

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

tem," the President said. He emphasized that his plan would include guidelines and rules, due to the fact it would be considered a retirement account.

He said under the current system the government promises a "stipend" but not an asset that is owned by the

individual.

The President said his plan would be phased in slowly "so that we can better afford the transition cost to go from one system to another. But I'll tell you this: If we don't act, we're looking at about an \$11 trillion hole

for the American taxpayers that are coming up."

One of the panelists, John Bly of Suffolk County, Long Island, said he was more concerned about his children and grandchildren's Social Security benefits.

"Private accounts are going to pay more," he said.

His daughter, Lisa Engler of Westfield, said the prospect of Social Security going bankrupt is, "very frightening" to her. The mother of five children with her husband, Bill, she said, "there is no getting around" that the system will be in the red in the near future.

Brian Dougherty, 23, a sales manager with the Hilton in Short Hills said people his age have been ignored by news networks and talk shows on the issue of Social Security.

"But we have something to say, and we're concerned about the issue," Mr. Dougherty told the President.

President Bush called Social Security a "generational issue" which needs to be "modernized and reformed so you'll have the safety net when you retire."

At the conclusion of the event Rep. Steve Rothman of Bergen County said the President's proposal would add \$2 trillion of new federal debt. He said if Social Security is left alone "the system will pay 83 cents on the dollar" in 2042 rather than going broke as the President stated. He said any plan must be bi-partisan in nature if a compromise between Republicans and Democrats is to be

reached.

"The President's plan is so destructive to what so many people find dear," Rep. Rothman told reporters. He said the plan would result in a 40 percent cut in Social Security benefits and elimination of guaranteed benefits the system currently pays out.

As an alternative, the Congressman favors a universal 401k plan as well as a Thrift savings plan similar to what employees receive.

He called President Bush's plan "radical" and one that was not embraced by Presidents Ronald Reagan or George H. W. Bush.

"I think that's (President Bush's plan) the wrong idea and will destroy Social Security," Rep. Rothman said.

Congressman Ferguson said, "If we do nothing the system will go broke." He said Congress needs to "take a reasonable and rational" and bipartisan approach to the future of Social Security.

To the Democrats who have come out against the President's plan Rep. Ferguson commented, "Those are people that are thinking about the next election rather than the next generation."

"I am trying to stay focused on the next generation and stay off of politics," President Bush said.

Although Rep. Ferguson has not officially endorsed the President's plan, he said people should be allowed to have "more control over their own resources."

Rep. Ferguson said the President was "welcomed very warmly by Westfield and the whole area."



CROSSING THE LINE...A demonstrator went too far in protesting as judged by police during President Bush's visit to Westfield last Friday.

## Protestors Blast President On Social Security Plan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Menendez, as supporters cheered and chanted "Bush must go."

In addressing the crowd, Congressman Pallone stated, "The bottom line is that this is a bad bill."

He said that under Bush's new system, bad investments could hurt Social Security recipients who are not knowledgeable investors.

"The only guys that think that way are the Wall Street guys, Bush's buddies," he said.

Union County Labor Council President Ed Zarnock was particularly impassioned, refusing to use a microphone during his raucous speech. He ended with some advice for the President, shouting, "Keep your damn hands out of it, and get the hell out of Jersey."

NAACP Vice President James Harris and N.O.W. (National Organization of Women) President Suzannah Porter were among those who addressed the crowd. Their unified message was that the President was not welcome here in New Jersey, and should stop lying to the American people. "Back to the Ranch" the crowd yelled coarsely throughout the demonstrations.

NJCA Political Director Staci Berge said she is confident that the nation's Social Security will remain solvent until 2042 because there is a "surplus built in. We have 40 years to figure out how to fix this," she said.

When asked whether she would feel more secure with a proactive President that would seek out measures to protect the nation's Social Security, Ms. Berger responded, "Not if that's the kind of leader George Bush is going to be."

