



# The Gill Perspective

## Greetings From the State House....



As your state representative in the Senate, my office is always open to you. Please feel free to

contact me or a member of my staff if you need help in dealing with a state agency; have a question concerning a state program or piece of legislation pending in

Trenton; or would like to express an opinion.

We look forward to hearing from you as personal contact is the best method I know to guarantee that I am appropriately representing your interests in Trenton.

The only way that government can work properly is in partnership with the people.

I encourage you to participate in the process by keeping me informed of the issues that are important to you. Only then can we ensure the best possible government for all.

Sincerely,

*Mia H. Gill*

## Be Heard On Property Tax Reform

**M**ake sure that your voice is heard with the Property Tax Convention Task Force, which is set to recommend on December 31, 2004, whether New Jersey should hold a Constitutional Convention.

The Task Force has been assigned to consider and develop recommendations regarding the process of conducting a constitutional convention designed to change the existing property tax system. The recommendations must include, but is not limited to: the recommended method for selecting delegates to the

convention, the proper scope of the convention's inquiry and the method for considering its recommendations, and identifying the specific issues that the convention should consider as well as the estimated costs of the convention.

There are many concerns that require serious consideration, and your opinions are critical in this process. Your input is important on such things as delegate criteria, delegate election and campaign finance rules, timing, operation of the convention, and recommendations. Your opinions are also vital on

how to focus the Convention's work on the stated public policy goal of bringing fundamental change to the property tax system in order to provide relief to property taxpayers.

Any meaningful property tax reform must address government spending, which is a constitutionally delegated power made specific to the State Legislature. This issue must be addressed.

You can contact the Property Tax Convention Task Force at [www.nj.gov/convention/](http://www.nj.gov/convention/) or write: The New Jersey Property Tax Force, c/o Acting Governor Richard Codey, CN 001, Trenton, NJ 08625.

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### Senator Gill's Committees

- Senate Judiciary Committee
- Senate Commerce Committee, vice chair
- Legislative Services Commission
- Casino Review Fund Advisory Commission.

## Whistleblower Notification Becomes Law

Employers now have to notify employees annually about New Jersey's "whistleblower" protections under S276 (Adler/Gill) which was signed into law on September 14, 2004.

Under the new law, employers with more than 10 employees must provide annual written documentation outlining employees' rights under the States Conscientious Employee Protection Act (CEPA), which protects employees from

retaliation if they expose an employer's wrongdoing.



The new law requires the State's Labor Commission to make available to employers a text of a notice fulfilling the requirements of this legislation and provide copies of the notice to employers who request the copies.

To obtain further information contact the Department of Labor at (609) 292-2323.

## Gill Delivers Keynote Address at Statewide World AIDS Day Conference

Senator Gill gave the keynote speech at the Department of Health and Senior Services annual World AIDS Day statewide conference on Wednesday, December 1, 2004 at the Sheraton Hotel in Atlantic City. The theme for this years conference was "Women, Girls, HIV, AIDS" in recognition of the increasing devastation the HIV/AIDS pandemic is having on the female population worldwide, in this country, and in New Jersey.

"I cannot promise what the state Legislature will do, but I can promise what I

will do," Senator Gill told several hundred attendees. "I will continue to press the fight for you so that the government becomes more responsive and listens." She also stressed that she would advocate for additional drug treatment and mental health services in the state budget, along with pressing for more prevention and education programs that focus on young women of color.



## Flu Vaccine Update

On October 29, Commissioner Lacy issued an administrative order requiring health care professionals to administer influenza vaccine only to those people at high risk of serious, flu-related complications and their caregivers. Physicians, nurses, pharmacies, health care facilities and others who dispense vaccine are covered by the order. In addition, the department currently has no intention of reallocating any vaccine held by any entity in the state, although permitted to do



so by the law.

On November 9, 2004, Department of Health and Senior Services received notice from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) that New Jersey will receive 342,000 additional doses of flu vaccine between now and early 2005 as a result of the nationwide reallocation of vaccine. Approximately 119,000 of these doses will be allocated to local health departments.

As per the CDC, all healthy people aged 5-49 years who are not pregnant can use FluMist. The Commissioner's administrative order does not

### *A Need For A Lieutenant Governor*

A constitutional amendment creating a Lieutenant Governor post would ensure the governor's successor is independent from the legislative branch and accountable to all New Jersey Voters.

During the last major overhaul of our state constitution in 1947, arguments were made to create the position of lieutenant governor. Testimony endorsing the position was submitted by the New Jersey League of Women Voters and the State Federation of Women's Club, among other groups. In the end, the committee of the 1947 Constitutional Convention defeated the proposal by a 6 to 3 vote. Four of the no votes were state senators who went on to become Senate President.

Under the current scheme, the Senate President serves as acting governor while holding his or her Senate seat until an election is held. The Senate President gets to introduce legislation, vote for it, and sign it into law. He/she gets to nominate a judge, then vote in the Senate to confirm the nomination. The doctrine of separation of powers was adopted in the United States to avoid kingship, and the idea of too much power in one person's hands.

