

# ***Public Hearing***

before

## **ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

**Senate Bill Nos. 1115 and 1199 (SCS)**

*(“Green Acres, Farmland and Historic Preservation, Lake, Stream, and Dam Restoration, and Cultural Arts’ Centers Bond Act of 1998”, authorizes \$295 million in bonds for those purposes and appropriates \$5,000)*

**LOCATION:** Committee Room 11  
State House Annex  
Trenton, New Jersey

**DATE:** July 27, 1998  
2:00 p.m.

### **MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger, Chairman  
Assemblyman Leonard Lance, Vice-Chairman  
Assemblyman Francis J. Blee  
Assemblywoman Clare M. Farragher  
Assemblyman John C. Gibson  
Assemblyman Guy R. Gregg  
Assemblyman Kenneth C. LeFevre  
Assemblyman Joseph R. Malone III  
Assemblyman John E. Rooney  
Assemblyman Joel M. Weingarten  
Assemblyman Joseph Charles Jr.  
Assemblyman William D. Payne  
Assemblyman Louis A. Romano  
Assemblyman Joseph Suliga  
Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman



### **ALSO PRESENT:**

David J. Rosen                                Mary Alice Messenger  
Philip N. Liloia                                Assembly Democratic  
*Office of Legislative Services*                        Committee Aide  
*Committee Aides*

*Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by*

The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,  
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

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**ASSEMBLYMAN RICHARD H. BAGGER (Chairman):** Good afternoon, and thank you for your patience with our late start this afternoon. I apologize for the lack of space in this meeting room for all those interested in the bills that we expect to hear this afternoon. This is the Assembly Appropriations Committee, and to begin our meeting, I've asked Mr. Rosen to take the roll.

**MR. ROSEN (Committee Aide):** Assemblyman Charles? (no response)

Assemblyman Payne? (no response)

Assemblywoman Pou? (no response)

Assemblyman Romano? (no response)

Assemblyman Suliga? (no response)

Assemblywoman Watson Coleman? (no response)

Assemblyman Blee? (no response)

Assemblyman Corodemus? (no response)

Assemblywoman Farragher?

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN FARRAGHER:** Here.

**MR. ROSEN:** Assemblyman Gibson?

**ASSEMBLYMAN GIBSON:** Here.

**MR. ROSEN:** Assemblyman Gregg?

**ASSEMBLYMAN GREGG:** Here.

**MR. ROSEN:** Assemblyman Kelly? (no response)

Assemblyman Malone? (no response)

Assemblyman Weingarten?

**ASSEMBLYMAN WEINGARTEN:** Here.

MR. ROSEN: Assemblyman Lance?

ASSEMBLYMAN LANCE: Here.

MR. ROSEN: Assemblyman Bagger?

ASSEMBLYMAN BAGGER: Here.

And by order of the Speaker, today it's my pleasure to notify that Assemblyman John Rooney is substituting today for Assemblyman John Kelly and Assemblyman Ken LeFevre is substituting for Assemblyman Corodemus. And we'll let the record reflect that they're both present at today's meeting.

We'll begin today with a public hearing in accordance with Rule 18:1 of the Rules of the General Assembly on the Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill Nos. 1115 and 1199 by Senators Littell, Baer, and Bennett. I'd like to begin by calling upon Senator Littell, the Chairman of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee.

**S E N A T O R   R O B E R T   E.   L I T T E L L:** Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Appropriations Committee in the Assembly.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of S-1115 and S-1199 -- has bipartisan support, 37 sponsors in the Assembly, passed by a vote of 38 to nothing. And what it is, is a Green Acres bond issue, which is not anything new or surprising. And it will provide a bridge from the present system of Green Acre bond issues to the stable source of funding issue, which will be done through a constitutional amendment and I wholeheartedly support. The Senate Committee reported that out at the end of June, and we held a public hearing this past Thursday. There was only one dissenter, and everybody else in the room was 1000 percent in favor of the idea of a stable source of funding. It's a good idea.

What this does is provides money in the interim. The stable source of funding doesn't kick into effect until July 1 of next year. It will be at least six months before you've accumulated enough money to appropriate any of it for the purpose of selling bonds or buying open space or farmland or historic preservation; and therefore, there will be a lot of pressure next year on the General Fund to provide money for projects that members of the Legislature in both Houses consider to be vital and important and essential in their process. In addition to the State acquisition and development of land, there's money for the Fish and Game to provide access for hunting and fishing around the state and some badly needed capital funds for that Department. There's \$10 million for Liberty State Park, the largest park in the State of New Jersey in a most urban area in the State of New Jersey, and we all know and appreciate what a wonderful spot that is. There's funds for local acquisition on a matching-fund basis. There's money for farmland preservation, for historic preservation, \$5 million for the *Battleship New Jersey*, \$15 million for lake and stream restoration, \$30 million for dam restoration on high-hazard dams, and \$35 million for cultural arts.

