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**PANEL RELEASES SCHAER/JASEY/COUTINHO/DeANGELO BILL
TO PUT MORE MATH, SCIENCE TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM**

Pilot Program Would Recruit Non-Traditional Teachers

(TRENTON) – The Assembly Education Committee today released legislation Assembly members Gary Schaer, Mila Jasey, Albert Coutinho and Wayne DeAngelo sponsored to create a pilot program to enable more individuals with degrees and career experience in math and science to receive teaching certificates.

The measure stems from President Barack Obama’s efforts through the federal stimulus program to bolster the nation’s math and science teaching corps.

“New Jersey is facing a critical shortage of math and science teachers,” said Schaer (D-Passaic/Bergen/Essex). “Reaching out to people who have both the brains and real-world experience to become classroom leaders can help us close this knowledge gap.”

“Students benefit when teachers can show that studying math and science can lead to real careers,” said Jasey (D-Essex), a former member of the South Orange-Maplewood Board of Education. “Educators that can show real-world applications for sometimes abstract concepts can inspire students to reach higher.”

The measure (A-3859) would establish an 18-month pilot program in the Department of Education to recruit and issue teaching certificates to individuals with mathematics or science skills and work-related backgrounds. The effort would target individuals who hold a bachelor’s degree in math or the sciences, can pass the state subject matter knowledge test and meet other requirements as to be determined by the Commissioner of Education.

(MORE)

According to the most recent international survey by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – which includes the world’s leading economic powers – U.S. students ranked 17th out of the group’s 30 member countries in science and 24th in math.

The National Assessment of Education Progress found New Jersey fourth- and eighth-graders exceeding the national average for test scores in math and science.

“If New Jersey’s students are to continue to outshine their counterparts nationwide and successfully compete against their peers from around the globe, we need to ensure that math and science remain front-and-center in our curriculum,” said Coutinho (D-Essex). “That effort starts with finding the right teachers.”

The federal Department of Labor estimates that by 2014 there will be as many as 2 million new jobs being created in the engineering fields.

“For the state to remain a magnet for high-tech jobs and become the epicenter of the ‘green’ jobs movement, we cannot allow math and science education to lag,” said DeAngelo (D-Mercer/Middlesex). “Giving individuals who have already made their mark the ability to pass a lifetime of classroom and real-world learning on to the next generation is the right thing to do.”

The measure was released 11-0. It already has been scheduled for a Monday vote in the full Assembly.

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