

Office of the Governor
NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Christie Whitman today signed the following pieces of legislation:

A-2008, sponsored by Assembly Members George F. Geist (R-Camden/Gloucester) and Arline M. Friscia (D-Middlesex), raises the state minimum wage rate to bring it into concurrence with the federal minimum wage rate, which is currently \$5.15 per hour. Under the bill, any future changes in the federal minimum wage would be automatically incorporated into state minimum wage law.

A-1697, sponsored by Assembly Members John S. Wisniewski (D- Middlesex) and David W. Wolfe (R-Monmouth/Ocean) and Senators Joseph F. Vitale (D-Middlesex) and Jack Sinagra (R-Middlesex), creates the School Bus Enhanced Safety Act. The bill, which implements the recommendations of the Governor's School Bus Safety Task Force, authorizes the Director of the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to establish a semi-annual or annual in-terminal school bus inspection program and establish standards and requirements pertaining to equipment, maintenance and repair of school buses; maintenance, repair and inspection records and driver employment records and any other records or credentials deemed necessary by the director. It also authorizes the DMV Director to implement a fee and fine schedule for such inspections. The bill will enhance the in-terminal semi-annual inspection program that the Director of DMV, through his administrative powers, implemented on July 6. This program includes both a safety and a vehicle emissions inspection.

A-1427, sponsored by Assembly Members Raul "Rudy" Garcia (D- Hudson) and George F. Geist (R-Camden/Gloucester) and Senator Bernard F. Kenny, Jr. (D-Hudson), increases penalties for violations of workplace standards in the apparel industry. The bill establishes a minimum penalty equal to the current maximum penalty and doubles the maximum penalties for violations of workplace laws. For instance, under the previous laws fines for first violations ranged up to \$1,000 while the new law provides that penalties for first violations will not be less than \$1,000 or more than \$2,000.

A-192, sponsored by Assembly Members George F. Geist (R- Camden/Gloucester) and Kevin J. O'Toole (R-Essex/Union), conforms New Jersey law regarding public sector labor organizations with federal law pertaining to penalties imposed in the private sector for individuals in labor organizations convicted of certain crimes. The bill provides that during the period in which an individual convicted under federal law of certain crimes is prohibited from serving in various private sector labor union capacities, the individual shall also be prohibited from serving in comparable capacities in connection with labor organizations, employers and employer organizations which are related to State and local government in New Jersey.

S-1324, sponsored by Senators Robert E. Littell (R- Sussex/Hunterdon/Morris) and Henry P. McNamara (R-Bergen/Passaic) and Assembly Members Guy R. Gregg (R-Sussex/ Hunterdon/Morris) and Sam Thompson (R-Middlesex/Monmouth), appropriates \$3,166,577 in funds from the Port of New Jersey Revitalization, Dredging, Environmental Cleanup, Lake Restoration, and Delaware Bay Area Economic Development Bond Act of 1996 to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for lake restoration projects in Northern New Jersey. Six local government entities in Monmouth, Morris, Passaic, and Sussex counties are eligible for funding totaling \$849,927 under the bill. Also, under the bill, the DEP's Division of Parks and Forestry will be eligible for funding totaling \$816,650 for projects in Morris, Sussex, Hunterdon, Middlesex and Warren counties and three private lake associations, as co-applicants with local governments, in Morris, Passaic and Sussex counties will be eligible for a total of \$1.5 million in loans.

S-1419, sponsored by Senators Diane B. Allen (R-Burlington/Camden) and Joseph A. Palaia (R-Monmouth), appropriates \$1,833,423 in funds from the Port of New Jersey Revitalization, Dredging, Environmental Cleanup, Lake Restoration, and Delaware Bay Area Economic Development Bound Act of 1996 to the DEP for lake restoration projects in Southern New Jersey. Under the bill, grants totaling \$1,724,473 will be distributed by the DEP to eight local governments in Atlantic, Burlington, Gloucester, Monmouth and Ocean counties. DEP also will award grants to its Division of Parks and Forestry (\$75,000 for a project in Burlington County) and to its Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife (\$33,950 for a project that spans Gloucester and Salem Counties).
