

# NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

*County Government with a Unified Voice!*

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## STATE HOUSE NEWS

*November 15, 2019*

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### MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY TASK FORCE

NJAC is pleased report that the Association will serve on the Mental Health Advisory Task Force created by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to address system-wide issues concerning individuals with mental illness. The Committee met for the first time on November 13<sup>th</sup>, where Chief Justice Stuart Rabner provided the opening remarks and shared his vision of how collaboratively the State should guide individuals struggling with mental illness to treatment and not into correctional facilities.

Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson and Essex County Vicinage Assignment Judge Sallyanne Floria will serve as co-chairs of Committee, which will *“examine points of intersection between individuals with mental illness and the Judiciary; determine whether mental health services can or should be provided at these various points; and, identify and formalize best practices and programs to create new initiatives that can be used to further the goal of better serving those with mental illness who interact with the justice system.”* Thank you to the AOC and the Honorable Glenn Grant for including NJAC in this important and timely endeavor. In addition to the Association, county government is well represented by Eugene Caldwell as the Gloucester County Jail Warden and President of the New Jersey County Jail Wardens Association; Steven Horvath with the Monmouth County Office of Mental Health and the New Jersey Association of County Mental Health Administrators; and, Camelia Valdes, the Passaic County Prosecutor.

We'll make sure to keep you posted on the Committee's progress and encourage you to share your thoughts and suggestions throughout the process. NJAC plans to serve on the Mental Health Summit Planning and Community Outreach subcommittees and looks forward to hearing from our county welfare directors, human service directors, adjusters, administrators, and other county professionals. Additional subcommittees include the Mental Health Pilot Subcommittee; the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), Mental Health Training, and Educational Materials for Key Stakeholders Subcommittee; the Data Collection, Measures, and Outcomes Subcommittee; and, the Treatment and Service Capacity Subcommittee.

## CODE BLUE

NJAC is concerned that the Assembly Homeland Security and State Preparedness Committee will consider during lame duck **SENATE, No. 3422** (*Singer R-30/Kean R-21*), which would require counties to declare a Code Blue alert when the National Weather Service (NWS) Predicts the temperature to be 32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.

Although NJAC commends senators Singer and Kean for their efforts to provide comfort for at-risk individuals during severe weather events, this legislation does not contain a funding mechanism or State appropriation to offset the costs associated with extending the 2017 law that counties, municipalities, social service agencies, and non-profit organizations have struggled to implement. In summary, the relatively new law requires county governing bodies, through their offices of emergency management or other appropriate offices, agencies or departments, to establish plans for issuing Code Blue alerts to municipalities, social service agencies, and non-profit organizations that provide services to at-risk individuals and are located within the county's borders. In summary, the new law requires emergency management coordinators to declare a Code Blue alert after evaluating weather forecasts and advisories produced by the National Weather Service that predict the following weather conditions in the county within 24 to 48 hours: temperatures will reach 25 degrees Fahrenheit or lower without precipitation; or 32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower with precipitation; or, the National Weather Service wind chill temperature will be 0 degrees Fahrenheit or less for a period of 2 hours or more.

Under the leadership of Senator Troy Singleton (*D-7*) and Assemblywoman Pintor Marin (*D-29*), Governor Phil Murphy signed into law earlier this year legislation that now authorizes county governments to increase the homelessness housing fund surcharge from \$3.00 to \$5.00 and to use the \$2.00 increase to support emergency shelter for homeless services provided during a Code Blue alert. NJAC supported this important and timely initiative as one of our top legislative priorities as it should help freeholder boards provide adequate shelter for homeless individuals during inclement weather without affecting existing programs that support permanent housing and self-sufficiency. Although certainly well intended, S-3422 would establish an even greater financial burden than the 2017 law and would make issuing a Code Blue alert more costly and difficult to implement, manage, and sustain. In fact, setting the parameters for issuing a Code Blue alert at 32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower would double the amount of Code Blue nights and would lead to increased costs as noted above, depleted staff and resources, and fatigued volunteers.

