

ASSEMBLY DEMOCRATS NEWS RELEASE



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CONTACT:

Press Office

(609) 292-7065

ASSEMBLY DEMOCRATS AGAIN MOVE TO HELP N.J. EMERGE STRONG FROM GLOBAL ECONOMIC STORM

(TRENTON) – The Assembly today continued its focus on the global economic crisis by approving more bills to help New Jersey residents and businesses emerge strong from the worldwide financial meltdown.

The bill's passed during today's voting session would:

- Implement mid-year cuts to the state budget.
- Make a new housing assistance and recovery program effective immediately.
- Promote energy efficiency and alternative energy by permitting the construction of wind and solar facilities in industrial zones.
- Authorize the Board of Public Utilities to provide grants for energy efficiency projects and programs promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- Help businesses handle overpayments to public utilities.

In all, the Assembly since September has considered more than 40 bills to help residents and business combat the global economic crisis.

The mid-year budget cuts are part of plans by Gov. Jon S. Corzine and legislative Democrats to deal with a revenue shortfall that stems from the global crisis. The bill (S-15/A3650) passed the Senate last month and heads to the Governor. It was approved 44-31-2 by the Assembly.

“These are difficult times, but these cuts are across the board and the pain is being shared,” said Assembly Budget Chairman Lou Greenwald (D-Camden), who sponsors the mid-year budget cut bill. “No one is being asked to cover the entire burden, and I think that’s sending the right message, not just for the year we’re in but for the upcoming year.”

Legislation (A-3711) sponsored by Assembly Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman and Assemblymen Jack Connors and Herb Conaway M.D. to make a new housing assistance and recovery program effective immediately was approved 52-24-2.

The news release is available at www.assemblydems.com.

“New Jersey’s deepening mortgage crisis makes it imperative that we provide immediate and direct assistance to ensure families can stay in their homes and out of foreclosure,” said Watson Coleman (D-Mercer) “We need to work faster to implement this program we already know can preserve the dream of homeownership for many families.”

Under the \$15 million program, nonprofits can execute lease-purchase agreements with homeowners who meet income requirements and face imminent foreclosure. Families can stay in their homes and pay affordable rent until they’re able to buy back the property.

“Let’s release this funding now to help nonprofits assist more homeowners,” said Connors (D-Burlington/Camden). “This global economic crisis means we cannot afford to wait to provide this help.”

“This is valuable program that we already know works,” said Conaway (D-Burlington/Camden). “Keeping people in their homes helps stabilize families and communities. Let’s not let time slip away. Let’s provide this help as quickly as possible.”

The bill goes to the Senate for further consideration.

Assembly members Pamela R. Lampitt, Upendra Chivukula, Connie Wagner, Valerie Vainieri Huttle, Nellie Pou and Linda R. Greenstein sponsored a bill (A-2550) to permit wind and solar facilities in industrial zones that was approved 62-14-2. It now goes to the Governor.

“We need to stop looking at wind and solar power as novelties and start viewing them as a viable, homegrown energy industry that can create new jobs here in New Jersey,” said Lampitt (D-Camden). “Actively promoting the expansion of alternative energy can be a win for families, a win for the economy and a win for the environment.”

“This is an environmentally smart way to reinvigorate our economy and save money through renewable energy,” said Chivukula (D-Somerset). “It makes sense on many levels and positions New Jersey for a strong future.”

“This will help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and redevelop industrial zones struggling in this global economic recession,” said Wagner (D-Bergen). “It’s smart environmentally and it’s smart fiscally.”

“New Jersey should be encouraging renewable energy as we look to position our state to emerge strong from this global economic meltdown,” said Vainieri Huttle (D-Bergen). “This helps do just that, and is a sound approach that will help benefit generations to come.”

“Many industrial areas need our help, and this is a sensible way to accomplish that while promoting renewable energy that is clearly the wave of the future,” said Pou (D-Passaic). “This approach will create jobs, help us save money and set us up to thrive once this global meltdown is over.”

“This bill will help boost our economy, help struggling industrial neighborhoods and promote renewable energy that will help end our reliance on foreign oil,” said Greenstein (D-Middlesex/Mercer). “It’s smart policy all the way around.”

The Assembly also voted 78-0 to approve legislation sponsored by Chivukula to authorize the Board of Public Utilities to use certain funding to provide grants for energy efficiency projects and programs promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency. The bill now goes to the Senate.

It also voted 78-0 to approve legislation sponsored by Assemblywoman L. Grace Spencer and Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo to help businesses better handle overpayments to public utilities.

The bill (A-678) would require interest be paid or credited on overpayments by nonresidential customers to public utilities. State law only requires utility companies do that for residential customers.

“Businesses deserve equal consideration when it comes to overpayments to public utilities, especially during this time of economic crisis,” said Spencer (D-Essex).

“Requiring businesses get equal treatment is yet another way to ensure employers remain strong and can create jobs so crucial to our state’s wellbeing,” said DeAngelo (D-Mercer/Middlesex). “This is yet another step to ensure New Jersey businesses emerge strong from this economic crisis.”

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