

New Jersey State League of Municipalities

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Statue Creates New Incentive for Municipalities to Have a Qualified Purchasing Agent (QPA)

P.L. 2009, c. 166 amends the Local Public Contracts Law and redefines the requirement for Qualified Purchasing Agents (QPA). Some of the major points of the bill:

- The requirement to have a Purchasing Agent is optional. However, if a Purchasing Agent is named, that individual must be a QPA.
- Municipalities without a QPA would have their bid threshold reduced and held at \$17,500. Currently, the threshold without a QPA is \$21,000.
- Municipalities with a QPA would have the option to raise their bid threshold to the one established by the Governor every five years. Currently, the threshold with a QPA is \$29,000. This threshold will be changed July 1, 2010 in accordance with the price index.
- The QPA must complete a series of training courses and pass a state-administered examination.
- Individuals who have been performing the duties of purchasing agent for at least three continuous years will have six months from the effective date to take the examination without taking the courses.
- The law takes effect in 13 months.

-Written by Joyce Miller, Purchasing Agent for Franklin Twp, Somerset County

Pension and Benefit Reforms Advancing

The New Jersey League of Municipalities expressed strong support for the vast majority of the bi-partisan public employee pensions and health benefits reform bills, introduced on February 8, in the State Senate. The proposed reforms will, among other things, cap payments for unused sick leave at the time of retirement to \$15,000 for newly hired employees; require employee contributions of at least 1.5% towards the cost of health benefits, with these contributions to commence at the expiration of an employee's current contract; require future retirees to contribute at that rate towards health benefit costs; base retirement payments on average compensation over five years for PERS and three years for PFRS (up from three years and one year, respectively); increase annual compensation requirement for membership in the Defined Contribution Retirement Plan; impose a 32 hours per week duty requirement for PERS membership; and apply all health benefits changes negotiated with State employees to local employees covered by the SHBP.-Continued on Page 2 under "Pension and Benefit"

“A Really Bad Idea!”

As though New Jersey municipalities don't have enough problems already, a Senate bill that purports to save money and improve efficiency will in reality deal a financial blow whose impact will be felt for years to come.

The legislation (S458) calls for a county-by-county statewide binding referendum to eliminate both municipal tax assessment and tax collection and consolidate those services in county-based offices. Such a vote effectively removes municipal governments from decision-making on this important

This is a *really* bad idea for a number of reasons. It removes the two main sources of municipal revenue – assessment and collection - from municipal control. In addition, municipalities will lose the interest on collected dollars and the incremental revenue from added assessments, dollars that currently more than offset the cost of the two functions for most municipalities. Finally, municipalities will be at the whim of county governments when it comes to the distribution of tax revenues.

All very good reasons for elected officials to contact Senators to voice their concern and opposition. --
—Carol C. Byrne, President, Association of Municipal Assessors of New Jersey, For more information please contact: Association of Municipal Assessors of New Jersey, Tenafly, NJ 07670, 201-568-6100, Ext 5532, tax61@bergen.org, <http://www.amanj.org>

“Pension and Benefit...”

The League is, however, concerned with the prospective “one job for one pension” provisions in S-2. While this reform aims at some real abuses, it could have unintended consequences for local taxpayers. State law limits certain municipal appointments to individuals holding State certifications. Consequently, there can be a high demand for a limited number of qualified applicants. State law also forbids a municipality from reducing the salary of some of these State certified officials.

Due to size and characteristics, many municipalities do not need these certified officials on a full time basis. It can be beneficial to the taxpayers to hire them on a less-than-full-time basis and permit them to independently contract with another municipality.

Accordingly, we will ask the sponsors to except individuals required to hold State certifications from the “one job for one pension” requirement.

Meeting this past Summer, the New Jersey State Health Benefits Commission approved a **16% premium cost increase** for local government active and retired employees. Also last Summer, the various Boards of Trustees for pension systems approved Annual Actuarial Valuation Reports as of June 30, 2008. Local **PERS payment will see a 12.7% increase** and **Local PFRS payment will see a 19.5% increase, on average.**

Though the reforms proposed will not reduce those burdens, they will help contain future increases. The vast majority of State employees hold membership in the PERS. School employees are, most often, members of the TPAF. Municipalities, however, employ a much higher percentage of uniformed personnel, who are members of the PFRS. Over the years, the Legislature has mandated more generous pension provisions for PFRS members. That is reflected in 7% difference between PERS and PFRS increases. And the fact that municipalities employ a much higher percentage of police and fire fighters puts further weight on our property taxpayers. Accordingly, the League was disappointed with the scope of proposals dealing with the high costs, and resultant impact on property taxpayers, of the Police and Firemen's Retirement System (PFRS).

On February 11, Governor Chris Christie delivered an address to a Joint Session of the Legislature to announce Administration actions to close the State's \$2 billion budget gap. Specifically, he will freeze a total of \$1.6 billion in unexpended funds across 375 different programs, including \$475 million in school aid, \$62 million in aid to colleges, \$12 million to hospital charity care and all funding to the Department of the Public Advocate.

The Governor, citing pension and health benefits costs as the major costs driver at all levels of government, praised the bipartisan package of pension reform legislation. He told the Legislature, “These bills must just mark the beginning, not the end, of our conversation and actions on pension and benefit reform.” And he called for the Legislature to, “...take these reform bills, make them even stronger ...” and send them to him before his scheduled Budget address, on March 16.