For these reasons and considering the several pieces of legislation that affect issuing Code Blue and Code red alerts, NJAC respectfully opposes S-3422 and instead recommends that the Legislature establish a task force to study and recommend Code Blue and Code Red alert best practices and guidelines. In fact, NJAC is seeking sponsors

to introduce legislation that would establish a task force to recommend Code Blue and Code Red alert best practices based on the following general parameters: 1) reasonable temperatures for issuing Code Red and Code Blue alerts; 2) clearly defined roles for counties, municipalities, social service agencies, non-profit organizations, and other volunteers; 3) the appropriate use of facilities, staffing levels, fire codes, permits, and other resources; and, 4) a permanent and steady source of funding to offset the costs associated with issuing Code Red and Code Blue alerts.

The task force should include representatives from the following county affiliated organizations: the New Jersey Association of Counties, the New Jersey Association of Human Service Directors, the New Jersey Association of County Emergency Management Coordinators, The New Jersey Association of County Welfare Directors, the New Jersey Association of County Mental Health Administrators, and the New Jersey Sheriff's Association. The task force should also include representatives from the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, the New Jersey Department of Human Services, the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, the Office of the State Treasurer, appropriate social service and non-profit organizations, and legislators from both houses and on both sides of the aisle. In general, the task force may meet in person at least (4) times and must deliver a final report to the Legislature within (1) year.

The intent of this important and timely task force would be to establish uniformity in the law that should help provide adequate shelter for homeless individuals during inclement weather in conjunction with existing programs that support permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

### **SMALL WIRELESS FACILITIES**

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, NJAC and the New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJLM) testified before the Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee on **ASSEMBLY, No. 5560** (*Murphy D-7/Greenwald D-6*), which would provide for the uniform regulation of small wireless facility deployment.

Although NJAC appreciates the need to uniformly and expediently deploy small wireless facilities to meet increasing consumer demand for wireless data, deployment must be executed in a collaborative effort between wireless providers and counties and municipalities as caretakers of public lands. NJAC plans to meet with the sponsors to discuss the measure in more detail as it would generally restrict a local government's authority over a wireless provider's use of public rights of way, cap application and permit fees, impose new timelines for automatic project approval, require local governments to repair or remove small wireless facilities under certain circumstances, and essentially eliminate indemnity protection. NJAC will also seek to address the longstanding issue of utility relocation in a timely manner when planning for long-term

capital improvement projects on county bridges of which often delays projects unnecessarily.

In general, this legislation would provide for the uniform regulation of small wireless facility deployment in this State by local government units (authorities). The bill would prohibit an authority from regulating small wireless facilities in a manner that is inconsistent with the bill. An authority may not enter into an exclusive arrangement with any person or entity for the use of the right-of-way for: the collocation of a small wireless facility; the mounting or installation of a small wireless facility on new or replacement poles; the installation of associated antenna equipment adjacent to a structure on which a small wireless facility is or will be collocated, mounted, or installed; or, the installation, operation, marketing, modification, maintenance, or replacement of associated poles.

The bill would also provide that a wireless provider would to have the right, as a permitted use not subject to zoning review or approval, and without the need for municipal consent to: collocate small wireless facilities; mount or install small wireless facilities on new or replacement poles; install associated antenna equipment adjacent to a structure on which a small wireless facility is or will be collocated, mounted, or installed; or, install, modify, or replace its own poles, or, with the permission of the owner, a third party's poles, associated with a small wireless facility, along, across, upon, and under the right-of-way.

The measure would further provide that each new, replaced, or modified pole installed in the right-of-way for the purpose of collocating, mounting, or installing a small wireless facility is to follow certain height restrictions pursuant to the bill. An authority may adopt aesthetics requirements governing the deployment of small wireless facilities and associated antenna equipment and poles in the right-of-way, subject to certain requirements pursuant to the bill. A wireless provider would have to comply with undergrounding requirements that are consistent with the bill. The bill provides that an authority may require a wireless provider to repair all damage to the right-of-way caused by the activities of the wireless provider and to return the right-of-way to its functional equivalence before the damage, pursuant to the competitively neutral, reasonable requirements and specifications of the authority. If the wireless provider fails to make the repairs required by the authority within a reasonable time after written notice, the authority may make those repairs and charge the applicable party the reasonable, documented cost of the repairs.

