

**GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT UPON SIGNING
ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 3628
(Second Reprint)**

Assembly Bill No. 3628 (Second Reprint), which I have signed today, establishes the New Jersey Civic Information Consortium (the "Consortium"). Under this new law, five New Jersey member universities - The College of New Jersey, Montclair State University, the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rowan University, and Rutgers, The State University - will assume the indispensable role of advancing research and innovation in the field of media and technology to benefit the State's civic life and evolving information needs.

I commend the Legislature for beginning to address one of the more challenging problems confronting New Jersey residents who want to know what is happening in the world around them in 2018 - intentionally deceptive "news." I am signing this bill because I believe the Consortium is a viable means to begin to combat the widespread proliferation of deliberately false or misleading information that threatens our democracy and contributed to getting President Trump elected. I believe it is extremely important to put in place a strong system to prevent a world in which popular but false news claims go unchallenged because of a lack of commitment or resources. This new law embodies precisely such commitment and establishes exactly such a system.

Unfortunately, however, the same cannot be said about the resources provided to the Consortium under this bill and under the legislative budget. Obviously, this law, passed contemporaneously with the budget bill, will require resources to accomplish its goals. As originally conceived, the Consortium would have been amply funded with appropriations totaling \$100 million. See Assembly Bill No. 4933 (2017); Senate Bill No. 3303. Those 2017 bills appropriately would have fought back against Governor Christie's misguided and irresponsible FY 2018 budget plan, which among other gimmicks, relied on diverting practically all of the proceeds of a one-time spectrum auction conducted by the Federal Communications Commission to plug a structural budget gap.

In the end, the FY 2018 budget as enacted did exactly what the Governor wanted - diverting nearly \$322 million of the \$332 million in total auction proceeds. In recognition of this reality, the Consortium bill thereafter was reconfigured by its sponsors to provide for a \$20 million General Fund appropriation to effectuate the purposes of the bill, and annual appropriations thereafter.

Upon introduction of the FY 2019 legislative budget in June, however, the General Fund appropriations were stricken from the bill. Instead, the legislative budget included language diverting an amount not to exceed \$5,000,000 from the Trust Fund for the Support of Public Broadcasting to the Consortium to advance research and innovation in the field of media and technology to benefit the State. I am advised by the State Treasurer that far

less than \$5 million remains available in the Trust Fund for potential transfer to the Consortium. Given the diversion of auction proceeds to the General Fund, most, if not all of the remaining balances are necessary to provide for capital projects and emergency repairs required by the New Jersey Public Broadcasting Authority to maintain its equipment and licensing as required by the Federal Communications Commission.

Budgeting is about mathematics and priorities. Instead of constantly relying on piecemeal gimmicks like one-shot infusions of diverted funds, the goal of my Administration is to wean State budgeting away from such diversions. I would strongly prefer to establish a long-term priority list and to generate sufficient recurring revenues to pay for those priorities in a responsible manner. Nonetheless, I am hopeful that a sufficient amount of funding will be available to support the Consortium as it begins its important work. My signature today represents my unwavering commitment to strengthening news outlets in New Jersey at this very critical time in our history.

Date: August 24, 2018

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Matthew J. Platkin

Chief Counsel to the Governor