

## SENATE BILL NO. 2000

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section 1, Paragraph 15 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am appending to Senate Bill No. 2000, at the time of my signing it, my statement of items, or parts thereof, to which I object so that each item, or part thereof, so objected to shall not take effect.

This budget reflects all we have done to use the taxpayers' dollars wisely to help create a more prosperous, better educated, safer and stronger New Jersey. Working together, we have generated jobs, cut taxes, prevented crime, guaranteed quality education for our children, improved transportation, reduced welfare rolls and preserved open space for generations to come. Most important, we have used our stewardship of this budget to help make New Jersey the best place in which to live, work, and raise a family.

I commend Senate President DiFrancesco and Assembly Speaker Collins and the chairmen of the budget committees, Senator Littell and Assemblyman Lance, for their diligence in achieving a budget that meets the fundamental goals of my budget proposal, reaffirms our pledge that the New Jersey taxpayer is our top priority and also received bipartisan support.

Our success in managing the State's fiscal affairs, coupled with the unparalleled prosperity New Jersey now enjoys, presents us with an unprecedented opportunity, an opportunity I call New Jersey's Prosperity Dividend. This budget invests that Prosperity Dividend in New Jersey's future by maintaining and expanding our commitment to the major accomplishments we have achieved over the past six years. Moreover, this budget highlights our strong fiscal record by returning more money to New Jersey taxpayers, while bringing the surplus to a record \$870 million.

First and foremost, this budget makes an unprecedented investment in education, assuring New Jersey's position as a national leader in providing quality education. This budget includes nearly \$6.8 billion to educate New Jersey's students – almost one-third of our entire State budget. That is a \$510 million increase over the current year, making this the sixth straight budget to increase direct school aid. With

this budget, the State is ready to undertake an historic commitment to rebuild and repair our schools so that all children will have a first class learning environment.

Rebates, veterans' tax credits, property tax deductions and school aid will provide almost \$10 billion in property tax relief. Through the NJ SAVER program we initiated last year, property taxpayers will receive a rebate check this fall averaging about \$240, or double last year's check. That amount will continue to increase until the average check reaches \$600 in the fifth year of the program and beyond, keeping our promise to provide meaningful, long-term relief from the burden of rising property taxes.

Of course, we want to ensure that we help New Jersey's low-wage working families boost their paychecks. That is why this budget funds the New Jersey Earned Income Tax Credit, which will provide a credit to nearly 240,000 families. In addition, this budget will establish FamilyCare, an affordable health insurance program designed to assist working families in New Jersey who lack health insurance. With FamilyCare, we will help 125,000 low-and moderate-income adults obtain needed health insurance. This program, together with our KidCare program for children, will improve the health of New Jersey's families and reduce the cost of charity care.

This budget also invests in our high tech future. The high technology package included in this budget will help our citizens take advantage of New Jersey's leadership position in this rapidly growing industry. This budget includes money for business incubators, venture capital for emerging businesses, and money for colleges and universities to produce the skilled workers needed in the technology industries.

As jobs grow and our State's economy expands, we need to make sure our infrastructure is first rate. This budget, when combined with federal funding, provides for an unprecedented \$2 billion program to improve our roads, highways, bridges, and mass transit systems – the lifeblood of our economy. This budget places a greater reliance on pay-as-you-go spending. This is the prudent way to invest in our future and the only way to ensure that critically needed road projects are completed in a timely manner.

This budget invests wisely in New Jersey's future, and I support the overall spending plan as presented in this bill. However, among the special and other appropriations in this budget, there are several areas in which I believe adjustments are

appropriate. Prudent fiscal management demands that even in times of prosperity we spend taxpayer money as if it were our own. I, therefore, judiciously exercise my line-item veto to further clarify the spending priorities for the coming fiscal year.

I am, accordingly, appending to Senate Bill No. 2000, at the time of signing it, this statement of objections to the items, or parts thereof, to which I object and which shall not take effect.