

# The Westfield Leader

— Established 1890 —

The Official Newspaper of the Town of Westfield  
Legal Newspaper for Union County, New Jersey

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## Codey's Proposal to Move Primary For President Election Is Good Idea

In his State of the State Address on January 11, Acting Governor Richard Codey proposed several changes to New Jersey's election laws. The most significant is his proposal to move the state's Presidential Primary from June to earlier in the election cycle. This, Mr. Codey correctly predicts, would increase the state's role in choosing Presidential nominees.

We fully applaud this proposal. As currently constructed, the Democrat and Republican Presidential nominations are long over by the time New Jersey voters head to the polls the first Tuesday in June. We believe changing the Primary Election date every four years is more important than the inconvenience it may cause local, state and federal candidates who would have to amend their fundraising and campaign strategies.

Given the importance New Jersey serves in its proximity to New York City, not to mention its 5,009,140 registered voters as of the November 2 General Election, it is important that Garden State voters are given every opportunity to participate in this process from the beginning, when the Primary contests are still ongoing.

In addition to changing the Presidential Primary date, Acting Governor Codey wants to lengthen the time New Jerseyans have to register to vote. In 2004, Mr. Codey said, a half million new voters were registered in the state in advance of the Presidential Election. Currently, prospective voters must register 29 days prior to elections. We believe the new registration numbers are a good sign for our state. It is important that more people participate in the election process in New Jersey.

In addition, Acting Governor Codey wants to require that voting machines, namely the new electronic ones, produce a paper record of all vote counts to ensure that a backup record is available in the case of an error with the machine. He also wants to make absentee ballots available to all voters who request them, regardless of the reason for their requests. Currently, absentee ballots are only available to military personnel and civilians who are ill or are unavailable to cast their vote in person on the day of

the election. Other interesting proposals by the Acting Governor include increasing the minimum wage to \$7.15 per hour from the current level of \$5.05, the first increase in the minimum wage since 1992. Mr. Codey also wants to re-establish the office of the Public Advocate "to restore integrity and accountability in state government."

The minimum wage increase is important so as to reduce the number of working poor in our state. The Public Advocate, however, is another story. This cannot become another political office. Whoever serves in this role must be protected from the governor and the Legislature so he or she can make decisions on state spending that are in the best interest of all New Jerseyans, not just the politicians. One of the powers of the office will be to sue other agencies. While that may seem like a good idea on the surface in order to protect the rights of certain segments of the population, such as the elderly, aren't New Jersey taxpayers going to be paying for the legal costs and settlements associated with these claims?

We are interested to see what Acting Governor Codey can accomplish this year. After 30 years in the Legislature, he certainly has the experience to get the job done.

He may have only a few months to get things done as the battle is already underway for the election of a governor in November. The primary to select party candidates is looming even sooner and United States Senator Jon Corzine has already announced his intention to seek the job. It's being bandied about that Sen. Corzine will be unstoppable as the Democratic candidate due to his personal wealth being thrown into the campaign.

Maybe so, but let's vote on it in the June primary. We'd like to see Acting Governor Codey's record stacked up against Sen. Corzine's bucks. We are also leery about the fact that if Senator Corzine wins, he gets to name his replacement as U.S. Senator from New Jersey. Haven't we had enough of people being put into office without the vote of the public?



## 21st District News Serious Change Is Required in Trenton's Flawed System

Assemblyman Jon Bramnick, Westfield

The legislative process in Trenton should be improved. The standard operating procedure does not provide enough time for legislators to review new laws prior to the vote on the assembly floor.

Presently, lawmakers receive between 30 and 50 new laws, four days before the voting session. The laws can be extremely complicated and may have impact that is difficult to predict without significant study. The constituents that may be affected must be contacted and must have time to voice their support or opposition.

The constituent groups, that have a full-time Trenton lobbyist carefully watching the program, are the only groups with some chance of influencing the vote. The media has little chance to provide citizens with information concerning the new laws. Floor amendments are routinely made that dramatically af-

fect the laws without further committee study or citizen input. I would hope that the media would join with me and call for an immediate change that permits time for reflection and public debate prior to a vote.

I have asked that the rules be amended to provide sufficient time for review and debate. The majority party is sympathetic to my concerns but does not appear ready to embrace change. We also spend time honoring citizens before the voting session but there is never a time when the public can speak before the legislature.

It would truly be a real honor to our fellow citizens to permit a period when the public could address the legislature on issues of concern.

I hope the public and media will join me and demand serious change to a flawed system.