A wireless provider would not be required to replace or upgrade an existing pole except for reasons of structural necessity or compliance with applicable building codes. A wireless provider may, with the permission of the pole owner, replace or modify the existing pole, but any replacement or modification shall be consistent with the design aesthetics of the pole being modified or replaced. The bill requires wireless provider to notify an authority at least 30 days before the abandonment of

a small wireless facility located within the authority's jurisdiction. Following receipt of the notice, the authority is to direct the wireless provider to remove all or any portion of the small wireless facility and associated antenna equipment that the authority determines would be in the best interest of public safety. If the wireless provider fails to remove the abandoned small wireless facility within 90 days after the notice, the authority may undertake to remove the small wireless facility and recover the actual and reasonable expenses of the removal from the wireless provider, its successors, or assigns. The bill would allow an authority to require an applicant to obtain a permit for: the collocation of a small wireless facility; mounting or installation of a small wireless facility on a new, modified, or replacement pole; or, the installation, modification, or replacement of associated poles or antenna equipment as provided the bill.

Each permit issued pursuant to the bill would be of general applicability and would not to apply exclusively to a small wireless facility. An authority would be required to receive and process applications following certain requirements pursuant to the bill. Additionally, rates, fees, and terms and conditions for any make-ready work to collocate, mount, or install a small wireless facility on an authority pole and to install associated antenna equipment would be non-discriminatory, competitively neutral, and commercially reasonable. The legislation would further provide that all rates and fees established pursuant to the bill are to be a reasonable approximation of the authority's reasonable costs and would be applied by the authority in a non-discriminatory manner. An authority may not require a wireless provider to pay any rates, fees, or compensation to the authority or other person other than what is expressly authorized by the bill for the right to use or occupy the right-of-way for the collocation, mounting, or installation of a small wireless facility on a pole in the right-of-way, or for the installation, maintenance, modification, or replacement of associated antenna equipment or a pole in the right-of-way.

Application fees for any permit would not to exceed certain amounts pursuant to the bill. The bill provides that an authority is not to have or exercise any jurisdiction or authority over the design, engineering, construction, installation, or operation of a small wireless facility located in an interior structure or upon the site of a campus, stadium, or athletic facility not owned or controlled by the authority, other than to require compliance with applicable building codes. Further, except as it relates to small wireless facilities subject to the permit and fee requirements established pursuant the bill or otherwise specifically authorized by State or federal law, an authority is not to adopt or enforce any regulations or requirements on the placement or operation of communications facilities in the right-of-way by a communications service provider authorized by federal, State, or local law to operate in the right-of-way, regulate any communications services, or impose or collect any tax, fee, rate, or charge for the provision of additional communications service over the communications service provider's communications facilities in the right-of-way. The bill would allow for an authority to adopt an ordinance that makes

available to wireless providers rates, fees, and other terms and conditions that comply with the bill. An ordinance or agreement that does not fully comply with the bill is to apply only to small wireless facilities and any associated poles and antenna equipment that were operational before the effective date the bill and are to be deemed invalid and unenforceable beginning on the 181st day after the effective date of the bill unless amended to fully comply with the bill.

The measure would provide that an authority may adopt reasonable indemnification, insurance, and bonding requirements related to a small wireless facility and associated pole permits and antenna equipment. An authority is not to require a wireless provider to indemnify and hold the authority and its officers and employees harmless against any claims, lawsuits, judgments, costs, liens, losses, expenses, or fees, except when a court of competent jurisdiction has found that the negligence of the wireless provider while installing, repairing, or maintaining a small wireless facility or associated poles and antenna equipment caused the harm that created the claims, lawsuits, judgments, costs, liens, losses, expenses, or fees. The bill provides that an authority may require a wireless provider to have in effect insurance coverage consistent with the bill. The bill also allows an authority to adopt bonding requirements for small wireless facilities if the authority imposes similar requirements in connection with permits issued for other right-of-way users. The bill provides that a court of competent jurisdiction is to have jurisdiction to determine disputes arising pursuant to the bill. A dispute is to be pursued in accordance with accelerated docket or complaint procedures, where available.

#### **ELECTRONIC NOTICE OF BOND ORDINANCES**

Also, on November 14<sup>th</sup>, NJAC noted its support before the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee for **SENATE, NO. 3037** (*Lagana D-38*)/**ASSEMBLY, NO. 4476** (*Mazzeo D-2/Armato D-2*), which would permit the transmittal of certain proposed bond ordinances by electronic mail.

