

## STATE HOUSE NEWS – OCTOBER 2008

*A monthly recap for GluckWalrath's government and public relations partners.*

### **TOLL ROAD INCREASES**

The New Jersey Turnpike Authority will hold its fourth public hearing on October 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss its plan to increase tolls on the Turnpike and Garden State Parkway by 50% in 2008, 50% in 2012, and 1% each year from 2014 until 2023. The Authority contends that these increases are essential to fund several safety and congestion relief projects over the next decade at a cost of \$9.7 billion, and to finance the construction of the ARC mass transit tunnel between New Jersey and New York at a cost of \$1.25 billion. Moreover, the Authority cannot currently certify, as required by law, that its projected revenues for 2009 are sufficient to meet its debt service obligations. As opposed to these significant increases, several State leaders have suggested that the Authority consider reducing the number of its capital improvement projects and overall operating budget.

### **MORE ETHICS REFORM**

Earlier last week, Governor Jon S. Corzine proposed an ethics reform package that includes new restrictions on “pay-to-play” and “wheeling.” Through executive order, the Governor plans to ban contributions by State redevelopers and their consultants, and to restrict further State-contractor contributions made by partners of professional service firms. With some help from the Legislature, the Governor plans to prevent county party committees from circumventing the pay-to-play and regular campaign finance law limits on contributions.

### **GREEN PROPERTY TAX RELIEF**

Governor Corzine recently signed into law as P.L. 2008, c.90, legislation that exempts certain renewable energy systems from real property taxation. This new law provides that the owner of real property equipped with a certified renewable energy system, may have exempted annually from the assessed valuation of the real property, a sum equal to the property's assessed value with the renewable energy system included less the property's assessed value without the system included. Renewable energy means any electric energy produced from solar technologies, photovoltaic technologies, wind energy, or fuel cells.

### **STATE HOUSE TRIVIA**

Did you know that the official State fish is the Brook Trout, which is native to New Jersey and received its name from the Pilgrims?

*Congratulations to the American Cancer Society, a Firm client, for its outstanding efforts in convincing Governor Corzine to sign into law, legislation that now prohibits the sale of flavored cigarettes in the State of New Jersey. And a special thanks to Senator Joseph Vitale and Assemblyman John McKeon for their leadership and commitment to this important healthcare initiative.*