SENATE BILL NO. 2531
(Second Reprint)

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 2531 (Second Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill laudably seeks to reduce the salary costs of participating counties without diminishing the performance of election administration functions by allowing those counties to abolish their offices of the superintendent of elections and the deputy superintendent of elections and transfer the offices' responsibilities to the county board of elections. Because this legislation has the potential to lower costs for the participating counties, I fully support many of this bill's provisions and commend the sponsors for their efforts to streamline and consolidate government operations.

I am concerned, however, that this bill includes a provision that would exempt a participating county's board of elections expenses from the property tax levy cap for the budget year following the year in which the participating county elects to abolish its offices of the superintendent and deputy superintendent of elections. Such a provision could have the unintended consequence of undermining the fundamental goal of the bill, which is to promote cost savings for taxpayers. Therefore, I am recommending technical changes to protect property taxpayers by requiring that expenses exempt from the property tax levy cap under the bill will result in long-term savings for the county.

Additionally, the bill appears only to allow a single county to abolish the operation of its offices of the superintendent of elections and deputy superintendent of elections. In 2013, the State successfully implemented a pilot program to allow select

counties to suspend the operation of these offices. At the time

the 2013 pilot legislation was enacted, Morris County had been

operating without a superintendent of elections for four years and

had achieved a cost savings of approximately $2 million. See "Plan

to Cut Superintendents Under Way," Bergen Record, February 13,

2013. Given the success of the prior pilot program and the proven

ability of this measure to save taxpayer money, I believe that the

opportunity to participate in this initiative should be expanded

to other counties, should they decide to do so. Accordingly, I am

proposing amendments to allow all counties of the second class as

well as counties of the fifth class the ability to eliminate these

offices, streamline their election procedures, and achieve cost

savings for their residents.

Therefore, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 2531

(Second Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

Page 2, Section 1, Line 9:	Delete "that"
Page 2, Section 1, Line 10:	Delete "meets the criteria under subsection c. of this section"
Page 2, Section 1, Lines 28:	After "c." delete "A county shall be eligible to abolish the offices of"
Page 2, Section 1, Lines 29-33:	Delete in their entirety
Page 2, Section 1, Line 35:	After "contrary," insert "and subject to approval by the Director of the Division of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs,"
Page 2, Section 1, Line 40:	After "section." insert "The director shall approve an exemption of expenses from the requirements of subsection b. of section 3 of P.L.2015, c.249 (C.40A:4-45.45b) pursuant to this subsection if:
	(1) the director determines that the expenses are reasonable and will result in long-term savings for the county; and
	(2) the county board of election's budget request for

the budget year is less than the aggregate amount of the budget requests submitted to the county governing body by the office of the superintendent of elections, the office of the deputy superintendent of elections, and the board of elections in the last preceding budget year."

Page 3, Section 2, Line 19: Delete "are" and insert "is"

Page 4, Section 4, Line 14: Delete "shall not" and insert "may"

Page 4, Section 4, Line 15: Delete ", except as provided pursuant to" and insert "in accordance with the provisions of"

Respectfully,

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

[seal]

Attest:

/s/ Matthew J. Platkin

Chief Counsel to the Governor