

TESTIMONY OF MATTHEW BOXER
ASSEMBLY BUDGET COMMITTEE
MARCH 9, 2009

Good morning Chairman Greenwald and members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you today to begin an ongoing dialogue about the effort to ensure transparency and accountability concerning the federal stimulus funding being provided to New Jersey.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was signed into law in order to stimulate economic growth through spending on a wide variety of programs. Two weeks ago, Governor Corzine asked me to co-lead a group to oversee the implementation of the Recovery Act in New Jersey. This morning the Governor named the remaining members of the group, which includes experienced current and former public officials who bring a wide variety of experience to the critical task of overseeing stimulus funding in New Jersey.

The process of assessing how best to ensure that there is proper oversight of these funds, which are so critically needed by the residents of our State, is underway. My particular focus will be to ensure that there is transparency and accountability in the funding process. To that end, we have been reviewing the specific transparency requirements in the federal bill and making our own independent assessment of the steps that are needed to ensure that the funds are distributed in a way that is both transparent and fully accountable to the public.

The federal stimulus bill requires that specified categories of information be posted on-line, and, accordingly, today the State plans to go live with its Recovery Act website. This website will be updated constantly

and will provide critical and detailed information to the public about funding that is available, about how the funds will be distributed, and about the criteria used to award funding. We also expect that the website will contain information about projects that are funded as well as vendors hired to perform the work. In short, this website will be a centerpiece of our effort to ensure full transparency. We have been engaged in discussions involving the Office of Information Technology and the Governor's Office regarding the timely reporting and updating of information on the website.

Because of the large task at hand both in distributing and accounting for this federal money, several national professional groups have been facilitating the exchange of information among the fifty states. We have been participating in these discussions from which we will learn the approaches being taken by other states, which will assist us in evaluating how best to execute our oversight tasks.

As you know, it is critical that these funds are utilized for their intended purposes, which are to help New Jerseyans through these challenging times by helping them get back to work, helping them to stay in their homes, and providing the critical safety net resources that are so needed right now. In the coming weeks, I expect to have more details on how we will oversee these funds. The government must be accountable to the public whenever it spends public money, but particularly in this situation that involves a truly unprecedented level of funding and unprecedented complexity in funding streams. I look forward to working with each of you and your colleagues in the Legislature to ensure that, collectively, we keep a close eye on how Recovery Act funds are spent.

Thank you for your time today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

