

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

SENATE BILL NO. 788
(Second Reprint)

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 788 (Second Reprint) without my approval.

Today, I signed the Fiscal Year 2013 Appropriations Act prepared and passed by the legislative majority. That budget, which contained billions of dollars in spending, failed to address the single issue that strikes at the heart of our shared interests and our continued prosperity: immediate tax relief for all New Jersey residents. To the contrary, and for the third time in as many years, the legislative majority has proposed raising income taxes as a solution to years of leaderless governance that was the norm in Trenton before January 2010.

Accompanying that budget were a number of additional bills, including this proposal, that would ladle on even more government spending. Separating these bills from the Appropriations Act is little more than a thinly veiled attempt to circumvent the tough choices required to meet the constitutional obligation of passing a balanced budget. Some elected officials persist in the convenient thinking, honed to perfection in the years prior to my Administration, that a spending bill or a tax increase passed outside the budget is not really taxing and spending as usual. But as every homeowner with a mortgage, every student with a tuition bill, and every business with a delivery knows, simply wishing for more money to pay the bills is a reckless, childish, guaranteed path towards financial disaster.

These bills passed by the legislature outside the budget are no different. Taken together, they would add more than \$275 million of government spending for the coming fiscal year. My refusal to accept this excess spending is not a comment on the merits of these legislative initiatives. Instead, I am rejecting the attempt to simply add millions of dollars to the budget without identifying offsetting reductions as required by the Constitution, and expected by the people. If the legislature is serious in advancing these ideas, let the members openly and honestly debate the merits of their preferred spending against the competing proposals for using taxpayer dollars. That dialogue should begin now, as we begin planning for our next fiscal year, rather than next June.

Twelve months ago, in rejecting the second of three attempts to raise taxes, I implored the Legislature to learn to live within our collective means. In a similar vein, more than three decades ago, it was noted that Government has "piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children's future" to avoid the inconvenient, but essential, choices of the present. But we are New Jerseyans. We do not shy away from the harder road, the difficult decision, the fight for principles that are fair, or the compromise that ensures those who have sacrificed in the past are rewarded with a better tomorrow. I will continue to answer the call to action that rings loudly across our State, and welcome all members of the Legislature to join me in the great and worthy task of leadership with, and for, the people whose welfare we are privileged to help protect.

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Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 788 (Second Reprint) without my approval.

Respectfully,

[seal]

/s/Chris Christie
Governor

Attest:

/s/Charles B. McKenna

Chief Counsel to the Governor