Along the lines of similar NJAC legislative initiatives that were signed into law, such as authorizing local governing bodies to pay employees by direct deposit and to pay bills by electronic fund transfer technologies, NJAC strongly supports this legislation as it would streamline and modernize the antiquated bond notification process. Under current law, a board of chosen freeholders in charter counties (*Atlantic, Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, and Union*) must provide, by regular mail within one week prior to the date of a hearing on a proposed bond ordinance, a copy of the proposed ordinance to the clerk of each municipality within the county. As ordinances typically range from 10 to 25 pages with anywhere from 15 to 70 municipalities in such counties, authorizing a board of chosen freeholders to notify municipalities by email of a proposed bond ordinance would save valuable time, resources, taxpayer dollars, and would provide clarification on the process to non-charter counties. The General Assembly unanimously passed A-4476 on March 25<sup>th</sup> and the Senate is expected to pass the measure during lame duck.

## **GOVERNOR'S PLAN FOR PUBLIC BANK IS MET BY ACCLAIM – AND SOME CONCERNS**

*by John Reitmeyer, NJ Spotlight - November 14, 2019*

Gov. Phil Murphy's long-awaited first step to establish a public bank in New Jersey has thrilled advocates for financial reform. But it is also generating concerns, including from those who worry New Jersey is a poor fit for a state-run financial institution. Murphy yesterday signed an executive order that formally set up a 14-member "implementation board" for a public bank in New Jersey. He has also given the panel a year to come up with a business plan and other operating guidelines for the institution. While the move was praised by financial reform advocates, Republican lawmakers and a representative of the state's banking community were among those critical of the move. "It just seems a little strange to be creating another state agency," said Michael Affuso, director of government relations for the New Jersey Bankers Association.

The basic premise of a public bank is to leverage the millions of dollars in taxpayer deposits that are normally kept in commercial banks and to use them as capital to underwrite loans that serve some sort of public purpose. Right now, North Dakota is the only state that operates such a bank. But Murphy, a Democrat, made the establishment of a public bank in New Jersey a central issue during his run for office in 2017. Yesterday's announcement marks the governor's first significant move toward making it a reality since he took office in early 2018. "I am so proud to be able to say we are governing as we said we would," Murphy said moments before signing the executive order during an event in Newark.

Financial reform advocates immediately praised the governor's action. Supporters included Joan Bartl, co-director of a group called Banking on New Jersey that has long called for the establishment of a public bank in the Garden State. "It's very exciting," said Bartl, who Murphy picked to serve on the implementation board. Advocates of public banks say they can provide borrowers with fairer interest rates and other favorable lending terms because there's no need to charge high fees to fund things like large executive bonuses or to pump up shareholder profits. Murphy also suggested a public bank in New Jersey could be used to boost affordable housing projects, fund infrastructure investments and provide better lending terms to college students and small-business owners.

"A public bank is about power to the people," said Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver, who was also on hand yesterday as Murphy signed the executive order. Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, executive director of New Jersey Citizen Action, said discussions about establishing a public bank in New Jersey go back decades. She credited Murphy for bringing the idea this far even while acknowledging there's more work to do over the next year. "Today marks a very important step toward making a state public bank in New Jersey a reality, and getting some of these very important projects funded," said Salowe-Kaye, who will also serve on the implementation board. Under the executive order, the 14-member

panel will hold at least three public hearings as it sketches out a business plan for the bank. State Banking and Insurance Commissioner Marlene Caride will lead the board.

Tim Sullivan, chief executive of the state Economic Development Authority, said after yesterday's event that the bank could play an important role in a broader push to improve the state economy by giving more entrepreneurs and small-business owners access to capital in New Jersey. "We're trying to shift how the marketplace thinks about a lot of these opportunities," Sullivan said. He cited as an example an EDA small-business "microlending" program that currently has only \$1 million in available funding. "It could be scaled up with a public bank, for sure," Sullivan said. "Hopefully, we can figure out some of the particulars of how this could work." Not everyone is thrilled to see the governor advance the public-bank initiative, including Republican lawmakers, who raised concerns yesterday about the potential for taxpayers to take on risky loans. "This poses too great of a potential liability for New Jersey families who already struggle with taxes," said Sen. Anthony Bucco (R-Morris).

Bucco also raised concerns about political influence in his own response to Murphy's announcement, which came as his administration is still in the midst of probing the state's administration of lucrative economic-development tax incentives. At least one criminal referral has been made as a result of that investigation. "Governor Murphy needs to focus on New Jersey's high property taxes and underfunded schools, rather than launch this bottomless money pit that will no doubt be run by politically connected folks," Bucco said. One of the big questions the implementation board will have to address is how the public bank would interact or complement existing financial institutions in New Jersey, including credit unions and community banks.

