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Businesses, advocates voice red-tape concerns

By [Shankar P.](#)

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Environmental concerns, patient safety and the high costs of running a business were some issues raised at the third hearing of the state's Red Tape Review Group in Edison on March 15.

Senate Majority Leader **Barbara Buono** (D-Edison), a member of the review group, chaired the hearing, which drew approximately 30 people, a dozen of whom provided testimonies.

The state Department of Environmental Protection was a frequent target in testimonies by some who cited delays in getting permits and approvals. Others called upon the DEP for strict enforcement of rules for storm water and wetlands.

Joseph Coyle, a real estate businessman and a board member of the Edison Chamber of Commerce, called for expeditious construction approvals, especially for retail space. He and others that testified stressed timely approvals are critical in the current economy, as banks are selective in lending decisions and shun uncertainties.

Jeff Tittel, executive director of the state chapter of the Sierra Club in Trenton, said the state DEP is unfairly blamed for errors made by applicants or their consultants. "Sixty-five percent of the delays in permits are because of misinformation or incomplete information from consultants, and the DEP gets a bad name," he said.

The review group's work has had a detrimental effect, said **Jeanne Otersen**, a spokeswoman for the Emerson-based Health Professionals & Allied Employees, an association of some 12,000 health care professionals in the state. Otersen said new rules require hospitals to invest in equipment and training that would minimize patient injuries. Because those rules have been frozen, patient safety is compromised, Otersen said.



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The Red Tape Review Group should unfreeze new rules requiring sprinklers in one- and two-family homes and town houses, said **David Kurasz**, executive director of

the New Jersey Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board in North Brunswick. The federal rules were to take effect in 2011, but New Jersey has until 2012 to allow time for training before implementation, he said. He said the state government needs to unfreeze the rules to allow sufficient time for the regulatory processes to be put in place.

The Edison Chamber of Commerce helped organize Monday's meeting, which was held at Middlesex County College. Gov. **Chris Christie** set up the Red Tape Review Group in January, imposing a 90-day freeze on 154 proposed rules; the group's report is expected on April 19.

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(New Jersey Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board)