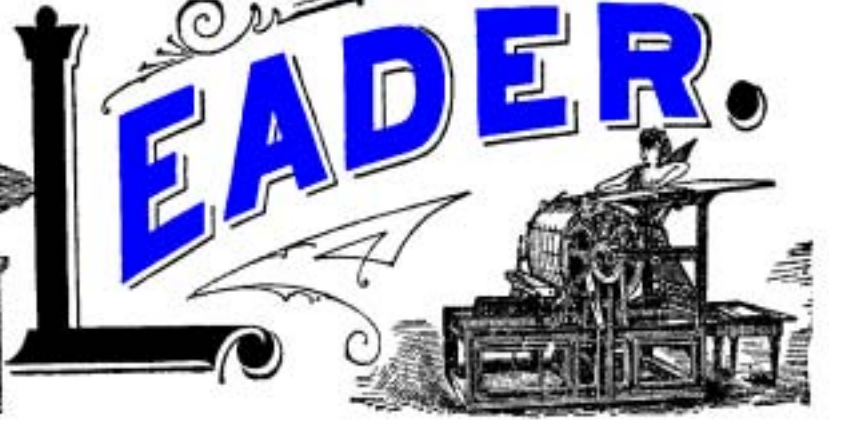




WESTFIELD WELCOMES PRESIDENT BUSH



Ad Populos, Non Abitus, Pervenimus

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SIXTY CENTS



Patrick Connor for The Westfield Leader



Patrick Connor for The Westfield Leader



Benjamin B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader

PRESIDENTIAL VISIT... President George W. Bush visits Westfield last Friday on his "60 Stops in 60 Days" tour to discuss and promote his plan to reform Social Security. The Town Hall-style meeting, held in the Armory, featured four panelists who discussed their views and opinions with the President. It drew a large crowd of supporters and demonstrators. Nine protesters, consisting of five juveniles and four adults, were arrested when the crowd refused law enforcements' attempts to quell disorderly behavior.

President Bush Holds Town Hall-Style Forum On Social Security Reform at Westfield Armory

By PAUL J. PEYTON
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader
WESTFIELD — President George W. Bush took his message of reforming the Social Security system to Westfield last week in a forum entitled, "Strengthening Social Security for the 21st Century." Before an audience of some 2,000 persons, Mr. Bush conducted a Town Hall-style meeting with a panel of individuals who favor changes to Social Security.

Westfield is part of the President's 60-city, 60-day nationwide tour, which will also include other members of his administration including Vice President Dick Cheney over the coming weeks. Last Friday's event was carried on local and national broadcast news networks, as well on the Sunday news talk show circuits.

The President was transported by a 25-car motorcade from Newark Liberty International Airport down the New Jersey Turnpike.

Westfield Mayor Greg McDermott met President Bush at the airport and accompanied him in the motorcade to Westfield.

Entering onto a stage setup inside the National Guard Armory at 10:53 a.m., President Bush was introduced by Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-7th) who said the last cited President to visit Westfield was President William Taft, in 1912.

"Today, almost 100 years later Westfield, is proud to once again host a President," Rep. Ferguson said.

President Bush joked, "A hundred years since a President has been here. I don't know what took the other ones so long to get here."

At the beginning of his discussion, President Bush called Social Security "an important safety net." The President continued, "But the safety net has got a hole in it, and we need to make sure we save that safety net for future generations of Americans to come."

The President said nothing would change for American citizens born before 1950 in how they receive their benefits.

"The problem isn't for the seniors; the problem is for the youngsters coming up. The question is, will you get

"pay-as-you-go" system, President Bush said in the 1950s there were 16 workers to support one retiree. That number today has been reduced to 3.3 workers for each retiree and in another decade it will be down two workers per retiree.

He said one of the myths of the system is that government is saving one's money for them.

"Your money is going into the system and it's getting spent; some of it on retirement benefits, other parts on just general government," the President explained. "It's a pay-as-you-go. It goes in and goes out."

The President said by 2018, the money going out in benefits would exceed the payroll taxes coming into the system. By 2028, he said, the Social Security deficit will reach \$200 billion and not long after, \$300 billion.

"That's why I say we have a problem," he said.

"Eventually, when you're spending at least \$200 billion above and beyond that which you've got in payroll taxes and increases every year, something drastic has to happen. If we act now, we can do so in a way that saves the system for younger workers," President Bush said.

To the news media and others who believe the President is exaggerating on the seriousness of the Social Security problem Mr. Bush commented,



OPPOSING VIEWPOINT...The AARP Social Security Rally of March 4 was held in Westfield's Town Hall Community Room prior to President Bush's speech at the Westfield Armory. About 200 attendees were present. Some traveled by bus from as far away as Trenton. Pictured above, Sy Larson, the NJ Prescription Drug Task Force Chairman for AARP, makes his point.

your check?" the President questioned.

Describing Social Security as the "third rail" of American politics, which politicians are warned not to touch, the President said he believes it is up to elected officials "to confront problems, and not pass them on to future Presidents, future Congresses, and future generations."

"I didn't run for office to dodge problems," President Bush said.

Describing Social Security as a

DWC Announces \$377K Operating Budget; Discusses Future Projects

By BETSEY BURGDOFF
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — At the Monday evening meeting of the Downtown Westfield Corporation (DWC), Executive Director Sherry Cronin announced that the 2005 Operating Budget of \$377,575 was "published and approved on first reading" by the Westfield Town Council. The budget will be formally adopted at the Tuesday, March 29, council meeting.

