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Gov. Christie acted Tuesday on more than 100 pieces of legislation, vetoing bills that would ban firearms for certain criminals, raise the smoking age, and preserve nonprofit hospitals' property-tax exemption.

Christie, a Republican running for president, had until Tuesday to take action on bills the Legislature passed during the lame-duck session between November's election and the start of the new legislative session last week.

He "pocket vetoed" dozens of bills, meaning he did not sign them into law or officially reject them. The practical effect is that the legislation did not become law, and legislators must start the process all over again if they wish to advance their initiatives.

One such bill Christie pocket-vetoed would have prohibited people convicted of carjacking, gang criminality, racketeering, or terroristic threats from purchasing or owning a gun. Current law already imposes that restriction on individuals convicted of other crimes, such as homicide, aggravated assault, arson, and endangering the welfare of a child. The bill, which passed the Democratic-controlled Legislature without a single vote against, also would make carjacking and the other listed offenses crimes of the second degree, which are punishable by a fine of up to \$150,000 and a prison sentence of five to 10 years.

Another gun-related bill Christie let lapse would require firearms retailers to sell and maintain an inventory of so-called smart guns. Also known as personalized guns, the weapons use technology, such as fingerprinting, to ensure they can be fired only by the person who legally purchased them.

The bill also would repeal a provision of a 2002 law that said that once smart-gun technology was available, firearms retailers would be prohibited from selling traditional handguns.

Democratic lawmakers who sponsored that law said it had the unintended effect of stalling the technology's development, as gun-rights groups lobbied against it.

The National Rifle Association opposed the latest effort, even as Democrats presented it as a rollback of a previously onerous regulation. The bill passed the Legislature along party lines. "This is, quite simply, an attempt to protect children from gun violence, especially accidental shootings, but the governor wasn't even interested enough to act," said Assemblyman Gordon Johnson (D., Bergen), a bill sponsor. Christie's rivals for the GOP nomination have attacked his record on gun rights, and the governor has acknowledged that he has changed positions on the issue.

The governor's office declined to comment on any specific bill Christie pocket vetoed. But spokeswoman Joelle Farrell said: "Having the Legislature pass more than 100 bills in such a hasty and scrambled way, praying for them to be rubber stamped, is never a good formula for effectively doing public business."

Christie also declined to sign a bill that would have raised the smoking age from 19 to 21. New Jersey is among just four states and the District of Columbia where the minimum age to purchase tobacco is 19. Nearly 60,000, or 12.9 percent, of the state's high school students smoke, according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

"We are disappointed that Gov. Christie vetoed this measure that would have protected thousands of New Jersey's kids from a lifetime of tobacco addiction, thereby saving lives and health-care costs," said Ethan Hasbrouck, a lobbyist for an advocacy group affiliated with the American Cancer Society. Hasbrouck added, "Evidence suggests that if a young person does not begin smoking by the age of 26, it is very unlikely that he or she will ever take up smoking." Hawaii is the only state where the minimum age to buy tobacco products is 21.

The bill faced opposition from among convenience stores and gas stations.

Christie also vetoed a bill that would preserve nonprofit hospitals' exemption from property taxes but also require them to pay annual community service fees to municipalities for public safety costs. The exemption had come under scrutiny after a tax court judge ruled in June that a nonprofit hospital in Morris County "operated and used its property for a profit-making purpose" and therefore owed property taxes.

The judge warned that other nonprofit hospitals with for-profit medical providers on-site across the state may not qualify for the property-tax exemption, and hospitals feared the decision could encourage municipalities to file lawsuits. Under the bill, hospitals' community service fees would help pay for public safety costs in their municipalities and counties. Under a formula established by the Legislature, Cooper University Hospital in Camden would pay about \$580,000 annually. Marlton-based Virtua Health would owe more than \$1 million total to a couple municipalities.

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