

# NJBIA

## AT ISSUE *By Frank Robinson, First Vice President for Grassroots Affairs*

### Employer Legislative Committees Celebrate 50 Years

**It started in 1959 as a simple idea:** Bring together government leaders with area business owners in an informal setting to discuss the best ways to approach the key legislative issues of the day. Fifty years later, the Employer Legislative Committees (ELCs) are stronger than ever. On June 16, we will celebrate by hosting the Democratic and Republican nominees for governor at the ELC State Dinner (more on that later).

For those of you who do not know, the ELCs are the county-based independent grassroots affiliates of the New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA). Eighteen different ELCs representing all 21 counties meet monthly with state legislators or other government officials over breakfast or lunch.

Business people are provided with valuable information about the issues affecting their companies through a brief presentation by one of NJBIA's Government Affairs staff as well as a presentation from a featured speaker. The informal setting allows for easy question and answer sessions, and, often, a lively give and take occurs.

While originally designed as a means to learn about pending legislation and interact with legislators, the ELCs have evolved to include governors, US Senators, members of Congress, cabinet officers, county officials and mayors. The ELCs have changed with the times and are responsive to the needs and concerns of local businesses. In recent years, the committees have provided attendees with the opportunity to discuss such timely topics as homeland security, economic recessions, and education funding.

The unsung heroes of the county ELCs are the women and men who have served in leadership roles in the organization. On a voluntary basis, the county chairs and vice chairs organize the meetings each month. From securing interesting speakers, to sending out notices and making arrangements for the meeting locations, these dedicated individuals are the heart and soul of the local groups. NJBIA is very grateful for the time, commitment and dedication these leaders have given to the organization. We know that the past 50 years of success is a result of their hard work.

In addition to "running the show," the chairs have

been instrumental in working with the NJBIA staff to encourage partnerships with other business associations. Whether it is local/regional Chambers of Commerce or other business advocacy groups, we now have relationships with over 30 other organizations that notify



>The guest speakers at the statewide ELC dinner **are the two major party nominees for Governor**—the first meeting of the candidates after the primary election.

their members of the monthly meetings and promote attendance. From what began as gatherings of 10 or 15 people, today many of our meetings regularly attract 50 to 75 business leaders. That is a testament to the value of these meetings to employers.

Since 1971, the ELCs have joined together every two years for a gala statewide ELC dinner. In years when there is an election for Governor, the guest speakers are the two major party nominees for Governor. This event has become a New Jersey tradition, the first meeting of these candidates after they have been selected in Democratic and Republican primary contests. Attended by over 500 business, governmental and political leaders, the State ELC Dinner is being held this year on Tuesday, June 16, at the Hyatt Regency in Princeton. We are proud that the NJ Credit Union League is sponsoring the dinner this year and we hope that you will join us. More information for this "must attend" event can be obtained on our web site, [www.njbja.org/events](http://www.njbja.org/events). **NJB**