

For Release: Immediate
Monday, February 27, 2012

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SWEENEY/SMITH LEGISLATION REAFFIRMING NJ'S PARTICIPATION IN RGGI CLEARS COMMITTEE

TRENTON – Legislation sponsored by Senate President Steve Sweeney (D – Gloucester, Salem, Cumberland) and Senator Bob Smith (D – Middlesex) that would reaffirm New Jersey's participation in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) cleared the Senate Environment and Energy Committee today.

The bill, S1322, would clarify the intent of RGGI legislation enacted in 2007. That law helped create an emissions auction and trading mechanism to help reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly carbon dioxide. In May of last year, Governor Christie announced that he was withdrawing New Jersey from RGGI without seeking legislative approval.

"Governor Christie's action is short sighted and without merit. RGGI has provided a smart, effective way in which to reduce pollution and the effects of greenhouse gases on the environment. For the governor to withdraw New Jersey from RGGI was a bad move that could have dire consequences in the long term. That is why it is essential that we pass this legislation," said Sweeney.

"The Legislature made quite clear five years ago that New Jersey was to be a participant in RGGI. It really boils down to a matter of common sense. The future of our environment should not be held hostage to the whims of the governor. Being part of RGGI is the right, responsible thing to do," said Smith.

The bill would clarify the original 2007 legislation by ensuring that New Jersey's participation in RGGI was not suggested, but mandated by the law. Passage of the bill would require Governor Christie to reenter New Jersey into RGGI.

The bill now heads to the Senate floor.