



COUNTY WELCOMES PRESIDENT BUSH

THE

SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD

TIMES

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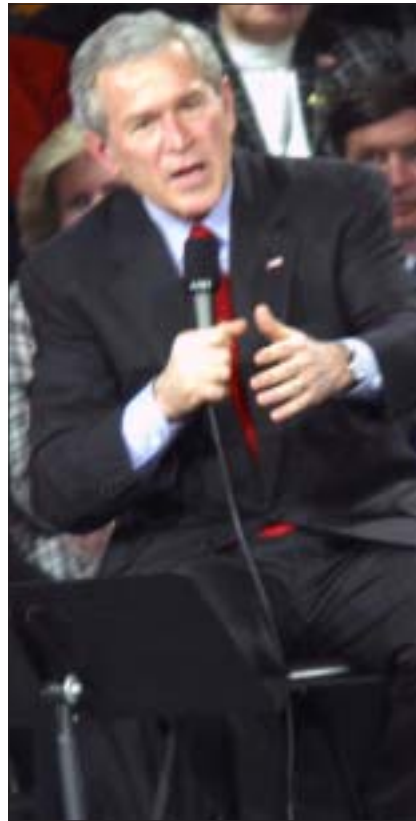
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SIXTY CENTS



Patrick Connor for The Times



Patrick Connor for The Times



Benjamin B. Corbin for The Times

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 Times

WESTFIELD — President George W. Bush took his message of reforming the Social Security system to Westfield last week. 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 as 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."

Upon beginning 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 your check?," the President questioned.

Describing Social Security as the "third rail" of American politics, which politicians are warned not to

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," the President said.

To the news media and others who believe the President is exaggerating on the seriousness of the Social Security problem Mr. Bush commented, "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 their working career would save \$250,000 by the time they retire. In addition, that amount would continue

to earn interest over the years. "It's been proven that when you hold money over a period of time in safe, conservative investments, it gets a better rate of return than the money you get in the Social Security system."

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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 Times

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 Congressmen Frank Pallone (D-Monmouth) and Robert Menendez (D-Hudson).

As organizers began to set up 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 wel-

come 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

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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.

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 "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.

Cooper Rd. Application Postponed Until May Zoning Board Meeting

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The continuation of the hearing on the application by a developer to build a single-family house on a portion of the island on Cooper Road in Scotch Plains will be put off until May at the earliest.

The township Zoning Board of Adjustment was set to resume hearing testimony March 2 on the application by Mark Lustbader of West Orange, who represents HUB Realty, the potential buyer of the property that is situated on the western side of the island. Board Chairman James Fawcett told *The Times* that the applicant apparently had not completed some revised drawings in time for last week's hearing.

An adjournment of the hearing until the board's Thursday, April 7, meeting was requested, but due to an al-

ready full agenda for that meeting, the Cooper Road hearing will resume at the Board's May 5 meeting.

The Zoning Board held its first hearing on the application in January, when it was revealed that the property "originally believed to be 39,338 square feet in area." It was determined to be smaller when rights-of-way along Cooper Road were excluded.

The neighborhood is an R-1 zone, meaning that lots are required to be at least 40,000 square feet in size.

At the January meeting, several witnesses testified for the applicant, including a professional planner who told the board that the site met all zoning criteria except size and that

the application was "well within the parameters" of the intent and purpose of local zoning ordinances. The property is presently owned by AT&T, which maintains a small building on the site that has been unused for the past few years and is no longer of use to the telephone company.

A professional engineer presented possible plans for the house and told the board there would be no additional storm water runoff resulting from development of the property, adding that much of the property will remain unchanged. A traffic expert said the proposed home would not negatively affect vehicular traffic in the neighborhood.

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Cory Mermer for The Times

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



Cory Mermer for The Times

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.