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FOR RELEASE:

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**HUTTLE/JOHNSON/COUTINHO/RAMOS BILL MAKING
MACHINE GUN OR ASSAULT FIREARM POSSESSION
A SECOND DEGREE CRIME SIGNED INTO LAW**

(TRENTON) – Legislation Assembly members Valerie Vainieri Huttle, Gordon Johnson, Albert Coutinho and Ruben Ramos sponsored that would raise the penalties from third to second degree for any person who either knowingly possesses an unlicensed machine gun today was signed into law by Governor Jon S. Corzine.

“The overwhelming majority of crimes in this state are committed with weapons that are unlicensed,” said Vainieri Huttle (D-Bergen). “Enhancing the penalties for the possession of such weapons can only serve to help keep them off the streets and out of the hands of criminals.”

“Strengthening the penalties for possession of unlicensed machine guns will act as a deterrent, keeping guns out of the hands of those who may have been previously willing to take a chance commit a crime,” said Johnson (D-Bergen). “With greater consequences looming if they get caught they may be less willing to act.”

The law will make a person who knowingly possesses an assault firearm that is not licensed, registered or rendered inoperable guilty of a crime of the second degree. Previously, a person guilty of this crime would have been guilty of a crime of the third degree.

A crime of the second degree is punishable by five to 10 years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$150,000, or both; third-degree crimes are punishable by three to five years in prison, fines of up to \$15,000, or both.

“It is our ultimate goal to promote and enhance safety in our communities,” said Coutinho (D-Essex) “There is no place for machine guns or assault weapons in our cities and towns.”

(MORE)

“Machine gun possession and assault weapon possession are serious crimes that deserve serious penalties, “ said Ramos (D-Hudson). “This bill will keep guns and criminals off our streets and make our state a safer place to live.”

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