

# *News From NJ Senate Democrats*

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**FOR RELEASE:** Immediate  
March 12, 2007

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## **SMITH PACKAGE TO PROMOTE RENEWABLE ENERGY ADVANCES IN ASSEMBLY**

**TRENTON** - A bill sponsored by Senator Bob Smith which would promote renewable energy systems in New Jersey homes was unanimously approved today by the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee.

“As heating and energy costs continue to rise, many homeowners are looking to renewable energy to offset or eliminate the cost of maintaining their homes,” said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset, the Chair of the Senate Environment Committee. “Home renewable energy systems have the added benefit of conserving natural resources, reducing our reliance on foreign oil, and taking advantage of cleaner energy sources. New Jersey should do everything it can to support homeowners who are making the effort to go green.”

Senator Smith’s bill, S-2154, would direct the Board of Public Utilities (BPU), in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the Housing and Mortgage Finance Association (HMFA), to provide down-payment assistance to middle-income families seeking to install renewable energy systems in

their homes. The bill stipulates that the program is only available to families who earn up to 110 percent of the county median income. The bill would also require the Commissioner of the DCA to amend the energy subcode of the Universal Construction Code to establish enhanced energy-saving construction requirements.

“If we’re going to get a real environmental benefit from renewable energy systems, we need to make them available to middle-income families,” said Senator Smith. “By providing down-payment assistance and other incentives for these systems, we can attract much greater participation from everyday New Jerseyans.”

The bill is pending in the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee before going to the full Senate for consideration.

Another bill sponsored by Senator Smith, S-2167, which would require licensed home inspectors to rate the energy efficiency of homes for prospective buyers, was also approved by the Assembly Environment Committee by a vote of 4-0, with 2 abstentions. According to Senator Smith, the bill would allow prospective home buyers to consider energy and heating costs when looking to buy a new home.

“In today’s real estate market, homes which are cheap to heat and energy efficient are definitely given more attention from environmentally-friendly and cost-conscious home shoppers,” said Senator Smith. “By requiring home inspectors to rate the energy efficiency of homes for prospective buyers, we would increase awareness to the benefits of energy efficient appliances and renewable energy home systems. It’s also a pro-consumer measure because it give buyers a heads up on the costs associated with maintaining their potential home.”

S-2167 is currently pending consideration before the Senate Economic Growth Committee.

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