And for the first time, \$10 million for shade tree commissions to deal with some of the serious problems that exist around the state on diseased and dying trees that need to be cut down and to have new trees planted. The Shade Tree Commission representatives came and testified in the Senate hearing, and I hope some of them are here today. I certainly hope that they are supporters of this.

I think it will be essential to the process to have money available for all of these programs for the next year and a half until the stable source of

funding program kicks in. I think the bridge, or the transition from one system to the other, makes a lot of sense, and I wholeheartedly support it and ask for your support in kind.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN BAGGER: Senator, thank you very much. If you would like to stay there, we have several people who have signed up to testify in the public hearing on this bond issue.

If they are here, if they could please come forward and offer your thoughts, the Acting Secretary of State, Carol Cronheim; the Deputy Commissioner of the DEP, Judy Jengo; and Julia Allen, the State Agriculture Development Commission.

While we are dispatching for them, we also have-- People who have also signed up on this bill, Richard Ginman of East Amwell Township; Barbara Mitnick, New Jersey Historic Trust; Fred Gardner, East Amwell Township; Sally Dudley, Association of the New Jersey Environmental Commissions.

Anyone who is here and would like to be heard in the public hearing on the Senate Bill Nos. 1115 and 1199, we'll give them a moment.

Certain types of bills under our rules require a public hearing in addition to our ordinary opportunity that we allow in committee for anybody to testify on bills, so since we're doing both on the same day on two different bills, I'm just going to call upon people once.

We have with us Barbara Mitnick.

SENATOR LITTELL: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN BAGGER: Yes, Senator Littell.

**SENATOR LITTELL:** The State Trooper just advised me that there's a couple of them out in the hallway that they're trying to get in here.

**ASSEMBLYMAN BAGGER:** That's great. Thank you, Senator.

Ms. Mitnick, would you like to be offering comments on Senator Littell's legislation?

**B A R B A R A J. M I T N I C K, Ph.D.:** Actually I'm here to testify on ACR-109.

**ASSEMBLYMAN BAGGER:** Okay. Well, you had signed up as a witness on--

**DR. MITNICK:** ACR-109.

**ASSEMBLYMAN BAGGER:** --Senate Bill No. 1115, No. 1199. If not, I will scratch you off the list, and we'll return later.

I'm sorry, Barbara, for that inconvenience, but I've been handed the list here for the public hearing.

Also signed up -- and I'm calling on everyone who signed up either for the public hearing or for the committee meeting on Senator Littell's legislation.

Betty Weiss at the Skylands Association, New Jersey State Botanical Garden, and also, Mr. John Budzash of the New Jersey Taxpayers Task Force.

Ms. Weiss?

**B E T T Y W E I S S :** Thank you very much, Assemblyman Bagger and Committee.

I'm here on behalf of Skylands Association, which is a friends group at the New Jersey State Botanical Garden in Ringwood. We are one of

many historical sites within the state. We have some wonderful facilities here in the state that are neglected terribly. And I think, through the issuance of a new Green Acres bond issue, we can attempt to address some of the needs for historic restoration.

I'd love to invite you all to come see this wonderful building, but through the ages, through the decades, it has suffered severe deterioration, as has many of the historic sites at Ringwood State Park and throughout the state. To come to Skylands Manor and see the ceilings deteriorating because of the roof leaking is just a tip of the iceberg of the way our historic sites are being treated in New Jersey.

I'm very supportive of Senator Littell's bill, and I would hope that the Assembly here could see its issuance.

Thank you very much.

**ASSEMBLYMAN BAGGER:** Thank you very much for your testimony.

This is a public hearing on Senator Littell's legislation, S-1115, if there's anyone else who would like to be heard on this.

Sally Dudley, New Jersey Environmental Commissions.

**S A L L Y D U D L E Y:** I'm Sally Dudley from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions.

We greatly appreciate Senator Littell's interest in open space preservation, and we also are very supportive of the Green Acres Program. Green Acres bond issues have accomplished a lot for this state over the years. At this point, we think that what New Jersey really needs is a stable source of funding. A bond issue is okay, but it's really a stopgap, and we need

something that will give us an assured sense of funding over a long period of time.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN BAGGER: Thank you very much.

Any further testimony for the public hearing on Senate Bill No. 1115? (no response)

Seeing no one, I will declare that public hearing closed.

**(HEARING CONCLUDED)**