



The Genealogical Society of New Jersey

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To Governor Christie, Lieutenant Governor Guadagno, State Treasurer Scudder, and Members of the Legislature:

The Genealogical Society of New Jersey opposes the State's current plan to move the New Jersey State Archives' operations and/or collections out of its current facility at 225 West State Street. The current layout of the State Archives was designed to welcome researchers, to enable the preservation and ongoing cataloging of documents, and to allow patrons and staff to have easy access to historical resources. Researchers from around the world visit the New Jersey State Archives year-round, and the Archives' staff are renowned in the historical community for their public service and expertise. Any separation of operations from collections will cause significant disruption of public access, will interfere with current indexing and database projects, and will present risks to the State's incredible documentary treasures.

Governor Christie's 2009 transition report characterized the Division of Archives and Records Management (DARM), which includes the New Jersey State Archives, in the following glowing terms:

DARM is a visible, accessible, and professional unit of State government. It is an enabler of improvements, functioning and cost savings to local governments, and an immense public relations value to the SOS [Secretary of State].

This was not surprising to New Jersey's historians, genealogists, archaeologists, press, and cultural resource professionals, given the national reputation that DARM and the State Archives have earned. The Archives and its staff have won multiple awards for institutional excellence, website resources, career achievement, and scholarship from various organizations within the state and nationally.

However, the historical community has been shocked and dismayed by a series of actions taken by the Administration that defy the transition report and weaken the safeguards in place to protect and manage public documents. This includes the termination of the Public Archives and Records Infrastructure Support ("PARIS") grants program in 2010, which resulted in the closure of several county archives and records management offices. The 2012 transfer of DARM's records management and records storage functions to the Division of Revenue and Enterprise Services (DORES) in the Department of the Treasury has also impeded important initiatives, including retention scheduling and other work of the State Records Committee, and the development of an electronic records program in the State Archives.

These actions are in direct contrast to standard practice in other states and not consistent with advances in archival programs nationally and internationally. Relocation of State Archives' operations or collections to create staff space for State House offices during the proposed five-year renovation would be yet another devastating blow to New Jersey's public record-keeping program.

The Genealogical Society of New Jersey urges the Administration and Legislature to seek other alternatives to accommodate the State House renovations that do not involve disruption of the State Archives' collections, programs, or public services.

We thank you, sincerely, for your reconsideration of this plan.

— The Genealogical Society of New Jersey Board of Trustees

Respectfully submitted by Pamelyn P. Bush, Recording Secretary