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Weber 
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Governor Christie Vetoes Senate Bill Affecting Total Disability and Survivors' Benefits

Governor Chris Christie vetoed New Jersey Senate Bill 929 this week which called for the payment of an annual cost of living adjustment (COLA) to total disability beneficiaries and those receiving survivors' benefits where the injury occurred after December 31, 1979. The current law only requires an annual adjustment in the rate of workers' compensation benefits for death and total disability to be paid from the Second Injury Fund (SIF), but only for those cases on or before December 31, 1979.

In his veto statement, the Governor noted that although S-929 was "well-intended," the "estimated yearly cost for the COLA is at least \$58 million and would be funded solely through an increase in the annual surcharge on private-sector employers paid into the Second Injury Fund (SIF)." Governor Christie added that "this bill would further raise [New Jersey employers'] workers' compensation insurance rates," already noted to be third highest in the nation and place additional burden on private sector businesses. It represented "a step in the wrong direction because an increase in the annual SIF surcharge would threaten the state's ability to keep existing employers in the state and undermine efforts to attract new ones," he said.

The Governor concluded that the bill called for "another unacceptable financial burden on the businesses of this state."

The bill was vociferously opposed by a number of organizations that lobby on behalf of New Jersey employers including the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, the New Jersey Food Counsel and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association.

Authored by: [Richard K Tavani](#)