

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 2250 without my approval.

Since the earliest days of my Administration, I have demonstrated my firm commitment to reversing the trend of economic contraction in the State's gaming industry. Together with the Legislature, my Administration has acted boldly to revitalize the gaming industry and to set a new course for economic growth and job creation in this critically important sector of our economy. From the historic establishment of a Tourism District in Atlantic City to expanded wagering opportunities at casinos and racetracks, including the implementation of one of our nation's first Internet gambling laws, I have consistently pursued new and innovative ways to make New Jersey a more competitive gaming jurisdiction and to enhance the financial viability of the State's gaming industry.

Consistent with these efforts, I signed into law legislation authorizing sports wagering at casinos and racetracks in January of 2012. This action followed the passage of a voter-approved Amendment to the State Constitution permitting sports wagering at these venues. These efforts were immediately met with resistance from the four major professional sports leagues and the National Collegiate Athletic Association, who brought suit alleging conflict between New Jersey's sports wagering law and the federal Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act ("PASPA").

As has been well chronicled, the plaintiffs in this legal battle prevailed in a federal trial court in their efforts to prevent New Jersey casinos and racetracks from lawfully offering

sports betting opportunities, under carefully prescribed rules, to their patrons. As has also been well chronicled, the State, at my direction, appealed that decision to the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, which agreed with the trial court, and then again to the United States Supreme Court, which declined to take up the State's case. Thus, after a spirited legal effort, the Third Circuit's opinion that PASPA prevents the implementation of New Jersey's sports wagering law represents the binding and final judicial interpretation of Federal law. While I do not agree with the Circuit Court's conclusion, I do believe that the rule of law is sacrosanct, binding on all Americans. That duty adheres with special solemnity to those elected officials privileged to swear an oath to uphold the laws of our Nation.

In a novel attempt to circumvent the Third Circuit's ruling, this bill states that all prohibitions against wagering on the results of any professional, college, or amateur sport or athletic event, set forth in State law would no longer apply to wagering at casinos or racetracks in this State. In essence, this bill partially deregulates betting at casinos and racetracks in an effort to sidestep federal law. While I support the intentions of the Legislature to continue our shared commitment to enhancing the economic viability of our gaming industry, I cannot sign this bill, which was introduced on the same day the Supreme Court declined to hear our appeal, and then was rushed to final passage just three days later. Ignoring federal law, rather than working to reform federal standards, is counter to our democratic traditions and inconsistent with the Constitutional values I have sworn to defend and protect.

While I remain open to exploring legally sound ways to let the State's casinos and racetracks offer sports wagering, I am

mindful that this process takes time. As the sponsors point out, the Third Circuit's opinion may not have foreclosed all legal avenues for permitting sports wagering within the State. Now that the Supreme Court has made clear that it will not be taking the case, the time is right to examine the Third Circuit's opinion carefully and determine if a different approach towards sports wagering would comply with federal law, and further whether this new approach would be in the best interests of the State. In the meantime, we must respect the rule of law and the decisions of our courts.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 2250 without my approval.

Respectfully,

[seal]

/s/ Chris Christie
Governor

Attest:

/s/ Paul B. Matey
Deputy Chief Counsel to the Governor