



Q. The tradition of 'home rule' means that New Jersey has over 500 municipalities and more than 600 school districts. What are the budgetary implications of maintaining or consolidating them?

Chris Christie (Republican) - I do not believe that we should be withholding funds or unilaterally acting against a community or school simply because it does not fit a Trenton bureaucrat's view of the ideal size or shape. I do believe that there are considerable savings to be achieved by the rational development of collaborations between towns and their schools and that these opportunities have been demonstrated across the state. I will seek to take the best of each example and create incentives for others to replicate those initiatives and to go beyond that to develop new approaches. I will not spend years studying the theoretic value of a proposal; I will provide incentives for communities, schools and counties to move forward with the state's support.

Jon Corzine (Democratic) - The issue of consolidation is a complicated issue and deserves careful thought, not knee-jerk reaction. We are in the middle of a nationwide recession and I think that consolidation is one area where municipalities can save money and provide much needed property tax relief. As Governor I signed legislation creating the Local Unit Alignment, Reorganization and Consolidation Commission (LUARC). The members of the Commission must be given time to consider the issues associated with consolidation.

My Administration has done more to incentivize shared services and consolidations than any other in New Jersey history. Additionally, I recently eliminated the so-called "non-operating school districts. By merging with neighboring districts, students will receive the same quality education as before, and we will also begin to bring more rhyme

Jason Cullen (People Not Politics) - Education needs to be competitive. The costs of operating these towns and districts are negligible compared to the monumental costs the subsidized school districts present. How many small towns and districts can be run for the \$700M given to Newark's system? Perhaps we should be looking into what teacher unions are doing to sacrifice quality of education for job security.

Christopher Daggett (Independent for New Jersey) – We have been talking about consolidation of municipalities for many years and despite all the talk, very little consolidation has occurred, largely because of the state's regard for home rule. Instead of focusing on mandated consolidation, we ought to be looking at expanding shared municipal services, which so many communities are already doing. The sharing of police dispatchers is a great example. Mandated consolidation, however, is a political hot potato that will not bear much fruit and will

not address the pension and health care benefit programs that are at the heart of New Jersey's fiscal crisis.

Kenneth Kaplan (Libertarian Party) – Under my tuition based educational plan, where schools will have to be run in an efficient manner, providing quality education at reasonable cost, or else losing enrollment to schools that do, administrative costs will automatically come under control. That may well involve consolidation of administrative districts.

Joshua Leinsdorf (Fair Election Party) - Some money will be saved by consolidation, especially in the school districts. The 100 biggest districts, (18% of the total school districts) are overwhelmingly black and Hispanic and have 58.1% of the state's students, while the smallest 278 districts (50% of the total school districts) have 11.67% of the students and are overwhelmingly white. This distribution has educational as well as budgetary implications because although the state's pupil population is 55% white, a majority of the school districts are 75% white. Minorities are underrepresented in statewide bodies like the New Jersey School Boards Association.

I favor a "compact and contiguous" amendment to the Constitution both for apportioning legislative and congressional districts, and for determining the boundaries of municipalities and school districts.

Alvin Lindsay (Lindsay for Governor) - I think when you merge the 500 municipalities and the 600 school districts; you will see a big difference in the budget. The issue is trying to balance the budget and I think this will help.

David Meiswinkle (Middle Class Empowerment) - It makes sense to study the feasibility of merging school districts and melding municipalities for overall cost savings. Perhaps there are some districts and municipalities that are already contemplating this action. Of course a lot of politics will be involved in refiguring the various municipalities responsibilities. The best approach may be to set up a prototype and attempt to merge a few select school districts, police departments, fire departments and emergency services, garbage collection, and study the cost savings, and gage the results.

Gregory Pason (Socialist Party USA) - I support local control, its a cornerstone of socialism. The problem is not the amount of localities but the overhead and overpaid managers. We need to develop a way to share services but maintain local control. I oppose any top-down directives to merge municipalities or school districts.

Kostas Petris (For the People) – *No Response Received*

Gary Steele (Leadership, Independence, Vision) – The main budgetary implication of maintaining over 500 municipalities and more than 600 school districts is that there is a

tremendous amount of duplication of services. Loch Arbour, agreed to consolidate services with Ocean Township. The State stepped in and forced Loch Arbour to dramatically raise their property taxes and pay more money to Ocean Township. This was a slap in the face to a municipality doing exactly what New Jersey asked them to do. Many smaller municipalities operate much more efficiently than big cities. Our big cities continually look to Trenton to bail them out and provide millions of dollars to keep them afloat. This will stop under my administration. Towns should not be punished for consolidating.

Gary Stein (Independent, multiple slogans) - There seems to be a common thread in all these League of Women Voters questions so far. Can anyone guess? Yes indeed-it's that we're broke! I rested my case earlier for a crash diet with no layoffs; it applies locally as well. The budgetary implications of doing nothing, is chaos.