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Governor Chris Christie Today Signed Significant Solar Power Legislation Into Law

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Trenton, NJ – Backing up his pledge to support renewable energy sources and jobs creation, Governor Chris Christie today signed into law a bill exempting solar panels from restrictions which had classified them as “impervious surface” under municipal land use law and waterfront and coastal development laws, including the Pinelands and Highlands protection acts.

The bill, S-921, had bi-partisan backing and sponsorship and received unanimous support in the Legislature.

“There is a balance to be struck between responsible land-use law and well-intended but burdensome restrictions that do more harm than good,” Governor Christie said. “This legislation removes the regulatory burden, serves our environment by expanding renewable energy assets and serves the economy by creating demand for solar panel production.”

Until this legislation, the law limited the total amount of land that could be developed with an impervious surface for environmental protection purposes. Under this law, only the base or foundation of the solar panel that is affixed to the land, rather than the entire solar panel, will be considered as “impervious cover.”

Governor Christie signed the bill during an appearance at the Surf Rider Beach Club in Sea Bridge, where he marked Earth Day in New Jersey with Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin and former Governor Tom Kean. Earth Day 2010 marks the 40th Anniversary of the DEP, created through legislation sponsored by then Assemblyman Kean.

The bill signed by the Governor recognizes solar energy developments as an important land use which will protect our environment. The bill eliminates a significant impediment which had previously stalled green energy projects.

This bill received unanimous support in the Legislature and was sponsored by Senators Bob Smith, Jennifer Beck, James Beach and Christopher Bateman; with Assembly sponsors Upendra Chivukula, Annette Quijano and John McKeon, and co-sponsors Erik Peterson, Declan O’Scanlon, Gordon Johnson and Wayne DeAngelo.

This bill is supported as promoting green energy and stimulating job creation by the NJ Chamber of Commerce, New Jersey Business and Industry Association, Sun Edison, New Jersey Farm Bureau, the Green Building Council, Sierra Club and the New Jersey Environmental Lobby.

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