Michael Affuso of the New Jersey Bankers Association said banks already have a responsibility under the federal Community Reinvestment Act to work with low- and moderate-income communities, which would also be one of the public bank's goals. He also questioned the state's creation of another financial bureaucracy, since there are already agencies like the EDA, the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority and the Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency operating in Trenton. "We think we can get exactly where the governor wants to get without creating any additional state bureaucracy," he added. Also raising eyebrows was Murphy's decision to appoint senior adviser Derrick Green to serve on the implementation board alongside advocates like Bartl and Salowe-Kaye, and administration officials like Caride and state Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio. Green, according to northjersey.com reports, was connected to a campaign-finance scandal several years ago in Bermuda. He was never charged with any wrongdoing, but GOP lawmakers had already been critical of Murphy's selection of Green to serve in his administration before he was picked to fill a seat on the public-bank panel. "Governor Murphy is once again intentionally ignoring significant issues involving someone within his administration, and doing so conspicuously," said Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi (R-Bergen). "It is a disturbing trend."



## **BILLS IN BOTH HOUSES WOULD TIGHTEN RESTRICTIONS ON VAPING, E-CIGS**

*by Lilo H. Stanton, NJ Spotlight - November 14, 2019*

New Jersey lawmakers are scheduled today to consider proposals that would eliminate all flavored tobacco and e-cigarette products — including menthol cigarettes — increase taxes on vapes, create an electronic tracking system for their sales and tighten regulations for retail outlets to reduce sales to those under age 21.

Bills scheduled to be heard in the Assembly and Senate health panels would codify some of the key recommendations of the Electronic Smoking Device Task Force Gov. Phil Murphy empaneled earlier this year to address concerns about vape use, which has soared in recent years among young people. At least one in five Garden State high schoolers now uses e-cigs although state law prohibits sales of any tobacco product to minors. Lawmakers first tried to ban e-cigarette flavors in 2016 but the issue has recently received new attention as health officials across the country face a growing number of vape-related lung injury cases. More than 2,000 cases are under review and 39 people have died nationwide, including one in New Jersey; initial research suggests street-altered products may be largely to blame. “Young people are using flavor as a gateway to nicotine addiction,” said Sen. Joseph Vitale (D-Middlesex), chair of the health committee and a sponsor of several bills. “There’s going to be pushback” from the vaping industry, he said, “but we’ll get this done.”

While e-cigarettes — which heat a liquid infused with nicotine or marijuana into a vapor that is inhaled — do not contain the same cancer-causing tar as traditional cigarettes, they do contain higher levels of nicotine. Health experts also note little is known about the effect of some of the flavors and other substances, but some users swear the products have saved their lives by allowing them to stop smoking cigarettes. A total of seven bills are on the agenda for Thursday, but several are nearly identical versions of the same proposals. Vitale and Assemblyman Herb Conaway (D-Burlington), who chairs the health committee in his chamber, are the lead sponsors on a number of measures, including the flavor ban. Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-Gloucester) is sponsoring a tax that would require vape products be carefully tracked. Vitale said most are likely to head to the budget committees next, where amendments will be made to resolve any disparities between the versions. *The bills scheduled for consideration Thursday include:*

S-3265/A-3178, which would make it illegal to sell, give away or otherwise distribute vape products that contain flavoring of any kind. It would impose fines ranging from \$250 for the first offense to \$1,000 for the third or later violation. It is up for a vote in both health committees today. This proposal dates to January 2016 and cleared hearings in both houses in the previous legislative session but has yet to gain traction — until now. Vitale, Sen. Shirley Turner (D-Mercer) and Sen. Richard Codey (D-Essex) are lead sponsors of the current Senate version. Conaway and Assemblywomen Carol Murphy (D-Camden) and Valerie Vainieri Huttel (D-Bergen) have championed the measure in their house.