To date, \$12,655, approximately 3 percent of the budget has already been spent.

The \$3.1 million, six-year Capital Budget Plan that the DWC would like the council to approve was also discussed. The plan has monies earmarked for specific projects such as the Station Square North project, the square at the entrance from Central

Avenue to Lot 5, behind the Rialto Theatre. Five thousand dollars of the plan, if approved, has been designated for holiday refurbishing, including new holiday decorations and flags.

The DWC would also like to install new benches and planters in front of Bombay and rework the curb in front of the Rialto Theatre to make it more congruent to pedestrian safety.

A quote for \$10,000 was received to rework the square on the right of the entrance to Lot 5. Pedestrians tend to walk through the garden at the corner because it is a direct route to Central Avenue. One pay station is located in the area, along with a tree that is being considered for removal.

"The design committee had some concerns about taking the tree out," Mrs. Cronin said.

The DWC is in the process of negotiating with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to possibly reduce the expense of the project.

"We would pay for the materials and they (DPW) would pay for the labor," Mrs. Cronin said.

The DWC is also considering budgeting for an off-duty police officer to patrol Lot 5, primarily behind Starbucks. The officer would patrol the lot a few nights a week in the colder months and every night in the summer.

"It is the first step in curtailing any problems they (pedestrians) think they are going to face when they get there," DWC Chairman David Martone said.

Complaints from pedestrians stating that they feel threatened by the crowd of young people and frequent vandalism in the area is the catalyst behind the plan. The officer will not just stand in one spot.

"The officer can start at Starbucks and just walk the beat," Committee

"I'm going to keep telling people we've got a problem until it sinks in, because we've got one."

The President said he favors personal accounts. He said the money one would earn would be substantially more than they could earn

through the current system.

"I'm talking conservative. I'm not talking about lottery, taking it to the track. A conservative mix of stocks and bonds just like federal employees get in the Employee Thrift Savings Plan," he said.

The President described personal accounts as an "add-on" to Social Security.

"It doesn't replace the Social Security system," he said. He said anyone earning \$35,000 a year now who puts 4 percent aside each year through

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NINE ARRESTED ON DISORDERLY PERSONS CHARGES

Protestors Blast President On Social Security Plan

By ANNA GITHENS AND DAVID GIALANELLA
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader

WESTFIELD — While President George W. Bush was conducting an event at the Westfield Armory on his plan for private personal Social Security accounts, protestors held counter demonstrations at the Westfield Municipal Building and at the intersection of Clark Street and Ferris Place.

The protests led to nine arrests after police moved in to prevent the crowd from getting too close to the Armory.

Demonstrators from New Jersey Citizen Action (NJCA) and Americans United to Protect Social Security (AUPSS) arrived early in the morning in a bus organized by Congressman Frank Pallone (D-Monmouth) and Robert Menendez (D-Hudson).

As organizers began to setup for their rally against President Bush's Social Security plan, they proceeded to park their platform truck over the pedestrian crosswalk on Ferris Place across from the Westfield Y. At approximately 9 a.m., Westfield Police Chief Bernard Tracy urgently commanded the crew to move their truck as demonstrators defiantly sang, "We all live in a military state" to the tune of "Yellow Submarine."

Tow trucks arrived and policemen from all over the surrounding area were trying to keep order and cars parked properly. A group of people stood in front of the truck, refusing to move. After a brief conflict, someone dropped coins in the meter, the truck was moved 25 feet from the crosswalk and the protesting began.

The crowd stood chanting, "We want a new deal, not Bush's raw deal" as Phyllis Salowe-Kaye, NJCA Executive Director, stood on the platform to begin introductions. She expressed her disfavor at being put too far away from where the President was speaking.

"We were told that the President was coming to have a conversation with the people of Westfield," said Ms. Salowe-Kaye, as she facetiously held up her Disney flip-phone.

State Assemblywoman Linda Stender of Fanwood (D-22) announced to the crowd, "I believe that George Bush is lying to us about Social Security," amid cheers and screams of "Yes. We know it!" She accused the President of trying

to scare the American people as he did with the war in Iraq.

"George Bush has no real plan for us," she declared, "He is more concerned about tax cuts and profits for his wealthy friends than he is about the average American citizen."

Congressman Menendez began his speech by saying, "The President is coming to New Jersey, here to Westfield, like a traveling salesman. If he had a good product, we'd welcome him but he's selling snake oil to

the American people and we're not buying it."

He added that President Bush's plan to privatize Social Security would create enormous debt and severe benefit cuts. He attributed his plan to that of stock market playing and gambling.

"Mr. President, I think you think you're in Atlantic City, not Westfield, New Jersey," said Congressman Menendez, as supporters cheered and

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Cory Mermer for The Westfield Leader

PRESIDENTIAL CARAVAN...The 25-car motorcade makes its way from Newark Liberty International Airport to Westfield via the Turnpike. The President travels through local neighborhoods on his way to the Armory.



Cory Mermer for The Westfield Leader

EXERCISING THE FIRST AMENDMENT...Demonstrators and protesters opposing the President's stand on Social Security and the war in Iraq gather throughout Westfield to voice their opinion.

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