

News From NJ Senate Democrats



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****PREVIEW****

SMITH DIESEL EMISSIONS REDUCTION EFFORTS UP FOR A VOTE ON MONDAY

TRENTON - A set of bills, sponsored by Senator Bob Smith, which would reduce diesel emissions in New Jersey and provide clean air for future New Jerseyans will be up for a vote in the Senate Environment Committee on Monday, March 7 at 10 a.m..

"There is nothing more important to the safety, health and well-being of New Jersey's residents than the air we breathe," said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee. "We cannot afford to have a laissez-faire attitude about pollution in our skies when hundreds of people in our State die each year, due to respiratory disease aggravated by airborne pollution. We have to take a stand, to provide a better future for our children and grandchildren."

Senator Smith's first bill, S-1759, would establish a fine particulate diesel emissions reduction program in New Jersey, to reduce emissions from certain older diesel-powered vehicles and equipment and to decrease the public exposure to those emissions. The bill would require the owners and operators of regulated fleets of 10 or more diesel-powered vehicles, such as commercial buses, sanitation vehicles and school buses with diesel engines, to come up with a plan to retrofit their vehicles with cleaner technology, with the ultimate goal of reducing emissions from diesel-powered engines by 20 percent over the next 10 years. The bill would also authorize the Department of Transportation (DOT) to examine truck routes, to relieve congestion of diesel truck traffic in residential neighborhoods and minimize the exposure of children to diesel emissions.

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"Pollution-induced respiratory disease is more than just an inconvenience to those who suffer from it -- it's an epidemic, and in some instances, it's a death sentence," said Senator Smith. "According to the DEP, last year alone, New Jerseyans suffered from 68,000 asthma attacks and visited their local emergency rooms 60,000 times because the air quality in our State has gotten that bad. According to the CDC, respiratory failure is the fourth most common cause of death in this country. We cannot continue turning a blind eye on the facts when we are most definitely being choked out of our homes due to pollution."

The second bill, SCR-113, would propose a constitutional amendment, to be voted on as a ballot initiative, to dedicate a portion of the revenue generated by the State's Corporate Business Tax (CBT) to air pollution control. The bill would dedicate 20 percent of the CBT's environmental dedication over the next 10 years to provide grants for the cost of air pollution control equipment and to reduce the levels of particulate matter emissions from diesel-powered engines.

"We're already using the CBT for environmental purposes, and an increased investment in reducing our State's air pollution is necessary if we're going to address the leading environmental health hazard in New Jersey," said Senator Smith. "We need a substantial commitment from the State if we're going to undo years of neglect and abuse that have caused our State's air quality to spiral downward until the air is nearly unbreathable for thousands of our State's residents. If we do not act now, when we hand New Jersey over to the next generation, we may as well hand them a gas mask too, because they're going to need it."

The bills will be voted on by the Environment Committee at 10:00 a.m. in the Statehouse Annex, Committee Room 10 on Monday.

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