Ms. Berger also feels the Town Hall meetings are simply campaign meetings and referred to them as a "scam" and "fake."

With regard to the protestors, much of their distrust is still rooted in the weapons of mass destruction controversy from the Iraq war. While most of the protesting centered around accusations of lies and deception toward the Bush Administration, it was lacking in suggestive alternative plans to help the ailing Social Security system.

As the demonstration came to an end at approximately 9:45 a.m., the anti-Bush crowd marched down towards the Armory waving placards that read "Hands off My Social Security" and shouting to passersby. When they were stopped on Rahway Avenue by police barricades and a Union County S.W.A.T. team, many demonstrators broke off down First Street to head off police in an attempt to get near the rear of the Armory.

Police at the intersection of Edgar Street and Lynwood Place then blocked the crowd with barricades to prevent them from getting near the Armory. After a great deal of commotion, three policemen took control and arrested a young girl as the crowd shouted, "Let her go."

The chanting developed into shouting matches between President Bush supporters and opponents with one side yelling, "Save Social Security" and the other side countering, "That's what he's trying to do."

Not everyone in the crowd was upset about the President's proposal. "I'm really excited that he's here to convey to the people of Westfield

See Exclusive Video on President Bush's Visit: [www.goleader.com](http://www.goleader.com)

### SPFHS Alumni Mtg. Slated on March 15

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains Fanwood High School Alumni Association will host its next meeting on Tuesday, March 15, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 101 at the high school.

Kara Brass, President of Relay for Life, a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society, will be guest speaker.

### Cooper Rd.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In response to the application, several dozen neighbors formed a group, "Save The Island," to oppose the development. In December, a protest rally was held on the island and several dozen residents attended the zoning board's January meeting. It is expected that residents will have an opportunity to make comments and question the applicant when the hearing resumes.

what his plan to privatize Social Security is all about," said Marcus Swillingsley, 18, of Westfield.

Many Bush supporters came with American flags and signs that read, "We love President Bush." Others were saying that the protestors' criticism stems from blind hatred toward the Bush Administration.

The following adult citizens were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct and released pending court appearances: Emily Colvin, 18, of Westfield; Jonathan Spitz, 41, of Westfield; Gabrielle Hanlon, 21, of New Brunswick; and Thomas Silva, 40, of Paterson. In addition, four 16-year-olds from Westfield, two boys and two girls, were arrested along with a 15-year-old boy from Rahway.

The police released the five juveniles to their parents or guardians.

The arrests occurred on Rahway Avenue, Coddling Place, and Lynwood Lane.

Mr. Spitz, who did not resist arrest, told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* that the arrests occurred after the President's motorcade exited the Armory. Although the police treated him well including loosening the handcuffs, he believed they were "over zealous" and that his arrest was "silly."

"I really feel it (the day's event) could have been handled much, much better by the President, the protestors and the police," Mr. Spitz said, adding that he felt protestors should have been allowed to demonstrate on the Westfield High School field.

"I think that was what everyone was looking for," he said, to be viewed by the President and his motorcade. Mr. Spitz, who said he was on the sidewalk when he was arrested, believes charges will be dropped upon his appearance in Municipal Court on Wednesday, March 23.

"The policemen were very nervous," said Mary Giovinazzo of North Euclid Avenue. She explained that she thought police officers were overly forceful during arrests.

"Frankly, that's what escalates people," she said.

Clark resident John Weaver said about President Bush and his supporters, "They don't understand Social Security." He explained that his son suffers from mental illness, and that he believed President Bush's proposed bill would make things harder for his family. "They're all crooks," he said.

Westfield police officers were joined by Union County Police and officers from Fanwood, Scotch Plains, Garwood, Roselle Park, Springfield, Kenilworth, Clark, Berkeley Heights and other municipalities.

The AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) also held a rally at the Westfield Municipal Building, which began at 9:30 a.m.

