

RESOLUTION # 36

SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

1 **WHEREAS**, agriculture has long been an industry closely associated with New
2 Jersey’s identity, as evidenced by the official nickname of “The Garden State,” the
3 choosing of the horse as the state animal and the choosing of a primary pollinator, the
4 honeybee, as the state insect; and

5 **WHEREAS**, agriculture continues to be a significant component of the state’s
6 economy, with agriculture and its related food industries in New Jersey estimated to
7 contribute more than \$105 billion annually to New Jersey’s economy; and

8 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey and its political subdivisions have, over the years,
9 invested in excess of \$1.5 billion to preserve farmland and the benefits agriculture
10 provides to the state and its citizens; and

11 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey residents, in the 2014 election, overwhelmingly
12 approved a ballot question changing the State Constitution to redirect funds to the
13 preservation of farmland and open space, again indicating the high priority New Jersey
14 residents place on preservation; and

15 **WHEREAS**, approximately 20 percent of New Jersey’s land is owned, managed,
16 cared for and kept productive by the agriculture sector; and

17 **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey agricultural sector, while being a substantial portion
18 of New Jersey’s economy and while managing approximately 20 percent of New
19 Jersey’s land base, providing a safe and nutritious food supply and at the same time
20 enhancing New Jersey’s quality of life through its scenic vistas, protection of the
21 environment and preservation of a way of life and sense of wellbeing grounded in a
22 cultural heritage treasured by New Jersey’s citizens, must exist within a framework of

23 laws and regulations necessary to accommodate the varied and sometimes competing
24 interests which exist in the most densely populated state in the nation, and

25 **WHEREAS**, the business of agriculture has grown increasingly complex in terms
26 of science, technology, environmental interrelationships, economic impacts and
27 sophistication, and social interaction and impact and, as a result, legislation and
28 regulation impacting it has become increasingly complex; and

29 **WHEREAS**, the importance of agriculture to so many facets of New Jersey life is
30 reflected in New Jersey's adopting planning objectives that call for "planning for
31 agriculture" instead of "planning around agriculture"; and

32 **WHEREAS**, the intrusion of suburbia into agricultural areas, and issues created
33 by that expanded interface create a need for balance and regulating in a way that meets
34 the needs of an expanding urban and suburban population while ensuring that
35 agriculture continues to be able to provide New Jersey with the vital benefits it is
36 uniquely able to supply; and

37 **WHEREAS**, in the 2014-2015 legislative session, nearly 150 bills affecting
38 agriculture and related food businesses were introduced in the Senate; and

39 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey has not had a Senate committee devoted solely to
40 agriculture since 1980; and

41 **WHEREAS**, the Assembly has an Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,
42 which routinely considers legislation impacting the agricultural sector, and which is
43 composed largely of legislators with high concentrations of agriculture and related
44 industries in their district or who otherwise have a keen interest in and/or understanding
45 of agricultural issues; and

46 **WHEREAS**, because of the increased importance of agriculture and its increased
47 interdependence with so many aspects of the health and wellbeing of New Jersey and

48 its citizens, it is appropriate for there to be a standing committee in the New Jersey
49 Senate to deal with matters impacting this vital segment of New Jersey's existence.

50 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 102nd
51 State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 8-9,
52 2017, do hereby call upon the New Jersey Senate to consider the establishment of an
53 Agriculture Committee as a standing committee.

54 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that, upon the establishment of such a
55 committee, we urge serious consideration be given to the knowledge, familiarity and
56 interest of each member regarding agriculture before their selection to serve on this
57 committee.

58 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that until a Senate Agriculture Committee is
59 established, we urge New Jersey Farm Bureau and other agricultural advocacy groups
60 to continue working with the Senate's existing committees to ensure that agriculture-
61 related bills are taken up regularly and in a timely manner.