

Delaware: Governor Minner Completes Legislative Session With Major Funding Accomplishments

Budget Includes Funding for Education, Health, Economic Development, Environment and the Transportation Trust Fund

July 1, 2007 -- Dover – Early this morning Delaware Governor Ruth Ann Minner signed the FY 2008 Operating Budget, the Capital Budget, and the Grant in Aid bill, which provide significant funding to continue to improve education, protect the environment, spur economic development and provide continued investment to the state's infrastructure needs.

The General Fund Budget for FY 2008 is \$3.3 billion, an approximate 5.9 percent increase over last year's budget. The FY 2008 Capital Budget is \$539.5 million, and the Grant In Aid Budget is \$47.7 million.

"This year, we faced several challenges including a growing population and increased demands on state services, continued Federal budget cuts and transportation demands outpacing our revenue growth," Governor Minner said. "The FY 2008 General Fund and Bond Bill represent responsible budgets that will continue to provide funding to critical needs and also fund core state services. I commend the members of the General Assembly and my Administration, including Director Jennifer Davis and Secretary Richard Cordrey, for their hard work over the past several months in this important budget process."

Some of the highlights of the package include:

Education:

- \$1.9 million to continue to fully implement Full-day Kindergarten;
- \$1 million to fund the Student Excellence Equals Degree (SEED) scholarship that provides free college tuition for a two-year degree to Delaware students;
- \$702,300 to help fund a program to put math specialists in every middle school; and
- \$9.6 million for increases in public school enrollment.

Health:

- \$16.2 million to fund recommendations of the Delaware Advisory Council on Cancer Incidence and Mortality;
- \$1.9 million to implement recommendations of the Infant Mortality Task Force;
- \$1 million to expand the Delaware Healthy Children Program; and
- \$28 million for the Medicaid program.

Economic Development:

- \$12 million for the Strategic Fund;
- \$5 million for the fourth year of the New Economy Initiative; and
- \$1 million to the Fraunhofer Center for Molecular Biotechnology for vaccine development.

Environment/Livable Delaware:

- \$1 million for Forestland Preservation; and
- Continued support of \$10 million for Farmland Preservation and \$10 million for Open Space through dedicated revenue.

Other:

- \$9.9 million in operating funds for the first full year of operations for the state's Veterans Home;
- \$273,400 to fund six additional troopers for the Delaware State Police; and
- \$25.4 million for employee salary increases.

The Capital Budget also includes \$256 million in capital authorizations for the Transportation Trust Fund. This budget is supported through the enactment of HB 253 and HB 264 which raised various revenues for the Transportation Trust Fund including vehicle registration fees, vehicle documentations, and a surcharge on traffic fines. Additional revenues will be raised through toll increases on Route 1 and I-95.

“Once again through the Governor’s leadership, the state has a balanced and prudent budget for FY 2008,” said Jennifer Davis, Director of the Office of Management and Budget. “I also commend the General Assembly for coming together to pass responsible operating and capital budgets that will undoubtedly benefit the residents of our State.”

Legislative achievements include:

- Senate Bill 1, which reforms the workers’ compensation system in Delaware;
- Senate Bill 149, which establishes the New Economy Jobs program;
- House Bill 249, which increases the cigarette tax by 60 cents;
- House Bill 253, which adds revenues to the Transportation Trust Fund;
- Senate Bill 79, which ensures that new buildings constructed in Delaware will be compatible with the 800 MHz radio system; and
- House Bill 109, which provides necessary code modifications for the implementation of the Delaware Employment Link.

Source: Delaware Governor