

NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

County Government with a Unified Voice!

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STATE HOUSE NEWS

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COUNTY LEGISLATIVE GOALS

NJAC's Legislative Affairs Committee is meeting later next month to consider and make recommendations concerning the Association's legislative goals for the 2025/26 legislative session when the Garden State will have a new Governor for the first time in nearly a decade along with several new members of the General Assembly.

With this in mind, NJAC is asking county leaders from across the State to share their thoughts and suggestions on potential goals within the parameters outlined below. During the previous legislative session, NJAC found success in proactively advocating for initiatives recommended by county officials such as modernizing the Open Public Records Act (OPRA), authorizing local governments to post legal notices online, permitting county commissioner boards to hold annual reorganization meetings at alternative locations, pursuing various reforms to streamline Civil Service, and more. Although a substantial degree of NJAC's advocacy and research is reactive in nature, pursuing well thought out legislative goals is critical for county governments' long-term success and much more enjoyable.

1. Recommendations should benefit county government as a whole and be non-partisan.
2. Recommendations should focus on streamlining county government operations.
3. Recommendations should be specific and tangible, so that we may quantify potential costs savings and other benefits.
4. Recommendations should be realistic and achievable.
5. Recommendations may include current initiatives such opposing the State's diversion of 911 fees and prohibiting the imposition of unfunded State mandates.

NJAC's Legislative Affairs Committee will provide a summary of its recommendations, which the Association's Board of Directors will consider at its next meeting on September 19th. In the meantime, we'll continue working to pursue the following during the lame-duck session:

1. Making changes to housing juveniles in county facilities.
2. Extending the Working Test Period.
3. Opposing the State's diversion of 911 fees and funding county 911 centers.
4. Protecting county governments negotiating power under Chapter 78.
5. Prohibiting unfunded State mandates.

PRIVATIZATION CONTRACTS

NJAC is encouraging all twenty-one counties to adopt the following resolution in opposition to **A-919** (*Reynolds-Jackson D-15*), which would effectively prohibit the use of privatization contracts by requiring county governments to pay new employees' wages and benefits at a rate not less than the wages and benefits paid to displaced employees. **A-919** is currently in the Assembly Appropriations Committee and the companion version **S-1518** (*Turner D-15*) is in the Senate Labor Committee awaiting consideration.

A RESOLUTION, opposing **A-919/S-1518**, which would establish certain procedures and standards concerning public services privatization contracts.

WHEREAS, this legislation would effectively prohibit the use of privatization contracts by requiring county governments to pay new employees' wages and benefits at a rate not less than the wages and benefits paid to displaced employees; and,

WHEREAS, counties enter into privatization contracts to recognize important cost savings in salary, wage, pension, and health benefit costs that make up approximately 65% of overall operating budgets; and,

WHEREAS, counties, municipalities, and school districts across the State are struggling to provide essential services in the wake of double-digit health benefit increases, pension payments, utility expenses, property and casualty insurance coverage, and the cost of goods and services; and,

WHEREAS, this legislation would effectively eliminate one of the only mechanisms available for local governments to control the ever-increasing property tax burden; and,

WHEREAS, this legislation would create an overly burdensome, adversarial, and unnecessary level of bureaucracy by requiring the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) to review and approve privatization contracts as local governments should retain autonomy to enter into such agreements that they believe serve in the best interest of constituents; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the New Jersey Association of Counties does in fact oppose **A-919/S-1518** (*Reynolds-Jackson D-15/Wimberly D-35/Turner D-15/Greenstein D-14*), which would establish certain procedures and standards concerning public services privatization contracts.

BE IT FURTHER, RESOLVED, that certified copies of this Resolution shall be sent to Governor Phil Murphy, Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Speaker of the General Assembly Craig Coughlin, and the clerks of the boards of county commissioners in all twenty-one counties.

PAYMENTS IN LIEU OF TAXES

On July 8th, Governor Murphy signed into law **S-3787/A-5613** (*Scutari D-22/Ruiz D-29/Pintor Marin D-29/Morales D-34*) as P.L. 2025, c.91, which changes certain provisions of the Long-Term Tax Exemption Law concerning Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT).

Under current law, a municipality receiving an “annual service charge” pursuant to a PILOT must remit five percent of the annual service charge to the county in which the municipality is located. This new law changes the current notice and remittance practice to require that each municipality which enters into a financial agreement on or after the effective date must remit five percent of the annual service charge collected by the municipality to the county. *“If the five percent remittance due to the county is not paid when due, the unpaid balance thereof and interest, at the rate of one percent per month accrued thereon, together with attorney fees and court costs, may be recovered by the county from the municipality in an action filed in a court of competent jurisdiction. A municipal finance officer certificate may be subject to revocation or suspension ... for the willful or intentional failure, neglect or refusal to comply with this section.”*

County tax due or tax due means that the governing body of each municipality must pay the treasurer of the county, in four installments, the amount of the county tax due. *“With each installment required to be paid pursuant to this section, the chief municipal finance officer shall provide the following information for each agreement entered into by the municipality: 1) The project name and address; 2) The date on which the municipality entered into the agreement; 3) The expiration date of the agreement; 4) The amount of the annual service charge to be paid to the municipality; 5) The annual amount due to the county; 6) The portion of the quarterly service charge installment due to the county; 6) The quarterly installment amount collected by the municipality; and 6) The amount attributable to the agreement that is included in the installment county tax due.”* This new law takes effect on September 8th.

