

News From NJ Senate Democrats

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SMITH STATEMENT ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT FOR AIR CONTROL FUNDING

TRENTON - Senator Bob Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee and a prime sponsor of a constitutional amendment which would dedicate a portion of the Corporate Business Tax (CBT) to clean air programs in New Jersey, issued the following statement regarding a public hearing held on the amendment today:

"If approved by the Legislature, the voters of New Jersey may have the opportunity to choose their own destiny when it comes to clean air funds as early as this November's ballot. And given New Jersey's historically poor air quality and the need for change, the decision should be an easy one to make.

"The constitutional amendment being proposed would set aside a larger portion of the revenues collected from the CBT to help pay for air control programs and fund the State's diesel emissions reduction program by retrofitting diesel engines to operate cleaner. Considering the health risks of inaction, I think that most people will agree that these two programs should be a funding priority, and a dedicated funding source is entirely in order.

"Polluted air accounts for hundreds of deaths and emergency room visits each year due to respiratory illnesses such as chronic asthma, bronchitis and emphysema. It's also been shown that poor air quality affects cardiac health, and medical research has shown an increased incidence of heart disease and cardiac arrests in areas of high air toxic concentration.

"New Jersey's background as an industrial magnet, and our status as a transportation hub for goods for the rest of the nation, are catching up to us, and the fumes spewed by manufacturing plants and diesel trucks are choking us out of our homes. We must take action to remove air toxics from our skies and our lungs, and a constitutionally mandated funding source, ratified by a vote of the people of New Jersey, is a necessary tool to accomplish just that."

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