

Bergmanson For Governor

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PLATFORM

We need a Governor who is willing to tackle the many challenges New Jersey is facing - that means identifying the problems, proposing real solutions to them, and then working with the legislature and the public to bring those changes to fruition. In this platform statement, I will lay-out a number of issues that I feel are important to address and how they should be addressed. As the campaign continues, I will be releasing position papers with more detailed proposals on many of these issues.

1. Bring Property Taxes Under Control.

New Jersey's Property Taxes are the highest in the nation. Every four years the candidates for governor promise to reduce property taxes, and once elected governor, those promises are forgotten. (Remember Jon Corzine's "40% in 4" promise to increase your property tax rebate to 40% in four years?)

The only way we can bring NJ's property taxes under control is to deal with the cause. Property taxes in NJ are actually at least three taxes (School Taxes, Municipal Taxes and County Taxes) rolled into one -

- A. School Taxes.** Real property-tax reform will not happen until our out-of-control Supreme Court is removed from the school-funding process, and the only way that can happen is to change the NJ State Constitution. As Governor, I will call for a Constitutional Convention within my first six months in office.
- B. Municipal Taxes.** Fully-fund or eliminate legislative and administrative mandates on our municipalities.
- C. County Taxes.** Reduce or eliminate County Government.

2. Restore Democracy with Initiative and Referendum.

In order to bring real democracy back to the citizens of New Jersey, we need Initiative & Referendum (I&R).

3. Reduce State Spending.

Governor Corzine says we need to find more "revenue streams" (that's code for more taxes). The problem is not that we are not getting enough money in, the problem is that we are sending too much money out - NJ State spending has increased an incredible 55% in the last 8 years! As governor, I will push for budget reductions of as much as 20% in each department, but rather than target the workers who actually do the work and serve the public, we need to start at the top by cutting the thousands of unnecessary patronage workers who do neither.

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4. Campaign Finance Reform.

Big money has corrupted our political system, especially here in New Jersey. The US Supreme Court has struck-down attempts to limit campaign contributions, so I propose that since we can't prevent it, we should tax it - specifically a graduated tax on all campaign contributions.

5. End double-dipping.

Currently, each member of the NJ Legislature is considered a "part-time" worker, leaving them free to have another job – often another "full-time" public-paid job. This represents a tremendous conflict-of-interest and should not be permitted. Of course, getting the legislature to go along with cutting-out this publicly funded gravy-train will be next to impossible, but with I&R, the voters of the state will have the final say.

6. Bail Reform.

New Jersey is the only state in the union which maintains that the sole function of bail is to ensure presence at trial. As a result, many criminals are out on bail for five or more different arrests. Other states recognize that persons accused of violent crimes should not be set free again-and-again while awaiting trial. It would take an amendment to the State Constitution to correct this flaw in our justice system, and I will propose one within 120 days of being sworn in as governor.

7. Restore Financial Integrity.

Over the years, successive administrations have redirected our dedicated funds in just about every way imaginable. The Unemployment Fund (which is currently about 8 weeks from running out of cash) has been raided on a number of occasions. The Transportation Trust Fund has been used to pay current expenses. The Pension Fund has been shorted so many times, it is now facing a shortfall of nearly \$60 Billion. Jon Corzine promised to end these gimmicks, and yet he is currently proposing that municipalities be allowed to "defer" half of their 2009 pension obligation! As governor, I will require that all dedicated sources of revenue be just that - dedicated. No shortfalls. No gimmicks. No nonsense.

8. Bonding Reform.

Jon Corzine has said we need to "monetize" (That's also code for more taxes) our state assets, but again, the problem is not the revenue, it's the spending. New Jersey voters have made clear that they want a say whenever bonds are passed, and I completely agree. Last year's constitutional amendment closed many of the loopholes that allowed Governor Corzine and his predecessors to circumvent this essential check on state bonding, but it created some new ones, and left others open. I will push for a new, stronger amendment to prohibit any bonding of any kind for any reason without voter approval.

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9. Investigate the SCC debacle.

The State of New Jersey has poured more than \$12 Billion dollars into school construction in the last nine years. While some worthwhile projects have been funded with that money, much of it was lost, wasted, or remains unaccounted for. As governor, I will ask the Attorney General to launch a full investigation into every dollar spent, and demand prosecution to the full extent of the law of anyone found to have stolen, misdirected or misappropriated any of those funds, including full restitution to the taxpayers of NJ.

10. Abolish COAH.

In 1985, the legislature created the Council On Affordable Housing (COAH) in response to the Mount Laurel decisions. This was the wrong response at the time, and it has (predictably) resulted in disaster. The solution to this problem is to do what should have been done in 1985 - the NJ Legislature must use its power to amend the State Constitution to give control of housing issues back to the people and their *elected* officials.

11. Pension Reform.

In the private sector, the days of the fixed-benefit pension plan are over. This benefit is unsustainable for the public sector, and we need to look into replacing it with 401k-type system for new employees, starting from the top down.

12. Lower the drinking age to 18.

When a young man or young woman turns 18, they are an adult in the eyes of the law. They can join the army, sign contracts, and they are fully prosecutable for any misdeeds they might commit. With the full responsibility of citizenship should come the full rights of citizenship, and that includes the right to drink.

13. Full Marriage Equality and Divorce Reform.

It is time to get the government out of our bedrooms.

14. Raise, then Enforce, the Speed Limit on Limited-Access Highways.

The public has voted with their gas pedals. Unrealistically low speed limits on our major highways have made scofflaws of 95% of the driving public and undermine respect for law enforcement. We need to raise the speed limit to a realistic number, and ask our state troopers to enforce the new limit.

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15. No More Toll Roads.

Machine politicians love toll roads because tolls are a great way to generate patronage jobs and slush money. Toll roads are also a remarkably inefficient way to collect taxes, and eliminating tolls will not only save us the expense of collecting tolls, it will allow us to obtain millions of dollars in matching federal highway funds that are not available for roads that have tolls. What's more, eliminating toll roads will reduce congestion, reduce pollution, reduce the number and severity of accidents and we'll also save gas – a whole lot of gas.

Within my first 120 days as Governor, I will appoint a bipartisan committee to present a plan to eliminate the tolls on the Garden State Parkway by July 1st, 2011, and to eliminate all roadway tolls in NJ by July 1st, 2013. Toll roads cost you time, cost you money, waste gas, pollute our environment, make driving more dangerous, and help feed the culture of corruption – it's time to eliminate toll roads in NJ.

16. Marijuana Reform.

As Governor Brendan Byrne has said – “Marijuana is a social problem and not a criminal problem.” It's time for New Jersey to recognize this and do what several other states have already done – decriminalize recreational marijuana use.