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Sep-16-07 Governor Signs Extension of Camden Revitalization Act

NEWS RELEASE

Governor Jon S. Corzine
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Governor Signs Extension of Camden Revitalization Act

Taps Judge Theodore Davis as Permanent COO of Camden

CAMDEN - Governor Jon S. Corzine today signed legislation extending for five years certain provisions of the Municipal Rehabilitation and Economic Recovery Act, the law that authorized the State's comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery program for Camden. The legislation will permit a five-year extension for the State-appointed Chief Operating Officer (COO) and makes other changes that enhance the COO's ability to implement recovery measures and work productively with the Mayor and City Council for the benefit of the city's residents.

"In the past five years we have taken important steps toward a brighter future for the City of Camden and its people," Governor Corzine said.

"But it is clear that we have plenty more to do. This legislation ensures that we have the important tools we need to continue to see positive change from the state's significant investment in the rehabilitation and recovery of Camden."

The original Recovery Act, passed in 2002, authorized the State to appoint a Chief Operating Officer with broad powers over the operations of the city government. The 2002 Act also funded an unprecedented economic recovery program for the City. That program will continue under the originally authorized funding levels. The 2002 Act also gave the state a voice in the local school district by giving the Governor veto power over the actions of the school board; that authority will remain in place.

"In order for Camden to continue its progress, the state needs to continue its role in helping Camden build a better future," said Assembly Speaker Joseph Roberts (D-Camden, Gloucester), who sponsored the bill in the Assembly. "This continued investment in progress will be helpful not only for Camden's residents, but for the overall economy of the entire South Jersey region."

"It's important for the state to continue working in partnership with the city to promote Camden's revival efforts," said Assemblywoman Nilsa Cruz-Perez (D-Camden, Gloucester), another Assembly sponsor. "Working together, we can move Camden closer to the day when residents might walk safer streets, send their children to better schools, and hold jobs that will one day provide them the means with which to fulfill their dreams."

The bill, S-3006/A-4129, was sponsored in the Senate by Senator Bryant.

Governor Corzine also announced today that, after a national search, he would appoint Judge Davis as the permanent COO of Camden.

Governor Corzine appointed Judge Davis as Camden's COO on an interim basis in December of 2006. He is a native of Camden and served for 22 years on the Superior Court, including 12 years as Presiding Judge of the Camden County Chancery Division. Prior to his appointment as interim COO, he was a

member at the law firm of Cozen O'Conner. Judge Davis and his wife, who have one child, reside in Camden.

"I appreciate the work the search committee put in to find a Chief Operating Officer for Camden," Governor Corzine said. "They conducted a national search and interviewed candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds, but no one could match Judge Davis's combination of integrity, intelligence, experience and dedication to and knowledge of the city of Camden."

"I am extremely grateful and honored for the confidence Governor Corzine has shown in me by appointing me as the Chief Operating Officer of the City of Camden- my home," Judge Davis said. "I am quite grateful for the opportunity to be of service to the state and the residents of Camden. With appropriate diligence and an extreme work ethic by the employees of the city and the trust of residents I have no doubt what the Governor desires for Camden- its revitalization - can in fact be accomplished."

The City of Camden also announced Sunday that it had arrived at a contract agreement with unions representing Camden's police officers.

The agreement, negotiated with the assistance of David Beckett from the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, will allow the department the flexibility to deploy officers in shifts and locations according to need.

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