

# Champion

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## NJ Budget Problems Made Worse by Cuts and Veto of Millionaire's Tax: Community groups, Labor Joint Effort to Support Community Services

The Stand Up Rally for a Fair Budget on May 22, 2010 brought together 35,000 families and concerned citizens to tell the NJ Legislature that we want a fair budget, with shared sacrifice, and continued support for our local schools, for health care, and for our communities. The rally was the first public reaction to the budget and policies of NJ's new Governor, Chris Christie.

Since Chris Christie began his campaign for Governor of NJ, it has been obvious that his goal would be the deliberate dismantling of public services and government protections so that the private sector could take over – whether in education, healthcare, municipal services, or environmental protection. Christie's course of action has set the stage for huge budget fights and a possible fight over constitutional amendments to limit revenue for public services and funds available to honor collective bargaining agreements.

Instead of acknowledging the deep economic crisis our nation is in, the Governor has framed the discussion as a problem of overspending and over-taxation. The truth is NJ has a revenue problem – taxes from both individuals and businesses dropped precipitously over the past two years – because of the economic downturn, business failures and unemployment. Instead of true shared sacrifice, through careful budgeting and extension of the millionaire's tax, Governor Christie has slashed public education, health care, municipal aid, libraries and other public services.

Governor Christie is running a classic anti-union campaign directed at public workers, which include the HPAAE nurses and health professionals working at UMDNJ.

Christie's latest (and most dangerous) attack is what he has called a 33-point 'tool kit', which includes:

- A 2.5% cap on state government costs including all public employee compensation/benefits
- A 2.5% cap on municipal costs including all school district expenditures and collectively bargained agreements
- The same cap on state collective bargaining agreements, including colleges and UMDNJ
- A breakup of collective bargaining processes and agreements in higher education, a direct attack on Council of NJ State College Locals and UMDNJ;
- Legislative proposals for vouchers/tax breaks for corporate voucher programs for education
- Reduced civil service protections and increased obstacles to Public Employee Relations Commission enforcement and protections for public employee rights.



Rally participants posing with HPAAE members: Jo Anne Dudsak, Elmer Daniels, Jeannie Redd Ann Twomey, Donna Benjamin, Bernie Gerard, Diane Weckesser, Benita Herndon, Larry Lipschultz and Evelyn Chua.



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## WHAT DOES SHARED SACRIFICE REALLY MEAN?



Everyone is feeling the effects of the worst recession of our lifetime – but not in the same way.

CEO William Marino, of Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, was recently singled out for his nearly \$9,000,000 compensation for one year (2009) – a 59% increase over the previous year. Pay and bonuses to Horizon's nine highest paid executives for 2009 were in excess of \$24 million – a whopping increase of \$9 million from the previous year.

At the same time, policy holders were forced to pay higher premiums – 30% in some cases –turning Governor Christie's mantra of "shared sacrifice" on its head.

We applaud U.S. Senator Lautenberg and NJ State Senators Sweeney and Weinberg for demanding hearings on the compensation of health insurance executives. One such hearing was held on June 14 before the NJ Senate Health Committee.

Are these high salaries in health care industry the exception or the rule? Let's take a sampling of compensation of NJ Hospital CEOs.

Hackensack University Medical Center, CEO John Ferguson received \$3.5 million in compensation before he resigned his position. Valley Hospital System President/CEO Audrey Myers received \$975,000 in 2007; Barnabas System CEO Ron Del Mauro reportedly received \$8.9 million in compensation in a single year.

These salaries exceed the median for comparables in other states. But even if they didn't they are grossly exorbitant especially in light of the "shared sacrifices" that those providing the health care services are making.

Our members at UMDNJ have not had a pay raise in three years because of egregious mismanagement by top executives coupled with the precarious financial support from the State of NJ. HPAE members at Englewood Hospital/MC agreed to a wage freeze for a year in order to guarantee safe staffing numbers in the contract. Members at Bayonne MC and Christ Hospital forfeited or delayed wage increases and reduced pension benefits to help their hospitals climb out of the red despite the booming salaries of the top executives and owners.

