

PRESS RELEASE

GOVERNOR CORZINE SIGNS ETHICS LEGISLATION

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Governor Jon S. Corzine,
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MARLBORO – Governor Jon S. Corzine signed a package of bills today designed to further improve the ethical climate in New Jersey by eliminating dual office holding for elected officials and – for the first time – creating a specific crime to target individuals who use public resources for unauthorized purposes and increase penalties for those found guilty of public corruption. The Governor also signed legislation requiring the Office of Legislative Services to post all legislators’ voting records online.

“I am committed to giving the people of our state the kind of open, transparent and accountable government they deserve, and these bills go a long way towards accomplishing that goal,” Governor Corzine said. “These reforms will only further demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that government serves only the public trust, and I want to thank the Legislature, and Senator Karcher in particular, for their efforts on this issue.”

“We’ve made enormous progress in banning pay-to-play, removing taxpayer funded pensions from convicted officials and imposing mandatory criminal sentences on corrupt politicians,” added Senator Ellen Karcher (D-Mercer/Monmouth), who sponsored three of the bills in the Senate. “Together these bills will further chip away at New Jersey’s image of a haven for the corrupt.”

"Today is a historic day in our efforts to restore the public's trust in its elected officials," said Assemblyman Panter (D-Mercer/Monmouth), who authored the ban on dual office holding in the Assembly. "We will no longer accept business as usual to dominate Trenton. Instead, we're taking major steps towards real transparency in New Jersey."

The ethics bills signed today are:

· A-4326/ S-3008, sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblymembers Panter (D-Mercer/Monmouth) and Greenstein (D-Mercer/Middlesex), and in the Senate by Senators

James (D-Essex), Karcher (D-Mercer/Monmouth) and Turner (D-Mercer): Prohibits newly elected public office holders from simultaneously holding more than one elective office.

- S-1192/A-2465, sponsored in the Senate by Senators Adler (D-Camden) and Karcher (D-Mercer/Monmouth), and in the Assembly by Assemblymembers Cohen (D-Union), O'Toole (R-Bergen/Essex/Passaic), Panter (D-Mercer, Monmouth), and Greenstein (D-Mercer, Middlesex): Creates the crime of Corruption of Public Resources, which makes it illegal to knowingly misuse taxpayer dollars and other public resources. Violations could result in up to 20 years in prison, a fine of \$200,000, or both.

- S-1318/A-3005, the "Public Corruption Profiteering Penalty Act," sponsored in the Senate by Senators Karcher (D-Mercer/Monmouth) and Madden (D-Camden, Gloucester), and in the Assembly by Assemblymembers O'Toole (R-Bergen/Essex/Passaic), Handlin (R-Middlesex/Monmouth), Panter (D-Mercer, Monmouth), Greenstein (D-Mercer, Middlesex), and Van Drew (D-Cape May, Atlantic, Cumberland): Authorizes courts to assess extra fines in corruption cases that involve any aspect of award or payment of local, county or State contracts. Penalties could be as high as \$500,000, or three times the value of the property stolen.

- S-1662/A-3252, sponsored in the Senate by Senators Martin (R-Morris/Passaic) and Weinberg (D-Bergen) and in the Assembly by Assemblymembers Vainieri Huttle (D-Bergen), Conners (D-Burlington, Camden), Hackett (D-Essex), and Gordon (D-Bergen): Requires the Office of Legislative Services to make available online the complete voting records of state legislators. The data must be updated daily and remain posted on the site for two legislative sessions.

Governor Corzine also signed the following joint resolution today:

SJR-16/AJR-76 (Martin, Weinberg/ Bodine, Chatzidakis, Manzo) – Designates third full week of September in each year as "Mitochondrial Disease Awareness Week."