The current state's succession process for governor vests too much power in one person, violating the constitutional tenets of the separation of powers since one person now heads the executive branch and part of the legislature. The New Jersey governor is the most powerful state post in the country as it is the only state-wide elected office, appoints all other state-wide positions, and has the power of line item veto (the ability to strike parts of legislation before signing it into law).

Forty-two states currently have a lieutenant governor.

### *A Seniors Bill of Rights*

An executive order was signed on September 27, 2004 that creates a Seniors Bill of Rights. It establishes policy whereby seniors would have a range of care choices to support their independence, dignity, and choice. It also requires the State to first and promote alternatives to nursing homes.

# More Gill Supported Legislation Becomes Law

**S1908** Requires Port Authority of NY and NJ to transport remains of victims of September 11, 2001 from WTC in a memorial.

**S150** Creates the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction.

**S1444** Creates the "Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative" in Office on Minority and Multicultural Health to establish a comprehensive plan to reduce health disparities.

**S1558** The "New Jersey Civil Rights Act" provides the citizens of New Jersey with a state remedy for the deprivation or interference with an individual's civil rights.

**S931** Requires employer notification to

employees if health benefits coverage is terminated.



**S914** "Brain Injury Research Act" establishes the New Jersey Commission on Brain Injury Research

**S1237** This bill conforms the survivor

benefit to the benefit a beneficiary is entitled to receive under the Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund.

**S1332** Concerns offenses related to unlawful use of personal identifying information

**S2379** Establishes organic certification program in Department of Agriculture

**S2559** Upgrades crime of luring or enticing a child into motor vehicle, structure or isolated area to a crime of the second degree

**A634** Requires initial decisions in written form whenever it result in the rejection of an application from a small business for eligibility to participate in the NJ set-aside program.

## Senator Gill Proves She's American As Apple Pie

Senator Gill's apple pie recipe won second place during the Montclair Historical Society's Apple Fest in September.

Apple Fest is an annual event that features activities for all ages including live music and various apple-related activities involving fun, facts, folklore, cider making, and a pie contest. This year's event was held on the grounds to the Crane House Museum in Montclair. Senator Gill's second place prize included \$25 and a one year membership to the Montclair Historical Society.

### Senator Gill's Apple Pie Recipe

¾ cup sugar  
¼ cup all purpose flour  
¼ teaspoon nutmeg  
¼ teaspoon cinnamon  
a pinch of salt  
6 medium gala apples; cored & pared, thinly sliced

Prepare pie pastry: Mix 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour, ¼ cup butter, ¼ cup shortening, and ½ teaspoon salt with pastry blender. Add ¼ cup water, a little at a time,



stirring with a fork until a ball is formed. Roll out and line pie plate with pastry.

Mix sugar, flour, nutmeg, cinnamon, and salt. In large bowl, pour over apples and stir. Pour ingredients into pie plate. Cover with crumb topping: Mix one cup of all-purpose flour with ½ cup of firm butter with pastry blender. Add ½ cup of compressed brown sugar and gently mix with a fork until crumbly.

Preheat oven to 425F. Bake for 50 minutes. Cover pie with foil for the final 10 minutes. Pie tastes best served warm.

## Protecting Children, Women, and Families

In New Jersey, two children have died every week for the last ten years due to HIV/AIDS related illnesses, 30,000 children have been orphaned because of HIV/AIDS related deaths.

New Jersey has the **third highest** pediatric HIV rate in the nation, with 71% of all cases being African American children; the **highest** rate of HIV infection among women in the nation, with African American women accounting for 63% of the women infected in the state; and a rate of injection-related HIV infection that is **almost twice** the national average. More than half of the total HIV/AIDS

cases in New Jersey can be attributed to injection related drug use.

An executive order has been issued establishing trial needle exchange programs for three cities with high HIV/AIDS rates in New Jersey. Camden and Atlantic City will be two of the locations. The establishment of these programs are a proven way to stem the spread of fatal blood-borne diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis C.

The NAACP, the American Medical Association, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Black Ministers

Council of New Jersey, have all endorsed needle exchange programs. Numerous studies, including those by the National Research Councils have found no evidence that needle exchange programs promote drug use or drug related activity. What the studies show is that needle exchange reduces infections and saves lives.

31,432 New Jersey residents are known to have died from this epidemic. This executive order will save lives.

New Jersey and Delaware are the only two states without laws granting drug users access to sterile needles. S1829 (Gill/Vitale) will save lives.



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Gill speaks at Montclair Child Center May 2.



Gill enters charity horse race at the Meadowlands Racetrack on June 12, overcomes fears, and wins \$250 to benefit the New Jersey Women and Aids Network.



Rapper Doug E. Fresh takes time to get acquainted with Gill and her staff at the National Hip Hop Convention.



Gill keeps in touch with constituents at Montclair's African American Day Parade.



Gill speaks at signing of the Executive Order to allow needle exchange for three municipalities, in October 2004.