

Driving Clean
By State Senator Bob Smith

As the world continues to face an unpredictable availability of fossil fuels, mounting environmental health concerns and an economic crisis, we must identify solutions that address these issues. New Jersey has the nation's third highest commuter times as we spend a lot of time in our cars. As a result of air pollution from our vehicles our health is in peril and due to the high cost of gas our wallets have shrunk. It is my strong belief that the legislature must find ways to encourage a switch to alternative fuel vehicles.

These challenges can be the economic juggernaut to revitalize our ailing economy. The almost four dollars per gallon gas price impedes people from participating in our economy, but a two dollar per gallon fuel price would be the best economic stimulus of the decade. This can be accomplished through good old fashioned capitalism by changing the transportation, environment and economic paradigm in New Jersey by facilitating the conversion to clean and economically advantaged automobiles, school buses, commercial buses and trucks.

Our country has monumental natural gas reserves. Natural gas vehicles provide double the bang for the buck compared to gasoline. This proven technology is plentiful overseas as a result of gasoline prices in Europe soaring to \$8 per gallon. Here in New Jersey you can purchase only one brand of natural gas vehicle, while in Europe there are many manufacturers, including American manufacturers, to choose from. We need the infrastructure to support alternative energy vehicles. When I think about this topic and it is daily, I keep playing over the line from *Field of Dreams* in which the main character is told "build it and they will come." I envision refueling and recharging stations on the Garden State Parkway and on the New Jersey Turnpike for vehicles that run on electric and compressed natural gas.

Residential homes already utilize natural gas as a fuel for heating and cooking. An automobile tank of natural gas provides almost the same mileage as a tank of gasoline at half the cost. Therefore, I have called upon the Division of Community Affairs (DCA) to develop building codes that would allow for the installation of compressed natural gas lines in homes already using this fuel to refuel autos. Home conversions and vehicle conversions mean jobs and savings and that is a win-win for the taxpayers of New Jersey.

In an effort to make strides with my fellow colleagues in the legislature, I unveiled the following package of bills for consideration:

- S-2193 provides for certain exemptions from sales and use tax for hybrid electric vehicles, compressed natural gas vehicles, and equipment used for refueling or recharging those vehicles.
- S-2194 requires the New Jersey Turnpike Authority to provide compressed natural gas refueling and electric recharging stations at certain rest areas on the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway.

- S-2195 provides a \$5 million grant program encouraging compressed natural gas fueling stations and electric charging stations.
- S-2196 requires DCA to adopt compressed natural gas connection code.
- S-2197 permits compressed natural gas as a fuel source for school buses.
- S-2198 creates the NJ Clean Car Commission to advise the Governor and the Legislature on methods to encourage the use of alternate energy and low emissions vehicles.
- S2229 Provides for \$5 million rebate program for purchase and installation of residential compressed natural gas vehicle fueling stations and electric vehicle charging stations using funds from societal benefits charge.
- S2250 Requires use of constitutionally dedicated moneys to fund conversion of certain diesel vehicles to compressed natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas, or electric vehicles.
- SR81 Urges automobile manufacturers to commercially develop and sell natural gas vehicles in NJ.

The death and devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy proves just how dangerous our dependence on fossil fuels continues to be for the future of human civilization. Global climate change is real. As we embark upon a new year, it is my hope that we can work toward a brighter future for our health, our environment and our economy.