
Public Hearing

before

ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT AND SOLID WASTE COMMITTEE

ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 195

(Proposes constitutional amendment to authorize use of dedicated Corporation Business Tax Revenues for funding development of land for recreation and conservation purposes; changes existing allocation percentages)

LOCATION: Committee Room 9
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: June 15, 2006
2:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman John F. McKeon, Chair
Assemblyman Robert M. Gordon, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Charles T. Epps Jr.
Assemblyman Louis M. Manzo
Assemblyman Michael J. Panter
Assemblyman Larry Chatzidakis
Assemblyman John E. Rooney



ALSO PRESENT:

Carrie Anne Calvo-Hahn
Kelli B. Kely
*Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aides*

Kate McDonnell
*Assembly Majority
Committee Aide*

Thea M. Sherridan
*Assembly Republican
Committee Aide*

*Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey*

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ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN F. McKEON: As required by the Legislative Rules of Procedure, as it relates to constitutional amendments, we will now open our public hearing with respect to ACR-195.

Madam clerk, would you please call the roll?

MS. CALVO-HAHN (Committee Aide): Assemblyman Rooney.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROONEY: Yes.

MS. CALVO-HAHN: Assemblyman Chatzidakis.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHATZIDAKIS: Present.

MS. CALVO-HAHN: Assemblyman Panter.

ASSEMBLYMAN PANTER: Here.

MS. CALVO-HAHN: Assemblyman Manzo.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANZO: Yes, I'm here.

MS. CALVO-HAHN: Assemblyman Epps.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPPS: Yes.

MS. CALVO-HAHN: Vice Chairman Gordon.

ASSEMBLYMAN GORDON: Here.

MS. CALVO-HAHN: Chairman McKeon.

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: Yes, present.

As it relates to taking testimony, members of the public are certainly welcome to come and give their testimony either for or against this proposed -- or ACR-195. There are several that have signed up, which I certainly will call. I do note that, notwithstanding, if one were to make a choice of submitting written testimony, it will become an official part of the record and will be as preserved for now and infinitum -- if anybody has written testimony they'd like to give to us.

With that having been said, Bill Foelsch, of the New Jersey Recreation and Park Association.

WILLIAM FOELSCH: Mr. Chairman, we support the bill.

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: We need you to come up just so we can get you on record, Bill. Thank you.

I bet you're going to be in favor of this.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Excuse me. As far as written testimony goes, is today, by 5:00, the deadline?

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: I'm going to have to turn to my staff.

MS. CALVO-HAHN: You can submit it to me tomorrow. That would be fine.

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: Tomorrow would be fine.

MR. FOELSCH: Mr. Chairman, William Foelsch, from the New Jersey Recreation and Park Association.

Since I must come up here and say we're in favor of the bill, I would like to note very quickly that this will be a great boost to our State park service. More than 15 million people visit our State parks every year. They're woefully short in terms of their capital upkeep. And we're looking at a more than \$250 million backlog of capital projects. So that is, obviously, a critically important part of this bill.

There are at least two other important things to remember with this bill. Number one, we're going to finally go forward with a vision for some new urban parks in this state, which are critically needed in each quadrant of our state. And it's been a long time since New Jersey started a new State park anywhere.

So we're pleased to move ahead with those, with this bill, as well as starting to restore the confidence in our State in its stewardship of our parks and historic sites. There have been notable examples of park closures and inability to fund and provide the proper upkeep for historic sites and parks. And I think we had started to lose public confidence. And this will go a long way to start to rebuild that.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: Thank you very much for your testimony.

Joanna Wolaver, of New Jersey Audubon, was kind enough to submit a very extensive written statement, which will be made a part of the record.

Thank you very much. We appreciate the Audubon's continued leadership in all areas of the environment.

Speaking of leadership in all areas of the environment, Dave Pringle. And that would apply to really everybody else that signed up here. But let me start with Dave.

Are you Dave?

J E F F T I T T L E: Jeff.

Dave's outside.

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: Jeff, Sierra Club.

MR. TITTLE: We're hanging out together. I guess we're hanging out a lot -- too much. People have started calling him Dave Tittle, for some reason.