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions - only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly - good guess. If you get two - well-read individual. If you get three - word expert. If you get all four - You must have a lot of free time!

All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.

Answers to last week's arcane words.

1. Tid - Tender; soft
2. Thrum - The row of thread ends left on a loom when the web is cut off
3. Tercel - The male falcon
4. Sanssouci - Without cares or worries

### STREEL

1. Unctuous sentimentalism
2. To drag
3. To grind with the teeth
4. Snarl; growl

### CLEG

1. The great horsefly
2. Link together; join
3. To hatch; to litter
4. A nickname

### FERRAGINOUS

1. Having the color of iron rust; reddish brown
2. Of or containing iron
3. Mixed or jumbled
4. Pertaining to reeds or canes

### FAITOUR

1. A member of a Moslem sect who lives by begging
2. An impostor; a rogue
3. A thing already done, so that opposition or argument is useless
4. A fine grade of painted and glazed pottery or porcelain

## Reader Disheartened By Recent Departure Of Kids' Coordinator

I was most disconcerted to recently learn of the departure of Carol Wilson from the Westfield Library. The board of the library truly lost a treasure when they let this librarian go by refusing to reward her years of service and her knowledge with a salary commensurate with the value she adds to the library.

The Westfield Library is one of the town's biggest assets, and much of its success is certainly due to the skill, patience and professionalism of this children's department coordinator and assistant library director. Our family is disheartened by her absence.

Frances R. Ward  
Westfield

## Freeholder Proctor First Chairman To Mention JV Center

When new Union County Freeholder Chairman Rick Proctor gave his annual speech on January 3, it was the first time since 1997 that a freeholder chairperson mentioned the county's juvenile (JV) detention center.

When current Assemblywoman Linda Stender delivered her 1997 message, she cited "the need for a juvenile detention facility has never been disputed."

In 1998, newly sworn-in Freeholder Chester Holmes said, "a paramount issue facing the board is to find a new facility to house juvenile offenders." Yet at the same meeting, Chairman Daniel Sullivan never mentioned the JV center.

There was no mention of the JV center by 1999 Chairman Nicholas Scutari. Sites were being considered, with one being purchased for the facility. The center was at three times its intended capacity.

In 2000 with Freeholder Sullivan again serving as Chairman, he once again failed to mention the JV center in his speech. In November of 2000, plans for a JV Center were again scrapped despite the fact \$2 million had been spent on the project. Population at the facility was now double its intended capacity.

In 2001, Freeholder Chairman, Alexander Mirabella didn't mention the center in his address. Yet, during his tenure it was necessary to bond for repairs to the now deteriorating and much-overcrowded juvenile detention center.

In 2002, Freeholder Chairman Lewis Mingo did not mention the center. That same year, the state's Juvenile Justice Commission reported that in the case of Union County, the center is clearly one that needs to be upgraded and it is up there at the top of the list to be replaced.

During Mr. Mingo's tenure, consultants were hired to locate a site and again do other studies costing \$300,000 to build a new JV center. In 2003, under board chairwoman Deborah Scanlon, progress on the JV center was not mentioned in her speech. Five months later on Mother's Day, a 16-year old took his own life at the JV detention center. Factors in his death were later determined to be a lack of repairs and improper procedures that the county had already in previous years been warned about and seemingly ignored.

In 2004, Freeholder Chairman Angel Estrada made no mention of the detention center or the loss of a child.

Finally, after six years of annual messages, Freeholder Chairman Proctor's four-page address on January 3 contained six sentences with regard to the juvenile detention center. He stated, "We strive to provide opportunities that will keep our children out of trouble. Sadly there are still many who fall through this net." He went on to state that the county is aware of the importance to continue its efforts to build a new center, had purchased property and would break ground this spring with a ribbon cutting in 2006.

Apparently spurred on only by a young person's untimely demise while entrusted to their care and the ensuing state investigation into the circumstances, this board is almost reluctantly queering into its agenda to construct a safe facility for our most troubled and at-risk children. Issues like the juvenile detention center should take precedence over others when the new initiatives are announced each year.

Patricia Quattrocchi  
Garwood



## 21st District News Bill Is Required To Consider Spending at Tax Convention

Assemblyman Eric Munoz, Summit

Assembly Majority Leader Joseph Roberts testified recently in Trenton that he hopes the proposed property tax reform constitutional convention will look at New Jersey state and local government spending. I agree!

In fact, I have been calling for a convention that would explore important government spending issues because I believe that is the only way we can achieve real and lasting reform.