A-5922/S-4224, which would revise sales requirements for tobacco, vape products; increases penalties This bill seeks to tighten and clarify state laws regulating tobacco product sales in order to reduce minors' access to vapes; it also spells out that these limits don't apply to medical cannabis. It would further require the use of an electronic system to monitor the sale of e-cigarette products, pending under another bill, which would allow regulators to track vape products through a system similar to how the state taxes and controls cigarettes. In addition, the proposal calls for vendors to keep all tobacco products, including vapes, in a locked cabinet behind the counter or other restricted area. It would also require salespeople to confirm the age of the buyer before selling any tobacco items. Retailers could face penalties ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 — double the current rate — for violations; the clerk making an underage sale could be charged with a disorderly persons offense and fined \$1,000, also twice the current amount. And minors who buy vapes could face similar charges, with a fine of up to \$500 and as much as 30 days in jail, or both, as they now do for buying tobacco products under the legal age. The proposal would also create new regulations to restrict what vape products can be sold legally, including banning devices that look like unrelated items — like flash drives or phones. In addition, it would require all products sold to be registered with the federal Food and Drug Administration and to include an electronic-tracking feature; vape liquids couldn't contain more than 2% nicotine or be tampered with outside the factory. Conaway is the sponsor of the Assembly version, which appears to align with draft text of the bill Vitale will formally introduce tomorrow. Both committees are scheduled to vote on the measure.

A-5923/S-4223, which would change how vape sellers are licensed under the state Treasury Department, raise and expand the sales taxes charged on these products, and establish a new electronic-tracking system for e-cigarettes like the so-called tax stamp used protect the legitimacy of conventional cigarette sales. It also creates new categories of business to separate shops largely devoted to e-cigarette products from other retail sites that offer a limited selection of these products; all of these retailers would need a license under the new bill. Currently, only vape shops that sell liquid refills require a special e-cigarette license, the bill notes. The proposal raises the fee for vape-shop licenses from \$50 annually to at least \$500; more extensive businesses would need to pay \$1,000 a year. It would also permit municipalities to require additional fees, if the revenue generated is spent on enforcement. Businesses that sell vape products to underage buyers would face a \$2,000 fine and could lose their license; operating without a license could result in daily penalties of \$1,000.

In addition, the measure would impose a new 20% retail tax rate on vapes and liquids and doubles the existing 10-cents-per-milliliter tax on refills. (New Jersey charges an excise tax of \$2.70 per pack of cigarettes, in addition to the 6.6% sales tax.) The bill also requires the Treasury's Division of Taxation to establish a database and an electronic system — with a stamp or barcode of some kind — that allows it to track all vape-related products sold. When he first discussed his plan, Sweeney said he envisioned

something akin to the tax stamps the state currently uses to regulate cigarette sales and ensure they are distributed legally. Two months after this process was developed, manufacturers would need to start building this tracking device into their products, upload information on these items to the state system, and report any problems to regulators, the bill notes. Items without the stamp would be considered contraband, like cigarettes without the state tax stamp. The measure is sponsored by Conaway; it appears almost identical to a plan Sweeney will introduce Thursday.

S-1947, sponsored by Vitale and Sen. Robert Singer (R-Monmouth) amends a 2008 statute that banned flavored cigarettes to include menthol and clove products, both of which were exempted at the time. The legislation notes that research has shown the cooling aspect of the menthol flavor desensitizes smokers so that they light up more frequently than their peers who prefer unflavored tobacco, which puts them at greater risk for addiction and smoking-related diseases. Menthol products have historically been marketed to the black community, the bill adds, and nearly nine-in-10 African American smokers prefer menthols. Conaway first introduced this measure in the Assembly in January 2018, when it also passed the health committee he chairs and was referred to the Assembly's appropriations panel, where the measure remains. (The Assembly version is not up for a hearing Thursday.) Federal regulators, who banned other flavored smokes in 2009, have also explored further restrictions on menthol products but have not imposed any ban, lawmakers note.

#### **UPCOMING NJAC EVENTS**

We hope you'll join us on December 20<sup>th</sup> for NJAC's "Summit on the Suicide Crisis," where we'll examine the alarming increase in suicide rates among teenagers, adults, veterans, and law enforcement professionals. Registration is free for all public officials; however, space is limited, and you *must* to attend.

**STATE HOUSE TRIVIA:** *Did you know* that the Macy's Day Parade began as a Christmas Parade with animals from the Central Park Zoo, entertainers, and employees.

*"Thanksgiving is an emotional time. People travel thousands of miles to be with people they see only once a year. And then discover once a year is way too often." - Johnny Carson.*