

## Bill to spur development around Atlantic City International Airport passes committee

SHANNA O'MARA For The Press



Lauren H. Moore, Jr., Executive Director of the Atlantic County Economic Alliance, and Joseph D. Kelly, President of the Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce, testify in support of Senate Bill S2872.

TRENTON — A bill that would provide tax incentives to businesses in areas designated as Garden State Growth Zones, including Atlantic City International Airport, was released Thursday to the state Assembly for a full vote.

The bill is intended to strengthen Atlantic County's economy and start a local aviation industry.

“Creating a growth zone around the airport, to encompass the Stockton Aviation Research Park, has the potential to be a real driver in bringing new industry and new good-paying jobs to our area,” said Assemblyman Vince Mazzeo, D-Atlantic, a sponsor of the bill. “This would benefit the city, the county, lessen our reliance on gaming as our main economic driver and position Atlantic City as a prominent player in the aviation industry.”

Five municipalities in the state — Atlantic City, Camden, Passaic, Paterson and Trenton — already have been established as growth zones. Companies in these regions may receive tax credits totaling as much as \$35 million.

“While tourism and gaming are the bread and butter of Atlantic County's economy, it's clear Atlantic County must diversify its economic base beyond tourism and gaming,” said state Sen.-elect Chris Brown, R-Atlantic.

Brown, who is currently in the Assembly, has introduced a bill with Mazzeo intended to create jobs within these zones. The specified one-mile area would include the Stockton Aviation Research and Technology Park, or SARTP, as well as the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center.

“Atlantic County offers the most advanced aviation environment on the planet, and I believe there are companies out there who will come to Atlantic County,” Brown said. “Unfortunately, New Jersey’s high taxes and the high cost of doing business are obstacles to attracting businesses and jobs to our county.”

SARTP board of directors President Edward Salmon said this legislation provides Atlantic County “the opportunity to become the aviation research and technology center for our nation and the world.”

“It would attract major industry into this region,” Salmon said. “It’s a New Jersey bill that is good for New Jersey.”