

**SENATE BILL NO. 264**  
**(First Reprint)**

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 264 (First Reprint) without my approval.

The work performed by first responders must be lauded. Their tireless dedication to ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of the citizens of New Jersey is unwavering. When our first responders are injured on the job or develop a disability as a result of their work, the law must provide the same level of protection to them as these brave men and women provide to us.

New Jersey's workers' compensation law has long been touted as an effective system that provides injured workers with compensation and quality medical care while also maintaining reasonable cost controls. The existing law considers the fact-sensitive circumstances surrounding each incident and the injuries unique to each employee, including public safety workers.

This bill, however, would provide public safety workers with a presumption of coverage for injuries associated with specifically-enumerated incidents and, in some cases, disabilities that cannot be tied to any work-related incident. That presumption could only be rebutted by clear and convincing evidence to the contrary.

While it is necessary to care for those who care for the citizens of this great State, the public service provided by first responders, and the value we collectively place on it, must be balanced against our concomitant responsibility to our taxpayers. When a nearly identical version of this bill reached my desk last session, I expressed, among other apprehensions,

concern with the Legislature's failure to fully and deliberately analyze its impact on State, local, and municipal budgets.

While this bill received a fiscal analysis, it was resolved that the impact was indeterminate. Such an analysis provides no better understanding of the true fiscal impact of this bill than the bill I previously returned. However, there is evidence that similar bills in other states dramatically increased workers' compensation premiums and costs.

Our public safety workers are vital to our State, and I am committed to ensuring their well-being. As I expressed last session, I am continually open to discussions on new ways to enhance the lives of our emergency responders; however, I must ensure that any actions taken are not to the financial detriment of the taxpayers of this State.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 264 (First Reprint) without my approval.

[seal]

Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Thomas P. Scrivo

Chief Counsel to the Governor