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**SMITH - 'TOUGH WORK IS AHEAD OF US ON PROPERTY TAXES'**  
Joint Consolidation Committee Begins Work To Reform Property Taxes, Shrink  
Government in New Jersey

TRENTON - Senator Bob Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Services, issued the following statement today regarding the panel's organizational meeting, and their ongoing mission of finding savings for the taxpayers of New Jersey through an emphasis on smaller government on the State and local levels:

"From the information presented to us today, I know the really tough work is ahead of us. But, if we're ever going to do something about New Jersey's property tax crisis, we need to ensure a more efficient and cost-effective delivery of the services we provide to the taxpayers of the State.

"We need a broad focus on consolidation and shared services across the board, not just in a few municipalities. We need incentive programs and regulations that are easy to follow, with the end result of saving taxpayer dollars and shrinking government. Without a stable base of efficient, streamlined government, we cannot build on property tax savings.

"The impediments to reform will be many, and we will have to overcome regional, political and cultural hurdles to accomplish our goals. Those with a vested interest in the status quo will continue to push their views, no matter how bad property taxes get.

"But if we look with an open mind at the solutions, and put aside all parochial interests, I think we stand to fundamentally change the way government works in the State. The 'cult of home rule' no longer has a place in New Jersey when property taxes are literally driving people out of the Garden State. Through dedication to our mission, we will make a difference in the lives of the people we represent."