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

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**DiFRANCESCO SIGNS 50 PERCENT INCREASE IN THE  
HOMESTEAD REBATE PROGRAM FOR SENIOR CITIZENS**  
*First Homestead Rebate Increase in a Decade*

Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco signed legislation today that increases the maximum Homestead Rebate for senior citizens to \$750 per year -- a 50 percent increase -- and the first in a decade.

"Increasing the Homestead Rebate was a promise; with my signature today, it becomes policy. Property tax relief for our seniors is long overdue. That is why today we are immediately increasing the Homestead Rebate and indexing it to the rising cost of living," said the acting Governor.

The bill, S-1, increases the maximum rebate to \$750 beginning in calendar year 2001. Beginning in 2002, that maximum amount will be indexed annually to the cost of living, the first time such a provision has been included in the program. The legislation, which was sponsored by DiFrancesco, who is also Senate President, was passed unanimously by both houses of the Legislature.

"Each year the rebate check has helped less and less as the cost of living has risen more and more. That has been especially hard on folks with fixed incomes who have had to make tough choices and sacrifices in budgeting basic necessities. From now on, we are going to increase the maximum Homestead Rebate automatically each year to match the rate of inflation," said DiFrancesco.

Currently, more than 600,000 senior citizen and disabled homeowners receive the Homestead Rebate. Senior citizens age 65 or older, the disabled and the blind are eligible for the program if they own a home or are a tenant during the tax year and have an annual income of \$100,000 or less.

This bill reflects DiFrancesco's continuing commitment to senior citizen issues. The acting Governor signed the landmark Senior Gold legislation in June, which helps middle-income senior citizens afford the rising costs of prescription drugs.

"The needs of New Jersey senior citizens are a priority of mine as acting Governor. That is why we restored the property tax deduction on the income tax, froze property taxes for qualified seniors and enacted Senior Gold, giving up to 100,000 more senior and disabled citizens help paying for their prescriptions," said acting Governor DiFrancesco.

Since DiFrancesco became Senate President in 1992, New Jersey taxpayers received 56 tax cuts, which saved them \$16 billion, including more than \$6.1 billion in direct property tax relief.

Last month the acting Governor signed legislation that more than doubles the NJ SAVER rebate checks for homeowners, making the average rebate check for that program approximately \$500.

S-1 was sponsored by DiFrancesco and Senators Peter Inverso (R-Mercer/Middlesex), Diane Allen (R-Burlington/ Camden), Louis Kosco (R-Bergen) and Assemblymen James Holzapfel (R-Monmouth/Ocean) and David Wolfe (R-Monmouth/Ocean).

The Homestead Rebate checks will be sent out on July 31, 2001 with the new, updated amount.