NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
County Government with a Unified Voice!

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STATE HOUSE NEWS

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STATE FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET DEAL

On Wednesday, Governor Sherrill, Senate President Scutari, and Speaker Coughlin announced that they've reached an agreement on the Fiscal Year 2027 State Budget with additional details to follow. Budget committees in both houses are scheduled to meet over the weekend to move the spending plan, but details are not available of this writing.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Although the staggering increases in health benefit premiums for local governments participating in the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP) have been well documented with the State Health Benefit's Commission to likely announce additional increases for plan year 2027 at the Commission's next meeting on July 8th, local governments across the State are also struggling to control unsustainable increases in healthcare costs. With this in mind, NJAC is encouraging all twenty-one counties to adopt a resolution urging state leaders to implement fair and equitable reforms to mitigate the unsustainable increases in health benefit premiums for public sector employees.

In 2025, county governments alone spent an estimated $1.2 billion in taxpayer dollars to provide health benefits for approximately 30,000 employees with employee contributions totaling $150.0 million or 12.5%. Despite innovative cost containment measures taken by county officials to make available affordable and quality healthcare for valued employees and their families, public sector health benefit plans are far too costly and time is of the essence for State leaders to enact long-term structural reforms that should include eliminating costly plan designs; modifying co-pays for specialists and urgent care, restricting the use of out-of-network healthcare coverage and GLP-1 drugs; implementing a Reference Based Pricing system; streamlining the use of Health Savings Accounts and Flexible Spending Accounts; and, enhancing medical transparency and the collection of data. Failure to make these long-term structural reforms will leave county officials with no choice but to impose hiring freezes, eliminate budgeted vacancies, and increase taxes on residents already burdened with the highest property tax bill in the nation. Unfortunately, as of this writing, it does not appear as if the Legislature will make any changes to meaningful changes SHBP before it passes the budget and recesses for the summer. Stay tuned for additional details.

JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITIES

On June 11th, NJAC testified before the Senate Law and Public Safety Committee in support of **S-1280** *(Greenstein D-14),* which would make various revisions to the statutes governing juvenile justice.

NJAC is grateful to Senator Greenstein for introducing this important and timely measure as one of the recommendations made by NJAC's Juvenile Detention Facility Working Group to address the long-standing public safety concerns with the housing of adults in juvenile detention facilities In summary, this measure would require the court to conduct an "In the Interest of Justice Hearing" to determine whether an individual over the age of 18 should continue to be detained in a county juvenile detention facility awaiting trial or transferred to an adult county jail or a secure facility operated by the Youth Justice Commission. This fair and reasonable change to the current process could serve to protect younger juveniles from being housed with adults who may have committed serious crimes as juveniles but remain in a juvenile detention facility pending trial. NJAC also supports the fact that this legislation would streamline the intake, remand and placement process for juveniles taken into custody as the average statewide length of stay is nearly 6 months and over 1-2 years in many cases. In fact, the new process under the bill would follow the adult Criminal Justice Reform timelines with final disposition or trial to take place within 2 years following the initial intake and screening of a juvenile taken into custody.

With only one-third of the State's twenty-one counties currently operating juvenile detention facilities, county governments across the State have been struggling to secure and maintain adequate housing and provide vital support services for juveniles taken into custody. County law enforcement officials, juvenile detention officers, social service professionals, and management attributes these struggles to a variety of factors that include an increase in serious crimes committed by juveniles, the housing of certain adults in juvenile detention facilities, inadequate staffing and training opportunities, lengthy case processing times, and a fragmented system for housing juveniles between counties that operate juvenile detention facilities and those that do not. The Committee second referenced **S-1280** to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee for consideration and NJAC is working to secure a sponsor for the companion version in the General Assembly.

VENUE OF JUVENILE COURT APPEARANCE

On June 12th, the Senate Judiciary Committee favorably reported **S-188** *(Diegnan D-18)/Corrado R-40),* which would require certain juveniles to appear before the court in the county where the incident giving rise to the delinquency complaint allegedly occurred under certain circumstances.

