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Governor Christie's "Tool Kit:" What is it and what it means to you?

In May 2010, Governor Christie proposed a package of 33 bills that are *labeled* as a "tool kit" to help local governments, school districts and higher education institutions control costs, as well as cap state spending. The vast majority of these proposals would do little to reduce costs, and instead are squarely targeted toward undermining and eroding collective bargaining and dismantling core labor standards. Included in the "Tool Kit" are:

#1: What is the proposal? A Constitutional amendment for a 2.5% cap on annual state spending increases.

What does it mean to me? When the economy improves, this amendment would effectively prevent the restoration of severe cuts to vital government services, including public safety & education.

#2: What is the Proposal? A cap on all collective bargaining agreements at 2.5% on economic issues. Included are salaries, hours in relation to earnings, paid vacation, paid holidays, health insurance and other economic benefits. Pension payments would be included in the cap if there is not a constitutional amendment requiring pension funding.

What does it mean to me? This is a unique proposal. No other state has a proposal like it. This cap is a limitation on what your union can bargain for your pay and benefits. This type of "line-item" specific cap does not exist for any other single category in a local government budget. If passed, due to inflation and the rising costs of health insurance, workers effectively would never get a raise again.

#3: What is the proposal? Allows for a local government to opt-out of civil service. The opt-out would be triggered by either a petition of 15% of valid votes cast in the local government during the last general election or by local government ordinance. Under both circumstances, the issue would then be placed on the ballot for consideration by the electorate. It also calls for removing State college employees from Civil Service.

What does it mean for me? Civil service is a core labor policy that ensures public jobs are not subject to politics and patronage, which often leads to waste and fraud. New Jersey's civil service law is necessary to ensure tenure, promotional practices, discipline practices, hiring practices and other essential personnel matters are done according to their merits, rather than being applied inconsistently or due to political interference. Ending civil service would jeopardize these long standing practices. This proposal would permit employers to pick and choose which employees are laid off – often as a result of politics.

#4: What is the proposal? Would prohibit negotiations over furloughs and allow an employer to institute any type of furlough plan they want. No furloughed employee shall be paid for the furlough.

What does it mean for me? This would permit employers to unilaterally reduce your pay and hours of work, which in turn would undermine and gut the main provisions of collective bargaining agreements.

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