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SWEENEY: NO HEARING FOR CHRISTIE COURT NOMINEE

TRENTON – Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney today said he will not authorize confirmation hearings for Governor Christie’s nominee to replace Associate Supreme Court Justice James Wallace.

“The Senate cannot in good conscience play a role in the Governor’s reckless politicization of the courts,” said Sweeney (D-Gloucester/Cumberland/Salem). “I will not allow the dismantling of New Jersey’s independent judiciary. This nomination will not be taken up by Senate Judiciary Committee.”

Sweeney noted the Governor will have the opportunity to fill the same court seat during his first term -- Justice Wallace would only be able to serve an additional 22 months, at which point he will reach the mandatory retirement age of 70 -- and said nothing would prevent the same nominee from being put forward at that time.

Sweeney also noted Chief Justice Stuart Rabner’s letter to the judiciary yesterday which stated, “The Constitution also recognizes the importance of a strong, independent judiciary in our democratic society. At the Constitutional Convention of 1947, the delegates ... understood the enduring value of having judges decide cases not with an eye toward reappointment but by fairly and honestly applying the law to the facts, free from any political pressures or influence.”

“Gov. Christie should’ve taken a page out of the book written by his mentor, former Gov. Kean,” said Sweeney. “Specifically, he should’ve taken the page that says ‘there has not been a judge since the constitution was adopted in New Jersey who has been denied reappointment based on court opinions or political beliefs...the day that happens, the New Jersey judiciary will be undermined.’ Instead, he’s torn up the book altogether.”