

News From NJ Senate Democrats

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SMITH PACKAGE TO PROMOTE RENEWABLE ENERGY APPROVED IN COMMITTEE

TRENTON - Two bills sponsored by Senator Bob Smith which would promote renewable energy systems in New Jersey homes were approved by the Senate Economic Growth Committee yesterday.

“Tapping into renewable energy sources to help offset home heating and energy costs is the wave of the future, and New Jersey should do all it can to support green-minded homeowners,” said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the Chair of the Senate Environment Committee. “These programs will go a long way to make expensive alternative energy home systems a reality, and put the Garden State at the forefront of efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions and conserve natural resources.”

Senator Smith’s first bill, a Senate Committee Substitute for S-1497 and S-2409, would exempt the value of renewable energy home systems from local property taxes. The bill would require that the system be certified by the local code enforcing agency before the exemption is granted, and defines renewable energy as energy produced using solar technology, photovoltaic technology, wind energy, fuel cells, geothermal

technologies, wave or tidal action, methane gas from landfills, or hydropower. The bill was approved by a vote of 5-0.

“Local governments should provide incentives for homeowners to conserve natural resources,” said Senator Smith. “By utilizing renewable energy to offset their home’s energy needs, they’re putting less of a strain on the energy infrastructure for the rest of us. Hopefully, this property tax exemption will encourage more families to install renewable energy systems in their homes, and go green.”

Senator Smith’s second bill, S-2154, would direct the Board of Public Utilities (BPU), in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Housing and Mortgage Finance Association (HMFA), to provide down-payment assistance to middle-income families seeking to install renewable energy systems in their homes. The bill stipulates that the program is only available to families who earn up to 110 percent of the county median income. The bill would also require the Commissioner of the DCA to amend the energy subcode of the Universal Construction Code to establish enhanced energy-saving construction requirements. It was approved by the Committee by a vote of 3-2.

“Renewable energy systems are a great way for New Jerseyans to save some green – both financially and environmentally,” said Senator Smith. “Offsetting their home energy and heating assistance provides real economic savings and cuts down on greenhouse gas emissions. If that weren’t enough to encourage families to go green, we’re providing a number of local and State incentives, including down-payment assistance, to push renewable energy reliance to the next level.”

Senator Smith’s bills now head to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee before going to the full Senate for consideration.

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