

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Honoring Late State Senator and Superior Court Judge Peter Barnes III

08/10/2021

EDISON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (A5822) renaming the Dismal Swamp and Dismal Swamp Preservation Commission as the “Peter J. Barnes III Wildlife Preserve” and the “Peter J. Barnes III Wildlife Preservation Committee”. The legislation is in honor of late State Senator and Superior Court Judge Peter Barnes III, who played an instrumental role in preserving the swamp, which includes 660 acres of freshwater wetlands, forested uplands, and meadows that is home to over 175 bird species and dozens of other animal species. The area, spanning Edison Township, Metuchen Borough, and South Plainfield Borough in Middlesex County, represents one of the last remaining wetland ecosystems in a densely developed region of the state.

“Pete had a remarkable and dedicated career of public service spanning more than two decades,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Through his positions on the Edison Township Council and Housing Authority, to the State Assembly and Senate, and the New Jersey Superior Court, Pete worked to make the lives of others safer, healthier, and better. He saw beauty in everything and sought joy and purpose in everything he did. Pete was passionate about the preservation of these wetlands, as they are a place of wonder and beauty, a home to hundreds of species of animals, and a place where people come to reflect and find purpose. This is a wonderful way to honor Pete’s legacy and all of his contributions to New Jersey.”

“The Barnes Family is humbled and honored by the work of the State Legislature in renaming the Dismal Swamp the Peter J. Barnes III Wildlife Preserve,” **said the Barnes Family**. “Pete lived a remarkable life dedicated to his community, and one of his greatest accomplishments as a public servant was working to protect this natural treasure for future generations. We can think of no greater tribute in recognition of his public service. Thank you to all who made this possible at the local, county, and state levels.”

“I’m proud to join Governor Murphy today to officially rename Dismal Swamp the Peter J. Barnes III Wildlife Preserve,” **said U.S. Congressman Frank Pallone**. “There is no more fitting way to honor Peter’s memory. He was a fierce advocate for protecting and preserving this area for the wildlife that call it home and for New Jersey residents who come here to enjoy it. It’s a thriving habitat for endangered birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. During the pandemic, outdoor spaces became even more important as New Jerseyans found renewed appreciation for recreation and our state’s beauty. Nature preserves like these are another critical tool in the fight against the climate crisis and its effect on our environment and wildlife. I’m honored to be a part of this moment to recognize the hard work Peter invested to conserve this natural habitat for years to come.”

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin and Assemblymen Robert Karabinchak and Sterley Stanley, as well as Senate President Steve Sweeney and Senator Patrick Diegnan.

“For the duration of his career, Pete Barnes was successful in so many areas, with his work to preserve open space and protect the Dismal Swamp being among his crowning achievements,” **said Senator Patrick Diegnan**. “He lived an incredible life that was lost too soon and he will continue to be dearly missed by his family, friends, and members of the State Legislature. By renaming the Dismal Swamp after Pete, we can ensure his legacy carries on alongside his tireless efforts to protect the area for generations to come.”

“I can think of no better way to honor the life and legacy of Pete Barnes,” **said Senate President Steve Sweeney**. “Because of his tireless advocacy, 660 acres of land are preserved, protecting an array of wildlife, including endangered species such as the Bald Eagle. Pete was an honorable public servant who was devoted to improving the quality of life



for others. With this renaming, the Peter J. Barnes III Wildlife Preserve will be a timeless reminder of the incredible work that Pete left for us all.”

“Peter fought hard to ensure that the ‘Everglades of Central Jersey’ were protected, and that the wildlife there was able to thrive,” **said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin**. “He would often go door to door to spread awareness about the State park. Dedicating the conservation to Peter is a way to honor his advocacy and dedication toward safeguarding such a spectacular place in New Jersey.”

“When Peter Barnes was in the Assembly, he was instrumental in preserving the Dismal Swamp,” **said Assemblyman Robert Karabinchak**. “Renaming the largest natural area remaining in northern Middlesex is a merited tribute to his effort and dedication toward protecting the land.”

“The support of then-Assemblyman Barnes and his legislation led to the conservation of approximately 660 acres of land,” **said Assemblyman Sterley Stanley**. “He was very passionate about preserving this area and through his actions, Peter was able to protect hundreds of birds and dozens of endangered species. Naming the conservation area after Peter is a wonderful way to honor and recognize his dedication to Middlesex.”

“The dedication of this vast ecological gem in memory of Peter J. Barnes, III is a fitting tribute to a New Jersey statesman and environmental steward,” **said New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette**. “From today forward, those who visit this natural oasis in bustling Middlesex County will come to know or be reminded of a thoughtful public servant whose commitment to his community and love for the environment has benefited generations of New Jerseyans.”

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