

SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 579

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 22, 1996

The Senate Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 579.

The bill would require the Commissioner of Environmental Protection to conduct a public hearing or hearings prior to making a decision on an application by the State, a county, or a municipality, or any agency or instrumentality thereof, to undertake a project that would encroach upon, damage, or destroy any area, site, structure, or object included in the State Register of Historic Places. Current law provides that such public hearings may be held at the discretion of the commissioner.

The bill would also require that any such public hearing be held within 120 days of receiving the application. Preference would be given to holding such hearings in the municipality wherein the historic place affected by the application is located, or in a municipality as close thereto as can reasonably be arranged.

Finally, the bill would require the commissioner to provide at least 10 days notice of the public hearing or hearings to all affected local government units, any agencies or instrumentalities thereof concerned with historic preservation, and any recognized organization concerned with historic preservation in the State and in the affected municipality.

This bill would allow for needed local and public input before decisions are made at the State level affecting historic preservation efforts at the local level. The commitment of many communities to historic preservation is readily evident in, for example, their creation of historic districts and their recognition of historic sites within the community. This commitment, which is encouraged by State law, and the desire of such communities to implement wise planning and land use policies, should not be compromised or thwarted by ill-informed decision-making at the State level. This bill would improve the decision-making process in that regard.