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January 12, 2021

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Municipal Clerks: Please forward to your Mayor, Governing Body, and Department Heads.

I. Governor Delivers State of the State Address

Yesterday, Governor Phil Murphy delivered his [2022 State of State address](#) in a pre-recorded video. Illustrating the theme of the Governor's address, "Resilient and Moving Forward," he reviewed New Jersey's response to COVID and noted the progress of New Jersey's economic growth as well as his plans for moving New Jersey forward.

During his remarks the Governor noted that New Jersey has greater tax fairness, cutting taxes for the middle-class, working families, and seniors. Governor Murphy also stated his commitment "that the state budget I propose in a few weeks won't raise taxes."

Discussing the progress against rising property taxes, he said, "through the policies we've put in place, and the community investments we've made, our administration has slowed the rate of property tax growth more than any of the previous four administrations—a record that includes four of the lowest year-over-year increases in property taxes on record. The reality is this—we're making New Jersey the place where businesses want to locate and families want to live. The Census counts it in black-and-white—while some states in our region lost population, New Jersey grew."

The Fiscal Year 2023 State Budget, "will continue to focus on broad-based economic recovery that works for everyone," he said, "not just the lucky few." It will continue to focus on making New Jersey more affordable for everyone; will continue seeking fairness for our middle-class taxpayers and working families and seniors to deliver for them concrete

benefits that make their lives and those of their communities better; and will continue working on property taxes. The budget he will put forth “won’t come with any tax increases,” the Governor added

Highlighting the investments made to our schools, Gov. Murphy noted that “school funding is property tax relief. Every single one of these dollars we as a state have invested is a dollar kept in the pockets of property taxpayers—whether it be state aid supporting our students and educators in their classrooms or construction aid to build or renovate schools to serve a 21st century education.”

The Governor also noted that “when the federal government cut your state and local tax deduction, which I continue to work to restore, we expanded the property tax deduction allowed in your state income tax filing. We expanded eligibility of older homeowners for the Senior Freeze program to protect you against any property tax increases. We modernized the Homestead Property Tax Rebate and, this past year, we delivered tax rebates of up to \$500 to nearly 700,000 middle-class families.”

Other tax savings included an extension of property tax deductions for veterans and service-members, in-state tuition payments, and deductibility of investments in college savings plans.

The Governor added, “We put into law the state’s first child and dependent care tax credit, and made every family making up to \$150,000 a year eligible. Each of these steps is making our state more affordable and giving middle-class, and working families, and seniors, the tax breaks you all deserve.”

Repeating his record, Gov. Murphy noted that the state had, “The slowest rate of property tax growth than during any of the previous four administrations and four of the lowest year-over-year increases in property taxes on record. And 14 middle-class tax cuts, made possible only through a commitment to fairness. And we’ve done so much more.”

He added, “I’ve noted our work to lower health care costs, particularly for those with children. We’ve put a college education within reach with our tuition-free community college program. And we invested in our child-care providers to make this critical service more accessible for families getting back to work.”

In this fiscal year the State made the first full payment in the pension fund in 25 years, he noted, and the pensions’ funds are performing better due to the investments and strong stock market performance. In addition, Governor Murphy highlighted the State’s efforts to rein in the cost of public employee and retiree health benefits while preserving high-quality care.

For the year ahead, Governor Murphy called for “a stronger New Jersey where we create opportunity and increase affordability because you want New Jersey to be more affordable; a fairer New Jersey where we work for tax fairness, and economic and social justice, because you want a fair shot at a more prosperous future and at your American Dream; and a New Jersey where we continue down the path of recovery from the pandemic together. “

We are encouraged by the Governor’s comments regarding property taxes and his call for openness to cooperation and negotiation as we work through COVID as a state. We look forward to working with the Governor and legislature on common-sense reforms.

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II. Public Health Emergency Reinstated, Extending COVID Related Administrative Actions

On Tuesday, Governor Murphy issued two Executive Orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic: [Executive Order No. 280](#), reinstating the state's Public Health Emergency, and [Executive Order No. 281](#) allowing certain prior executive orders to remain in effect. These prior executive orders include those mandating the use of masks in schools and at health care facilities. Executive Order No. 281 also extends various regulatory actions taken by administrative departments in response to COVID-19, including actions regarding access to remote public meetings and COVID-related sick time for civil service employees. A full listing of the department actions can be found in the [EO 281 Appendix](#).

The declaration of the Public Health Emergency provides the Governor and the State with broad authority to respond to the pandemic and the unique challenges more recently brought about by the COVID-19 Delta and Omicron variants.

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III. Deadline Extended for Local Government to Participate in National Opioid Settlement

The deadline for local governments to sign on to participate in the [National Opioid Settlement](#) has been extended until January 26, 2022. Previously local governments across the country had until January 2, 2022 to sign on to participate in the settlement.

As you are likely aware, a national settlement agreement has been reached between national pharmaceutical distributors and states and local governments regarding the distributors' role in the nationwide Opioid abuse crisis. The settlement provides substantial funds to states and local governments for abatement of the Opioids epidemic and will impose transformative changes in the way the settling distributors conduct their business.

The total amount of settlement funds allocated to each state is dependent upon the number of counties and municipalities that agree to participation. Greater participation from local governments triggers additional settlement funding being distributed to the state. You do not need to have filed a lawsuit to be part of the settlement, or to participate. However, you do need to complete an electronic [settlement registration](#) and return the executed participation agreements before the extended January 26, 2022 deadline.

For more information on the settlement and the extension please see the [website](#) created by the settlement officers. You can also find more information on the Settlement Agreement and the participation process on the League's [Opioid Settlement Resource](#) page, which also includes information from last month's webinar with the State Attorney General's Office and Governor's Office.

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