

# Atlantic County assemblymen reintroduce AC airport growth zone bill

JOHN DeROSIER Staff Writer

Atlantic County Assemblymen Vince Mazzeo and John Armato have reintroduced a bill that would establish the Atlantic City International Airport as a Garden State Growth Zone.

The bill, which was also reintroduced in the state Senate by Sen. Steve Sweeney, allows qualified businesses that are interested in relocating within one mile of the airport to apply for tax incentives to help cut back on costs.

"Having an economic growth zone surrounding the Atlantic City Airport and the Stockton Aviation Research & Technology Park continues to be one of our highest legislative priorities," Mazzeo and Armato said in a joint statement. "Last month, along with the Atlantic County Economic Alliance and the Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce, we went to Trenton and met with several members of Governor Murphy's senior staff to brief them on our proposal. Following that meeting and based on past statements by Governor Murphy regarding tax incentive programs, we re-introduced a new bill targeting just the Atlantic City Airport Aviation District."

In January, Gov. Chris Christie vetoed a similar bill on his way out of office.

He defended his decision, saying he didn't like that it extended the same growth zone benefits the airport in Egg Harbor Township got to Atlantic City, Camden, Passaic, Paterson and Trenton.

"The adding of all the other places on that bill made it unacceptable to me," Christie said at the time. "As governor, you have to make decisions. I can't accept a number of towns being added to this distinction ... if I don't believe it will help those towns economically."

This new bill creates the incentives only at Atlantic City International and a one-mile radius around it.

The idea of establishing a Garden State Growth Zone is to attract out-of-state businesses to come into New Jersey. There has been debate among lawmakers about the effectiveness of this designation because companies that already do business in New Jersey were moving to other parts of the state to get the tax breaks.

But adding a growth zone around the airport was a good idea, lawmakers argued, because there is no "aviation industry" already established in New Jersey.