In the southern part of NJ, there are fewer hospitals, less competition, higher patient censuses and very healthy financial reports. Yet, the salary and benefit increases are modest for all nurses and health care workers.

Scrutiny of public dollars must be required of all hospitals, including and especially, the growing number of for-profit hospitals that are able to hide their profits and compensation from the public and community. Senators Weinberg and Cunningham are co-sponsors of an important bill (S-1468) to require for-profit hospitals to report information to the DHSS. Assemblypersons Vanieri-Huttel, Wagner, and Chiappone are the sponsors of the same bill in the Assembly.

National health care reform has done much to cover millions of Americans who are without any health care coverage, but it is weakened by the billions of healthcare dollars that are funneled to a small number of executives who enjoy a distorted view of their own worth.

Health care reform cannot be fully realized unless and until abuses in the system are stopped, and the delivery of quality health care becomes the sole priority of any and all decisions that are made.

Ann Twomey,  
President HPAE

## Local 5147 Receives Community Support



From L-R: Carwyn Mandoca, Andre Savaille, Juan Sequinot, Mayor Gonelli, JoAnne Dudsak, Jeff Peck, Curtis Jeter, Debbie Hernandez

Secaucus residents came out in large numbers to a picnic hosted by Mayor Michael Gonnelli and HPAE, that celebrated the importance of Meadowlands Hospital and its workforce – and sent a signal that the community would fight to preserve the hospital.

Liberty Health, the current non-profit owner of Meadowlands, has filed to sell the hospital to a for-profit corporation called 'MHA'. In the sale agreement, there are no provisions to maintain the hospital as an acute care hospital with full services, or to maintain the current employees. HPAE members walked through the picnic informing attendees of the hospital's sale, and asked them to sign petitions and postcards calling on NJ state agencies to make sure the sale protected hospital services and the current employees.

The response of community residents was overwhelming and demonstrated a strong commitment to the hospital and its workers. Over and over again, residents shared their experiences - stories of childbirth, sick parents, and important emergency treatment received at their local, community hospital. Katie Polite, an Environmental Services Aid said, "I was very happy with the community's reaction – so many people shared their own stories of the hospital."

Over the summer, the Office of the NJ Attorney General and the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services are expected to hold public hearings before final approvals of the sale. Both agencies have set conditions on other hospital sales previously that preserved the integrity of the hospital, and can do so again. This is a fight HPAE is committed to winning.

# Welcome Barbara Rosen



HPAE is proud to announce the appointment of Barbara Rosen as State Secretary/Treasurer.

Barbara is a Registered Nurse employed at Bergen Regional Medical Center since 1975. She was a Critical Care Nurse until 2005 when she joined the Department of Education. She received her BSN from Saint Peters College and holds a CCRN. She is a member of the American Association of

Critical Care Nurses (AACN), the National Nursing Staff Development Organization (NNSDO), and the International Honors Society of nurses, Sigma Theta Tau.

As an active member of HPAE, Barbara was the President of Local 5091 and participated in the fight against privatization, unsafe needles and mandatory overtime. Her most memorable time was the strike that occurred in 2004 in which the local successfully won the fight over a major union busting effort.

Barbara lives in River Vale where she held positions on the Township Council, Planning Board, and Board of Adjustments. She currently holds a position on the Democratic County Committee and is active in the River Vale Democratic Club.

Barbara is married to Ken and has two children; Janis who is a recent graduate from Ithaca College with her Masters in Occupational Therapy and David who is studying Engineering at the University of Maryland.

Barbara is thrilled to be on board and is looking forward to the future working with the HPAE family of whom she considers to be the nicest people on the planet.

## NJ Budge Problems

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- g. Reduction in layoff rights, particularly in 'shared services' agreements between municipalities
- h. Other affronts to collective bargaining including consolidation which would allow counties to revoke agreements between municipal bodies (including school boards) and unions

The NJ AFL-CIO, with HPAE, AFT and other unions representing public service workers are organizing a lobby campaign challenging these so-called 'tools', based on the following principles: Principles of Organized Labor in Opposition to Governor Christie's "Tool Kit":

- 1) Protect the integrity of collective bargaining as it exists under current laws, ensure the right to negotiate annual wages, benefits, and contract terms, and the ability to legally enforce those contracts, including through the use of binding arbitration with independent arbitrators.
- 2) Support a civil service system that governs seniority, hiring and layoff practices and is free from political interference.
- 3) Protect the principle of just cause and due process for discipline procedures.
- 4) Preserve interest arbitration for those employees that currently have these protections.
- 5) Do not erode pension benefits for current workers and retirees.

