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For Release: Immediate
Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Contact: Jason Butkowski
(609) 292-5215

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SMITH - 'ADMINISTRATIVE SCHOOL SAVINGS ARE RIFE FOR THE PICKING'

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Property Tax Co-Chair Says New Jersey Could Realize Savings up to \$400 million

Bill Number

Keyword

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 after today's hearing on consolidating school districts into county-based administrative districts:

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"The reactions we received at today's committee hearing on school consolidation proposals were wholly expected. We knew there would be pushback from school officials whose continued employment relies on what we do to reign in property taxes. But, that doesn't change the fact that we have to do something, and consolidating our schools into county-based administrative districts could provide significant savings to taxpayers.

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"Right now, New Jersey suffers under an overburdened, overlapping and inefficient school system. The way we deliver education in this State is appalling, with unwieldy administrative bureaucracy calling the shots and raising our tax burden.

"When you look at other models of school administration, you realize there are better alternatives out there. A straight-up, apples-to-apples comparison between New Jersey and Maryland shows that we spend 2.5% per pupil on central administration, five times more than Maryland, which has county-based districts, and spends about half of one percent. An audit shows that every year, we spend about \$553 million for central school administration. Taken to its logical conclusion, a shift to county-based school administration could conceivably save up to \$410 million a year - money that would stay in the taxpayers' pockets, and lower their burden.

"We could do this while keeping curriculum decisions on the local level, and ensuring that every school retains its local identity and flavor.

"I'm under no delusions in thinking that what we're calling for isn't the equivalent of asking schools to fundamentally change the way they do business. That's why I think we should put any plans to consolidate government on the ballot, and let the people decide if they're willing to go this route.

"New Jerseyans should be given the option to vote on the level of government

that they're willing to pay for. Our role as a committee is to give taxpayers the tools they need to choose their own governmental destiny. But at the end of the day, I think the taxpayers will make the right choice - the democratic choice - and choose to relieve themselves of bulky, unwieldy and inefficient school administration."

[Read more releases from Senator Smith](#)