

**The Barnegat Bay is not a Republican or a Democratic Bay. It is one of the most beautiful environmental treasures of New Jersey. And, it's dying! The bay generates \$3.3 billion of revenue every year as well as tens of thousands of jobs for Ocean County residents. We need to work together to clean up this treasure both for environmental and for economic reasons.**

**Last Thursday, the Senate Environment and Energy Committee and the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee met jointly in the Toms River Municipal Building to review new laws that will help the bay recover. One bill requires the soil conservation service to issue regulations requiring that soil be restored after construction has occurred at a site. Heavy construction equipment causes soil compaction. The compacted soil acts as if it were concrete or asphalt, increasing storm water runoff into the bay. A second bill would require builders, who develop around the bay, to contribute to off-site storm water improvements. The third bill is designed to restrict the use of fertilizers and to limit the nitrogen content in a bag of fertilizer. Run-off containing fertilizer is causing the Barnegat Bay to undergo a process called eutrophication. Eutrophication results in the stimulation of algae growth and adversely changes the environment to the detriment of the clams, fish and other species and finally to the ultimate filling in of the bay. The Barnegat Bay is now classified as the second worst bay in America because of the extensive eutrophication occurring here.**

**Barnegat Bay suffers every time it rains in Ocean County. There are more than 2,000 malfunctioning or non-operating storm water facilities in Ocean County. Everyday, many residents of the bay begin their day by picking plastic bottles and Styrofoam cups and other trash out of the bay. If the non-operating storm water facilities were repaired and made operable, the floatables and the soil containing fertilizers would not wash into the Barnegat Bay. This is the most critical problem associated with Barnegat Bay health.**

**The final piece of legislation that we considered last Thursday would allow Ocean County to set up a storm water utility. There are literally thousands of storm water utilities across the United States cleaning up the same type of problem that Barnegat Bay is experiencing. Chesapeake Bay is one of the prime examples where storm water utilities are making a difference.**

**Under this legislation, Ocean County government would be allowed to include the maintenance and operation of storm water facilities under the umbrella of the Ocean County Utilities Authority. The purpose of the storm water utility is to provide the funding for these needed improvements. There is no "free" lunch. If we are to clean up the bay we will have to contribute toward its clean up. Around the Chesapeake Bay these utilities collect fees from property owners with large impervious surfaces like shopping centers and office complexes. It makes sense that the source of this problem should bear a greater responsibility. In many of the places with storm water utilities, homeowners pay between two and four dollars per month to fund the needed improvements.**

**It is my belief that we are at the critical moment in the life of Barnegat Bay and the Ocean County residents that enjoy it and who are employed because of it. The legislation is written to be totally permissive. As such, the Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders can set this up any way they'd like to do so. I urge the residents of Ocean County to contact their Board of Chosen Freeholders to tell them how important the health of Barnegat Bay is to their quality of life. Please reach out to the Freeholders and let them know just what the health of the bay means to you. Their names, numbers and mailing address are as follow:**

**Freeholder James F. Lacey  
Director (732) 929-2004**

**Freeholder John P. Kelly  
Deputy Director (732) 929-2003**

**Freeholder John C. Bartlett Jr. (732) 929-2116**

**Freeholder Gerry P. Little (732) 929-2001**

**Freeholder Joseph H. Vicari (732) 929-2002**

**Mailing address:**

**P.O. Box 2191  
Toms River, NJ 08754-2191**

**Sincerely,**

**State Senator Bob Smith, Chairman Senate Environment and Energy Committee**