CLEAN COMMUNITIES

On July 22nd, Governor Murphy signed into law **S-3511** (*McKeon D-27/Zwicker D-15/Hader D-37/Reynolds-Jackson D-15*) as P.L. 2025 c. 106, which makes permanent an annual allocation of \$500,000 from the "Clean Communities Program Fund" to the Department of Environmental Protection to fund public outreach efforts related to the State's single-use plastics program reduction. In general, the Clean Communities Program Fund receives monies from user fees paid by manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, and retailers of litter-generating products, as well as penalties, and other voluntary donations. The law banning single-use plastics, included the allocation of \$500,000 from the fund to pay for the Clean Communities Program for education and implementation of the law until 2023. The Clean Communities Program has used these funds, in part, for the establishment of a bag redistribution program that collects reusable bags and repurposes them for use by food banks, food pantries, and other food distribution programs. This new law took effect immediately.

ELECTIONEERING

Also on July 8th, Governor Murphy signed into law **S-3850** (*Smith D-17/Scutari D-22/Karabinchak D-18/Reynolds-Jackson D-15*) as P.L.2025 c.92, which permits county boards of elections to extend the distance within which electioneering is prohibited. Prior law barred electioneering inside any polling place or room; within 100 feet outside the entrance to a polling place or room; and, within 100 feet of a ballot drop box in use during an election. This new law grants county boards of elections the discretion to extend the distance from 100 feet to 200 feet. The new law further requires county boards of elections to place notice of these prohibitions, and penalties for any violations, in a clear and conspicuous manner outside the polling place, polling room, or ballot drop box accordingly. This new law took effect immediately.

INVOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS

For our county adjuster and county counsel friends, on July 22nd, Governor Murphy signed into law **S-4263** (*Vitale D-19/Scutari D-22/Carter D-22/Sumter D-35*) as P.L. 2025, c.108, which revises certain provisions concerning involuntary commitment. In general, this new law revises P.L. 2023, c.139 to stipulate when consent may be provided to authorize a continued hold of a person along with additional requirements concerning the manner in which a hospital, emergency department, or designated screening service provider may apply for a temporary court order for a continued hold. The new law also expands certain reporting requirements for general hospitals and emergency departments. C.139 provides, in part, that a general hospital or emergency department, where a person is located during a screening outreach visit, may not detain the person for more than 72 hours from the time a screening certificate is executed, unless the hospital or emergency department obtains a temporary court order permitting the continued hold of the person for up to 72 additional hours. This new law took effect immediately.

DIGITAL DRIVER'S LICENSE

On July 23rd, Governor Murphy signed into law **A-3518** (*Quijano D-20/Sampson D-31/Calabrese D-36*) as P.L. 2025, which requires the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) to create digital driver's licenses and digital non-driver identification cards. In general, this new law requires the MVC to create and issue, in addition to the printed hard-copy driver's license or non-driver identification card issued by the MVC, a digital driver's license or digital non-driver identification card to any individual who voluntarily requests electronic documentation and the individual meets all requirements for the issuance of a basic driver's license, motorcycle license, probationary license, or non-driver identification card, as applicable. Stay tuned for additional details as this new law takes effect 44 months after enactment and authorizes the Chief Administrator of MVC and the Attorney General to take any administrative action as may be necessary to implement the measure in advance of that date.

WORKING TEST PERIOD

NJAC is optimistic that the Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, and Historic Preservation Committee will consider **S-3892** (*Polistina R-2*) in the fall after the General Assembly unanimously passed the companion version **A-5146** (*Guardian R-20*) on June 30th. In summary, this legislation would extend the Working Test Period (WTP) for local governments from three months to four months along with the ability to extend the WTP to six months at the discretion of the Civil Service Commission (CSC). County officials contend that this relatively brief timeframe hampers human resource professionals from properly evaluating potential employees and making accurate recommendations accordingly. Moreover, current law provides the State of New Jersey as an employer with a four-month WTP, so any permanent changes to the law would create uniformity among all levels of government. As such, this modest adjustment to the law would provide personnel and human resource departments in local governments across the State with additional time to adequately evaluate and recommend qualified employees for full-time employment.

UPCOMING NJAC EVENTS: Stay tuned for details about NJAC's next virtual workshop on 9/17 and Year-End Summit on 12/19!

THE TOP 15 GREATEST SUMMERTIME HITS OF ALL-TIME TO HELP EASE YOUR MILD TO MODERATE ROAD RAGE AS YOU'RE HEADING DOWN THE SHORE THIS WEEKEND BUT ARE STUCK IN TRAFFIC ON THE GARDEN STATE PARKWAY BECAUSE YOU LEFT JUST A MINUTE TOO EARLY, OR TOO LATE, BUT IT REALLY DIDN'T MATTER

15. Let's Twist Again by *Chubby Checker*
14. Summertime by *DJ Jazzy Jeff without the Fresh Prince*
13. Beyond the Sea by *Bobby Darin*
12. Surf City by *Jan & Dean*
11. I Get Around by *the Beach Boys*
10. Tender Years by *Eddie & the Cruisers*
9. Hot Fun in the Summertime, by *Sly & the Family Stone*
8. Summer Nights by *John Travolta & Olivia Newton John*
7. Jersey Girl by *Bruce Springsteen* but only if he stops talking and doing commercials
6. Schools Out by *Alice Cooper*
5. Saturday in the Park by *Chicago*
4. Summer Breeze by *Seals & Croft*
3. Under the Boardwalk by *the Drifters*
2. Summer Wind by *Frank Sinatra*
1. One Summer Night by *the Danleers*

DISHONORABLE MENTION list of terrible summertime songs that make you long for an awful Hallmark Christmas movie in July: Vacation by the Go Go's; Cruel Summer by Bananarma; Summer Girls by LFO; Suddenly Last Summer by the Motels; Endless Summer Nights by Richard Marx; That Summer by Garth Brooks; and, Summer of 69 by Bryan Adams.

"Nothing lasts forever, except the day before you start your vacation." Gayland Anderson

