

Menendez, Lautenberg Push For Relief In Final Budget

WASHINGTON — New Jersey U.S. Senators Robert Menendez and Frank R. Lautenberg have called on House and Senate leaders to formalize AMT tax relief in the fiscal year 2007 budget, thereby saving over one million New Jerseyans from the "stealth" alternative minimum tax, according to a press release from Sen. Menendez.

Without passage of AMT relief, one in three New Jersey taxpayers will find themselves facing an unexpected tax increase this year, in many cases more than \$1,000, according to the press release.

"Already burdened by the rising costs of education, health care, and home ownership, the last thing New Jersey families need is a 'stealth tax' increase," Sen. Menendez said. "Our first priority should be to protect middle class American families."

"The AMT hits New Jerseyans harder than any other state. If we do not act, over a million hard working people in New Jersey will be forced to pay higher taxes as a result of skewed Republican tax policies," said Senator Lautenberg.

In a letter to Senators Chuck Grassley and Max Baucus, chairman and ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, and to Representatives Bill Thomas and Charles Rangel, chairman and ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee, respectively, Sens. Menendez and Lautenberg said over one million New Jerseyans could face an additional \$1,000 in new taxes if AMT relief is not passed.

"The AMT would mean a substantial tax increase for millions of taxpayers — many will pay more than \$1,000 in additional taxes if the current AMT exemption is not extended," the New Jersey lawmakers wrote. "In our State of New Jersey, more than a million taxpayers are expected to face the AMT this year if Congress does not act. That means nearly one in three taxpayers in New Jersey would be subject to the AMT."

The alternative minimum tax was originally designed to ensure that people making more than \$200,000 paid some income tax, but because it was never indexed for inflation, each year it captures more and more middle class families unless it is changed by Congress.

The respective Senate and House committees are beginning "conference negotiations" to reconcile budget proposals from both chambers of Congress. The Senate's tax reconciliation bill, passed last November, protected middle class families from additional taxation through the alternative minimum tax. The House bill does not offer such protections, according to the press release.

Sen. Menendez last month offered an amendment to the tax reconciliation bill before the Senate, explaining that alternative minimum tax relief for middle class families should replace tax cuts on dividends and capital gains.



PROUD TO BE A MARINE...U.S. Marine Private First Class Sean Flynn of Rahway speaks with, from left to right, Dylan Bonina, Louis Molinari, Scott McCarroll and Eugene Rawles while paying a visit to Kelly Delfino's class at Jefferson Elementary School in Westfield. The students in Mrs. Delfino's class wrote to PFC Flynn while he was in boot camp. PFC Flynn, who completed boot camp in February, visited the students to thank them for their support and to talk to them about being a Marine.

Therapist to Speak To Mothers Group

FANWOOD — The Union County Chapter of Mothers & More will host Sherri Hewitt, a physical therapist, at its meeting on Wednesday, March 15, at 8 p.m. at the Fanwood Recreation Center, located at Forest Road Park in Fanwood.

Ms. Hewitt will discuss the risk factors, symptoms and physical therapy treatments available for female urinary incontinence. The meeting is open to the public.

Interested persons also will have an opportunity to learn more about

the chapter's activities, which include mom-and-tot outings, mom's night out, playgroups, a book club and a craft club, among other offerings.

A national, non-profit organization, Mothers & More champions the value and necessity of all mothers' work to society, both paid and unpaid, within and outside of the home. For more information about this meeting or Mothers & More, please call Micheal at (908) 620-3202 or Marilyn at (908) 568-2633 or visit mothersandmore.org.

NJDOT Emergency Truck Access Rules Take Effect

TRENTON — Acting Commissioner Kris Kolluri on February 28 announced that the New Jersey Department of Transportation's (NJDOT) proposed emergency regulations that identify state roadways suitable for 102-inch wide trucks are in effect.

"These rules protect motorists' safety by restricting truck traffic as NJDOT continues its legal fight for a statewide truck ban," said Acting Commissioner Kolluri. "Without the emergency rules, 102-inch wide trucks could lawfully travel on virtually any road in the state, regardless of whether the roads are physically suited for such vehicles."

The proposed rules permit 102-inch trucks to travel exclusively on state, interstate and county roads that feature lane widths of at least 11 feet, shoulders and geometric configurations suitable to safely accommodate large trucks. The 102-inch wide standard truck may detour off the authorized routes only to the extent necessary to bypass road closings and route restrictions such as weight or vertical clearance limits.

The emergency rule is effective immediately. Its permanent counterpart, filed concurrently, will appear in the Monday, March 20, issue of the New Jersey Register. The public may comment on the rule through Wednesday, April 19.

NJDOT proposed the emergency

truck access rules in response to the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals opinion that declared New Jersey's previous truck access rules unconstitutional. Under the previous regulations, interstate trucks were required to use the National Network, which is comprised primarily of the Interstate system. Trucks were allowed off the National Network only when seeking reasonable access to food, fuel, repairs or rest. Under these regulations, intrastate trucks could use both the National Network and the New Jersey Access Network, comprised primarily of state highways, since these trucks had either an origin or destination, or both, within New Jersey.

The American Truck Association (ATA) and U.S. Xpress, Inc. challenged these regulations on the grounds that they violate the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution. In March 2004, the court ruled in favor of the ATA, but allowed a stay of New Jersey's regulations pending an appeal. On February 21, the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals issued an opinion on that appeal and declared the rules unconstitutional. Under the direction of Governor Jon S. Corzine, NJDOT will appeal this decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, a DOT spokesman said.

The proposed rule and a map depicting roadways affected by the rule are available at www.state.nj.us/transportation/.

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