HPAE and our coalition partners will be lobbying throughout the summer for these principles, starting with a Lobby day on Monday, June 21, 2010 in Trenton. See [www.hpae.org](http://www.hpae.org) to RSVP or for more information.

## HPAE TELLS SENATE HEALTH COMMITTEE TO STRENGTHEN STAFFING REQUIREMENTS IN THE HOSPITALS



Picture (l-r): Jeanette Gabral, JNESO; HPAE members Shelly Crowe, Bernie Gerard, HPAE VP, Stephanie Orrico, and Valerie Clary-Muronda, JNESO

HPAE leaders were in Trenton on May 10 to testify before the NJ Senate Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee on hospital licensing regulations and nurse staffing. HPAE advocated for the hearing, chaired by Senator Loretta Weinberg, because the state hospital licensing regulations, including staffing guidelines, sunset in July of this year. The NJ Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) has proposed their re-adoption, but HPAE asked for hearings in order to stress the need to strengthen staffing requirements for hospitals.

"Too often our hospitals are staffing to a pre-determined budget, rather than the continually changing needs of our patients", said Stephanie Orrico, HPAE Executive Committee Chair member, who testified along with HPAE Vice President Bernie Gerard. "At the end of National Nurses' Week, we would rather you recognize us with staffing ratios that give us the tools and staff we need to provide safe patient care, than any other ceremonial recognition."

Several academic leaders and nursing leaders joined HPAE in testifying at the hearing, citing their own experiences in caring for too many patients, as well as the range of studies demonstrating the link between patient safety and nurse staffing. The key evidence was the newest study by Linda Aiken of the University of PA School of Nursing comparing nurse-to-patient staffing levels and patient mortality in California to NJ and PA. NJ had a 13.9% higher mortality for surgical patients - and PA a 10.6% higher mortality due to higher patient workloads for nurses in these states, when compared to California.

California's law requires hospitals to establish minimum levels of 1 RN for every 5 patients on a medical-surgical unit; or 2 patients to every nurse in an Intensive Care Unit. Nurses in NJ and Pennsylvania had 2 more patients on average on a medical surgical unit, resulting in higher mortality rates. While numerous studies have demonstrated the direct link between nurse staffing levels and patient outcomes, this study is the most direct comparison of mortality rates between states with ratios required by law, and states like NJ, which rely on a mix of regulatory guidelines and hospital-based acuity systems.

Despite the evidence, the hospital industry appeared and testified against nurse-to-patient ratios, even though NJ regulations contain ratios in critical care areas. The focus of HPAE's testimony was on the need to expand the ratios into the medical/surgical units and emergency departments.

At the end of their testimony, Bernie and Stefanie explained changes HPAE would propose in staffing regulations and law:

- Eliminate patient care assignment from the 'charge nurse' responsibilities
- Establish ratios as the 'minimum' behind any staffing plan and acuity system
- Require hospitals to set targeted direct patient care hours for each unit
- Establish joint staffing committees to assess staffing and develop

contingency plans that do not over-rely on temporary staffing and that require proper orientation before floating RNs from unit to unit."

# Bargaining Round-Up

Even in a difficult economic year, with attacks on labor's collective bargaining rights from our new Governor, HPAE members held ground and reached solid new contract settlements with hospitals and nursing homes.

## Newton Memorial Hospital

Newton Registered Nurses are currently negotiating a first contract. Their bargaining campaign includes outreach to the physicians and the community through billboards (as seen on right), newspaper ads and web ads to highlight the need for a contract that focused on staffing, patient care and nurse recruitment.



HPAE members organized forums with Newton physicians, and Lisa Arbolino, Joellen Barrett and Karla Messerschmidt met with the Hospital's Medical Executive Committee, giving a presentation on contract priorities and issues.