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: I've done that to you guys before.

MR. TITTLE: I'll just start and be brief, because I know you're busy.

Basically, we need a stable source of funding for our parks, because they're not stable, they're falling down. We all know there's a \$250 million backlog. For some of us, we've been fighting for 10 years to try to develop a stable source. So we want to see this go forward.

We now have a third more land than we had 10 years ago, with a third less staff.

Parks are critical, not just at the State level, but also at the local level. They're a major factor in quality of life, in bringing families together, in public health, revitalizing our neighborhoods. But, more importantly, parks, overall, are a part of a major economic benefit for the State that-- Just outdoor recreation alone -- meaning hiking, fishing, hunting, and birding -- are part of a \$4 billion industry for the State, \$150 million in taxes from that.

When you look at ecotourism, historic tourism at our parks, all together, it's about a \$30 billion tourism industry in New Jersey that this will help make better. We need to invest in our parks, we need to invest in our families. But, also -- which is important for all of us, as we battle with budgets and fight over different bills, and that -- this is really about a legacy. This is a gift for future generations and for families, so that there are campgrounds, and picnic areas, and playgrounds -- so that there will be something for all of us. And I think it's critical, because that's really a legacy. As we battle over issues, this is something that everyone can benefit -- and use, and make our state a much better place.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: Jeff, thank you.

And it's to everybody -- none of us mean to make short shrift of this. We all understand how significant it is, and how hard each and every one of you have worked to bring us to this point. And we all respect that and celebrate it. And that celebration will come in November, when the voters support this.

David.

DAVID PRINGLE: Thank you.

I'll try to minimize duplication and, if I could, just ask, for the record, that my testimony on the June 1 hearing -- when the bill was released in the first place -- be entered in the record -- and just want to make three very--

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: That's a good point. We will do that.

MR. PRINGLE: --brief points.

Maybe, actually, you should have the entire record from that hearing -- not just mine -- be attached to this.

Three brief points: One, I just want to reiterate that the Corporate Business Tax dedication for the environment is working. As one of the original organizations working to make that happen in 1996 -- it's working exactly as intended. We're very proud of it. The idea was to dedicate a chunk of funding to the environment, given historic disproportionate cuts by legislators and governors in years past for over a decade. We tweaked it over time, as times have changed. And it's working exactly as intended, and I'm very proud of that.

Two, this is very much an environmental justice issue. Urban parks, in particular, have not gotten their fair share over the years. And it's why we need this legislation.

And then, third, as a result of that, we're very proud to be working with Outdoor Recreation Alliance, Sierra Club, Audubon, PIRG, Weequahic Park Association, and the New York/New Jersey Baykeeper to make this happen. It is now onto the ballot in November; and to get the Garden State Trust reauthorized, strengthened soon thereafter, and certainly before the budget break next year.

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: Thank you.

And on the Garden State Trust, you have my word that that's my priority as soon as we are through with this.

I just want to make something clear, because we do have to make an official record of this. We can only accept written testimony to make it a part of the record, as opposed to adding what was stated back at any other hearing. Thus, given anyone that would like to do that until tomorrow-- If you want to supply something in writing to make it part of the record, we'll be happy to accept it.

Amy Hansen.

AMY HANSEN: I'll submit my comments in writing.

Thank you for your support.

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: Dena, fitting that you're bringing up the -- last, but not least.

DENA MOTTOLA: I'll do the same. I will send you my written comments from the June 1 hearing to be submitted into the record.

We support this, and appreciate--

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: Who should we send them to?

ASSEMBLYMAN McKEON: Ms. Calvo.

Seeing no other members of the public wishing to be heard -- or those not needing to be verbally heard, having submitted written testimony -- any members of the Assembly Committee wish to make a statement? (no response)

Hopefully, as we're all co-sponsors -- each and every one of us -- we're all in favor.

Again, we'll have time on the 22nd, when this gets to the floor, as I understand it, to make our comments publicly at that point in time.

I will now officially close the public hearing, and that aspect of the procedure, as we move forward the constitutional amendment.

Thank you, all, for your cooperation.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)