
THIS WEEK IN TRENTON



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414 River View Plaza, Trenton, New Jersey 08611-3420 · Phone: 609.393.7799 · Fax: 609.393.9891 · www.njpsi.com

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Christie Nominates Commissioner of Children and Families

Governor Chris Christie nominated Dr. Allison Blake of Raritan Township to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Dr. Blake is currently the Director of the Institute for Families at the Rutgers School of Social Work, where she oversees a portfolio of over \$30 million in grants and contracts aimed at strengthening families by building the capacity of the individuals and organizations that serve them. Previously, Dr. Blake served in several leadership capacities at the Council on Accreditation (COA), an international organization that develops best practice standards for public and private organizations that provide services across the continuum of care throughout North America. While at COA, Dr. Blake focused on helping agencies build their capacity to improve service delivery as COA's Director of Public Agency and Government Relations and then its Vice President of Accreditation Operations.

Dr. Blake spent 18 years at the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services, where she worked in various direct service and administrative positions. She later worked with the team charged with developing a blueprint for improving the capacity of the child welfare system to improve services to the state's at-risk children and families. Dr. Blake is also a faculty member at the Rutgers School of Social Work where she teaches in the nonprofit and public agency management concentration.

Dr. Blake holds a Ph.D. in social work from Fordham University, a Masters of Science in social work from Rutgers University, and a Bachelor of Science in social work from the University of Dayton.

Christie Announces Restoration to Senior Programs

Governor Christie announced this week that due to increases in rebate collections from drug manufacturers, higher utilization of generic drugs, expanded eligibility for enrollment in Medicare Part D's Low Income Subsidy program and manufacturer discounts in Medicare part D "donut hole", funding will be available in the fiscal year 2011 budget to keep deductibles and copayments for Senior Gold and the Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD) at preexisting levels, as well as lower PAAD copayments for generic medicines to \$5.

The Governor's budget proposal called on PAAD and Senior Gold beneficiaries to cover the annual deductible of \$310 required by Medicare Part D. Additionally, the proposed budget anticipated that the co-payment under PAAD for brand name drugs would increase from \$7 to

\$15. The Governor's announcement means that the State will continue to fund the \$310 Medicare Part D deductible for those enrolled in PAAD and the Senior Gold program, while restoring funding to keep the co-payment for brand name drugs at seven dollars and reducing the co-payment for generics to five dollars. The total cost of the restorations is \$55.5 million - \$39.7 million to eliminate the deductible and \$15.8 million for changes to copayments.

The Administration now anticipates an additional \$10.4 million due to the higher utilization of generic drugs; \$13 million in increased collections from existing manufacturer rebate programs; \$22.8 million from changes to Medicare Part D's Low Income Subsidy and \$9.3 million in savings from the 50% discount on brand name drugs in the Medicare Part D coverage gap beginning 1/1/11.

Legislature Passes "Millionaire's Tax, Senior Restoration Legislation;" Christie Vetoes Immediately

The Senate and Assembly passed legislation that would set the income tax rate on those earning \$1 million at 10.75 percent in the 2010 taxable year. The current rate for those taxpayers is 8.97 percent. They also passed legislation restoring property tax rebates to seniors and the disabled and eliminating language in the Governor's proposed budget placing a \$310 deductible on senior and disabled citizens in the Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled prescription drug program and 23,000 senior citizens enrolled in the Senior Gold prescription drug program and eliminating language doubling prescription drug co-payments on those senior and disabled citizens. Both bills were passed along party line votes with Democrats voting in favor and Republicans voting against. As expected, Governor Christie vetoed both bills as soon as they reached his desk.

Legislature Passes Unemployment Reform Legislation

The Senate and Assembly both passed legislation which reduces the unemployment insurance (UI) tax rates which will be imposed on employers during fiscal year 2011 by setting them based on the "C" column of the UI tax table in R.S.43:21-7. The UI tax rate which is being charged to employers during FY 2010 is based on column "B" of the tax table. Because the UI trust fund is currently in deficit, the tax rate, under current law, would increase, starting on July 1, 2010, to the highest tax rates set by the law, the rates found in the "E" column, plus an additional 10% surcharge. The legislation reduces the UI tax burden on employers by providing that the "C" schedule will stay in effect throughout fiscal year 2011.

Senate Confirms Cabinet Appointments

The Senate yesterday confirmed Governor Christie's nominations of Hal Wirth to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development and Lori Grifa to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs.

Legislative Calendar

This week the Senate and Assembly held voting sessions. Next week The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee will receive a revenue update from the Office of Legislative Services and the Treasurer on May 25 and the Assembly Budget Committee will receive similar updates on May 26. These updates were postponed from this week. The Senate will also hold Group 1 and 2 Committee meetings on May 27.