

News From NJ Senate Democrats



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SMITH RESPONSE TO DIESEL CRITICS - 'REGULATION WILL SAVE LIVES'

TRENTON - Senator Bob Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee and prime sponsor of a legislative package designed to reduce diesel emissions in New Jersey, issued the following statement today regarding critics' claims, most notably Senator Henry McNamara, R-Bergen, that diesel emissions reduction efforts before the Legislature are flawed:

"I've worked with Senator McNamara for a number of years on issues affecting the environmental health of New Jersey. Sometimes we're on the same page, and sometimes we're not. When it comes to diesel emissions reductions, it seems we are most definitely not on the same page.

"Senator McNamara recently issued a statement lambasting a set of bills, S-1759 and SCR-113, which would set up a program to cut diesel emissions and provide funds for clean air programs. However, his arguments against these bills are fatally flawed, and some clarification of the facts is in order.

"In his statement, the Senator claimed that the diesel emissions bills would only reduce up to 3 percent of harmful emissions, when in fact the bill is designed to reduce emissions from diesel engines by 20 percent. Additionally, studies have shown that the emissions we're targeting from diesel-powered vehicles are the most toxic to human life. Assuming that diesel retrofittings of regulated fleets of 10 or more is not enough to accomplish that goal, the DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) would have the authority to take the necessary steps to reach the 20 percent threshold.

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"The Senator claimed that these bills would establish a new \$200 million program in State government. The real number is closer to about \$160 million, but more importantly than that is the fact that the funds would come from a surplus in a preexisting environmental cleanup fund, assuming that voters approve the transfer of funds at the voting booth in November. If the Senator is against giving the voters the decision on how to spend their money, he should come forward and say so. There are no new taxes proposed in this initiative.

"And finally, the Senator sought to minimize the impact of diesel emissions reduction in New Jersey. According to estimates from the DEP and independent environmental watchdog groups, these two bills combined could save anywhere from 300 to 800 lives in New Jersey annually from pollution-induced respiratory illness and pollution-aggravated cardiac illness. It is estimated that in excess of \$1 billion of health care costs could be avoided by reducing diesel particulates in our State's air.

"To suggest that the impact on New Jersey's citizens is minimal is an insult to everyone who's suffered from asthma, chronic bronchitis, and other illnesses which are exacerbated by diesel emissions."

Both S-1759 and SCR-113 were approved by a vote of 3-2, split along party lines, by the Senate Environment Committee on Monday. They now head to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee before going to the full Senate for a vote.

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