

Office of the Governor
NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Christie Whitman today signed the following legislation:

S-164/A-1775, sponsored by Senators Joseph M. Kyrillos, Jr. (R-Middlesex/Monmouth) and Wayne R. Bryant (D-Camden/Gloucester) and Assemblymen Joseph Azzolina (R-Middlesex/Monmouth) and Michael J. Arnone (R-Monmouth), requires a standardized form for bonds and letters of credit for improvements in developments. This bill requires that a standardized form be used for performance guarantees, maintenance guarantees and letters of credit, which assure the installation and maintenance of on-tract improvements in developments that are regulated by the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL). The legislation mandates that the Department of Community Affairs adopt, through regulation, standardized forms to be used in all cases that are required by an approving authority under the MLUL. The approving authority, according to the MLUL, is the planning board of a municipality, unless a different agency is designated by ordinance when acting pursuant to the authority of the MLUL.

S-375/A-2682, sponsored by Senators Bernard F. Kenny, Jr. (D-Hudson) and Diane B. Allen (R-Burlington/Camden) and Assemblymen Joseph Charles, Jr. (D-Hudson) and Joseph V. Doria, Jr. (D-Hudson), reallocates up to \$7.5 million to offset federal administrative funding reductions in the New Jersey Food Stamp Program and provides reimbursement for certain administrative costs of the program. The bill fulfills Governor Whitman's promise to offset federal cuts to the administration of the Food Stamp Program, by reimbursing counties for certain administrative costs and restoring federal reductions that would otherwise have a significant impact on the county welfare agencies.

The bill provides that the Division of Family Development in the Department of Human Services shall reimburse counties for all documented administrative costs incurred between January 1 and June 30, 1998, associated with the implementation of the State Food Stamp Program.

These costs arose under the state's extension of funding to provide Food Stamp assistance to groups who became ineligible for the federal food stamp program under the federal "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The Governor provided benefits to many who had lost federal eligibility by signing executive order No. 74 in 1997. Many of these people were restored eligibility for federal benefits under subsequent federal legislation, the rest continue to receive state-funded food stamps under State law after the Executive Order expired on June 30, 1998.

This bill will reimburse counties' costs associated with administering the food stamp program between January 1 and June 30, 1998.

The legislation also reallocates \$7.5 million of the fiscal year 1999 appropriation from the General Fund for Income Maintenance Management to offset the federal administrative funding reductions in the Food Stamp Program. Without these funds, county property taxes would have to increase to offset the federal funding reductions or county welfare agencies would have to lay off workers. The reimbursement is a state fiscal year reimbursement that would offset county expenditures in calendar years 1998 and 1999 without regard to county fiscal years.

S-803/A-2040, sponsored by Senators William Gormley (R-Atlantic) and Edward O'Connor, Jr. (D-Hudson) and Assembly Members Christopher "Kip" Bateman (R-Morris/Somerset) and Joan Quigley (D- Bergen/Hudson), simplifies the statutes relating to county surrogates. The surrogate, a county officer, has jurisdiction over the administration of probate matters. The statutes governing surrogates date back more than 100 years and included out-of-date and sometimes conflicting language on salaries, performance bond amounts and references to county courts. The statutes mandated procedures no longer followed including the signing by hand certain recorded documents.