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PREVIEW*

CONSOLIDATION JOINT COMMITTEE TO HOLD ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING ON TUESDAY

TRENTON - The Legislature's special session on property tax reform will resume this week when the Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Services holds its organizational meeting tomorrow morning.

The joint committee will meet at 10 a.m. Tuesday, August 8, in Committee Room 4, State House Annex, West State Street, Trenton.

"Promoting greater consolidation and more efficient delivery of services is essential to taming the property tax beast," said Senator Bob Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, a co-chair of the joint panel. "Without a meaningful agenda geared towards really pushing the consolidation and shared services ball forward, we cannot be expected to rein in soaring property taxes in the Garden State."

"New Jersey has more bureaucracy per square inch than any state in the nation," said Deputy Speaker John S. Wisniewski (D-Middlesex), co-chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Services. "We need to examine and consider changing the state's system of confusing, contradictory, and ultimately counterproductive laws that are compounding New Jersey's property tax problem."

The bipartisan, bicameral committee is charged with exploring New Jersey's government structure and provide recommendations to decrease the size of government at the State and local levels.

At Tuesday's meeting, members will receive a presentation from the non-partisan Office of Legislative Service on consolidation issues, and hear from invited guests: Thomas D. Sharpe, Vice President, Somerset County Business Partnerships; Gregory J. Bonin, Chairman, Somerset County Municipal Managers Association (SCMMA); and Reagan Burkholder, Principal, Summit Collaborative Advisors -- all of whom are involved in promoting shared services in New Jersey.

The committee's membership includes: Senator Ellen Karcher, D-Monmouth and Mercer; Senator Joseph M. Kyrillos, R-Monmouth and Middlesex; Assemblyman Robert Gordon, D-Bergen; and Assemblyman Joseph Malone, R-Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean.