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EDITORIALS

Smith's ideas, actions add up to re-election

The New Jersey Republican Party isn't going to break the 20/20 deadlock in the state Senate by unseating Democrat Bob Smith, who is the hands-down choice for re-election in the 17th District

Smith has been a Statehouse leader for nearly two decades and his ideas for reducing the cost of local education are some of the boldest and most refreshing in the state.

Smith, a lawyer by trade, was a Piscataway councilman from 1977 to 1980 and the township's mayor from 1981 to 1986. He was elected to the state Assembly in 1986 and the Senate in 2001, succeeding Democratic Party power broker John Lynch.

Smith's major bills include important legislation signed into law last year that makes critical water resources and flood-prone areas top priorities for acquisition in the state's open-space preservation program. He pledges to pursue additional measures to shield precious sources of drinking water and he wisely supports using the soon-to-be-released Department of Environmental Protection master plan.

New Jersey's more than 600 local school districts are "the most inefficient system in America" and a large reason property taxes are so high, Smith argues. He favors regionalization into 21 county school districts with a central administration, a single purchasing department and uniform teachers' salaries in each. The idea is a radical counterbalance to home rule — just what is needed.....

The 17th District contains Highland Park, New Brunswick, Milltown, North Brunswick and Piscataway in Middlesex County and Franklin Township in Somerset County.