

News From NJ Senate Democrats



Visit us on the World Wide Web at: www.njsendems.com

FOR RELEASE: Immediate
June 25, 2004

CONTACT: Jason Butkowski
Tel: (609) 292-5215
Fax: (609) 984-1235

SMITH: ENVIRONMENTAL INTERESTS MET IN FY 2005 STATE BUDGET

TRENTON - Senator Bob Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the Chair of the Senate Environment Committee and a sponsor of two Budget bills to raise penalties on polluters and increase funding for hazardous chemical spills, issued the following statement regarding the State's commitment to New Jersey's Environment in FY 2005:

"New Jersey Democrats recognize that the environment is a precious resource that needs to be protected from irresponsible companies that would, if left unchecked, pollute our land, water and air and make the State completely uninhabitable. By increasing the penalties on polluters and making more money available for hazardous site remediation, we are renewing our pledge to keep New Jersey clean for future generations.

"To that end, in the FY 2005 debate, we are considering two bills to raise the fines on certain polluters and the fees associated in transporting hazardous waste, to send a strong message that the destruction of New Jersey's environment will not be tolerated.

"The first bill, S-1711, increases the Spill Tax act on the transportation of certain hazardous chemicals by more than half of its current rate, to increase funding for State-sponsored cleanup programs, such as the Hazardous Site Remediation Program, and the State Spill Cleanup Fund. The current rate has not been raised since 1987, and it's more than appropriate to ask transporters of hazardous materials to pay their fair share in the cleanup of spills.

-MORE-

"The second bill, S-1772, imposes an air toxics surcharge on the owners and operators of factories that spew pollutants into New Jersey's air. The bill charges a tiered rate for each pound of toxic substances emitted from the facility, depending on the impact on the health of nearby residents. This bill will make plant owners and factory operators feel the pain of their pollution on the well-being of the State as a whole.

"These two bills represent the strengthening of the message sent to polluters in New Jersey that the State will not idly stand by and let them foul the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the land on which we live. Polluters, you're on notice -- if you engage in practices that harm New Jersey's environment, prepare to pay the price."

###

S-1711 was approved by the Senate by a vote of 21-18. S-1772 was approved by a vote of 27-12. Both bills now go to the Governor as part of the FY 2005 Budget to be signed into law.