



Dear Friend:

The state we love is at a crossroads. In one week, New Jerseyans will go to the polls and cast ballots in a gubernatorial election that will determine our state's priorities and future.

There are many issues of importance to New Jerseyans in this race and Governor Jon Corzine and I stand at opposite ends of the spectrum on many of them. While the Governor has stated he will continue to raise taxes to cover his budget shortfalls, I have put forth a plan to drastically cut wasteful spending while still funding vital priority programs, such as special needs and education.

I have met with families affected by autism from across the state and have been struck by their incredible grace and courage. Many of these families have expressed their concern over New Jersey's highest-in-the nation vaccine mandates. I stand with them now, and will stand with them as their governor in their fight for greater parental involvement in vaccination decisions that affect their children.

In addition, we need to ensure that our most vulnerable children and adults have access to the health coverage and services they need. I will ensure that New Jersey families have more access to affordable health care, so that their children can have access to vital proper health coverage and vital research, such as autism screenings and therapy.

The stark reality is that Governor Corzine's Administration continues to underfund and under support the agencies charged with providing assistance to these families and ignores the impact of failed policies. In 2009 the State Comptroller reported that millions were being wasted annually by the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Corzine Administration responded by slashing the budgets of the vital private agencies dedicated to assisting the disabled. The state offices continue to suffocate the families of New Jersey with mountains of rules and regulations with little sign of understanding or concern for the realities of their lives.

In addition, Governor Corzine reduced state funding in the 2010 state budget proposal for the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) by \$13.5m which was covered this year with a onetime addition of federal aid. This budget gimmick places the DDD's vital funding and programs at grave risk.

Through my interactions with families of children with special needs, I have seen the financial, social and emotional impact of autism on New Jersey families. Like so many aspects of New Jersey's state government, I think we all know that we can and must do better. When it comes to serving the most challenged members of our community, it simply is not enough to talk about helping, we must make change an immediate priority.

My conversations with educators, caregivers, health professionals, and parents of special needs children have given me an appreciation for the important role of state government in improving the lives of special needs children and adults and ensuring all have the tools they need to succeed in our state. Ending waste in state government in order to improve care and services for these unique children and adults, as well as giving parents the choice they deserve in their children's health care decisions, will be top priorities.