

Senator Christopher J. Connors
Assemblyman Brian E. Rumpf
Assemblywoman DiAnne C. Gove

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(Representing parts of Ocean, Burlington and Atlantic counties)

GOVERNOR SIGNS 9TH DISTRICT **DELEGATION'S COASTAL** **EVACUATION PREPARATION** **INITIATIVE INTO LAW**

Trenton: Legislation initiated by efforts undertaken by the 9th Legislative District Delegation more than five years ago to enhance New Jersey's evacuation preparedness procedures has been signed into law. The measure (S-264/A-3224), sponsored by Senator Christopher J. Connors, Assemblyman Brian E. Rumpf and Assemblywoman DiAnne C. Gove, will implement recommendations made by the Coastal New Jersey Evacuation Task Force in its final report.

The Coastal New Jersey Evacuation Task Force was established in 2007 under legislation sponsored by the Delegation and charged with examining and assessing current plans and proposals to evacuate the state's seven coastal counties.

Assemblyman Rumpf served as Vice Chairman of the Task Force and was instrumental in the development of the recommendations published in the Task Force's final report issued to the Legislature in May 2008.

Following the measure's enactment, Senator Connors, Assemblyman Rumpf and Assemblywoman Gove issued the following joint statement:

"The enactment of this legislation marks the culmination of a several-year bipartisan effort to enhance the state's coastal evacuation procedures and safeguard the lives of residents.

The key provisions of the law were based on recommendations provided by top experts in their respective fields and were carefully considered during the Task Force's public hearings.

"Our Delegation undertook this effort in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Rather than sit back and simply hope for the best, we felt it was important for New Jersey to learn from the experiences in New Orleans and other affected areas of the Gulf Coast region and better prepare for challenges that could severely hamper evacuation efforts.

"Then, this past summer New Jersey got a wake-up call that only highlighted the pressing need for enhancing coastal evacuation procedures. Though only hitting New Jersey with less force than previously feared, Hurricane Irene triggered mandatory evacuations and caused damage throughout the state. Moreover, its impact demonstrated, in no uncertain terms, that New Jersey is not immune from severe weather.

Key provisions of the new law include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ Requiring the Director of the State Office of Emergency Management (OEM), in consultation with the Emergency Management Offices of affected counties and municipalities, to develop an annual public awareness program to educate the public concerning the State's plan to evacuate New Jersey's coastal areas in times of emergency.
- ▶ Allowing counties to establish a central registry for individuals with special needs who may need additional assistance during an emergency.
- ▶ Requiring that the State Police, the Department of Transportation (DOT) and county emergency management coordinators implement a lane reversal strategy on the Atlantic City Expressway and the Garden State Parkway in preparation for an evacuation during an emergency.