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SMITH - 'CONSOLIDATION PROPOSALS A GOOD FIRST STEP TOWARDS REFORM'

TRENTON - Senator Bob Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, co-chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Services, issued the following statement today on the approval of three measures that originated with the Consolidation Committee's recommendations:

"The bills approved today by the full Legislature are an important first step towards sustainable property tax reform. The measures, which have bipartisan sponsorship from myself, Senator Ellen Karcher and Senator Joe Kyrillos, are the result of months of hearings and will play an important part in streamlining government in the State of New Jersey.

"That said, these bills are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the total property tax reform package put forth not only by the Consolidation Committee, but through the Legislative Special Session on property taxes. On some of the most complex issues facing lawmakers dealing with our broken property tax system, we're moving ahead deliberately and thoughtfully, to carefully vet each proposal and ensure that we're moving the ball forward on necessary relief and long-term reform.

"The Legislature remains committed to real and lasting property tax reform, and a measure of relief for New Jersey's beleaguered property taxpayers. These bills are just the beginning, and I look forward to continuing the work with my legislative colleagues to move forward an aggressive agenda which will accomplish both of these goals in the very near future."

The bills approved by the Senate today are:

S-5 - Clarifies authority of DOT to enter certain agreements with local governments. The bill was approved by the Senate by a vote of 32-4, and received final legislative approval in the Assembly by a vote of 78-2.

S-45 - Establishes the Division of Risk Management in the Department of the Treasury; reorganizes Office of Information Technology; requires consolidation of enhanced 9-1-1 public safety answering points. The bill was approved by the Senate by a vote of 35-4, and received final legislative approval in the Assembly by a vote of 79-0, with one abstention.

S-46 - Authorizes individual boards of education to self insure for certain insurance; removes current prohibitions. The bill was approved by the Senate by a vote of 30-6, and received final legislative approval in the Assembly by a vote of 72-4, with four abstentions.