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SMITH CONSOLIDATION AND SHARED SERVICES BILLS APPROVED BY **SENATE**

Legislation Would Increase Oversight on Local School Budgets, Establish Enhanced 9-1-1 System

TRENTON - Two measures sponsored by Senator Bob Smith which would promote shared services in New Jersey schools and develop an enhanced 9-1-1 public safety answering system, among other reforms to cut the cost of government in New Jersey, were approved today by the Senate.

"With the passage of these bills today, we're one step closer to more efficient government in New Jersey," said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the co-chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Service, the legislative panel that recommended the reforms. "New Jersey's taxpayers pay the price for overlapping services, unending bureaucracy, and inefficiency and waste in the system. Through these bills, we can streamline services, and put downward pressure on property taxes in the Garden State."

Senator Smith's bills are the product of months of hearings on New Jersey's complex municipal and governmental map.

The first bill, S-19, would implement Assembly Speaker Joe Roberts' CORE proposals, including requiring 'user-friendly' municipal and educational budgets, so taxpayers can understand specific budgetary proposals; enacting uniform standards for regionalization and shared service agreements between municipalities and breaking down barriers to sharing services, such as when one municipality is governed by Civil Service requirements, and another is not; and establishing executive county superintendents, which would have greater oversight and authority on local school spending and would be able to facilitate easier resource and service sharing between local school districts.

"The executive county superintendents will be invaluable in realizing cost savings for our schools, and will build bridges between districts to make the most out of our educational tax dollars," said Senator Smith. "At the same time, we're also empowering voters to make educated decisions on local budgets, and breaking down the inherent barriers to municipal mergers under current law. These proposals will go a long way towards promoting efficiency and transparency in local governing units."

S-19 was approved by the Senate by a vote of 21-16, and now heads to the Assembly for consideration.

The second bill, S-45, would make various consolidations on the State level to maximize the efficient delivery of services. The bill would establish a Division of Risk Management in the Department of Treasury, to consolidate the purchase and oversight of insurance for public employees and the State. The bill would also reorganize the Office of Information Technology, to provide for the efficient purchase and maintenance of State-owned computers, and would develop a statewide enhanced 91-1 system, while prohibiting law enforcement officers from serving in dispatcher capacity.

"S-45 makes various changes on the State level, consolidating services which were previously scattered across the entirety of State government under one roof," said Senator Smith. "We cannot mandate local consolidation, regionalization and shared services unless State government leads by example, and cuts down on the inefficiencies in our own house. At the same time, we can ensure efficiency and improve services by cutting down on wasteful levels of government bureaucracy."

S-45 was returned to the Senate to consider a conditional veto from Governor Corzine dealing with the Division of Risk Management provision. It was approved by a vote of 38-0, and goes to the Assembly for concurrence with the conditional veto.