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JON S. CORZINE
Governor

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Governor Announces First Round of Funding for Regular Operating School Districts

BAYONNE- On a tour of the Washington Community Elementary School, Governor Jon S. Corzine today announced that more than 130 New Jersey school districts are eligible to receive approximately \$180 million for capital maintenance and construction projects under the first round of Schools Development Authority (SDA) regular operating district grant allocations.

"Today, we are delivering on our commitment to transform our schools into safe, healthy learning environments for our children," said Governor Corzine. "We recognize that many non-Abbott districts are struggling with costs for construction, maintenance and repairs to make desperately needed improvements. Investing in these types of projects will help stimulate the economy and create job opportunities during this critical time."

Bayonne is scheduled to receive approximately \$5.95 million in state funds for upgrades and repairs at ten schools totaling \$10.6 million. The Washington Community Elementary School will receive \$839,873 in state funds to undertake a \$1.5 million repair project. Overall, 133 districts applied for funds for 400 projects. Total estimated cost of the projects to be funded in this first round is \$447,182,565.

"School construction is a vital need statewide and affects all of our children. The funding opportunities announced today will both benefit future generations of New Jersey students and create much-needed jobs to stimulate the economy in these unprecedented times," said Kris Kolluri, the Schools Development Authority's CEO.

Last July, Governor Corzine signed legislation authorizing an additional \$3.9 billion for the schools construction program. Of that funding, \$1 billion was made available for the state share of funding for projects in non-Abbott districts.

The Department of Education (DOE) established processes for district applications, project evaluations and prioritization and aid eligibility. The grant awards announced today represent the first of multiple rounds of funding opportunities.

Projects eligible to be funded by the first round grants range from the replacement of a middle school destroyed by fire in East Brunswick (\$4.2 million state share) and major renovations at Clayton High School (\$6.4 million state share) and Henry P. Becton Regional High School in Carlstadt-East Rutherford (\$11 million state share) to the replacement of windows at Milford Elementary School in Hunterdon County (\$7,840 state share).

Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy noted that it is much more difficult for children to succeed academically when they are being taught in an overcrowded building or in a building in need of repair. "It is difficult for children to learn in an old school with crumbling plaster, broken lights, sagging ceilings or inadequate bathrooms," the Commissioner said.

A report on the first round allocations - including the districts, their approved projects and the funds they can expect to receive, along with descriptions of the DOE application and evaluation processes and a county-by-county analysis of the grant distribution can be found on the School Facilities page of the Department of Education website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.

In order to receive the state share for their projects, district officials must secure their local shares through referendum or budget approval. Fifty-seven projects in 18 districts require referendums, all of which are scheduled for April 21, 2009.

The deadline for districts to submit applications for round two funding has been extended to April 17. However, some districts which submitted requests as early as last month may receive notifications of grant eligibility as early as March 20.

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Photos from Governor Corzine's public events are available in the Governor's Newsroom section on the State of New Jersey web page, <http://www.nj.gov/governor/news/>

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