterans by signing legislation to implement a constitutional amendment that will increase the annual property tax deduction for veterans and their surviving spouses.

"New Jersey will never forget the sacrifices of its more than 700,000 veterans who have answered the call to duty," said Gov. Whitman.

The bill phases in the increase over four years as follows: \$100 in calendar year 2000, \$150 in calendar year 2001, \$200 in calendar year 2002 and \$250 in calendar year 2003 and thereafter.

Gov. Whitman said that the current property tax deduction of \$50 has not increased since 1963 - almost 50 years - but that all changed through a constitutional amendment that the voters overwhelmingly approved last November, and which today she signed into law. Following the passage of a concurrent resolution by the Legislature during its prior session, the amendment was placed on the November 2, 1999 ballot.

The bill, S-215, sponsored by Senators C. Louis Bassano (R-Essex/Union) and Anthony R. Bucco (R-Morris) and Assembly Members Joseph Azzolina (R-Middlesex/Monmouth) and John C. Gibson (R-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland), implements the constitutional amendment to increase the annual property tax deduction for certain veterans and surviving spouses.

In the next fiscal year starting July 1, Gov. Whitman said that there is approximately \$18 million in her budget to pay for the property tax deduction for eligible veterans and surviving spouses. To be eligible, the Governor explained a veteran must be honorably discharged from active service in any branch of the Armed Forces, during time of war or other emergency. And if a member of the Armed Forces was killed while on active duty during a time of war or emergency, then their spouse is eligible to receive this deduction.

But property tax relief is not the only benefit dedicated to veterans in Gov. Whitman's "Prosperity Dividend" that was outlined in her budget address this past January. Because of the state's unparalleled prosperity, Gov. Whitman has an unprecedented opportunity - to build on what's been accomplished and to also do more for all New Jerseyans, including its veterans.

For instance, the Governor has recommended in her budget proposal an additional \$9 million in matching state funds toward a \$33 million reconstruction of the Vineland Veterans' Memorial Home, the second of three state-operated homes to be rebuilt under her administration.

Gov. Whitman also spoke about her administration's other accomplishments for state veterans, from welcoming home the battleship USS New Jersey to including \$5.5 million in last year's budget to refund property taxes to all of the 100 percent disabled veterans who had paid those taxes without realizing they were exempt. Last month, the Governor presented a check on behalf of New Jerseyans to the World War II Memorial Campaign, for what will be the first national monument recognizing veterans' achievements during the war.

"Our vets have always been there for New Jersey, and we are showing that, once again, New Jersey is there for them," concluded Gov. Whitman.

For more information, veterans or their surviving spouses should call 609-292-6400 at the New Jersey Division of Taxation.