Newton Nurses are the newest members of HPAE, winning their election and beginning bargaining in late 2009, after months of procedural delays to the union election forced by Newton management and attorneys.

Some progress has been made on work schedules, and seniority issues, but key issues like the formation of a joint Staffing Committee remain.

## UMDNJ – Three locals with a common goal

All three HPAE locals at UMDNJ representing RNs at University Hospital, professionals throughout the system and RNs at Department of Corrections - are all involved in contract negotiations, initially as a wage reopener and now, as full contract negotiations.

Negotiations had been progressing until the election of our new Governor at which time funding as support from the State became uncertain. HPAE members have expanded their outreach and are working on a statewide basis with all public sector workers to keep the necessary funding and to seek recognition for the important and unique work that our members do.

## RNs at Salem Memorial Hospital Want to Join Our Union

Wanting a larger role in patient care and to protect health services for the community, more than 70% of the Registered Nurses at Salem Memorial Hospital filed a petition on May 19th with the NLRB to conduct an election so they can become part of HPAE.

"We are community nurses, we live here, we work here, we take care of neighbors and families, and we want to make sure the voices of the nurses and the community are heard at the decision-making level at Memorial Hospital of Salem County, and its parent corporation, CHS," said Lorie Halter, RN ICU.

The nurses have gained the support of elected officials, with the passage of a resolution by the Board of Chosen Freeholders of Salem County supporting the rights of nurses to unionize. (See [www.hpae.org/newsroom](http://www.hpae.org/newsroom))

"In this time of uncertainty in health care, the voice of the bedside nurse is critical to making sure that patients come first, before profits or any other interest," said Ann Twomey, president of the state-wide HPAE. "Letting nurses have an election free of delays, intimidation, and endless legal challenges is crucial to giving nurses a real voice in protecting patient care and community needs."

There are 130 Registered Nurses working at Salem, and in recent months there has been controversy over attempts by Salem's parent corporation, CHS, to close maternity services at the hospital. The closure would appear to violate terms of the for-profit company's commitment when they purchased the hospital 8 years ago, and would first require approval by the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services.

Nurses have already been out in the community, seeking support to win their voice and maintain services at Memorial Hospital of Salem, which is owned by one of the country's largest for-profit hospital chain, CHS.

The NLRB is conducting hearings to determine the appropriate bargaining unit. The hospital's lawyers are claiming that all of the nurses are supervisors and therefore, no one should be eligible. This is a stalling tactic by the employer to delay the right of the nurses to join a union. We are strongly opposing this tactic at the NLRB hearing that are currently in progress. The date of the election will be determined once the hearings are finished. Look for a new local page on [hpae.org](http://hpae.org) to stay up to date on the campaign.

TO GET HEALTH CARE RIGHT EVERYDAY.

Salem County needs a community hospital with community nurses.

HERE IN SALEM COUNTY, we value being part of a community that cares for each other and reaches out for each other. Over the years, Memorial Hospital of Salem County (MHSC) has been an important part of our community, and we want to make sure that we stay that way. As nurses, our promise to you is a genuine commitment to provide the best care we can to our neighbors and families. We've taken the step of asking for a vote to join the state's leading nursing union, the Health Professionals and Allied Employees.

As the nurses at MHSC, we're your voice on the front lines of health care. That's why we are joining our voices together, so that you have a voice as well inside our community hospital. We want to make sure staffing is always at the right level for your care. We want to make sure we continue to provide all the services this community needs - putting patients ahead of profits.

By coming together as a unified group, the MHSC nurses you know and trust will be even stronger advocates for better health care.

We need to protect our community and our hospital. That's why we need the nurses at MHSC to have a vote.

Go to [www.hpae.org](http://www.hpae.org) to learn more about how we get healthcare right - everyday.

Health Professionals and Allied Employees present

Getting health care RIGHT EVERYDAY. HPAE



## South Jersey Healthcare

### RNs Win Staffing Adjustments in 'Real Time'

HPAE RNs won an innovative approach to staffing problems in their 2nd contract with SJH, ratified on May 27, 2010. RNs will be able to electronically transfer short staffing forms and incident reports to their nurse manager, as soon as staffing becomes a problem on the floors.