In summary, this legislation would eliminate the county of the juvenile's domicile as the default venue and make the county in which the alleged act of delinquency occurred the venue for the delinquency proceedings as is the case under current Court Rule. The bill would require juveniles accused in a delinquency complaint of an offense which, if committed by an adult, would constitute a crime of the first through third degree under Title 2C of the New Jersey Statutes to appear before the court in the county where the incident giving rise to the complaint allegedly occurred. In addition, the bill would require juveniles accused in a delinquency complaint of an offense which, if committed by an adult, would constitute a fourth-degree crime, a disorderly persons offense, or a petty disorderly persons offense to appear before the court in the county in which the juvenile is domiciled, unless the court finds good cause to retain venue in the county where the incident giving rise to the complaint allegedly occurred. Further, the bill would require any objection to the transfer of venue to the county where the juvenile is domiciled to be made to the court in the county where the complaint was filed within five days of receiving the delinquency complaint.

The measure would also permit the prosecutor or the defense to file a motion for change of venue, with notice to the other party, to the Family Presiding Judge or designee in the county where the matter is currently the venue. Lastly, the legislation would require venues to be held in the county where the incident giving rise to the complaint allegedly occurred if there are multiple defendants, either juvenile or adult. **S-188** is on second reading in the General Assembly, and the companion version **A-3952** *(Karabinchak D-18/Rodriguez D-33)* is in the Assembly Community Development and Women's Affairs Committee awaiting consideration.

MILITARY LEAVE

On June 3rd, the Senate Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee favorably reported **S-4264** *(Diegnan D-18/Beach D-6),* which would increase the days of paid leave of absence for public employees who serve in the United States Reserve.

In summary, this legislation would entitle a public employee who is a member of a Reserve component of the United States military, including the National Guard of other states, to 90 workdays of paid leave for federal active duty. Any leave taken after 90 workdays would be provided without pay. Under current law, a public employer must provide such paid leave of absence for 30 workdays with any leave taken after 30 workdays without pay. Although NJAC certainly appreciates the intent of this legislation and supports protecting members of the United States Reserve and their families from financial harm when called to duty, NJAC respectfully requested the following amendment to the bill to address the potential fiscal and operational impact it may impose on local governments as employers. *"In accordance with the provisions of Article VIII, Section II, paragraph 5 of the New Jersey Constitution, upon application for reimbursement by a county or municipal governing body or a board of education to the State Treasurer for reimbursement and approval of the application by the Director of the Division of Budget and Accounting, reimbursement shall be made by the State for any costs incurred as a result of the provisions of P.L.2001, c.351 and as a result of the amendment to R.S.38:23-1, P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill).*

NJAC submits that this new language would preserve the intent of **S-4264** and address any salary, workforce composition, temporary staffing, or other related challenges local governments may face as they continue to struggle with providing essential services in a cost-effective manner. The Committee second referenced the bill to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee for consideration and NJAC looks forward to working with the sponsors to address our concerns shared by the New Jersey State League of Municipalities (NJLM) and the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA). The companion version **A-3888** *(Karabinchak (D-18/Sauickie R-12)* is currently in the Assembly Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee awaiting consideration.

POLL WORKERS COMPENSATION

On June 11th, the General Assembly passed by a vote of 76-3 **A-1516** *(Calabrese D-36/Sampson D-14),* which would exempt wages earned as a poll worker from affecting an individual's unemployment compensation. This bill would exempt services performed as a temporary board worker hired by a district board of elections who receives compensation for the discharge of election duties from the definition of "employment" in the unemployment compensation law. The measure would also exempt any wages paid to a temporary poll worker from unemployment, disability, and family leave insurance taxes. The exempted poll worker would not be eligible for benefits under these programs.

Additionally, the exemptions would only apply to individuals whose compensation by a county board of elections does not exceed $1,000 in a calendar year. The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) in its Fiscal Estimate concluded that the bill would result in an annual revenue loss of up to $200,000 to the Unemployment Insurance Compensation Fund and the State Disability Benefits Fund the measure would exempt any wages received by t
emporary poll workers, including those who process mail-in ballots, from unemployment, disability, and family leave insurance payroll taxes. The bill could result in an annual indeterminate expenditure decrease to the Unemployment Insurance Compensation Fund and the State Disability Benefits Fund by exempting poll workers, including those who process mail-in ballots, from receiving unemployment insurance benefits, temporary disability benefits, and family leave insurance benefits for which they might otherwise qualify. The companion version **S-1116** *(Corrado R-40/Beach D-6)* is currently in the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee awaiting consideration.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PLAN

On May 29th the Assembly Public Safety and Preparedness Committee favorably reported **A-2384** *(Moen D-5/Stanley D-18),* which would require the Department of Health (DOH) to develop a statewide emergency medical services plan.

