

MONDAY, MAY 19, 2014 CONTACT: ALISE RODERER (609) 847-3700

SMITH BILL TO PROHIBIT DRILLING OFF NEW JERSEY COASTLINE APPROVED BY SENATE ENVIRONMENT PANEL

Legislation sponsored by Senator Bob Smith that would prohibit drilling of either oil or natural gas off of New Jersey's coastline was approved today by the Senate Environment and Energy Committee.

"The 127 miles of New Jersey coastline are both an ecological treasure and a major economic engine for New Jersey. Protecting it is not only environmentally important, but since the Shore contributes more than \$3 billion annually to New Jersey's economy, is important for the stability of the state," said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, and Chairman of the Senate Environment Committee. "The BP Oil Spill was a perfect example of the horrific impact that accidents associated with drilling can have on an entire region. We should not open ourselves up to these types of tragedies."

The bill, S-1513, would prohibit the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) from issuing a permit or other form of approval for any development, facility or activity associated with drilling for oil or natural gas of the coast of New Jersey.

In 2010, an explosion occurred on Deepwater Horizon, a BP-owned oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. The accident killed 11 crew members and released 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf. Two years after the spill, 4.6 million pounds of oily material were removed from Louisiana beaches, with marine and wildlife being greatly affected. For example, a 2013 study found that infant dolphins were dying at six times their normal rate. The Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences found that the oil spill could have much as an \$8.7 billion impact on the Gulf of Mexico's economy over seven years including the loss of close to 22,000 jobs. Senator Smith asserts that this legislation is needed to ensure a similar disaster never occurs in New Jersey.

The bill was approved by the Committee with a vote of 4-1. It now heads to the full Senate for consideration.