SENATE BILL NO. 1415
(First Reprint)

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 1415 (First Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill would establish a New Jersey Turnpike Authority (the “Authority”) pilot program to aid former military personnel in finding employment in the construction industry. The bill would require that, for each highway project constructed by the Authority during the pilot program, not less than five percent or more than 20 percent of the projected labor hours per project must be awarded to the contractors registered with the Helmets to Hardhats Program.

I commend the sponsors for their efforts to increase economic opportunities for the veterans who have honorably served our State and our Nation. My administration remains committed to ensuring that veterans continue to play a key role in all aspects of New Jersey’s growth and expansion, with particular emphasis on adding veterans to New Jersey’s economic recovery. The Helmets to Hardhats program is a valuable resource that provides opportunities for quality career training and employment opportunities in the construction industry for our veterans. My administration has supported the State Helmets to Hardhats Program through grants from the Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

While I support the pilot program the bill would establish, I am concerned that in its current form the bill does not go far enough to ensure that veterans are given every opportunity to pursue meaningful employment with the State. Significantly, the bill as currently drafted does not directly increase veteran
employment, and may actually have the unintended consequence of limiting veteran opportunities. Whether on the job building our State’s highways, or in the office of a State contractor, we should make every effort to help transition our Nation’s heroes into our Country’s workers. Therefore, I am recommending that the bill be amended to require that the Authority establish benchmarks for veteran hiring and retention by all contractors working with the Authority, as well as attainable targets for veteran Helmet to Hardhats participant labor hours for each highway project constructed by the Authority during the pilot program.

Let me take this opportunity to once again thank our veterans for their service to New Jersey and the Nation and reaffirm my commitment to assisting veterans as they transition back to civilian life.

I herewith return Senate Bill No. 1415 (First Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

Page 2, Section 2, Line 43:

Page 3, Section 2, Line 13:

Page 3, Section 4, Line 23:
Respectfully,

/s/Chris Christie
Governor

Attest:

/s/Charles B. McKenna
Chief Counsel to the Governor