

Christie Signs Bill to Impose Stricter Bail Conditions on Domestic Violence Offenders

Thursday, November 10, 2011

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Gov. Chris Christie

TRENTON – Gov. Chris Christie today signed legislation to strengthen protections for victims of domestic violence by imposing stricter conditions for bail for domestic violence offenders who violate pre-existing restraining orders or are found in contempt of a restraining order.

“This is a common-sense protection. Those who demonstrate a propensity to re-victimize their victims will find their options for regaining their freedom limited, as well as their opportunity to re-offend,” said Christie. “We must always put victims of domestic violence first.”

The bill, A-1491, amends current law to limit bail options for persons charged with any crime involving domestic violence where the defendant is subject to a pre-existing temporary or permanent restraining order, and is charged with committing a crime against the person protected by the order. It also imposes bail limitations in cases where the defendant is charged with contempt of a domestic violence restraining order.

In such cases, release is permitted only if the defendant posts the entire bail amount in cash or a surety bond or a bail bond secured by real property. Additionally, the court may order only full cash bail in appropriate cases. Under the new law, defendants will no longer have the option to pay just 10 percent of a specified bail amount for violation of a temporary restraining order. Additionally, when a restraining order is in place and the defendant causes serious bodily injury to the victim or has previously violated a restraining order from that victim or has a previous conviction for domestic violence, there now will be a presumption that the defendant can only post full cash bail thus removing the option of posting any type of bond.

The bill was sponsored by Assemblymembers Celeste Riley (D-Salem, Cumberland and Gloucester), Cleopatra Tucker (D-Essex), Joan Voss (D-Bergen), Ralph Caputo (D-Essex) and Gordon Johnson (D-Bergen).