

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 151

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED APRIL 13, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman JAY WEBBER

District 26 (Essex, Morris and Passaic)

Assemblyman GERARD SCHARFENBERGER

District 13 (Monmouth)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblymen DiMaio, Thomson, Wirths, Bergen, Assemblywoman

DiMaso, Assemblyman Space, Assemblywoman Stanfield, Assemblymen

Peters, Rooney, Bramnick, Clifton, Catalano and McGuckin

SYNOPSIS

Urges Governor to immediately rescind Executive Order No.118, which closed all State parks and forests and county parks.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/1/2020)

1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** urging the Governor to rescind
2 Executive Order No.118, which closed all State parks and forests
3 and county parks.
4
5 **WHEREAS**, On April 7, 2020, Governor Murphy issued Executive
6 Order No.118, which indefinitely and completely closed all State
7 parks and forests and county parks due to the COVID-19
8 emergency; and
9 **WHEREAS**, While it is imperative that New Jerseyans comply with
10 social-distancing and other guidelines to fight the COVID-19
11 pandemic, the complete closure of over half a million acres of open
12 space to public access is harmful to the public health and well-being
13 of the State’s residents; and
14 **WHEREAS**, The closure of public open space appears to be based
15 purely on anecdote, without sufficient data or health science to
16 support the decision; and
17 **WHEREAS**, Department of Environmental Protection’s Commissioner
18 McCabe previously stated in a department press release that
19 keeping State-owned open space “available to the public is
20 important so people can continue to enjoy the healthful benefits of
21 recreation and being outdoors”; and
22 **WHEREAS**, As the need to comply with social-distancing guidelines
23 may last for an indeterminate duration, it is important for the State
24 to maintain the confidence and cooperation of the public in the
25 Governor’s efforts to combat the pandemic by instituting measures
26 that balance the need to protect the public while also being sensible;
27 and
28 **WHEREAS**, The people of New Jersey are fully capable of making
29 intelligent, common-sense, and responsible choices to fight the
30 COVID-19 pandemic while also ensuring their physical, emotional,
31 and mental well-being during this difficult time; and
32 **WHEREAS**, Access to fresh air and exercise, especially during this
33 stressful time, is paramount, and according to several medical
34 studies, the outdoors, exercise, sunshine, and fresh air are important
35 factors in building a strong immune system; and
36 **WHEREAS**, A lack of Vitamin D, which the human body obtains by
37 synthesizing sunlight when it comes into contact with skin, has long
38 been associated with increased susceptibility to respiratory diseases;
39 and
40 **WHEREAS**, While New Jersey fights COVID-19, it cannot lose sight of
41 the mental, physical, and social health of the State’s residents,
42 which are well served by opportunities for outside recreational
43 activities; and;
44 **WHEREAS**, Numerous other states affected by the COVID-19
45 pandemic, including New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and
46 California, have not taken the drastic and arbitrary approach to
47 prohibit public access to State and county open space, and some
48 states have even waived entrance fees to parks; and

AR151 WEBBER, SCHARFENBERGER

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1 **WHEREAS**, There are less restrictive measures to ensure public safety
2 in New Jersey's in parks and forests than the complete closure of all
3 State parks and forests and county parks; and

4 **WHEREAS**, Members of the General Assembly stand ready to work
5 with the Governor to find better, more constructive, and more
6 balanced ways to manage our State parks and forests and county
7 parks so that our natural resources can be enjoyed responsibly
8 during this crisis; now, therefor,

9
10 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New
11 Jersey:

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13 1. This House urges Governor Murphy to immediately rescind
14 Executive Order No.118, which closed all State parks and forests
15 and county parks.

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17 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
18 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to
19 Governor Murphy, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection,
20 the Chief of the New Jersey State Park Police, and to every county
21 parks department or county park commission, as applicable.

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STATEMENT

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26 This resolution urges Governor Murphy to immediately rescind
27 Executive Order No. 118, issued on April 7, 2020, which closed all
28 State parks and forests and county parks.