

STATE HOUSE NEWS – SEPTEMBER 2008

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

GAS PRICES LIKELY TO INCREASE

For the first time since 1988, the State Legislature will likely increase the State's motor fuels tax as the federal government faces an unprecedented shortfall in its fiscal year 2009 Highway Transportation Trust Fund. New Jersey relies heavily on this Fund to subsidize approximately 50% of its road, bridge, and mass transit improvement projects at a cost of approximately \$3.3 billion per year. To make matters worse, experts have long projected that the State's Transportation Trust Fund will simply run out of money by 2011 if state leaders fail to establish a steady, long-term, and dedicated source of revenue before it's too late. Despite the fact that New Jersey remains as one of the most highly taxed states in the nation, its gasoline tax is one of the lowest at 10.5 cents per gallon. Pennsylvania's gasoline tax is 31.2 cents per gallon, while New York taxes motorists at 32.4 cents per gallon.

STATE POLICE ROAD PATROLS

Earlier this summer, the Corzine Administration sent bills totaling \$12.6 million to 89 small and rural municipalities throughout New Jersey for State Police services provided to those communities in fiscal year 2008. Services the law enforcement agency provided free of charge since 1920. In fact, towns such as Millstone in Monmouth County and Buena Vista in Atlantic County have until December 15th to pay the bills, some of which will amount to a 50% increase in municipal property taxes. With this in mind, State Senator Jeff Van Drew (D-1) recently introduced legislation that will impose a \$40.00 surcharge on all motor vehicle violations to offset some of the costs associated with providing local police services. The Senate Law and Public Safety Committee will likely consider S-1976 at one of its upcoming meetings in the fall.

MILITARY PERSONNEL TO VOTE IN STATE ELECTIONS

Governor Corzine recently signed into law as P.L. 2008, c.61, legislation that now authorizes overseas voters to vote by absentee ballot in all local, State, and federal elections. Prior New Jersey law restricted such voters, including those serving in the military, to vote only in federal elections.

STATE HOUSE TRIVIA

Did you know that the State dinosaur is the Hadrosaurus Foulkii; and that the fossil remains of the 25-foot long duck-billed creature were found in a marl pit in Haddonfield in 1858.

Summer recess is over for the State Legislature as well as the General Assembly plans to return on September 15th and the Senate plans to return on October 2nd.