

## **PolitickerNJ**

### **Turner-Vitale-Weinberg Bill Banning Smoking in Public Beaches and Parks Clears Senate**

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TRENTON — Legislation sponsored by Senators Shirley Turner, Joseph F. Vitale and Loretta Weinberg banning smoking at public parks and beaches cleared the Senate today. If enacted, New Jersey would become the first state in the nation with such a ban.

The bill, S-1772, would expand New Jersey's Smoke Free Act to include public beaches and state, county or municipal parks. The bill was amended to allow municipalities and counties to set aside up to 15 percent of a beach as a smoking area, but that does not apply to parks. Violators of the law would be subject to fines of not less than \$250 for the first offense, \$500 for the second offense and \$1,000 for each subsequent offense.

"Today, no one questions the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, and we must do all we can to protect our children and non-smokers to allow them to enjoy the state's natural resources without fearing for their health. Also, eliminating smoking in parks will reduce the risk of forest fires, which can destroy lives and property," said Turner (D-Mercer, Hunterdon). "New Jersey continues to set the precedent to promote good, healthy habits that help save lives and reduce public healthcare costs in the long run."

"This represents a great compromise. It helps protect people against harmful second-hand smoke while giving local governments the right to set aside small sections of their beaches for smokers," said Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee Chairman Vitale (D-Middlesex).

"When residents visit the state's parks and beaches, they should not have to worry second-hand smoke and their health. This bill once again shows that New Jersey can be a leader when it comes to public health," said Weinberg (D-Bergen).

The senate passed the bill by a 30-3 vote, and it now heads to the governor's desk.

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