



MEETING OF THE CANDIDATES...Attending the Union County League of Municipalities meeting on Saturday, left to right, were: Democratic State Assembly candidates J. Brooke Hern and Thomas C. Jardim, gubernatorial candidate Bob Franks, Westfield Mayor Gregory S. McDermott, Congressman Michael A. Ferguson, Assemblyman Tom Kean Jr. and Democratic Senate candidate Ellen Steinberg.

Franks, Senate, Assembly Candidates At League of Municipalities Meeting

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times
WESTFIELD — In a big election year, candidates don't want to pass up the opportunity to speak at gatherings.

Last Saturday, Republican gubernatorial candidate Bob Franks, along with State Senate and Assembly candidates in the 21st District, had the opportunity to speak to the Union County League of Municipalities during its Legislative Day, which was held in the Community Room of the Westfield Municipal Building.

Mr. Franks, a former seven-term Assemblyman, four-term Congressman and 2000 United States Senate candidate, spoke of the importance of increasing state aid to municipalities and of helping towns promote jitney services to address the problem of overcrowded train station parking lots. Mr. Franks said he also wants to increase mass transit opportunities in the state.

He said his campaign is in the process of developing "a sweeping proposal" to address high property taxes. He specifically noted the significance of the high cost of public education.

"Every dollar sent from Trenton to help pay for local education is a dollar that does not need to be raised on the back of local property taxpayers," Mr. Franks said.

Mr. Franks cited his efforts that led to a "state mandate, state pay" initiative.

Gubernatorial candidates, Republican Bret Schundler and Democrat James McGreevey, were invited to the League's Legislative Day but declined the invitation.

Assemblymen Tom Kean, Jr. (R-22nd) of Westfield and Eric Muñoz of Summit (21st) both spoke of their early days in the State Legislature. Both are running in the newly realigned 21st District.

Congressman Michael A. Ferguson (R-7th) noted his efforts, along with those of Congressman Patrick Kennedy (D-R.I.), to have the federal government fund 40 percent of the cost of special education as originally mandated in 1975. That's a

hike of \$2.5 billion over the course of six years. Over 65 members of the House of Representatives have signed on as co-sponsors.

Mr. Ferguson is also a co-sponsor of legislation that provides up to \$600 million to local school districts for school construction costs. He is also working on legislation to fund the Green Brook flood control project.

Assemblyman Kean said he is working on property tax relief and open space preservation with other legislators. Mr. Kean has sponsored legislation to help low-income families afford child safety seats.

District 21 Democratic Assembly candidate Thomas C. Jardim, a former two-term Westfield mayor, cited the funding of public schools as a key campaign issue, noting that property taxes may not be the most efficient way to fund education.

"We need to look at a safer way at funding our school system," he stated.

Traffic, especially in northern New Jersey, also needs to be addressed, he said. In addition, existing bridges and highways need to be fixed "before we start building \$300 million tunnels in Atlantic City," the former Westfield mayor commented.

In addition, he said the characters of downtowns in the district must be preserved "before we allow development to occur that is unwise and upsets the balance and the quality of life that we're used to in all of our towns."

District 21 Democratic candidate for Senate Ellen Steinberg of Chatham said she is running for office "to bring more accountability

back to our government."

The candidate said she will soon release a proposal to cap property taxes where increases would be deferred until the property is sold and transferred.

"I am still working on the details," she stated.

J. Brooke Hern, a resident of New Providence and Assembly candidate on the ticket with Ms. Steinberg and Mr. Jardim, noted his past experience as Director of Public Affairs in the New Jersey Department of Commerce and Economic Development; as a former Chief of Staff for a member of the General Assembly, and as a member of his town's environmental commission.

"All of these experiences have demonstrated to me that, too often in Trenton and elsewhere, our leaders take a one size fits all approach to public policy that most often doesn't work," he said.

Mr. Hern said he and his running mates "advocate real property tax reform that will reduce the need for schools to raise taxes and take the pressure off the leaders in the municipal government."

