



Signs transition legislation, suspends employee layoffs

Gov. Chris Christie Friday took several actions aimed at carrying out his administration's goal of transitioning New Jersey Network into an independent broadcasting outlet that would continue to provide New Jersey-centric programming, without taxpayer subsidy.

These steps include the signing of the New Jersey Public Broadcasting System Transfer Act, the direct appointment of three members to the reconstituted New Jersey Public Broadcasting Authority, as provided for in the Act, and, the temporary suspension of layoffs of network employees during the transition.

"Today, we are taking the next steps to secure the future of New Jersey public television as an independent public media organization able to stand on its own without any continuing taxpayer subsidy," Christie said. "In addition to our work already underway, these actions today pave the way for New Jersey focused programming to continue uninterrupted while New Jersey Network's transition to a free-standing institution is completed."

Christie signed S-2406, the to accomplish the conversion of NJN from a government body to an independent entity, either to a non-profit corporation or through an agreement with an existing public broadcasting entity.

The state Department of Treasury will be responsible for implementing the law, aspects of

which are already underway, including compiling an inventory of the authority's and foundation's assets and liabilities; identifying the methods or mechanisms required to transfer assets and liabilities; receiving and approving proposals for the transfer of any or all of the authority's or foundation's assets; and assuring that NJN's successor can fulfill the responsibilities of a maintaining a New Jersey-focused broadcasting operation.

In addition, Christie named three people to serve on the Public Broadcasting Authority, effective immediately. They are state Treasurer Andrew Sidamon-Eristoff, John Inglesino of Rockaway, and Anthony Della Pelle of Morristown. Bill S-2406 provides for the current membership of the authority to be sunset and reconstituted. The appointments represent the three direct appointments authorized by the governor under the new law. Two additional members will be appointed to provide for the remaining membership, one by the Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney (D-Gloucester) and one by Assembly Speaker Sheila Y. Oliver (D-Essex/Passaic).

Finally, Christie also announced that the layoff plan for NJN employees, initiated in September in accordance with existing collective bargaining agreements, will be temporarily suspended to provide for the continued temporary NJN's operation while the transition is completed.

Senate sponsors of the legislation were Sweeney and Sen. Joseph Kyriillos Jr. (R-Monmouth) and in the Assembly it was sponsored by Assembly members Lou Greenwald (D-Camden), Alex DeCroce (R-Morris) and Upendra Chivukula (D-Somerset).

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