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McKEON / RILEY BILL ASKING VOTERS TO OK FUNDING FOR OPEN SPACE & HISTORIC PRESERVATION ADVANCES

Measure Would Ask Voters to Approve \$400M To Fund Garden State Preservation Trust

(TRENTON) – Legislation Assemblyman John F. McKeon and Assemblywoman Celeste Riley sponsored to authorize asking voters in November to approve a \$400 million bond to pay for open space, farmland and historic preservation was released today by the Assembly Budget Committee.

“The New Jersey open space program is the nation’s most successful land preservation program, yet it has been left penniless while critical tracts of open space, farmland or historic sites are unprotected,” said McKeon (D-Essex), the committee chairman. “Allowing this program to languish is an expense New Jerseyans simply cannot afford. Neglect of this program would have serious impacts on our environment, health and quality of life.”

The legislation (A-3901) would authorize the sale of \$400 million in bonds to preserve land through the state’s Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) program.

“We must continue our legacy of aggressively protecting New Jersey’s diminishing areas of open space and farmland,” said Riley (D-Cumberland). “This bond act would create a dedicated stream of funding to support the state’s ongoing efforts to preserve critical tracts of land, including farmlands and historic sites, and voters would have final say on whether it should go forward.”

The program has nearly spent all of the funding from the 2007 voter-supported bond measure.

“Now is the time to protect New Jersey’s precious natural resources,” said McKeon. “During the current global economic downturn the state can gain the advantage in protecting valuable lands at unprecedented rates.”

“We have a responsibility to protect these valuable tracts of land today before they are lost to development at the expense of generations to come,” said Riley.

(MORE)

The measure was released 11 to 1. It now heads to the full Assembly for further consideration.

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