**Supported:**

A-2963 from Assemblymen Gordon Johnson (D-Bergen), Raj Mukherji (D-Hudson), and Jamel Holley (D-Union), which expands the sales tax exemption for products related to hydrogen fuel. It passed the Assembly Commerce Committee unanimously.

A-2718 from Assemblymembers John McKeon (D-Essex), Nancy Pinkin (D-Middlesex), and Dan Benson (D-Mercer), which orders the creation of a public-private partnership to promote the development of a refueling infrastructure for most forms of alternate energy, including electric charging and hydrogen. The partnership would include private fuel station vendors; NJGCA believes any move to a new infrastructure for vehicle refueling should make use of the existing fueling infrastructure wherever possible. It passed the Assembly Environment Committee unanimously.

S-1922 from Senator Troy Singleton (D-Burlington) would give employers an income tax credit of up to $5,250 for financial assistance they give to their employees to help them pay for higher education programs like technical schools. It passed the Senate Higher Education Committee unanimously.

S-2345 from Senators Tony Bucco (R-Morris) and Troy Singleton (D-Burlington) would amend the Regulatory Flexibility Act to force the State to consider the interests of small businesses whenever they are creating, amending, or renewing existing regulations. It passed the Senate Economic Growth Committee unanimously.

**Opposed:**

A-1769 from Asw. Annette Quijano (D-Union) which, in its current form, would effectively outlaw any type of non-compete agreement. For example, you may want a new technician at your auto repair facility to sign an agreement in which they promise that if they ever leave your employ, either for a competitor shop or to open their own, they cannot simply call every one of your shop’s customers and try to poach them from your business. This bill would outlaw that type of agreement completely. It passed the Assembly Labor Committee 6-3, but we have already reached out to the sponsor and are hopeful that we will be able to amend the bill to make it more reasonable. One thing we need to know is how often do our members use any type of contract like this, and what kinds of behavior does it prevent the employee from doing. Please email Eric@njgca.org with details.

A-3871 from Asw. Valerie Vainieri Huttle (D-Bergen) and Asm. Joe Egan (D-Middlesex) would repeal some important reforms to the state’s unemployment insurance law that were passed in 2010. The bill would have removed the new, tougher definition of “misconduct”, allowing more people to earn unemployment benefits immediately and costing the UI Fund around $100-$150 million per year. Any surplus in the current UI Fund should be given back to those who paid into the program. The bill was pulled from consideration.

S-2528 from Senators Steve Sweeney (D-Gloucester), Pat Diegnan (D-Middlesex), and Teresa Ruiz (D-Essex) is the latest version of the bill to expand the state’s paid family leave program. Under current law, every employee is able to take up to six weeks of leave to care for a child, spouse, or parent and to be paid by the state a portion of their salary. If their employer has more than 50 employees, they are required to bring the employee back on when the leave ends, in the same position and with the same pay. This bill would lower that exemption level to employers with 30 employees (this is still an improvement over the previous version of this bill, which lowered it to 20). It would also expand the definition of “family member” to parents-in-law, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, “any individual related by blood” and “any other individual whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship”. This basically means everyone, since how can you disprove an employee’s claim that any friend of theirs is not “the equivalent of a family relationship”? It also doubles the amount of time an employee can take leave to 12 weeks, and they would be paid 90% of their regular wage up to $1,200 a week. Supporters of this bill asked the legislators to completely remove the employer exemption. It passed the Senate Labor Committee 3-1-1 and now moves to the Senate Budget Committee. A similar version of this bill was passed last year and vetoed by Gov. Christie.

S-1073 from Senators Bob Smith (D-Middlesex) and Kip Bateman (R-Somerset) would allow local governments to create stormwater utilities. That may sound fairly uncontroversial, but the bill is better known as the “rain tax”. These stormwater utilities would get their funding by taxing all property covered by buildings or asphalt, then using the money to pay for upgrades to local stormwater infrastructure. The bill allows each local utility to set their own rate, so it is difficult to estimate what the cost would be, particularly to station owners with lots of pavement. It could range from $100 to several thousand dollars a year. It passed the Senate Environment Committee 4-1 and is now in the Senate Budget Committee.