The rally began when Bill Mayer, New Jersey State Communications Coordinator for the AARP, informed the assembly that one of the seniors asked him when they were going to see the President. His response was, "We weren't invited."

One speaker, Dave Mullen, a member of AARP's Speakers Bureau, informed the group, "We are not here for ourselves because our (those over 55) benefits are protected. We are here to protect our children and our grandchildren."

Mitchell Corbert, a securities attorney from Morristown, said that these days, brokers charge up to 3 percent to manage your account on an annual basis and that this will affect smaller accounts more than bigger accounts.

"Who does privatization really benefit?" Mr. Corbert asked, "The answer is: only the brokerage houses."

Among other speakers invited to address the group were Marilyn Askin, AARP New Jersey State President; Len Giovanni, AARP's New Jersey County Coordinator; Rutgers student, Jim Boyd, Jr., and recent Princeton Graduate, Natasha Morales.

Claire Edelman, an AARP speaker, lost her spouse tragically in 1964. When she became a widow with three young children, the steady flow of Social Security checks created a regular income for her family to depend on.

Sy Larson, AARP New Jersey Prescription Drug Task Force Chairman, the closing speaker of the day, declared, "The Senior Citizens of the state of New Jersey will oppose any kind of proposal which undermines the integrity of the Social Security system."

Paul J. Peyton contributed to this story.

## Modified Bulky Waste Collection OK'd in Twp.

By FRED ROSSI  
Specialty Writer for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — Three months after it began serious discussions on the matter, the Township Council on Tuesday evening approved an ordinance modifying the township's spring clean-up program by instituting a user fee-based system that will require residents to purchase an annual permit if they wish to dispose of large household items.

"We are not doing away with the program," Councilwoman Paulette Coronato said during Tuesday's public hearing at which no residents attended, perhaps due in part to the day's icy weather.

"We are just changing it," she said, reiterating the reasons for the change, including increased costs and tipping fees that have caused the township's annual expenses for the program to rise from \$184,000 in 2003 to more than \$300,000 last year.

Township officials have predicted that a fully-financed program could cost as much as \$500,000 in future years. The new structure will be financed only by those homeowners with a need to dispose of bulky household items instead of being funded by all property owners via property taxes.

Residents wishing to take part in the program, which occurs in June, will have to purchase a permit that will cost \$60 this year. Each permit will entitle the holder to dispose of up to 750 pounds of bulky waste, and township officials will encourage neighbors with less than the maximum weight of items to share the cost of the permits.

Mrs. Coronato said guidelines will be sent to residents containing approximate weights of commonly-disposed items, and added that further information will be posted on the township's website and on TV-34.

Bulky waste will not be allowed to be placed at curbs any earlier than the Wednesday prior to the following Monday start date of a designated collection period. Fines for violating the weight limit, the permit system or the time limit for setting out items will be subject to fines of \$100 for the first offense, with second offenses punishable by fines of \$200 to \$1,000 and, possibly, five days of community service.

Mrs. Coronato urged the public to be patient as the modified program is implemented.

"We'll guide you through the process," she said.

Mayor Martin Marks said the police department would be strongly encouraged to enforce the anti-illegal dumping portion of the ordinance.

Another factor in the program's increasing costs was the number of out-of-towners illegally dumping

their items at township curbs.

The council approved an ordinance authorizing an application to the state Department of Transportation (DOT) for funding for resurfacing projects on East Second Street and a portion of Plainfield Avenue.

The council approved an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of certain wildlife such as deer, squirrels and geese, except for birds via birdfeeders, on public and private property.

The ordinance is needed to comply with recently-issued stormwater management regulations, and it is also hoped the new rules would also lessen the tendency of deer to wander off both the Ashbrook and Watchung Reservations and onto nearby streets and residential properties, where homeowners sometimes place food for wildlife.

