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LATEST VERSION OF LESNIAK BILL WOULD PRODUCE ZERO HOMES  
***Proposed amendments to Lesniak bill would replace  
state's housing policy with home improvement grant program***

**May 20, 2010** – Trenton, New Jersey- Today, Sen. Ray Lesniak is asking the Senate to vote on new legislation that would replace the state's housing policy with a home improvement grant program. Instead of actually having to build even a single new home affordable to people with low- and moderate-incomes and people with special needs, developers could instead meet their obligations by providing \$10,000 grants for home improvements.

"Home improvement grants do not meet our state's needs for homes near jobs and transit affordable to people of all incomes and people with special needs," Fair Share Housing Center Associate Director Kevin D. Walsh said. "Home improvement grants do not address the needs of a receptionist looking for an apartment, a person with cerebral palsy who needs accessible housing with appropriate supportive services, or seniors on a fixed income who can't afford to stay in their existing home."

The grants, which would provide \$10,000 to homeowners to upgrade their homes, would replace all other state housing requirements, resulting in no state program for producing homes affordable to low- and moderate-income families, seniors, and people with special needs. For example, a developer building a new development of 100 homes would be required to provide ten grants of \$10,000 each to 10 homeowners to make interior or exterior repairs.

Neither developers nor municipalities would have any other obligations — thus bringing to a halt over 40,000 homes already in the pipeline, and killing over \$6 billion in investment associated with those homes.

"This is the worst possible time for legislation that would force builders throughout the state to abandon plans in which they have already invested hundreds of millions of dollars," said Fair Share Housing Center staff attorney Adam Gordon. "We need those construction jobs to rebuild our economy — jobs that Sen. Lesniak's bill would take away."

The amendments proposed today are the sixth version of Lesniak's bill to surface in the past three months. Many key flaws of earlier versions remain — such the process by which the State Planning Commission will have to sort out whether a particular condominium is a "luxury" condominium or not, which Sen. Lesniak has suggested will involve an analysis of aerial photos. In other key ways, like prior amendments, these amendments change the bill to something totally different from earlier versions. Also like prior amendments, the amendments were released just hours before the vote, without any opportunity for stakeholders to comment.

"Before voting on these amendments, Senators should take a close look at what they are being asked to do," Walsh said. "Once again, Sen. Lesniak has failed to provide a transparent process to debate the changes he wishes to make."

Fair Share Housing Center, founded in 1975, is the only public interest organization devoted entirely to defending the housing rights of New Jersey's poor through implementing the Mount Laurel doctrine

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