



president's message

BY THOMAS A. BRACKEN

The New Jersey Chamber's Pledge: Make N.J. a Great Place to Live, Work and Do Business

These are interesting times in New Jersey. Following years of legislation and regulation that helped drive many businesses and jobs out of the Garden State, the momentum is turning.

In June, the governor and the Legislature passed a second-consecutive budget that reduces spending and does not increase taxes. That came a week after they worked together to achieve something many in Trenton thought impossible: pension and health benefit reform. Congratulations to Gov. Chris Christie, Senate President Stephen Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver and the members of the Legislature who came together in a bipartisan manner and made this happen for the good of New Jersey.

These achievements are also a victory for our lobbying team here at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce. They worked tirelessly to spread the message that government needs to exhibit the same fiscal responsibility as the private sector, and that spending cuts must be considered before tax increases.

We were successful this year in preventing a \$1 billion payroll tax increase to employers that was intended to supplement the Unemployment Insurance Fund. After many months of advocacy by our staff, we saw business tax reform passed in the form of a measure that, for the first time, allows small businesses to carry forward net operating losses for 20 years, and allows them to offset gains and losses from one category of income to another. We aggressively promoted changes to regulations burdensome to the business community – several of these recommendations were in a report by Gov. Christie's Red Tape Review Commission and are pending action.

These are outstanding achievements. But this is no time to rest. We are working everyday to encourage the governor and the Legislature to continue pursuing bold reforms that will improve our economy,

create jobs in New Jersey and continue to make our state more business friendly.

Next up is education.

We support the governor's education reform package that will help ensure that every child receives a quality public school education. The package includes improved evaluation and increased accountability for teachers and principals, reform of the state's teacher tenure system, protection for good teachers by ending "first in, last out" laws, elimination of the practice of forced placement, and empowerment of parents who have children in failing schools.

The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber's Foundation have long argued for these reforms.

The focus of reform must be on our kids. We need to make sure all of them receive a quality education and are ready to become part of the highly skilled workforce that companies in New Jersey have come to expect.

As a member of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, you are supporting the fight for these policies and programs and our efforts to improve the economic climate in our state.

Your voice is among those who want to see a growing and thriving business community in New Jersey. Our pledge to you: we will continue to aggressively promote the interests of our members and make sure New Jersey is a great place to live, work and to do business. ❖

Thomas A. Bracken
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New Jersey Chamber of Commerce