

January 13, 2014

**SENATE BILL NO. 1264
(First Reprint)**

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 1264 (First Reprint) without my approval.

Under the Vote by Mail law, New Jersey voters may obtain a mail-in ballot by submitting an application that is received by the county clerk no less than seven days before the election. This seven-day deadline provides just enough time for county clerks to process applications and deliver mail-in ballots to voters, and for voters to conveniently cast those ballots before the polls close on election day. It is a system that has worked well for hundreds of thousands of New Jersey voters who vote by mail.

Senate Bill No. 1264 (First Reprint), however, would change the seven-day deadline by requiring that applications for mail-in ballots be postmarked seven days before an election, as opposed to being received seven days before an election, as is the current law. In effect, the bill would shorten by three or more days the seven-day period county clerks now have to process applications and send mail-in ballots to voters before Election Day. This change would cause many voters to not receive their ballot until the day before, the day of, or worse still, after the election, thus preventing voters from timely mailing in their ballots. The bill also unwisely ties the application deadline to a postmark date even though many applications never get postmarked because postage is pre-paid or the postal service otherwise does not individually postmark every item. Replacing our current process with this unproven and likely unworkable timeline may undercut the purpose of the Vote by Mail law and ultimately lead to disenfranchisement of some voters.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 1264 (First Reprint) without my approval.

Respectfully,

[seal]

/s/ Chris Christie
Governor

Attest:

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