

Office of the Governor
NEWS RELEASE

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

A-2915/S-1717, sponsored by Assembly Speaker Jack Collins (R-Salem/Cumberland/Gloucester) and Assemblywoman Arline M. Friscia (D-Middlesex) and Senator Leonard T. Connors, Jr. (R-Atlantic/Burlington/Ocean) and Senate President Donald DiFrancesco (R-Middlesex/ Morris/ Somerset/Union), extends the filing deadline for applications for the homestead property tax reimbursement, under the senior citizen property tax freeze law. The bill extends the deadline for tax year 1998 from December 31, 1998 to April 15, 1999. This extension is only for the 1998 tax year and the deadline will return to December 31 in subsequent years.

A-507/S-1028, sponsored by Assembly Members Gerald H. Zecker (R-Essex/Passaic) and Kenneth C. LeFevre(R-Atlantic) and Senator Norman M. Robertson (R-Essex/Passaic), establishes a chronic fatigue syndrome program in the Department of Health and Senior Services and designates \$95,000 for the program.

The legislation requires the Commissioner to establish a statewide network of resources to provide training and education to doctors and patients and create a public awareness campaign regarding chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS).

The Commissioner must also prepare and make available, to all health care providers in the state who request it, a manual with information about the clinical significance, diagnosis, and treatment of CFS. The Commissioner will consult with the New Jersey Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Association, Inc., the Academy of Medicine of New Jersey and the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. The manual will contain information that the Commissioner deems necessary and can be revised when new information is made available about CFS. The Department must publicize and make the manual as accessible as possible.

CFS is a scientifically recognized disease which manifests itself through various symptoms. Symptoms range from fatigue to wheelchair confinement. CFS is often characterized by both physical symptoms -joint pain, muscle weakness, headaches, insomnia, and exhaustion-and cognitive symptoms -memory loss, inability to concentrate and mental "fog." To date, no cure has been found for the estimated one million sufferers of CFS in the United States. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently raised CFS to a "Priority 1" in the new re- emerging drug-resistant infectious disease category. Other diseases in this category include cholera, malaria, hepatitis C and tuberculosis.

S-500/A-2390, sponsored by Senator Andrew R. Ciesla (R-Monmouth/Ocean)and Assemblymen James Holzapfel(R-Monmouth/Ocean) and David W. Wolfe (R-Monmouth/Ocean), permits the Commissioner of Transportation to privately sell certain excess lands to contiguous property owners.

The legislation provides that the Commissioner must first offer to sell, at a private sale, remainder parcels of land no longer required for highway purposes to the owner of the real property whose frontage is contiguous to the parcel being sold. This applies only if there are no capital improvements on the parcel being sold and the parcel being sold is less than the minimum size required for development under the municipal zoning ordinance. The law currently requires such land to be sold at public auction to the highest bidder.

In addition, the legislation requires that any such sale must not be for less than the fair market value of the remainder parcel. In the instance where there is more than one owner with real property whose frontage is contiguous to the State land, the bill says the parcel must be sold to the highest bidder among such owners.

The bill does not affect the right of first refusal for previous owners of the property and the bill does not affect the ability of the Commissioner of Transportation to sell the lands at a private sale to public entities.

S-1584/A-2742, Sponsored by Senators Leonard T. Connors, Jr.(R-Atlantic/Burlington/Ocean) and Ronald L. Rice (D-Essex) and Assemblyman Jeffrey W. Moran (R-Atlantic/ Burlington/ Ocean),clarifies the status of employees of the Council on Local Mandates and revises certain restrictions applicable to council members.

The bill will provide the Council with more flexibility in hiring its staff and will modify current law regarding Council members' ability to hold other State or local public offices.

In order to give the Council more hiring flexibility, the bill:

- Eliminates the provision of the law which places clerical and secretarial personnel in the career service of the civil service law;
- Allows the Council to employ operational and administrative personnel; and
- clarifies that the Council may employ an administrator and coordinator who would serve at the pleasure of the Council for no more than two years without reappointment.

Current law prohibits Council members, while serving on the Council and for two years thereafter, from holding any other state or local public office. The legislation modifies these restrictions in the following manner:

- while serving on the Council, a member would be prohibited from holding any other State or local public office;
- while serving on the Council and for two years thereafter, a member would be prohibited from holding elective State or local public office;
- for a period of two years after serving on the Council, a member would be prohibited from being employed with a county, municipality, or school district which filed a complaint with the Council while the member served on the Council;
- for a period of two years after serving on the Council, a member would be prohibited from employment with a State agency that promulgated a rule or regulation which was the subject of a complaint during the member's service on the Council; and
- members would be allowed to serve on a study commission or similar advisory body for which no compensation is paid, other than reimbursement of expenses.