



## ***News from Albano & Milam 1st Legislative District***



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### **ALBANO/MILAM BILL TO IMPROVE COASTAL EVACUATION READINESS ADVANCED BY ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE**

*Bill Package Would Ensure State is Prepared if Disaster Strikes*

(TRENTON) – Sweeping legislation Assemblymen Nelson T. Albano and Matthew W. Milam sponsored to improve evacuation plans throughout the state in preparation for a catastrophic event or natural disaster, such as a hurricane or nor'easter, was released today by an Assembly committee.

“We can’t afford to wait until after a disaster strikes to improve our preparedness,” Albano said.

The measure (A-3786) stems from the final report of the Assembly Coastal New Jersey Evacuation Task Force that was submitted last May.

“While our emergency management officials have done a great job, the state can do more to ensure residents have the tools, services and information they need to be protected if and when disaster strikes,” Milam said.

The bill would:

- Require the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to develop an annual public awareness program to educate the public on the state’s plan to evacuate New Jersey’s coastal areas during emergencies.
- Require the OEM to work with the state departments of Health and Senior Services and Community Affairs to appoint a commission of experts to identify and reserve elementary and secondary schools to serve as temporary emergency shelters, and identify and reserve locations to serve as long-term shelters for individuals displaced from their homes for more than six months. Following the enactment of the bill, all new schools in the state would be constructed to serve as adequate shelters.

- Require the OEM to work with each county emergency management coordinator to identify critical infrastructure that would need an alternative emergency power generator.
- Provide the State Police work with county emergency management coordinators to implement a lane reversal strategy on the Atlantic City Expressway, the Garden State Parkway and Route 287 in preparation for an evacuation during an emergency.
- Require each county to establish a central registry for individuals with special needs who may need additional assistance during an emergency.
- Require each Emergency Operations Plan to include a provision specifically designed to address the needs and facilitate the safe and timely evacuation of the families and dependents of the emergency responders rendering major disaster or emergency services.
- Require county and municipal Emergency Operations Plans to evaluate evacuation procedures for hospitals and other health care facilities, alternate sources of care for evacuated patients and proposed sites of temporary shelter in an emergency.
- Create a separate state coastal operations team composed of experts from within the State Police assigned to review and assess the county evacuation plans to ensure consistency and integrate the plans into a statewide plan.

Milam and Albano – along with Sen. Jeff Van Drew – have worked with emergency management professionals and volunteers from across the state to develop the legislation.

“The measures would help streamline emergency operations during a disaster, identify buildings as shelters and critical infrastructure and have specific statewide and coastal evacuation plans at the state, county and local levels,” Albano said.

“New Jersey hasn’t seen a major hurricane in a long time, but we know disaster can hit and we must be prepared for the worst so we handle it the best,” Milam said. “We don’t want a repeat of hurricanes Katrina and Rita in New Jersey.”

The bills were released 4-0 by the Assembly Homeland Security and State Preparedness Committee and head to the Assembly speaker, who decides if and when to post them for a floor vote.