The council also approved an ordinance to set a four-ton truck weight limit on Hunter Avenue. There have been complaints about large commercial vehicles traveling on that street, specifically large trucks coming from Route 78 that want to get to Terrill Road and turn right onto Mountain Avenue after traveling over the Park Avenue bridge over Route 22. Then they are left with no option except to cut through one of the streets connecting Mountain Avenue with Front Street.

Another ordinance approved on Tuesday evening amends a township ordinance regulating the times of day in which noncommercial solicitation or canvassing can take place.

In the wake of a recent settlement agreement between the township and New Jersey Citizen Action, a nonprofit group, Scotch Plains agreed to revise portions of a township ordinance, which addresses "hawkers, peddlers and solicitors," in order to conform with rulings by the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals regarding noncommercial solicitation or canvassing.

The amendment will allow such solicitation between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. every day of the year.

Township Attorney Douglas Hansen said the new rules would apply not to individuals selling goods or items, but more to those making political-oriented solicitations. He pointed out that residents have the right to ask any callers to leave their property or to post "no solicitors" signs on their property.

At the start of the meeting, Mayor Marks issued a proclamation designating Wednesday, March 9, as Erica Lynne Scanlon Day in honor of Ms. Scanlon, Miss New Jersey for 2004-2005. After singing the national anthem to begin the meeting, Ms. Scanlon spoke briefly about her work with various organizations trying to find a cure for autism.

## School Board Learns Tentative Budget Plans

By MATTHEW MARINO  
Specialty Writer for The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education adopted a tentative budget for the 2005-2006 school year at last Thursday night's meeting. A public hearing will be held on Tuesday, March 29, with final adoption scheduled for that same evening barring any changes to the budget.

Board Business Manager Anthony Del Sordi presented the tentative budget to board members and reviewed the major aspects of the budget.

According to the data provided, the overall budget increase next year will total \$2,890,542, or 4.50 percent, to a grand total of \$67,084,688. This reflects a decrease from the first draft of the budget, which projected an increase of \$3,936,902, or 6.16 percent.

The reduction in dollars came as a result of scaled-back vacancies and cutbacks in administrative costs. For example, originally the board planned on twelve vacancies to be filled, but that number was reduced to seven. As a result, the total cost to fill the vacancies dropped from \$635,000.00 to \$390,000.00.

Federal and state aid will remain the same as it was this year, approximately \$890,626.

The budget calls for several major capital projects next year, the largest being the removal of asbestos floor tiles in the halls and classrooms at Evergreen Elementary School, and the roof replacement at Coles El-

ementary School. Those projects are expected to cost \$125,000 and \$150,000, respectively.

Tax levies in both Scotch Plains and Fanwood will both be affected by the budget. The percentage of allocation for Scotch Plains will fall from approximately 78.5 percent to 78.1 percent, totaling \$46,807,320. Fanwood, meanwhile, will recognize a slight increase in its percentage of allocation, rising from 21.4 percent to almost 22 percent, with total dollars of \$13,406,729.

Mr. Del Sordi explained that when making cuts, one must keep in mind the many factors that go into that cut. He noted that if the board wished to cut \$200,000 from the budget, this would result in 3-4 teachers being laid off while saving the Scotch Plains taxpayer only \$12 per year in taxes.

"We don't have many choices in terms of raising revenue," Mr. Del Sordi commented.

The cost per pupil will rise approximately seven dollars, from \$1,127 to \$1,134. The regional limit is \$1,494 per student, which indicates the board has managed to keep per-student costs within regional limits.

Board member Lance Porter praised Mr. Del Sordi and his department for "keeping the cuts as far away from the classroom as possible."

Likewise, board member Edward Saridaki commented that in putting together the budget, he observed "no personal agendas or politics involved."

## Teens Invited to Take Part In Tiyulim This Summer

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Central New Jersey in Scotch Plains has invited youngsters entering ninth or 10th grade in the fall to participate in Tiyulim, a travel camp unit of the JCC of Central New Jersey's Camp Yachad.

Beginning after the July 4 holiday weekend and ending in mid-July, Tiyulim offers teenagers six weeks of sightseeing, recreation and interactive experiences.

