

NEW JERSEY SENATE

SENATE REPUBLICAN OFFICE

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December 28, 2021

Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney
935 Kings Highway, Suite 400
West Deptford, NJ 08086

Senator Nicholas P. Scutari
1514 E. Saint Georges Ave., 2nd Floor
Linden, NJ 07036

Dear Senate President Sweeney and Senator Scutari,

The Administration's recent \$53 million settlement for the deaths of 119 residents of New Jersey veteran's homes who died from COVID revives our call for an investigatory committee with subpoena power to review the Executive Branch's pandemic performance.

Not coincidentally, news of the settlement was revealed to a reporter after the Governor departed on a flight to Costa Rica for vacation and disclosed by [NJ.com](https://www.nj.com) late in the afternoon the day before Christmas Eve.

This appears to be an orchestrated scheme designed to avoid scrutiny and shield the Governor from answering crucial questions during the holiday news void.

That settlement, and everything that led up to it, demands explanation, and the silence from the front office is unacceptable but not surprising.

The Administration has never explained the rationale of decisions during the pandemic that led to the loss of almost 10,000 vulnerable seniors.

News of the \$53 million payoff, tendered without the participation or consultation of the duly elected Legislature, leaves us no choice but to once again renew the call for the Senate to form a Select Committee with subpoena powers to investigate the Executive Branch's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on nursing home residents, too many of whom lost their lives.

We need to understand where these taxpayer dollars are coming from, and how the Governor justified the expenditure without including the Legislature. Specifically, are federal coronavirus funds, or some other funds, expected to be used for the settlement?

We also must get answers regarding the decisions, the edicts, and the guidance the Murphy team imposed on veterans and nursing home administrators that may have triggered the devastating results.

Our caucus wonders what this settlement portends for the thousands of other families affected by the Administration's orders.

The Governor's Administration has maintained all along that their instructions to the long-term care facilities were not at fault, yet the monetary settlement would suggest otherwise.

The Senate Republican caucus first called for a Senate Select Committee in a [letter](#) on May 13, 2020. That was the first of six similar communications.

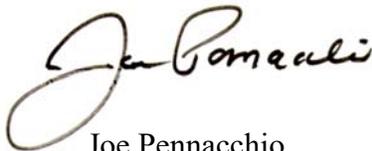
It was, and remains, our contention that the investigation would improve transparency and accountability and provide important insight of an Administration that has preferred to govern by executive order.

Through the pandemic, the Governor has eschewed the Legislature and its constitutionally ensured role as an equal and separate branch of government.

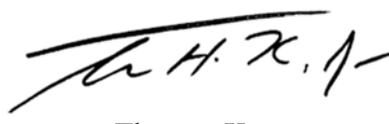
It is the opinion of our elected caucus that the results we have seen during two years of pandemic – including the \$53 million settlement - clearly demonstrate the need for legislative participation.

It is time for the Senate to get off the bench and get into the action.

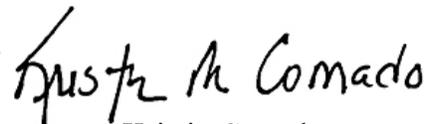
Sincerely,



Joe Pennacchio
Whip



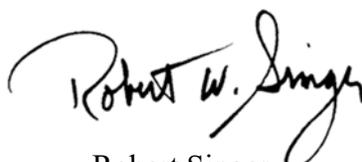
Thomas Kean
Leader



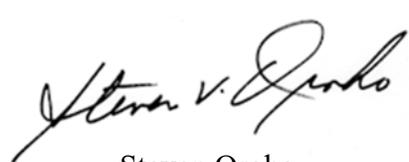
Kristin Corrado
Conference Leader



Kip Bateman
Deputy Whip



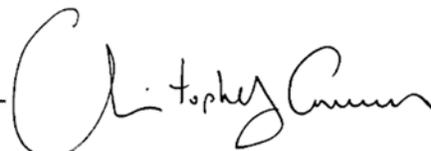
Robert Singer
Deputy Leader



Steven Oroho
Budget Officer



Anthony M. Bucco
Senator – District 25



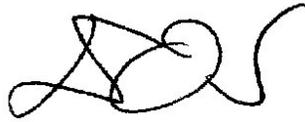
Christopher Connors
Senator – District 9



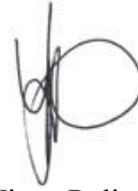
Michael Doherty
Senator – District 23



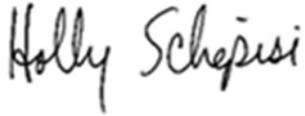
James Holzapfel
Senator – District 10



Declan O'Scanlon
Senator – District 13



Vince Polistina
Senator – District 2



Holly Schepisi
Senator – District 39



Michael Testa
Senator – District 1



Samuel Thompson
Senator – District 12