

News From NJ Senate Democrats



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SMITH HAILS SENATE PASSAGE OF HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION ACT

TRENTON - Senator Bob Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee and a prime sponsor of S-1, the "Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act," which would preserve vital water resources in New Jersey's Highlands region, issued the following statement after the Senate approved the bill by a vote of 34-2:

"The most important environmental legislation in the last two decades is now comfortably within our reach.

"After hours of heated debate, nine hearings and thousands of pages of testimony, we've finally reached a compromise on the Highlands Protection Act, which will ensure our water supply is protected from over-development. And today, our efforts have been vindicated by Senate approval of this legislation to guarantee the pristine beauty and environmental vitality of the New Jersey Highlands while preserving the water supply for 4.5 million New Jerseyans.

"We are now one step away from this bill being sent to Governor McGreevey's desk to be signed into law. The General Assembly is scheduled to vote on the Highlands Protection Act today as well, and if they approve it, that will be the end to a legislative journey that often seemed longer than it truly was.

"I commend everyone who has worked, day and night, weekday and weekend, on this historic bill. Particularly, I would like to thank my fellow sponsors, Senator Bob Martin in the Senate, and Assemblymen John F. McKeon and Louis Manzo in the Assembly. If there is a special place in Heaven designated for those that care about the environment, these

legislators can rest assured that they made the list.

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"This is a somewhat bittersweet moment, as we close the chapter on a piece of legislation that I and my legislative staff have lived and breathed for the last few months. It was truly an honor to be a part of the effort to protect New Jersey's Highlands, and it is with great happiness that I watch it move forward into the hands of the Executive Branch. Governor McGreevey has provided excellent leadership on this issue and I am certain he will be signing it into law expeditiously.

"While we are marking the end of the legislative journey of the Highlands bill, we are also marking the beginning for clean water protections in the vital Highlands area. Our actions today in the Senate, to approve this landmark bill to preserve the Highlands, will be remembered for generations of New Jerseyans to come. Every member of the Legislature should be proud of the affirmative vote they cast today for the future of New Jersey."

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