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THOUSANDS TO GATHER AT NJRC STATEWIDE ASSEMBLY

**Top Legislators & Other Key Political Leaders to attend
Governor Expected to Unveil Plan for School Funding Formula**

Cherry Hill, NJ (November 6, 2006) – The New Jersey Regional Coalition

(NJRC) will host a huge public assembly on Thursday, November 16th in Atlantic City, NJ. The NJRC, a powerful statewide citizens' organization, is calling on the governor and legislative leaders to act immediately on reforms that will lower property taxes, lessen public school dependence on local property taxes, and put a ban on the affordable housing loophole.

Last year, legislative leaders and then gubernatorial candidate Corzine vowed to address these problems but have yet to act on them. "After our recent meeting with Governor Corzine's top staff, it is clear he backs the changes we are proposing for school funding reform to lower property taxes," says NJRC Board Member Rev. Gladys Moore, Pastor of St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Jersey City, and Assistant to the Bishop, New Jersey Synod, ELCA. "We have been given every indication that the Governor plans to confirm his support at our NJRC assembly."

Property taxes for New Jersey homeowners are the highest in the nation. "Rising school and home costs are pricing middle class families, seniors and renters out

of their communities. Low-income children are being denied equal access and opportunities to housing and education,” says NJRC leader Marlene Lao-Collins of the New Jersey Catholic Conference. “Our legislators have to take the bold steps needed to fix our tax problem and make our state and our region more stable, unified and economically competitive.”

The New Jersey Regional Coalition advocates a controversial formula that would expand state funding of public schools based on the number of low-income children within a district and on the taxing capacity of that district. “Property tax reform must find ways to support communities and school districts that are caught in the middle,” said NJRC leader Rohn Hein, in a statement to a joint legislative committee last month. The NJRC wants the recently passed sales tax used to expand school funding. “If this funding stream was dedicated specifically to reducing property taxes based on school district revenue capacity, it could lower property taxes significantly in hundreds of towns and for thousands of middle-income homeowners across the state,” said Hein. “A funding formula like this would support diversity rather than encourage segregation as the current formula does.”

NJRC leaders are also demanding a ban on the use of Regional Contribution Agreements or RCA’s - the controversial loophole in the fair housing law that allows wealthy towns to pay poor towns to take on their low-income housing obligation. They are also calling for in-state tuition to be extended to the children of immigrants. “Recycling children back into poverty by denying them an education has never helped anyone or any group or community,” says Rev. Moore.

The NJRC is a grassroots organization that seeks to develop regional strategies to combat urban decline, racial segregation and fiscal disparities in New Jersey.

This influential, interfaith-based coalition represents congregations, communities, unions, non-profits and policy advocates statewide.

Legislators already committed to attend the assembly include: Senator Robert Menendez, State Senator Diane Allen (R-7), Senator William Gormley (R-2), Assemblyman Reed Gusciora (D-15), Assemblyman Jack Connors (D-7), Assemblyman Thomas Giblin (D-34), Assemblyman Louis Greenwald (D-6), Assemblyman Mims Hackett Jr. (D-27) and Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver (D-34), with many more expected.

This year, the people's meeting – set for **November 16th from 7:30 – 9:00 pm at St. Nicholas of Tolentine Catholic Church, 1409 Pacific Ave. (corner of Pacific and Tennessee Ave.) Atlantic City, NJ 08401** – is being held in Atlantic City because many of the same elected officials who promised change last year will be present for the League of Municipalities Annual Conference. Although the League has endorsed a citizens' convention to address tax reform, the NJRC is rejecting that approach as remote and too risky. Instead, the Coalition is calling on the governor and legislators to act now! For more information please visit www.njregionalequity.org or call 856-663-5380.