

From **SAVE OUR SENSIBLE SAFEGUARDS**

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New Campaign Aims to Defeat Regulatory Rollbacks of New Jersey's Landmark Environmental, Health, and Worker Protections

Trenton, New Jersey (June 9, 2010): Seventy-five labor, environmental, emergency response, and other organizations today announced at a State House news conference a new public campaign to defeat bipartisan attacks on decades of New Jersey's worker, environmental, health, and other protections. The groups focused on draconian state legislation to prohibit New Jersey state agencies from adopting – or even proposing – any new regulations or requirements that would exceed federal government standards unless every detail was approved first by the legislature. The legislation is S1986, sponsored by Senator Jeff Van Drew (D-1) and Steven Oroho (R-24), which was referred to the State Government Committee, and A2486, by Assemblyman John Burzichelli (D-3) and Assemblyman Scott Rumana (R-40). A2486 was reported by the Assembly Regulatory Oversight Committee on March 18, 2010, and is pending a vote by the full Assembly. To view the legislation, go to www.njleg.state.nj.us.

According to John Pajak, whose job is loading and unloading oil tankers at the Linden, NJ ConocoPhillips petroleum refinery (and is President of the New Jersey Work Environment Council), “At the very time that an environmental catastrophe has cost thousands of jobs on the Gulf Coast, these legislators want to rollback New Jersey's rules for preventing and cleaning up oil spills, which are stronger than the federal governments. This is outrageous.” Van Drew and Burzichelli represent coastal areas.

At the press conference, the *Save Our Sensible Safeguards* Campaign released a letter to Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver and Senate President Steven Sweeney urging them not to support or post these bills for a vote in the legislature. See the letter at www.njwec.org.

The Campaign also released a statement by Senate Majority Leader Barbara Buono (D-18) opposing the legislation, which said (in part), “We must not undermine decades of health, labor, and environmental protections which protect the safety and well-being of our neighborhoods, families, and workers.” See Senator Buono’s full statement at www.njwec.org.

Dominick Marino, President of the Professional Firefighters Association of NJ (International Association of Fire Fighters), said, “Firefighting is an incredibly dangerous job. New Jersey had taken the steps to protect New Jersey firefighters. Yet, firefighters still need stronger protections, not weaker ones.”

“Historically, New Jersey has been a pioneer among states for environmental protection. These bills cede state’s rights to the federal government and accelerate a ‘race to the bottom’,” said Jeff Tittel, Director of the Sierra Club’s New Jersey Chapter.

“The legislative sponsors didn’t bother to examine the consequences of their bills,” said Work Environment Council Director Rick Engler. “This legislation will rollback decades of worker, environmental and community protections.”

Luke Gordon, Staff Representative for United Steelworkers District 4, the state’s largest industrial union, pointed out that, “The legislation could harm job creation efforts if New Jersey requirements for companies to receive low interest loans, grants, or tax abatements exceed federal requirements.”

Valorie Caffee, speaking for the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance, said, “Vulnerable populations suffer every day from diesel exhaust and air pollution. Our state government should be issuing innovative requirements to protect health, not deregulating to benefit big corporations.”

A fact sheet illustrating the negative impact of these bills is at www.njwec.org.

The Christie Administration has also been trying to rollback worker and environmental protections through various Executive Orders and recommendations by his Red Tape Review Group.