But is the Majority Leader's proposal sincere? I hope so. Mr. Roberts has the clout in Trenton to make his request happen. He is one of the most powerful and influential people in New Jersey state government, which is controlled by his Democrat Party.

Republicans have already introduced a bill that calls for a property tax constitutional convention that can consider government spending issues. If Mr. Roberts and the Democrats are sincere, all they need to do is post this Republican bill for a vote and we can have a convention that looks at the spending side of the equation.

The people of New Jersey are sophisticated enough to know the difference between "real" and "pretend" policies offered by elected officials. If the property tax convention does not look at New Jersey spending, we will have missed a rare opportunity to actually decrease state spending and taxes.

I hope Mr. Roberts means what he says.

## Letters to the Editor

### Trenton Is Not Going To Do Anything To Help Us With Out-of-Control Taxes

It was good to see the responses from Mr. Karl Grossman & B. Lyman commenting on the significant gap between private industry and the school board with regard to the ever-increasing cost of benefits and the failure of the school board to excise the sharing that industry experiences. It is rare for any of us working in the private sector to have our employer pay for our benefits in total. This does not appear to be the case in our school board and their employees.

Mr. Lyman mentioned that he had written Dr. Choye several times regarding this issue and received a "skirting manner" response. I had previously suggested, in this paper, that the school budgets, both present and one being worked on, be placed on the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school website. This way we could easily see where our money is going and perhaps make a recommendation for cost savings. This suggestion was apparently dismissed, with out even a word.

Perhaps the school board has forgotten who is working for whom! Our elected officials further compound this situation with the apparent lack of concern. Last month, I noticed that representatives from our school system, including Dr. Choye met with both Senator Thomas Kean, Jr. and Assemblyman Jon Bramnick to soften the impact of \$1701, which limited the school districts rapid rise of their budgets. It should be noted that both Senator Kean and Assemblyman Bramnick are not Scotch Plains-Fanwood elected officials.

Regardless, I contacted these two individuals, along with our representatives Senator Nicolas Scutari, Assemblyman Jerry Green and Assemblywoman Linda Stender. I received a nondescript response from Senator Scutari and a promise from Senator Kean to contact me. There has not been any further word from Senator Kean. One can only speculate that we are not high on their list of priorities.

Mr. Lyman has suggested that the school board act as company and made mention of the apparent handsome compensation that the Dr. Choye receives for her efforts. We can speculate that the number is multiples of the average salary of approximately \$40,000 per female resident and \$60,000 per male resident of Scotch Plains.

Perhaps they are behaving like a corporation, ones with the names of Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, etc. We taxpayers apparently do not have a right to know where our money is going or participate in any efforts to control the year after year outflow of our limited cash.

Prior to my sending this response there appeared a letter to the editor from former Scotch Plains resident and teacher Mr. David Bello stating that the problem is in Trenton and so is the solution. He mentioned that the culture is different from the corporate world to the education world. Mr. Bello, when I look in my wallet, I see only one diminishing amount of money.

Each day in the newspapers and on television we see events in other parts of the world that make us glad we live in the United States. It could be the desecration of a temple in Israel, a mosque in an Arab country or a church in Europe.

We detest these events and often have trouble understanding how one could do such a thing to another. Of course we sit back in the comfort of our home and say how could someone do these things and then go about our lives.

Recent events in Westfield should make us open our eyes. Vandals painting a Swastika on the forehead of Baby Jesus in the heart of town, and the theft of the statue of Baby Jesus from St. Helen's Church is no less disgusting than the bombing of a temple or mosque in the Middle East. Unfortunately, events like the ones in Westfield are not uncommon here in the United States.

The individuals responsible for what

Your words were nicely said but failed to lack specifics. Regardless, if one is in America or Europe, controlling expenditures is identical. A European company, in fact, employs me.

You stated that cutting their benefits would force the teachers away from the education profession. This begs the question as to their dedication to the profession. In addition, if you have not noticed finding a job is not the easiest thing in the world. Just in the last couple weeks, I know three people that lost their "not education" jobs. Many that I know that have lost their jobs in the last seven to eight years have experienced salary cuts, decreased (if any) benefits, no job security, and long commutes.

A number of these people, that after 25 years would be happy to make \$80K. You indicated that you were making \$48K in Scotch Plains. You failed to mention how long ago that was.

Looking at the facts, another written media reported on September 9, 2004 stated that the average salary rise in the last year for teachers was approximately 5 percent. This far out weighs most of us, assuming that we received any raises at all. When it comes to salary, the same other written media on October 3, 2004, reported that the average salary for teachers in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood school system was \$58,397. This was slightly more than they expected. These numbers are roughly confirmed by salary comparisons on the Internet.

