

January 21, 2014

**ASSEMBLY BILL No. 3691
(First Reprint)**

STATEMENT

I am filing Assembly Bill No. 3691 (First Reprint) in the Division of Archives and Records Management without my approval.

Under the provisions of Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, this bill, which was passed within 10 days preceding the expiration of the second legislative year, does not become law because it was not signed prior to noon of the seventh day following such expiration. While in this circumstance there is no provision for the return of a bill to the Legislature for reconsideration, I believe it is appropriate to express my reasons for not approving this legislation.

This bill requires that all public schools be equipped with a silent alarm linked directly to local law enforcement, or the State Police. The bill further requires that each alarm be connected to a red emergency light installed on the outside of each school. The emergency light must be placed above or near the front entrance, or on the nearest roadway. Finally, the bill requires the installation and activation of these emergency lights and panic alarm systems in approximately 2,500 schools within ten months.

Children are our most precious gift and we must ensure their safety, especially in our public schools. My administration has acknowledged the increasing need to provide for our students' security. Indeed, last year I established the New Jersey SAFE Task Force on Gun Protection, Addiction, Mental Health and Families, and Education Safety which studied and made recommendations regarding school security and our emergency response protocols.

I share the sponsors concerns for our students' safety, and I applaud their efforts to improve our schools. I am concerned, however, that this bill does not adequately address all of the relevant and important concerns surrounding school safety. Indeed, a more appropriate approach to school security involving both education professionals and law enforcement was established by Assembly Bill No. 3583, which created an eleven-member School Security Task Force to study physical and cyber vulnerabilities and potential breaches of security in our schools. The installation of silent alarms and external alerts, connected to police departments, is best considered by that ongoing Task Force. I encourage the sponsors to submit their proposal to the School Security Task Force, where this idea can be addressed by the Department of Education, the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, the Schools Development Authority, school security experts, and other education stakeholders.

Accordingly, I have decided to file Assembly Bill No. 3691 (First Reprint) without my approval.

Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

[seal]

Attest:

/s/ Christopher S. Porrino

Chief Counsel to the Governor