

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2014 CONTACT: ALISE RODERER (609) 847-3700

## SENATE COMMITTEE TAKES FIRST STEP IN REVOKING CHRISTIE'S EFFORTS TO PULL OUT OF REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS INITIATIVE

*Senate Environment and Energy Committee Approves Senators Sweeney, Smith and Barnes' Resolution*

**TRENTON** – A resolution sponsored by Senate President Steve Sweeney, Senate Environment and Energy Chairman Bob Smith and Senator Peter J. Barnes III that would stop the Christie Administration and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) from changing rules and regulations related to the state's withdrawal from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) was approved today by the Senate Environment panel. The bill would override the DEP rule change and force the state to keep the rules that implement a market-based, carbon-emission program.

"This isn't Governor Christie's empire. He cannot simply ignore the law," said Senator Sweeney, D-Gloucester, Cumberland and Salem. "RGGI can reduce carbon emissions, lower energy costs for families and businesses, increase the development of renewable energy and create thousands of jobs in the process. We cannot allow the governor to once again turn his back on an economic driver that will put New Jerseyans back to work."

RGGI is the nation's first auction to sell and trade carbon dioxide emission credits to large-scale CO2 polluters such as coal-powered plants. The proceeds from the auction go towards clean and renewable energy investments and energy efficiency programs. Nine Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states belong to the coalition.

A study released last week by Environment Northeast found that New Jersey could be walking away from \$387 million in revenue from now until 2020 if we were not to reenter the program.

According to information Joseph A. Martens, New York State's Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, provided in a recent letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, in only the first three years of implementation, RGGI has led to investments in clean energy that will reduce energy bills by \$1.3 billion and will create thousands of jobs.

"When New Jersey and our neighboring states created RGGI nearly a decade ago, we were in the forefront of environmental leadership by finding a commonsense solution that reduced pollution without limiting power companies' ability to operate," said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset. "But with one unilateral decision, Christie chose to side with polluters over the health and wellbeing of our state's citizens as well as the quality of our air. We will not allow that decision to stand."

The senators note that rejoining RGGI would be even more important as the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is expected to adopt rules requiring states to reduce their carbon emissions, something that can be accomplished through the participation in RGGI.

"With severe storms such as Hurricanes Sandy and Irene pummeling New Jersey, it is hard to deny that climate change is occurring and it is our responsibility to take action to slow it," said Senator Barnes, D-Middlesex. "Reducing the harmful toxins we pump into the air is a great step, while investing in renewable and clean energy production will create lasting and sustainable changes to our environment. The federal government has recognized this and will soon require states to take action, yet the Christie Administration has us sitting on our hands."

In 2007, the Legislature through legislation sent marching orders to the DEP that they must "take any measure necessary" to govern the state's participation in a greenhouse gas cap and trade program. With SCR-125 the Legislature would state that the Christie Administration's attempt to roll back those rules is against legislative intent and therefore illegal.

Governor Christie, in May 2011, announced that he was withdrawing New Jersey from RGGI without seeking legislative approval. This past March, the Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court ruled that the Christie Administration had acted improperly failing to enforce the RGGI rules. The Court required the Administration to initiate an official rule making process. The Christie Administration published the proposed rule change beginning that process in the state register in July.

Under a Constitutional provision, the Legislature has the ability to stop an executive branch rule change that is inconsistent with Legislative intent by approving a concurrent resolution, providing the

Administration with 30 days to amend or withdraw the proposed rule and then approving a second resolution. This measure would be the first step in that process. The measure was approved by the Committee with a vote of 4-1. It now heads to the full Senate for consideration.