

RESOLUTION # 25

SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE

1 **WHEREAS**, agriculture has long been an industry closely associated with New
2 Jersey’s identity, as evidenced by the official nickname of “The Garden State,” the choosing
3 of the horse as the state animal and the choosing of a primary pollinator, the honeybee, as
4 the state insect; and

5 **WHEREAS**, agriculture continues to be a significant component of the state’s
6 economy, with agriculture and its related food industries in New Jersey estimated to
7 contribute more than \$115 billion annually to New Jersey’s economy; and

8 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey and its political subdivisions have, over the years, invested
9 in excess of \$1.5 billion to preserve farmland and the benefits agriculture provides to the
10 state and its citizens; and

11 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey residents overwhelmingly approved a ballot question
12 changing the State Constitution to redirect funds to the preservation of farmland and open
13 space, again indicating the high priority New Jersey residents place on preservation; and

14 **WHEREAS**, approximately 20 percent of New Jersey’s land is owned, managed,
15 cared for and kept productive by the agriculture sector; and

16 **WHEREAS**, the New Jersey agricultural sector, while being a substantial portion of
17 New Jersey’s economy and while managing approximately 20 percent of New Jersey’s land
18 base, providing a safe and nutritious food supply, and at the same time enhancing New
19 Jersey’s quality of life through its scenic vistas, protection of the environment and
20 preservation of a way of life and sense of wellbeing grounded in a cultural heritage treasured
21 by New Jersey’s citizens, must exist within a framework of laws and regulations necessary to
22 accommodate the varied and sometimes competing interests which exist in the most densely
23 populated state in the nation; and

24 **WHEREAS**, the business of agriculture has grown increasingly complex in terms of
25 science, technology, environmental interrelationships, economic impacts and sophistication,

26 and social interaction and impact and, as a result, legislation and regulation impacting it has
27 become increasingly complex; and

28 **WHEREAS**, the importance of agriculture to so many facets of New Jersey life is
29 reflected in New Jersey’s adopting planning objectives that call for “planning for agriculture”
30 instead of “planning around agriculture”; and

31 **WHEREAS**, the intrusion of suburbia into agricultural areas, and issues created by
32 that expanded interface create a need for balance and regulating in a way that meets the
33 needs of an expanding urban and suburban population while ensuring that agriculture
34 continues to be able to provide New Jersey with the vital benefits it is uniquely able to
35 supply; and

36 **WHEREAS**, in the 2018-2019 legislative session, approximately 300 bills affecting
37 agriculture and related food businesses were introduced in the Senate, an increase of nearly
38 100 bills over the 200 introduced in the 2016-2017 session; and

39 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey has not had a Senate committee devoted solely to
40 agriculture since 1980; and

41 **WHEREAS**, the Assembly has an Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee,
42 which routinely considers legislation impacting the agricultural sector, and which is
43 composed largely of legislators with high concentrations of agriculture and related industries
44 in their district or who otherwise have a keen interest in and/or understanding of agricultural
45 issues as they relate to all areas of the state; and

46 **WHEREAS**, because of the increased importance of agriculture and its increased
47 interdependence with so many aspects of the health and wellbeing of New Jersey and its
48 citizens, it is appropriate for there to be a standing committee in the New Jersey Senate to
49 deal with matters impacting this vital segment of New Jersey’s existence.

50 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 105th State
51 Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 5-6, 2020, do

52 hereby call upon the New Jersey Senate to consider the establishment of an Agriculture
53 Committee as a standing committee.

54 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that, upon the establishment of such a committee, we
55 urge serious consideration be given to the knowledge, familiarity and interest of each
56 member regarding agriculture before their selection to serve on this committee.

57 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that until a Senate Agriculture Committee is
58 established, we urge New Jersey Farm Bureau and other agricultural advocacy groups to
59 continue working with the Senate's existing committees to ensure that agriculture-related
60 bills are taken up regularly and in a timely manner.