In general, this bill would require the Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) in the Department of Health (DOH) to develop a Statewide Emergency Medical Services Plan that provides for a comprehensive, coordinated, emergency medical services (EMS) system in this

State. The plan would include short and long-term goals and objectives and may incorporate regional emergency medical services plans tailored to the specific needs of regions as designated by the OEMS. If used, regional plans would be jointly developed by each county board of health within the designated region, in consultation with local boards of health. Such plans would be subject to approval by the OEMS. The bill would further require OEMS to triennially review and update the statewide plan, and to make any changes to the plan as may be necessary to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the State's EMS system of care. The measure would require DOH to make the Statewide Emergency Medical Services Plan available on its website.

The Office of Legislative Servies (OLS) fiscal estimate concluded that annual State expenditures would increase under the bill by an indeterminate amount to develop, implement, and periodically revise the Statewide Emergency Medical Services Plan, but noted that costs could rise into the millions of dollars annually over a multi-year period. The legislation could also substantially overhaul the delivery of emergency medical services in the State, which is now primarily delivered at the State and regional level. The annual costs to the State would depend on the plan that is developed by DOH after conducting an inventory of the emergency medical services resources currently available, an assessment of the current effectiveness of the system of care in the State, and consulting with different stakeholders throughout New Jersey. County and municipal costs could also increase if OEMS determines that the plan should include the use of regional emergency medical services plans accordingly. The Committee second referenced A-2384 to the Assembly Appropriations Committee for consideration and the companion version **S-1772** *(Singleton D-7/Beach D-6)* is currently in the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee awaiting consideration.

Solar Purchases

On June 15th, the Assembly State and Local Government Committee favorably reported **A-4959** *(Swain D-38/Greenwald D-6),* which would establish the "Affordable Power Purchase Agreements Extension Act." Under current law, certain public entities are authorized to enter into energy contracts for a term not to exceed 15 years. The bill would authorize public entities to extend, without public advertising for bids and bidding, existing energy contracts for a term not to exceed 30 years in the aggregate. NJAC will continue to monitor this legislation as its permissive and we don't mind those kinds of bills**.** **A-4959** is on Second Reading in the General Assembly, and the companion version **S-4162** *(McKeon D-27/Greenstein D-14)* is in the Senate Environment and Energy Committee awaiting consideration.

Micro transit Programs

On June 1st, the Assembly Transportation and Independent Authorities Committee favorably reported **A-3315** *(Sampson D-31/Quijano D-20),* which would establish requirements for on-demand micro transit programs operating in the State.

In general, this bill would define "on-demand micro transit" to mean a shared public transportation services provided by means of a motor vehicle to individuals selecting a pick-up and drop-off location by telephone or through a software application, and which transportation is provided at a time selected by the individual or as soon as possible after the individual selects pick-up and drop-off locations for such transportation. Additionally, the measure would permit the New Jersey Transit Corporation, and any other entity operating an on-demand micro transit program, to provide on-demand micro transit services through a third-party contractor. However, under the bill, the third-party contractor or subcontractor would be required to directly employ all on-demand micro transit drivers and meet all federal and State wage and hour requirements.

The legislation would further require that any contract or agreement between an entity, other than the corporation, and a third-party contractor, include a precondition that the contractor and all subcontractors of the contractor enter into a labor harmony agreement with one or more labor organizations that represent or seek to represent the contractor's employees. The bill also provides that the existing employees of an entity that provides on-demand micro transit service, including, if applicable, the entity's existing transportation contractors, and the corporation are not adversely affected by the establishment and operation of an on-demand micro transit program under the bill. Finally, each on-demand micro transit program established under the bill is to create new transit service within transit deserts; be available to persons without access to smartphones, Internet service, or credit cards; and contain certain accessibility features outlined in the bill. The Committee second referenced **A-3315** to the Assembly Appropriations Committee and the Companion version **S-2931** *(Mukherji D-32/Diegnan D-18*) is currently in Senate Transportation Committee awaiting consideration.

The top 10 greatest summer movies of all-time to enjoy while waiting for the sun to break during a tropical depression, avoiding the hotness from El Nino, or sitting in bumper-to-bumper traffic on your way to the World Cup or down the shore.

10) Stand By Me
9) Flamingo Kid
8) American Graffiti
7) Friday the 13th
6) Fast Times and Ridgemont High
5) Raiders of the lost Arc
4) Jaws
3) Grease
2) the Godfather
1) The Sandlot

""A perfect summer day is when the sun is shining, the breeze is blowing, the birds are singing, and the lawn mower is broken." James Dent