

# Essex Exchange

SEPTEMBER, 2010

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Current legislation that will hurt public employees**
- **NJEA Member Action Centers**
- **NJEA Convention**
- **Quick Notes**

*“Member engagement will be critical in this fight for the future of our schools and our profession. In order to communicate and engage members quickly, NJEA’s local associations are creating Member Action Centers (MACs) at every worksite in the state. Each MAC will be stocked with information about current challenges and strategies for engaging members in the fight.”*  
[njea.org](http://njea.org)

## Under Attack

*Summary of bills reprinted from njea.org MAC*

Educators and ESPs across the state know that the attacks on benefits, salary, and their future continue each day under the guise of the Governor’s reform agenda. The most recent attack is cloaked in the Governor’s Toolkit. More specially, the current bills under consideration for vote any day now are extremely harmful to state workers.

The bills, if enacted, will reverse the progress in labor contract negotiation that has been made over the past forty years. A review of the bills follows:

- S-2043 (Kyrillos R, 13) is another piece of the Governor’s “toolkit.” It would cap increases in school districts’ labor costs, including the

cost of benefits, at 2%.

- Bill S-2043 (Kyrillos R, 13) is another item in the Governor’s “toolkit.” This legislation would allow boards of education to impose their “last, best offer” as the terms and conditions of employment, overturning the current collective bargaining law (as amended in 2003 to prohibit contract imposition) which has brought fairness and balance to the negotiations process without harmful strikes
- Senate bill S-2025 (Kyrillos R, 13), part of the Governor’s “toolkit,” would authorize Executive County Superintendents to approve all locally negotiated collective bargaining agreements.

It is ready to be heard by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee. A series of bills that are part of the Governor’s “toolkit” would limit unused sick leave and vacation buyout for school employees to \$15,000. The lead bill is S-2220 (Sarlo-D, 36) which has been released from the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee. The Assembly version is A-2952 (Casagrande R, 12, Munoz R, 21). Currently only S-2220 is ready for a Senate vote.

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*Continued on pg. 2*

## Member Action Centers

The NJEA has urged local districts to form Member Action Centers in each and every building in the locals. The purpose of the center is to keep members aware of current legislation and the fast paced changing political climate affecting NJEA members. The centers will in-

clude summaries of current legislation, strategies for political action as well as any other pertinent information concerning the Governor’s Toolkit.

Locals are urged to organize phone days so that members can call legislators and

voice their anger over the proposed changes to our benefits.

For more information see Member Action Centers (MACs) at [njea.org](http://njea.org).

# Education Jobs Money



Co-sponsors of the Education Jobs bill Senators Menendez and Lautenberg

*Voting on these bills is imminent. Take Action*



*“These meetings help leaders prepare for the challenges of the new school year.”*  
NJEA.org

With the Education Jobs bill signed into law, NJ districts will receive federal money to help save jobs and offset the deep cuts to education funding generated by the Christie administration.

Although Governor Christie was slow to apply for the money, NJ was awarded \$268 million in federal money. Each district in the state will receive an allotment of the money. Unfortunately, the money was received too late

to save some teaching and ESP jobs in the state.

In her cover letter to school districts, Acting Commissioner Rochelle Hendricks is urging school districts to reserve the federal funding for the 2011-2012 year.

“With your staff and budget set for the 2010-2011 school year, I urge you to be mindful of how and when these funds are spent. While record levels of total federal, state and local funding have been made avail-

able to schools in recent years, the next budget cycle promises to be challenging. Therefore, please consider reserving this one-time funding for the 2011-2012 school year if possible.” writes Hendricks in her letter to all districts.

More information on the federal funding from the bill may be found on the ECEA web site: [eceonline.org](http://eceonline.org).

## LEGISLATION BILLS CONT.

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\* On Sept. 15, Gov. Christie announced a wide-ranging set of proposals aimed at cutting pensions and benefits of current, future, and retired NJEA members. There is currently no specific legislation, but the proposals – many of which may be illegal—include:

- Eliminating cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for current and future retirees
- Changing the normal retirement age for all current PERS and TPAF participants with fewer than 25 years of service to age 65
- Increasing the PERS and TPAF member contributions from 5.5% to 8.5%

- Requiring active employees and retirees to pay 30% of the cost of their health insurance premium
- Increasing the penalty for early retirement to 3% per year instead of the current 1% per year
- Requiring employees with fewer than 25 years of service to work 30 years for full retirement benefits instead of the current 25 years
- Changing the calculation of final average salary from the highest three to the highest five years for current PERS and TPAF participants with fewer than 25 years of service
- Increasing the PERS and TPAF member contributions from 5.5% to 8.5%
- Increasing employee and retiree co-payments, deductibles and other out-of-pocket costs
- Eliminating the School Employees' Health Benefits Plan
- Eliminating NJ DIRECT 10 and creating a basic plan, with the option to buy up to better plans

## Fall Focus

The Essex County Education Association will hold its annual Fall Focus on October 20, 2010 at the Valley Regency in Clifton, NJ.

The Fall Focus program centers on issues that are or will affect education throughout the year. This year's fall focus promises to be a critical program as Governor Christie's agenda for reform is hurting public schools and public workers.

Scheduled to appear at the ECEA focus is Barbara Keshishian, President of the NJEA.

NJEA annually holds Fall Focus for Leadership meetings in each county for local leaders. NJEA officers provide valuable insights into important educational and association issues. These meetings help leaders prepare for the challenges of the new school year. *(last paragraph taken from [njea.org](http://njea.org))*



# NJEA Convention

On November 4-5, 2010, the NJEA will host its annual convention in Atlantic City, NJ. Along with the large exhibition area featuring more than 700 vendors and exhibitors, members may attend over 200 workshops. One of the highlights of the convention is the NJ DOE Commissioner of Education's annual address.

