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GREENSTEIN-SMITH BILL ESTABLISHING TASK FORCE ON DRINKING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE GAINS FINAL APPROVAL

Legislative Task Force to Address Lead in Water Resulting from Aging Systems

TRENTON – Legislation sponsored by Senator Linda R. Greenstein and Senator Bob Smith that would establish a joint legislative task force to study and make recommendations concerning issues related to drinking water infrastructure received final legislative approval in the Senate today. The initiative follows recent findings of elevated lead levels found in water at New Jersey largest public school district in Newark and in other areas throughout the state.

Under the resolution, SCR-86, the “Joint Legislative Task Force on Drinking Water Infrastructure” would be charged with identifying both short-term and long-term solutions and making recommendations to address the quality and condition of drinking water infrastructure in the State.

“The discovery of lead contamination in drinking water across our state has led to questions about the integrity of our aging infrastructure and water supply systems,” said Senator Greenstein (D-Mercer, Middlesex). “The task force created under this bill will bring us closer to addressing the issue in New Jersey and ensuring that our infrastructure’s quality standards are safe for our residents and environment.”

In conducting its business, the task force would be directed to call upon the Department of Environmental Protection, the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust, the Division of Water in the Board of Public Utilities, and investor- and government-owned water utilities to offer their respective expertise and experience concerning the condition of the State’s drinking water infrastructure, and what improvements are necessary to ensure a safe drinking water supply.

“In light of the recent discovery of lead in our water as a result of the aging infrastructure, we are taking the necessary steps to protect the health of our children and the environment from the ill effects of lead poisoning,” said Senator Smith (D-Middlesex, Somerset). “The issue requires urgent attention with appropriate research and necessary action to be taken as swiftly as possible.”

The task force established under the legislation would be composed of three members of the Senate appointed by the Senate President and three members of the General Assembly appointed by the Speaker.

Within six months after the date the task force organizes, it would be required to prepare and submit a report containing its findings and recommendations, including any proposals for legislation and other appropriate legislative or regulatory action.

The bill was approved by the Senate with a vote of 39-0 and the Assembly by 65-0-0. The resolution takes effect immediately and calls for the task force to hold its first meeting within 30 days.