

August 18, 2014

**SENATE BILL NO. 387
(Second Reprint)**

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 387 (Second Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

On January 17, 2012, I signed into law Senate Bill No. 3148, an item from my property tax reform toolkit, establishing procedures for moving school elections to November. Since that time, hundreds of New Jersey's school districts have taken advantage of that law, advancing my goals of saving taxpayer dollars and increasing voter participation in annual school board elections.

This particular bill would allow candidates in school elections, whether they take place in April or November, to circulate petitions jointly and be bracketed together on a ballot for the same term. The bill also would allow one or more candidates for a school board to circulate a petition or appear on a ballot with a designation in not more than three words that conveys the principles that the candidate or candidates therein named represent.

I support responsible election reform that advances the critically important goal of increasing voter knowledge of candidates and issues. However, I am concerned that this bill may risk the integrity of our school elections by politicizing them.

Because the sponsors of this bill also express concern regarding voter knowledge of candidates and issues in school elections, I am recommending that the bill be amended to require the Secretary of State, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education, to undertake a review of the impact of allowing the bracketing of candidates together and designations of candidates' principles on school election petitions and ballots, and to report their findings and recommendations to me. In conducting this review, the Secretary of State and the Commissioner of Education

will draw upon the expertise of appropriate offices and divisions in their respective departments, including the Division of Elections in the Department of State and the Office of School Finance in the Department of Education.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 387 (Second Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

- Page 2, Title, Lines 2-3: Delete "and amending P.L.1995, c.278"
- Page 2, Section 1, Lines 8-43: Delete in their entirety
- Page 3, Section 1, Lines 1-6: Delete in their entirety
- Page 3, Section 2, Lines 8-47: Delete in their entirety
- Page 4, Section 2, Lines 1-24: Delete in their entirety
- Page 4, Section 3, Lines 26-46: Delete in their entirety
- Page 5, Section 3, Lines 1-24: Delete in their entirety
- Page 5, Section 4, Lines 26-47: Delete in their entirety
- Page 6, Section 4, Lines 1-38: Delete in their entirety
- Page 6, Line 39: Insert new section 1: "1. The Secretary of State, in consultation with the Commissioner of Education, shall undertake a review of the impact of allowing the bracketing of candidates together and designations of candidates' principles on school election petitions and ballots, and shall report any findings and recommendations directly to the Governor no later than twelve months from the effective date of this act."
- Page 6, Section 5, Line 40: Delete "5." and insert "2."

[seal]

Respectfully,
/s/ Chris Christie
Governor

Attest:

/s/ Christopher S. Porrino
Chief Counsel to the Governor