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CONTACT:

Assemblyman Milam

Assemblyman Albano

(609) 465-0700

Assemblyman McKeon

(973) 275-1113

MILAM/ ALBANO/McKEON BILL
TO TOUGHEN PENALTIES FOR BEACH-DUMPING
APPROVED BY ASSEMBLY

*Lawmakers Aim to Toughen Decade-Old Penalties;
Spurred to Action by Illegal Dumping that Closed Beaches Over Labor Day Weekend*

(TRENTON) – Legislation Assemblymen Matt Milam, Nelson Albano and John F. McKeon sponsored to toughen the financial penalties against illegal ocean dumping today passed the Assembly.

The measure was crafted after several South Jersey beaches were forced to close around Labor Day weekend after illegally dumped medical waste washed ashore. As many as 225 syringes and other medical waste were found in Avalon – leading borough officials to close beaches four times. Syringes also washed ashore in Berkeley, Ocean City, Sea Isle City, Brigantine and Upper Township.

Thomas McFarland, a Philadelphia dentist who owns a Jersey Shore summer home, was charged Sept. 5 with intentionally dumping the waste that caused the Avalon closings. The source of the other waste is still under investigation.

The measure (A-3271) would double the fines for illegal medical-waste dumping in New Jersey's waters to \$100,000-per-day. The lawmakers noted that state penalties for water pollution haven't been updated since 1990, while those for illegal medical waste handling haven't been updated since 1997.

"Polluters who foul our beaches must pay dearly for tarnishing the shore's reputation," said Albano (D-Atlantic/Cape May/Cumberland). "The true cost of beach pollution goes far beyond what is spent to actually clean this garbage off the sand, but includes the long-term effects when people decide to use this disgusting episode to decide against visiting our beaches."

"Our beach towns and small businesses are in no position to absorb the financial hit caused by someone's reckless behavior," said Milam (D-Atlantic/Cape May/Cumberland). "Polluters should be on the hook not just for environmental damages, but economic damages, too."

The lawmakers said that while the current \$50,000-per-day fines allowable under clean water law looks severe, its effectiveness has eroded since enactment in 1990.

Had the penalties kept pace with inflation, the trio noted that the fines would be equal to roughly \$82,800 in today's money.

"Dumping medical waste into New Jersey's oceans poses a grave threat to public health and safety," said McKeon (D-West Orange), chairman of the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee. "We must do all that we can to protect New Jersey's environment and hold these individuals accountable by increasing penalties for such reckless behavior that threatens the health of our environment and communities."

The measure passed the Assembly 79-0. It was also released Monday by a Senate committee.

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