As one can see from above, this is close to the same male average income of township residents. In fact, the discrepancy widens when one takes into consideration the massive cost of benefits.

Perhaps if you had stayed longer you would not have had to move.

Also, when looking at the apparent indifference of our elected officials, you're identifying the source in Trenton, is partially true but meaningless. They are not going to do anything to help us. We are on our own. Perhaps if you still lived in New Jersey you would know about the projected \$4 billion budget deficit that we are anticipating this year. There is little spare change to alleviate the problem. We must control our cash flow and not depend on some one else.

I started drafting this response on New Years Eve. I could not afford to do anything else that night with the sucking of cash out of my wallet for my real estate taxes, mostly due to the ever-increasing school board's need for funding. Mr. Bello please keep your eyes open for homes for us in Pennsylvania, it will not be long before we will be joining you by moving out of Scotch Plains.

This would make us all refugees from the out-of-control taxation. Perhaps this is what is desired and ironic considering the birth of this nation.

Al Muller  
Scotch Plains

## Swastika, Theft of Statue Should Open Eyes in Town

Each day in the newspapers and on television we see events in other parts of the world that make us glad we live in the United States. It could be the desecration of a temple in Israel, a mosque in an Arab country or a church in Europe.

We detest these events and often have trouble understanding how one could do such a thing to another. Of course we sit back in the comfort of our home and say how could someone do these things and then go about our lives.

Recent events in Westfield should make us open our eyes. Vandals painting a Swastika on the forehead of Baby Jesus in the heart of town, and the theft of the statue of Baby Jesus from St. Helen's Church is no less disgusting than the bombing of a temple or mosque in the Middle East. Unfortunately, events like the ones in Westfield are not uncommon here in the United States.

The individuals responsible for what

happened are probably proud of what they did and are bragging about it to their friends. I am sure they will save the articles from the paper for a long time. If they are caught, some smart lawyer will try to pass it off as a prank. Let's hope the courts don't see it that way.

Thomas Lienhard  
Westfield

### Correction

A letter written by Carol Ann Wilson and published in the letters section of the January 13 issue of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* mistakenly identified Mrs. Wilson as the assistant children's librarian and assistant library director.

She was actually the children's coordinator and assistant library director. We apologize for the error.

E-mail us at: editor@goleader.com

## Realtor Thanks All Who Supported Drive

On behalf of the Westfield Coldwell Banker Office and the families served by Family and Children's Services, we want to thank those of you who supported our annual Toys for Tots drive and distribution program.

Your generosity was truly amazing and helped to serve over a thousand children. These children are among the most disadvantaged and include those who have been abused, removed from their families, live in domestic shelters, experienced domestic violence, or live in the county's foster homes.

We trust that you have all enjoyed your own holidays a little more, knowing that you have given something very special to brighten the lives of children in the community. Again, we sincerely appreciate your most thoughtful generosity.

Kathy Shea  
Faith Maricic  
Margaret Maguire  
Coldwell Banker  
Westfield

## Letters to the Editor

### Fanwood Lions Thank Tree Sale Supporters

The Lions Club of Fanwood would like to thank all neighbors in Fanwood, Scotch Plains, Westfield, Plainfield and surrounding communities for their continued support of their Christmas Tree Sale.

The revenue from the sale goes to local charities and to local students applying for scholarship aid for college.

Through the generosity of our benefactors, and the hard work of the club members, this will be fulfilled.

The Lions are always looking for men and women to join their group to work to fulfill its mission of community service. If interested, please call Lion Phyllis Fischer at (908) 233-2581.

Phyllis Fischer,  
Past President  
Fanwood Lions Club

## Attack on One Faith Is Attack on Us All

We, leaders of the religious communities of Westfield, have learned that for the second time, a crèche owned by a Catholic organization has been vandalized, this time with the repugnant symbol of the swastika.

We wish to make clear that we consider this not to be a Catholic or Jewish concern, but a concern for all people of faith. An attack on one religious group is an attack on us all. We celebrate the diversity of Westfield and condemn in the strongest possible terms these recent acts.

While the identity of the perpetrators is not known, this is an opportunity for all Westfielders to speak to one another and their children about the virtues of love, tolerance and mutual respect.

Rabbi Doug Sagal,  
Father Andrew Hamersley,  
Reverend Fr. Peter Delvizio,  
Reverend Ed Carl,  
Reverend Dee Dee Turlington,  
Reverend Paul Kritsch,  
Father Joseph Masiello  
Westfield Clergy

