

For Immediate Release
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Thousands Demand the NJ Legislature Block Waiver Rules

TRENTON – Labor-environment coalition representatives delivered thousands of petition signatures to Senate President Sweeney’s office asking him to post SCR 59, the resolution to repeal the NJ Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) waiver rule, for a vote. The NJ Assembly already passed a resolution to repeal the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) waiver rule a year ago this week.

A petition signed by over 2,000 New Jersey citizens asks the NJ Legislature to overturn all blanket waiver rules, including those issued by the first two state agencies to do so -- the Department of Environmental Protection and Division of Consumer Affairs. According to the New Jersey State Constitution, if the Legislature passes a resolution by simple majority twice, it can invalidate the rule. The Governor cannot veto it.

Governor Christie’s Executive order #2 mandated that every state agency set-up a process for waiving most laws that the agency is supposed to enforce. The first agency to issue a waiver rule was the DEP.

“Political appointees can now grant waivers based on guidelines that are vague at best. New Jerseyans are all too familiar with the way pay to play politics have hurt our environment and our economy,” said Denise Patel, Project Coordinator of the NJ Work Environment Council. “We are asking Senate President Sweeney to stand up against corruption and Governor Christie’s destructive policies.”

"The waiver rule is the worst environmental rule ever proposed, waiving regulations across 124 DEP programs. The rule means more flooding and pollution. The waiver rule is even worse after the destruction we saw in Sandy. That is why President Sweeney should post the oversight resolution for a vote as soon as possible. If the Senate President posts the resolutions before the end of the month, the Legislature can vote a second time before the summer break to stop the rule from moving forward," said Jeff Tittel, Director, NJ Sierra Club.

Residents wrote comments on the online petition stating their outrage about the rule. A Salem County resident wrote, “the DEP regulations are in place for a reason, mostly to protect lives and the environment. It is unreasonable to give the power to overrule these regulations to a person who possibly has no knowledge of the regulations or why they were enacted. It is also possible this person may overrule a regulation to win favor with a corporation to line their pockets or at the very least gain campaign contributions from said corporation.”

The environment-labor coalition gathered petition signatures from residents across the state urging the Legislature to take action and block the DEP waiver rule.

Participating groups include:

American Littoral Society
Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, Sandy Batty, 973-539-7547
Clean Ocean Action
Communications Workers of America 1036, Adam Liebttag (732) 266-2520
Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Edison Wetlands Association, Bob Spiegel, 732-841-9375
Environment New Jersey
Food & Water Watch, Jim Walsh (732) 979-6883
Hackensack Riverkeeper
Health Professional and Allied Employees
Hopewell Valley Citizens Group
NJ Environmental Federation, Dave Pringle (732) 996-4288
New Jersey Environmental Lobby, Mike Pisauo, (609) 919-9500
New Jersey Highlands Coalition
New Jersey Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
NJ State Industrial Union Council, Carol Gay (732) 785-1503
New York/New Jersey Baykeeper, Debbie Mans, 732-888-9870
Raritan Headwaters Association
Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Save Barnegat Bay
Sierra Club, New Jersey Chapter, Jeff Tittel (609) 558-9100
Sourland Planning Council
Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, Jennifer M. Coffey, (609) 532-3462
International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 877
Union of Rutgers Administrators, American Federation of Teachers Local 1766
United Steelworkers District 4
Work Environment Council of New Jersey, Denise Patel

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