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Annual step increases of 1%, along with wage increases of 1.75%, 1.75% and 2%, are provided in the 3 year agreement. Nurses will receive recognition for their certifications, including \$.50 per hour National Certification Differential and \$.50 per hour Professional Ladder Differential, as well as increased access to continuing education funds. Nurses will also be protected against losing pay due to 'call-out's. The new agreement will extend until May 31, 2013.

## HPAE Local 5106 Temple/Episcopal Hospital

In February, RNS and Techs attended a general membership meeting to review the terms of a tentative agreement reached at the bargaining table. By secret ballot vote, the contracts were overwhelmingly approved.



### Here are the highlights:

Temple's initial wage proposal was 0%. So we thought we could be heading for a job action once again. Knowing how strong our members are, they began to bargain and we achieved a good contract. The new contract provides for increases of 6.5% over the four year term. The contract also included a ratification bonus for all bargaining unit members - full timers will receive \$1,000 and part timers \$500.00.

Many thanks to the negotiating committee and for all the support from the membership, pictured above L to R - Stephanie Reid-Harden, Terry Leone, Sue Clements, Betsy Nulty. Second row L to R: Alice Knittel, Gary Peoples, Rachelle Kozak and Carol Harrison. Missing from the picture are Mary Mansfield and Kathy Boardman who were also on the Negotiating Committee.



Local 5091 members reviewing the terms of the contract.

## Bergen Regional Medical Center

Professionals and RNs of Local 5091 were also able to successfully navigate not only a difficult economic year, but a past history of contentious negotiations, reaching a tentative settlement on May 18, prior to the contract expiration deadline of May 31. The new three year contract contains wage increases of 1.75%; 1.75% and 1.65%, as well as annual step increases average 1.5-2%; an increase in the education differential; and improvements in scheduling problems that had been leading to staffing shortages.

“Our members focused on improvements that maintained quality of care and allowed us to recruit and retain qualified staff,” said Jeff Peck. “In this economic climate, we wanted to negotiate this contract in a timely way that avoided any disruption of care to our patients, and to our staff. We’re pleased with the overwhelming ratification of this contract by our members.”

## Llanfair House Contract Settled



RNs and LPNs at Local 5107 members at Llanfair House in Wayne, NJ, settled a new 3 year contract which provides for 9.6% increase in salary during the term of the contract. It also includes an increase in charge pay, uniform allowance and dental

insurance. Congratulations to the negotiating team members: Laura Korkes, Lorri Bowlby and Hanna Juatco and HPAE Education Director Mike Slott.

## Harborage House Contract Settled

CNAs at Local 5097 in North Bergen, NJ, overwhelmingly ratified a 2 year contract in May that provides regular salary increases of approximately 2%; a slight increase in the cost of health premiums; and limits floating to emergencies. It now provides a float differential of \$2 more per hour whenever a CNA with a permanent assignment floats. This is a victory for the residents as well as the CNAs in terms of continuity of care.

Congratulations to the negotiating team of: Jennifer Charles Thompson, President; Sharlene Grant, Grievance Chair; Mirta Ramirez (Sec/Treas); Sandy White (VP) and Sharon Hodges.

# Budget Fact Sheet: NJ State Budget Cuts - Necessary or an Attack on Families & Communities?

The budget proposal from Governor Christie includes major cuts to health care, senior citizen programs, education, municipal aid and transportation, BUT no new revenue.

What Christie claims is a spending problem is really about declining state revenues due to the economic downturn. Income taxes, sales and business taxes for NJ government are all significantly less than needed to support local and state public services. Our biggest problem is finding the revenues to make sure that our families and children can get the services they need while making only the cuts that won't hurt either our economic recovery or our communities.

## Who gets hurt by the Christie Budget?

**Seniors and Frail Elderly:** Cuts in senior prescription drug programs – seniors making only \$20,000 a year will have to pay the first \$310 co-pay upfront for their prescription drugs; Cuts in eligibility for adult medical day care programs; Seniors on fixed incomes would see their taxes rise by more than \$1,300 under these budget cuts. (OLS 4/2010)

**Families:** Freezing Family Care for parents– a program to help working families pay for health insurance: More uninsured & More unpaid ER visits.