Among those attending the Legislative Day program were Westfield Mayor Gregory S. McDermott and Councilman Neil F. Sullivan, Fanwood Mayor Louis C. Jung, Cranford Mayor George J. Jorm, Winfield Park Mayor David P. Wright, New Providence Mayor Allen Morgan, Roselle Park Mayor Joseph DeLorio and Garwood Councilman and President of the Union County League of Municipalities, Paul DeVenuto.

It's Down to Final Days In Battle Between Franks and Schundler

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Next Tuesday, voters will formally select the two major party candidates for governor, with much attention focused on the Republican Primary battle between Bob Franks of Berkeley Heights, the former Seventh District Congressman and last year's United States Senate candidate, and Jersey City Mayor Bret Schundler.

Democratic Mayor James McGreevey of Woodbridge, who nearly unseated Governor Christine Todd Whitman in 1997, will be confirmed as his party's nominee.

Speaking on Tuesday to *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times of Scotch Plains-Fanwood* during the campaign trail in Paramus, in the midst of a statewide bus tour, Mr. Schundler, who was elected mayor in 1992, said he believes that next Tuesday, "the property tax issue will be foremost on voters' minds."

In addition, "education has been my passion throughout my time in government," he noted, and toward that end, he said he would like to reform schools in New Jersey.

"Sixty percent of students in urban districts drop out. The state's solution has been to throw more money at the problem instead of reforming," Mr. Schundler said. "I don't want to see taxes going up, but I do want to see kids get an education."

The Jersey City mayor also addressed the issue of suburban sprawl. He favors repealing the Mount Laurel low-income housing requirements, a move he said "will re-establish proper local zoning and planning powers" and "redirect private investment dollars back to the cities."

Mr. Schundler accused Mr. Franks

of running a negative campaign, saying that "all he has done is oppose my proposals and then he has attacked me. I've spent my time talking about issues and my experiences in Jersey City."

The mayor said the Franks Campaign "has said untrue things about me" regarding property taxes in Jersey City and the student scholarship program.

"If voters want higher taxes, failing schools, sprawl and Parkway tolls, then they can vote for Mr. Franks," Mr. Schundler stated. But he was confident about the Tuesday Primary. "I think we'll win, potentially by a decent margin. Bob Franks is becoming the mad b o m b -

thrower and people are

not buying that," the gubernatorial candidate remarked.

Mr. Franks has touted his experience both as a state legislator and a Congressman.

"I hope that people look at the fact that my experience in the State Legislature and representing the Seventh District in Congress for eight years has allowed people to see the level of leadership that I will bring to Trenton," he told *The Leader* and *The Times* this week in an interview from his campaign bus in Woodstown.

"I've worked my entire career to reduce the tax burden and to eliminate wasteful government spending," he added.

He said he voted against the 1990 tax increase backed by then-Governor Jim Florio and, in Congress, had "supported a trillion dollars-plus of tax relief for the people of our country."

Speaking of his former constituents in the Seventh District, Mr. Franks said they "know I'm responsive to their concerns to make government more efficient and cost-effective and to lower taxes."

With the national and state economy in some uncertain times, he said it was "important to have a leader with hands-on experience in meeting our important obligations without digging deeper into the pockets of the taxpayers."

Mr. Franks said he regretted the tone of the Primary campaign, saying it has "been quite harsh" and expressing his hope that the fall campaign "will be a more positive discussion."

He said he was proud of the campaign he ran last year against Jon Corzine for the United States Senate. "Despite intense disagreements, we kept the discussion at a dignified level," he stated.

Mr. Franks said he was upbeat about next Tuesday's vote. "With the support of people who have known me over the years," he commented, "I think that I will do extremely well."



Bret Schundler



Bob Franks

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We also wish to thank the many volunteers who supported the event!

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Please accept our apologies if we inadvertently excluded other volunteers.

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