

NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

County Government with a Unified Voice

RICHARD D. GARDNER
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Andrew Hendry,
Executive Director, Senate Majority Office

From: John Donnadio
Executive Director, New Jersey Association of Counties

DATE: September 13, 2012

RE: NJAC LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the New Jersey Association (NJAC), I would like the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss some of our short-term legislative initiatives that would help local governing bodies run more effectively and efficiently. As a non-partisan organization that represents the only true regional form of government in the State with a unified and proactive voice, NJAC is dedicated to advancing innovative programs and initiatives that save valuable taxpayer dollars.

DIRECT DEPOSIT

NJAC supports as one of its top legislative priorities **S-2090/A-720** (*Gordon D-Bergen*)(*Ramos D-Hudson*), which would require direct deposit for all State employee compensation on or after July 1, 2014; and, would authorize counties, municipalities, and school districts to pay its employees by direct deposit at the governing body's discretion at that time as well. This legislation would also authorize governing bodies to grant exemptions under certain circumstances and as determined by the governing body.

Current law, N.J.S.A. 34:11-4.2 requires local government employers to pay its employees the full amount of wages due in cash or by check. Although N.J.S.A. 34:11-4.2a authorizes public employers to pay its employees by direct deposit, such employees must first consent to payment in this manner. Unfortunately, these antiquated laws have become a significant barrier for several counties committed to streamlining their operations.

At a time in which all local governments are struggling to make ends meet, NJAC supports this important and timely measure to provide local governing bodies with a more cost effective alternative for managing its day-to-day operations. As you know, the Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, and Historic Preservation Committee will consider this measure on September 13th; and, the General Assembly passed with unanimous bi-partisan support A-720 on June 25th.

SHARE COUNTY TAX ADMINISTRATORS

At the request of Hunterdon County, NJAC drafted and strongly supports **S-1694/A-2758** (*Doherty R-Warren*)(*Quijano D-Union/McKeon D-Essex*), which permits counties to share county tax administrators. As you know, NJAC is a strong advocate for sharing resources and consolidation where feasible as cost effective alternatives for providing necessary and often mandated government services in a more reliable and practical manner. Over the past decade, our counties have led the way on implementing innovative programs and initiatives that have improved the level of service provided and saved valuable taxpayer dollars. Unfortunately however, several antiquated laws remain on the books and have become significant barriers to moving forward with potential cost saving initiatives.

One such example is the fact that N.J.S.A. 54:3-7(b) requires the county board of taxation in each county to appoint a full time county tax administrator. As you know, the Governor appoints all tax board members with the advice and consent of the Senate, and the State Treasurer pays their salaries accordingly. However, counties must pay for the salaries of its county tax administrator at approximately \$120,000 - \$150,000 per year. Counties must also pay for the salaries of all clerical assistants, and for the operation and maintenance of the offices for the entire tax board and administrator.

Several of our counties have expressed interest in sharing their county tax administrator as a meaningful cost saving measure, but have been advised that such an arrangement is prohibited by N.J.S.A. 54:3-7(b) as it again requires that counties employ their tax administrator on a full-time basis. At a time in which all local governments are struggling to make ends meet by reducing critical staff, essential services, and capital improvement projects, this outdated law imposes an unnecessary barrier to progressively sharing services. With this mind, NJAC strongly supports this legislation to provide county governments throughout the State with an additional tool to implement cutting edge changes on how it does business. S-1694 is currently in the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee awaiting consideration; and, A-2758 is currently in the Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee awaiting consideration as well.

COUNTY BOARDS OF TAXATION

Separate, but related; and, at the request of Hudson County, NJAC would like you to consider introducing legislation that would authorize county governing bodies to use monies held in trust funds maintained by county boards of taxation to pay for the operation and administrative expenses incurred by the boards.

Current law, N.J.S.A. 54:3-21.3a restricts the use of revenues collected by county tax boards to modernizing record retention capabilities, defraying recording and transcribing appeal proceedings, and setting forth memorandums of judgments. Over the course of time, trust funds maintained by county tax boards have accumulated substantial balances that remain unused. Given the economic difficulties and uncertainties faced by county governing bodies, counties should have the opportunity to use these funds to help offset the costs associated with operating and maintaining county tax boards. With this in mind, we respectfully request that you consider sponsoring legislation that would amend the law as follows:

N.J.S.A. 54:3-21.3a All revenues received by the county from fees ... shall be used exclusively for the purposes of modernizing the record-retention capabilities of the county board of taxation, for defraying the costs incurred by the county board of taxation in recording and transcribing appeal proceedings, setting forth memorandums of judgment, [and for] paying any salary required to be paid by the county which is increased pursuant to the amendatory and supplementary act, and for the operation and administrative expenses of the county board of taxation.

This proposed amendment will provide county governments throughout the State with an additional resource to fund the day-to-day operations of a State mandated function.

PUBLISH ORDINANCES BY TITLE AND SUMMARY

At the request of the Atlantic County, NJAC strongly supports **S-316** (*Whelan D-Atlantic*), which permits certain county boards of chosen freeholders to publish notices of proposed or amended ordinances by title and summary.

NJAC supports this legislation as it will save significant taxpayer dollars for county governments established pursuant to the "Optional County Charter Law." These counties include Atlantic, Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, and Union. Although current law under N.J.S.A. 40:49-2 authorizes municipalities to publish ordinances in a newspaper in their entirety or by title and summary,

N.J.S.A. 41A-1-101 mandates charter counties to publish ordinances in their entirety at a substantially higher cost. Please note that except for certain bond, capital expenditure, or health ordinances as required by specific statute, non-charter counties typically adopt resolutions at a much lower cost to publish. S-316 is currently in the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee awaiting consideration.

Thank you again for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing back from you soon, so we can discuss these important and timely initiatives in more detail.