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## Jul-17-07 Governor Corzine Signs Legislation Protecting New Jersey Workers

**NEWS RELEASE:**Governor Jon S. Corzine  
July 17, 2007**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Press Office - 609-777-2600

### GOVERNOR CORZINE SIGNS LEGISLATION PROTECTING NEW JERSEY WORKERS

TRENTON – Governor Jon S. Corzine today ceremonially signed legislation cracking down on the misclassification of full-time construction workers as independent contractors.

"Companies that misclassify workers to avoid taxes hurt their workers and hurt the public," Governor Corzine said. "This bill ensures that any attempt by companies to shirk their responsibility to their employees and to the public will now be met with a hefty penalty."

The legislation sets up criminal penalties for contractors who knowingly classify full-time employees as independent contractors to avoid state and federal taxes. The bill creates the presumption that construction workers are full-time employees unless proven otherwise and calls for fines of up to \$75,000 for violators. Additionally, contractors that engage in this practice could be ineligible for public contracts.

"New Jersey's labor laws are meant to protect all of our workers," said Senator Karcher, (D-Mercer and Monmouth), who sponsored the bill in the Senate. "But it's become all-too-common for unscrupulous home contractors to find loopholes in order to cheat the tax system and exploit workers while lining their own pockets. We need serious penalties to force contractors to comply with fair employment practices, not just slap-on-the-wrist fines which are easily absorbed as the cost of doing business in New Jersey."

"Today New Jersey sends a clear message that taxpayer money will not go to unscrupulous contractors who put their bottom line ahead of protecting their employees," said Assemblyman Van Drew (D-Cape May/Atlantic/Cumberland), an Assembly sponsor. "Employers who purposely misclassify employees for a quick tax write-off cheat workers out of benefits and legal protections. Now, such actions won't just seem criminal, they will be criminal."

The bill, A-4009/S-2579, was also sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblymembers Caraballo (D-Essex, Union), Egan (D-Middlesex, Somerset), Burzichelli (D-Salem, Cumberland, Gloucester), Greenstein (D-Mercer, Middlesex), and Gordon (D-Bergen). It was also sponsored in the Senate by Senators Codey (D-Essex) and Sweeney (D-Salem, Cumberland, Gloucester).

The Governor also ceremonially signed legislation prohibiting the sale, use or burning of creosote and creosote treated products. Creosote is used primarily as a wood preservative and exposure can lead to skin conditions and other long-term health risks.

"Construction workers should not have to put their health in jeopardy to earn a living," Governor Corzine said. "This legislation will ensure that workers and the public are protected from the risks associated with creosote exposure."

"The environmental protection agency classifies creosote as a carcinogen, which poses a critical threat to the health of residents and to the environment," said Senator Sweeney, (D-Gloucester, Cumberland and Salem), who sponsored the bill in the Senate. "The ingestion of creosote can cause serious burns, kidney and liver damage and even death, not to mention soil and ground contamination. It's the State's responsibility to work to find safer alternatives that can be used as wood preservatives. The health of our residents must come first."

"Given New Jersey's commendable legacy for championing worker protections, it's entirely appropriate that we should be among the first states to curb this dangerous carcinogen," said Assemblyman Patrick Diegnan (D-Middlesex), an Assembly sponsor. "Workers in construction trades are particularly susceptible to the cancer-causing chemicals that can be found in creosote."

This legislation, A-2804/A-1965, was sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblymembers Barnes (D-Middlesex), Stack (D-Hudson), McKeon (D-Essex), and Vas (D-Middlesex). It was also sponsored in the Senate by Senator Lesniak (D-Union).

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Photos and audio and video clips from Governor Corzine's public events are available in the Governor's Newsroom section on the State of New Jersey web page, <http://www.nj.gov/governor/news/>



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