Activities will include grass skiing, wild water rafting, horseback riding, paint ball, mountain hiking, jet boats, summer stock theater, laser light shows, caverns, museums, bumper boats, and a high ropes course.

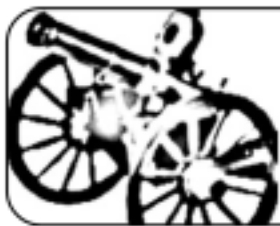
The schedule includes trips to

Philadelphia/Cape May, the Catskills, Montreal, Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard, Western Pennsylvania and the Blue Ridge Smokey Mountains.

The weekday travel allows participants to be home every weekend with their friends and families.

Registration is open, but space is limited. For more information, please call Robin Brous, Camping and Recreational Services Director, at (908) 889-8800, extension no. 203, or email [campyachad@jccnj.org](mailto:campyachad@jccnj.org).

Interested individuals also are invited to visit the website for the camp, [www.campyachad.bunk1.com](http://www.campyachad.bunk1.com) or the camp page at [www.jccnj.org](http://www.jccnj.org). The JCC's Wilf Jewish Community Campus is located at 1391 Martine Avenue.



### Scotch Plains Recreation Department Events Calendar

by Allison Halperin  
[ahalperin@scotchplainsnj.com](mailto:ahalperin@scotchplainsnj.com)  
(908) 322-8700 ext. 221

**Girls Softball League**, third through eighth grades. Season runs from April 16 to June 11. This basic instructional league is based on teaching skills and drills in a non-competitive format. Teams will be formed and practices and games will be played on township ball fields twice a week. Leagues will depend upon registration numbers. Parent volunteers are needed to coach. Umpires are also needed. The cost of the program is \$55 per person and the season runs from Saturday, April 16 through Saturday, June 11.

**Jazzercise**, New Session Begins Monday, March 28. This original exercise phenomenon dance course is taught by instructor Bernadette

Paige of Scotch Plains. The course is offered at the Scotch Hills Country Club four times a week. Another program will be offered this spring. The cost for the eight-week program is \$88 per person.

**Murder Mystery at Scotch Hills**, Friday, March 18. Doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$45 per person and includes a buffet dinner. Seats are limited so early ticket purchases are encouraged.

**Easter Egg Hunt** (infants to eight years old), Saturday, March 19, Village Green. This program, which begins at 10 a.m., will include the Easter Bunny and treats up all toddlers. The Junior Woman's Club will provide coffee and hot chocolate.



**SELECTED SINGERS...** Wardlaw-Hartridge School students selected to New Jersey Honor Choir Music teacher Brenda McCulley at The Wardlaw-Hartridge School has been notified that six of her students from the Edison independent school have been selected to the New Jersey All-State Elementary Honor Choir. "We are pleased to announce that from audition tapes they made, our students were chosen as members of the 120-voice select choir and will perform in concert on Saturday, May 7, at Monroe Township High School," said the Lower School and Middle School chorus teacher. Fifth grader Aneesa Sonawalla from Edison, top, fifth grader Billy Buchbinder of Scotch Plains, sixth grader Kelsey Hart of Edison, fifth grader Emily McGurk of Roselle Park, and sixth grader Ian English from Cranford are pictured on the steps of the new Sarkison Middle School building. Sixth grade student Ashley DaCosta of Fords will also participate in the statewide performance but was absent from the picture.

# "HOME. AUTO. LIFE. ME."

TALK TO A REAL, LIVE PERSON WHO'S IN THE SAME PHONE BOOK AS YOU.

NELSON ESPELAND, LUTCF  
SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ 07076  
(908) 233-6300



Allstate  
You're in good hands.

Allstate New Jersey Insurance Company, Bridgewater, New Jersey.  
Allstate Life Insurance Company, Home Office: Northbrook, Illinois.  
© 2005 Allstate Insurance Company