-Jon Moran, Senior Legislative Analyst, New Jersey State League of Municipalities

Upcoming Seminars and Events

- [March 2-Wage and Hour-Crowne Plaza, Monroe Twp](#)
- [March 4-Budget Updates-PNC, Holmdel](#)
- [March 9-Health Benefits Negotiations Primer-Cherry Hill Library, Cherry Hill](#)
- [March 11-Budget Updates-Cherry Hill Library, Cherry Hill](#)
- [March 16-Family Medical Leave Act/Family Leave Act-Crowne Plaza, Monroe](#)
- [March 31-Budget Updates, Bergen County College, Paramus](#)
- [April 8-Foreclosures: What They Are and How They Work, Cherry Hill Library, Cherry Hill](#)
- [April 16-Affiliate Pre-Conference Meeting, Crowne Plaza, Monroe Twp](#)
- [April 28-Personnel Policies-Crowne Plaza, Monroe Twp](#)
- [April 30-NJDHARM Training-Mercer County College, West Windsor](#)



Former TCTANJ President
Joseph E. Rauch

Affordable Housing Seminar sponsored by NJPO

"Affordable Housing - The Future" is the topic of the April 23, 2010, NJPO State Planning Conference co-sponsored by the League of Municipalities. Experts will look at the sweeping changes that appear to be on the horizon and how every municipality will be affected. The program, \$35 registration, will begin at 1:30 p.m., at the Woodbridge Hilton Hotel, in Woodbridge (Middlesex County) which is easily accessible via major highways. The conference will be followed by the annual NJPO Achievement in Planning Awards Banquet, social hour 5:30 p.m., dinner, 6:30 p.m. More information and forms will be available at NJPO's website, njpo@njpo.org.

NEWS FROM THE TAX COLLECTORS AND TREASURERS ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

It is with deepest sorrow that we report the loss of past president (1981-1982) and executive director emeritus Joseph E. Rauch on February 1. Joe was instrumental in getting our certification statute enacted and in amending it to provide for continuing education for recertification. Joe was CTC #1 and CMFO #1 in New Jersey. He continued to provide advice and guidance to the association even after his retirement and relocation to Florida in 1997. He will be missed.

-Our 43rd Annual Spring Conference will be held May 18-20 at the Tropicana Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City. CEU credits will be available for tax collectors, finance officers, municipal clerks and purchasing officials.

-*Vincent A. Belluscio Executive Director, TCTANJ*

For more information please contact: Tax Collectors and Treasurers Association of New Jersey, www.tctanj.org.

To register for a Seminar and/or Event, please log onto www.njslom.org, click "Calendar", select your event, and fax the downloaded registration form to Suzanne Delany, Registration Coordinator, at (609) 695-0151. Should you have any registration questions, such as availability of a seminar, call Suzanne at (609) 695-3481 at ext 111, or you can email her at sdelany@njslom.com.

Any other questions regarding a NJSLOM Seminar and/or Event, please contact Danielle Holland (x 118) (609) 695-3481 email dholland@njslom.com.

2010 Orientation Meetings Educate Eager Newly Elected Officials



Delegates listen intently to speakers at Newly Elected program on Saturday January 9 at the Enterprise Center at Burlington County College

The Newly Elected Orientations took place on Saturday January 9th at the Enterprise Center at Burlington County College and Saturday January 23rd at the Renaissance Hotel in Rutherford. Each event was well received and attended by newly-elected officials from both North and South Jersey towns including: Boonton, Denville, Marlboro, Parsippany, Princeton, Cape May, and Camden. The speakers included Susan Jacobucci, Director, Division of Local Government Services, DCA, Joseph Valenti, Former Chief of Bureau of Local Management Services, Division of Local Government Services, DCA, Robert Casey, Executive Director, New Jersey Municipal Management Association, Vincent Buttiglieri, RMC/CMC/CMP, Municipal Clerk/Registrar, City of Ocean, President, Municipal Clerks Association of New Jersey, Andrew Pavlica, RMC/CMC/MMC, City Clerk/Deputy City Manger, City of Garfield, 2nd Vice President, Municipal Clerks Association of New Jersey, William Kearns Jr., Esquire, League General Counsel, Brian Kronick, Esquire, League Labor Relations Counsel, and Mayor's John Dean DeRienzo of Haworth, League Executive Board Member and Chuck Chiarello of Buena Vista, 1st Vice President, New Jersey State League of Municipalities, who served as moderators. They spoke on a range of topics including, Labor Relations, Budgeting, Ethics, and Professional Development.



New Jersey State League of
Municipalities

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Visit our website at
www.njslom.org

Have an issue that you think should be addressed in this newsletter? Please send articles of 150 words to
dholland@njslom.com

Deadline for May Newsletter: **April 15th, 2010**

The New Jersey State League of Municipalities is a voluntary association created to help communities do a better job of self-government through pooling information resources and brain power. It is authorized by State Statute and since 1915, has been serving local officials throughout the Garden State. All 566 municipalities are members of the League. Over 560 mayors and 13,000 elected and appointed officials of member municipalities are entitled to all of the services and privileges of the League.