**Children:** \$3 million of cuts to subsidized school breakfast – a program that serves breakfast to NJ's poorest kids and cuts to pre-school and early education; More than \$800 million in cuts to local school budgets.

## Our Communities: More than \$400 million in cuts to municipal aid

**Taxpayers and Renters:** Reduction in property tax and renter rebates; Reduction in state aid to municipalities will raise the average taxpayer's tax bill by \$250.

**Uninsured and Hospitals:** Increase in hospital taxes and cuts to hospital Stabilization Fund – small increase in charity care.

**HPAE Members:** working in public facilities (UMDNJ, Runnell's) will pay more for health insurance; Cuts in pension benefits and retiree benefits.

## WHO BENEFITS?

**Millionaires and the rich:** Those making more than \$400,000 would save \$11,500 a year (OLS 4/2010). By not renewing the 'Millionaires-Tax', a one-year income surcharge on those whose income is \$400,000 or more, NJ will lose almost \$1 billion in revenues.

**Q.** Are the teachers and public service workers really the problem?

**A.** Public workers are the people who teach our children, care for our elderly, clean up our schools and communities in NJ. Even wage freezes at the local level – without sharing the sacrifice with a 'Millionaire's Tax' – won't make up for the cuts to schools and municipal aid. Instead of bargaining with teachers and public service workers, Gov. Christie and NJ Legislators unilaterally reduced pension and health benefits. That kind of attack on the collective bargaining process will weaken all of our unions – without solving the state's budget problems.

**Q.** Well, aren't public salaries and benefits too high?

**A.** AT UMDNJ, HPAE members have gone without a raise for 3 years. National studies show that public workers still make less than their private sector counterparts. Our members have always contributed to their pension plans. In many HPAE hospitals, our members have agreed to pension cuts, reduced salary increases and other sacrifices to save their hospitals. But, we demand the right to financial information, shared sacrifice, and our bargaining rights. All of that has been violated by Governor Christie and the NJ Legislature.

**Q.** So what is the answer?

**A.** HPAE has joined in coalition with citizen groups to provide revenue alternatives – and to oppose unnecessary cuts. Extending the Millionaire's Tax and current business taxes instead of cutting them would also raise significant revenues. HPAE is participating in budget hearings to raise our concerns – and is participating in Lobby Day on Monday, June 21, 2010.


OLS ANALYSIS PROVES CHRISTIE BUDGET ONLY BENEFITS RICH AT EXPENSE OF EVERYONE ELSE: <http://www.njsendems.com/release.asp?rid=3286>

An Update on State Budget Cuts Governors Proposing New Round of Cuts for 2011; At Least 45 States Have Already Imposed Cuts That Hurt Vulnerable Residents:

<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1214>

# HPAE

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**HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND ALLIED EMPLOYEES**  
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## HPAE CONVENTION CALL

### "GETTING HEALTH CARE RIGHT"



HPAE 2010 CONVENTION  
September 30 - October 1, 2010

TROPICANA HOTEL  
Havana Towers  
2831 Boardwalk  
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

**Register by  
Friday, September 24, 2010:**

Via the web at:  
[www.hpae.org/2010convention\\_registration](http://www.hpae.org/2010convention_registration)  
- Or call 201-262-5005  
- Or complete the registration form below  
and fax to 201-262-4335.

**Registration Fee:**

**Members:**  
\$40 both days / \$25 one day

**Non-Members/Guest:**  
\$50 both days / \$30 one day

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ St: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: (        ) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Local: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday, September 30, 2010**

#### "STAFFING MATTERS"

An interactive workshop/presentation will take place.

10 am - 10:30 am Registration  
10:30 am - 3:30 pm with lunch provided.

5 pm - 6 pm Registration  
6 pm - 7 pm Reception  
7 pm - 11 pm Dinner & Dancing

**Friday, October 1, 2010**

8 am - 9 am Registration & Continental Breakfast  
9 am - Convention

- Election of Officers
- State of the Union
- Keynote: Transforming Health Care in NJ

- Luncheon
- State & Local Awards
- Constitutional Amendments & Resolutions