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State House Strategies
Legislative Update

The first four months of the Christie Administration appears to be a night and day comparison with recent history in the State's approach not only to business regulations but to marina's and recreational boating specifically. Early indications of changes of policy and approach to communicating with the industry have been encouraging. The hard part starts over the next few months as the Administration puts their positive words into action.

The most significant recent development coming from Trenton was the release of the report from the Red Tape Review Task Force established by the Governor to study regulations and rules that hurt business in the State. The Task Force, led by Lieutenant Governor Guadagno, analyzed the process by which the State's agencies propose and consider rules. In doing so, the Task Force took testimony throughout the State and reviewed the impact of over 20,000 pages of rules and regulations. The Marine Trades Association of New Jersey, represented by Executive Director Melissa Danko, made an impact during that review.

At a public hearing at Montclair State University, Director Danko outlined the various, contradictory and unreasonable regulations facing the recreational boating industry and the testimony caught the attention of the Lieutenant Governor who asked a number of insightful questions. DEP Commissioner Martin, also a member of the Task Force, commented as well that the DEP would be holding "stakeholder" meetings to address some of MTANJ's concerns. MTANJ's testimony also was echoed by NJ Business and Industry Association Vice President David Brogan.

The Task Force report indicates that the MTANJ comments and examples made a significant impact. The Report, under a section titled "Examples of rules that appear to offend Common Sense", is highly critical of the DEP's recent "public access" rule. The Task Force stated that the DEP action on public access imposed "immense" costs and liability on a critical sector of New Jersey's tourism economy. The DEP also appears to have taken note and they have called a meeting, as proposed by the DEP Commissioner, with the MTANJ and other groups to discuss a revised approach to this and other rules. The recommendations of the Task Force appear clearly to be a step in the right direction to restoring fairness and realism to the discussion over marinas, permitting and public access.

The State will also soon be deeply engaged in a debate over the passage of the FY 11 State Budget. The Legislature is currently considering testimony from the Christie Administration about their Budget proposal. Buried deep within the proposal, unfortunately, is a reduction in money's in the I BOAT NJ fund. The Office of Management and Budget has apparently misidentified the program as "unspent" resources and are looking to take much of the \$2.5 million fund for General Fund purposes. The MTANJ has strongly opposed this suggestion and have been meeting with senior Budget Committee members to discuss I BOAT NJ and the impact that a loss of funding would have on tax saving projects the program supports. The

Association will continue to meet with legislators and Administration staff to protect the program and to promote its benefits to the State.

The Legislature is currently on recess but they are scheduled to return in early May to begin the Budget process which is required to be completed by June 30, 2010.