CNN anchorwoman Soledad O'Brien and creativity and innovation expert Sir Kenneth Robinson will keynote at the 2010 NJEA Convention. Robinson is scheduled

to speak on Thursday Nov. 4 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and O'Brien is scheduled to speak on Friday, Nov. 5 from 11:30 a.m. to



12:30 p.m. A question and answer

period will follow.

Other events include a panel of State Board of Education members and the Celebration of Excellence, as well as concerts by the All-State Jazz Ensemble and the All-State Chorus and Orchestra.

For more information visit [njea.org](http://njea.org) or see the NEA Convention program.

(some material taken from [njea.org](http://njea.org))



**CNN anchorwoman Soledad O'Brien and creativity and innovation expert Sir Kenneth Robinson will keynote at the 2010 NJEA Convention.**

## Member Must Take Action

All NJEA members are urged to take action to preserve their benefits and prevent the Governor's "toolkit" from becoming law.

What can members do:

- Visit [njea.org](http://njea.org)'s Member Action Center site. Become aware of the issues affecting members.
- Call or visit local legislators. Use the NJEA talking points as a guide. Tell your legislators to vote NO on all bills affecting pensions and benefits.
- Urge your friends and family to contact legislators to tell them to vote NO on all

bills affecting pensions and benefits.

- Be sure that other members of your local are aware of the importance of defeating these bills.



## School Choice bill passed

Associated Press • September 13, 2010

TRENTON — Parents who wish to send their children to a different public school district now have the chance under a bill signed into law by Gov. Chris Christie.

The public school choice program allows parents to move their children to schools across district lines, if space is available.

The law expands a pilot

program that was in effect for five years. Washington Township in Burlington County and Folsom in Atlantic County were among the 15 districts participating in the pilot program.

Under the bill, which was sponsored by Assembly Democrat Paul Moriarty and signed into law by Christie on Friday night, schools seeking to participate would apply to the state education commissioner, detailing services available to students. They

also must account for fiscal issues they may face by taking part.

Students seeking to transfer must apply to the new district, which could hold lotteries if the number of applications they receive outpace the available seats.

Students' home districts would provide or pay for transportation for elementary school pupils who live more than two miles from the receiving district, and for secondary school students who live more than 2 1/2 miles. But they wouldn't

have to pay if the new school is more than 20 miles from the student's home.

Both the Assembly and Senate passed the bill unanimously in June. In addition, both the New Jersey Education Association and the New Jersey School Boards Association, have voiced support for it.

## NJ LOSES RACE TO THE TOP BID FOR FUNDING

### MISSING THE MARK

A mistake in New Jersey's application for the competitive Race to the Top grant program may have cost the state up to \$400 million in federal education reform dollars. The state's application received 437.8 points in the 500-point competition and fell just three points behind 10th place winner Ohio.

GRANTEE	MONEY AWARDED	PHASE 1 SCORE	PHASE 2 SCORE	CHANGE
1. Massachusetts	\$250,000,000	411.4	471.0	59.6
2. New York	\$700,000,000	408.6	464.8	56.2
3. Hawaii	\$75,000,000	364.6	462.4	97.8
4. Florida	\$700,000,000	431.4	452.4	21
5. Rhode Island	\$75,000,000	419.0	451.2	32.2
6. District of Columbia	\$75,000,000	402.4	450.0	47.6
7. Maryland	\$250,000,000	n/a	450.0	n/a
8. Georgia	\$400,000,000	433.6	446.4	12.8
9. North Carolina	\$400,000,000	414.0	441.6	27.6
10. Ohio	\$400,000,000	418.6	440.8	22.2
11. New Jersey	—	387.0	437.8	50.8

Source: U.S. Department of Education

THE STAR-LEDGER

New Jersey lost its Race to the Top bid for millions in federal funding. The funding was lost due to a critical clerical error on the 1000 page application. Although the state hired an independent firm to ensure that the application was properly prepared, financial information, specially requested on the application, was omitted. The omission caused NJ to lose vital points in its assessment. NJ finished 11th in the "race" just behind Ohio which was the last state to receive funding.

Following the application debacle, Governor Christie fired NJ DOE Commissioner Brett Schundler. Rochelle Hendricks has been named Acting Commissioner until a permanent commissioner can be named.

The 10 winners were: the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Rhode Island. The grants vary, from \$700 million for New York and Florida, to \$75 million for smaller states such as Hawaii, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia.



## Important Quick Notes

- **Internet Workshop Part I**

October, 13, 3010 Appian Way

- **A.R. Training Workshop**

October 7, 2010—The Appian Way

- **Fall Focus**, October 20, 2010

Valley Regency, Clifton NJ

- **NJEA Convention**,

November 4-5, 2010  
Atlantic City, NJ

- **ECEA Hospitality**,

11:00am to 1:00pm, Thursday and Friday at the Sheraton,

- **Win an iPad**—see [njea.org](http://njea.org)

- **March on Washington**, October 2, 2010. See [njea.org](http://njea.org)

- Invite the **Cat in the Hat** to your school. See [njea.org](http://njea.org) for more details.

- **Project Pride** will be held at the Livingston Mall this April. Save your students' projects for the exhibit.

- Review member discounts available to all. See [njea.org](http://njea.org).



- **Teacher for a Day** is a program that allows individuals from the community to experience an entire school day. Under the watchful eye of a regular classroom teacher, Guest Teachers perform all the duties a teacher would do in a normal day - teaching class, performing lunch and corridor duty, recess supervision, study halls- in order to "walk a mile" in educators' shoes. Reprinted from [njea.org](http://njea.org). See [njea.org](http://njea.org) for more

