

# NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

*County Government with a Unified Voice*

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## STATE HOUSE NEWS

*November 15, 2011*

### COOPERATIVE PURCHASING

On November 7<sup>th</sup> Governor Christie signed into law as P.L. 2011 c. 139 - **SENATE, NO. 2721/ASSEMBLY, NO. 2786** (*Greenwald D-6*) (*Beach D-6/Gordon D38*), which permits local governing bodies to participate in cooperative purchasing agreements through the use of a nationally recognized and accepted cooperative purchasing agreement that has been developed utilizing a competitive bidding process by another contracting unit within this State or within any other state. Although NJAC supported this measure as it made its way through the Legislature and onto the Governor's Desk as it's permissive and promotes shared services through cooperative purchasing, our county purchasing officials expressed concerns over the fact that the new law may circumvent the Local Public Contracts Law and diminish the State's overall purchasing power.

### SHARING COUNTY TAX ADMINISTRATORS

At the request of Hunterdon County, NJAC developed the position statement below that we'll use to secure sponsors of legislation that would authorize counties to share county tax administrators.

"The New Jersey Association of Counties (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 their county tax administrator at

approximately \$120,000.00 - \$150,000.00 per year, plus pension and health benefits. 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 in mind, we respectfully request that you consider sponsoring legislation that would amend the law concerning county boards of taxation as follows:

N.J.S.A. 54 (b) After the effective date of this 1979 amendatory and supplementary act, P.L.1979, c.499, any person holding the office of county tax administrator shall devote full time to his duties; provided, however, that any person currently holding office as a county board secretary may, at the option of the appointing authority, continue to serve on a part-time basis; provided he holds or obtains prior to July 1, 1981 a tax assessor certificate. Notwithstanding any law, rule, or regulation to the contrary, the governing body of the county may share its county tax administrator with another duly qualified county.

This proposed amendment will provide county governments throughout the State with an additional tool to implement cutting edge changes on how it does business.”

## **DEED SOLICITORS**

On November 21<sup>st</sup>, the Senate Commerce Committee will consider **SENATE, NO. 2459** (*Turner D-15*), which requires deed solicitors to register with the Division of Consumer Affairs.

NJAC supports this important and timely legislation as it will serve to protect consumers from companies that mislead them into overpaying for mortgage, deed, and other documents readily available through the offices of the county clerks and registers of deeds. These companies often charge up to 700% of what it would cost consumers to obtain the same information at their respective county offices. Although several counties have already issued public warnings to residents, this legislation would effectively end this deceptive business

practice. One recent example is a solicitation from a national deed service company that offered to provide a consumer with a deed copy for \$79.50 that the consumer could obtain at the county for as little as \$5.00. NJAC plans to testify in support of this Legislation on Monday.

#### **DIRECT DEPOSIT**

We hit a potential issue with our efforts to support legislation that would authorize county governments to pay its employees by direct deposit as a more cost effective alternative for conducting business. Last week, direct deposit failed for all employees on the State's legislative payroll because of programming changes made at Treasury. Although the issue has been resolved, opponents of the measure will very likely use last week's glitch as an example of why this legislation will not benefit employees. Nonetheless, we'll continue to advocate for the Assembly State Government Committee to consider **ASSEMBLY, NO. 3899** (*Ramos D- 33*) at one of its upcoming meetings where NJAC will testify in support of this important and timely initiative. The Senate version **SENATE, NO. 2833** (*Stack D-33*) is currently in the Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism, and Historic Preservation Committee awaiting consideration.

#### **SUMMIT ON POLICE CONSOLIDATION**

*(Trenton)* The New Jersey Association of Counties (NJAC) is hosting an educational and informative "Summit on Police Consolidation" on December 2, 2011 at the Trenton Country Club.

"This important and timely event will provide a unique opportunity to learn about the historical efforts of Camden and Somerset counties to save valuable taxpayer dollars and provide a more efficient level of service by studying the consolidation of police services in their respective counties," said NJAC President and Salem County Freeholder Beth E. Timberman.

NJAC has assembled an outstanding panel of subject matter experts that will provide local officials, decision makers, and statewide leaders with a highly anticipated and long overdue discussion on the feasibility of countywide police forces. NJAC is also pleased to announce that Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno will serve as the keynote luncheon speaker following the panel discussion moderated by NJTV's Michael Aron.

"As a leader in promoting shared services and consolidation initiatives, we're thrilled that Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno will address what we expect to be a capacity crowd of those

committed to providing taxpayers with innovative solutions for delivering essential services in a more cost effective manner,” said Timberman.

NJAC is committed to advocating for legislation, regulations, and policy directives that empower county governments to operate 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 for the sole purpose of saving valuable taxpayer dollars.

*“The road to happiness lies in two simple principles: find what interests you and that you can do well, and put your whole soul into it – every bit of energy and ambition and natural ability you have.” John D. Rockefeller III*

