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SMITH RECYCLING PACKAGE APPROVED BY BUDGET COMMITTEE

TRENTON – A pair of bills sponsored by Senator Bob Smith which would guarantee funding for municipal recycling programs and create a statewide electronics recycling initiative were approved by the Budget and Appropriations Committee today.

“The greatest environmental legacy we can leave for future generations is an effective and functional Statewide recycling system,” said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the Chair of the Senate Environment Committee. “As the gears of economy continue to turn, single-use, disposable products are littering our landscape, and putting increased pressure on dwindling natural resources. There needs to be a culture-shift, and soon, so that we can put greater emphasis on recycling and slow down the consumption of precious – and finite – natural resources.”

The first bill in the package, S-554, would create a Statewide electronic waste management program that takes the best portions of two previously-competing proposals considered in the Senate and Assembly Environment Committees. Under the compromise legislation, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) would collect a \$10 advance recovery fee on the purchase of all new televisions in the State, to provide funding for a State-run television recycling program. Recycling of computer equipment would be managed by computer manufacturers, under plans approved by the DEP.

“Both committees conducted exhaustive hearings on the different established methods of electronics recycling being done in the United States, whether through advanced recovery fees or manufacturer responsibility programs,” said Senator Smith. “By establishing a hybrid plan to deal with electronic recycling in New Jersey, we can take advantage of the best of both worlds, and deal with the tons of electronic waste that find their way into the State’s waste stream. I credit my colleagues in the Assembly – Assemblymen Reed Gusciora and John McKeon – for working with me to achieve this compromise legislation which will put New Jersey on the map in terms of our efforts to recycle consumer-level electronic waste.”

The bill was approved by a vote of 8-0, and now heads to the full Senate for consideration. It was unanimously approved by the Senate Environment Committee in January of last year.

The second bill in the package, S-557, would impose a recycling tax on solid waste generation in order to provide financial support to municipalities and counties for local recycling programs. The tax would be levied on the owner or operator of every solid waste facility in the State at a rate of \$2.00 per ton on all solid waste accepted for disposal or transfer at the facility. The tax would not be imposed on facilities designated as “sanitary” landfills or facilities associated with the recycling process, and is similar to a \$3 per tax recycling tax which was in place from 1987 to 1996.

The new recycling tax is estimated to raise approximately \$23 million annually for recycling efforts in the State. Sixty percent of funds collected, or \$13.8 million, would go to municipalities or counties as direct recycling grants. A quarter of the revenue, or \$5.75 million, would go to continue to help with preparing and implementing their solid waste plans. Ten percent, or \$2.3 million, would go to the State recycling program, and five percent, or \$1.2 million, would go to the counties for public information and education programs on recycling.

“By tapping solid waste facilities to bolster recycling programs throughout New Jersey, we are asking landfill owners and waste facility operators to give something back to the environment,” said Senator Smith. “This surcharge would not be felt by most residents in the State, but would reenergize the State’s recycling efforts and make New Jersey a national leader in terms of support for recycling. As we begin to put greater emphasis on recycling as a way to preserve open space and protect our natural resources, this bill would provide dedicated funding to help us attain our State’s recycling goals.”

The bill was approved by the Budget Committee by a vote of 8-0, and now heads to the full Senate for consideration. It was approved by a vote of 3-2 by the Senate Environment Committee in January of last year.