

## Childs to Head Economic Crime Bureau for County

ELIZABETH — Richard Childs, the county's acting public safety director, has been appointed as the chief of the newly-created Economic Crime/Inspection Bureau in the Sheriff's Department, Sheriff Ralph Froehlich announced Monday.

Mr. Childs, who had been serving as acting director of the Public Safety

### Assembly OKs Bill for Rules for Lt. Governor

TRENTON — The State Assembly last week approved legislation that would impose electoral and campaign finance requirements upon lieutenant governor candidates.

The new post that will become effective in January when the state swears-in its first lieutenant governor. Voters in 2005 approved a state constitutional amendment creating the new post.

As provided by the constitution, candidates for lieutenant governor will be selected by the gubernatorial candidates within 30 days following this Tuesday's Primary Election.

The governor will appoint the Lieutenant governor, without the advice and consent of the Senate, as either the head of a principal department or another executive or administrative state agency, except that the governor cannot appoint the lieutenant governor to serve as the attorney general.

Under the bill (A-3902), candidates for lieutenant governor and governor, who under the constitution are to seek election conjointly, would be treated as one candidate for the purposes of campaign contribution and expenditure limits and public financing.

The bill also requires that, when a gubernatorial candidate is accepting public financing and is required, therefore, to participate in two debates, the candidates for lieutenant governor will be required to participate in one debate.

Under the bill, a candidate for lieutenant governor must meet the same campaign financial disclosure requirements as a candidate for governor, except that the disclosure statement would be required to be filed on or before the 30th day following the day the candidate for lieutenant governor is selected by the gubernatorial candidate.

The bill also requires a candidate to disclose involvement with an issue advocacy committee, as gubernatorial candidates are required to do. The legislation also gives the Election Law Enforcement Commission the authority to issue any advisory opinions that relate to candidates for lieutenant governor, including temporary regulations that may be adopted on an emergency basis, as the commission deems necessary.

The bill was approved 45-29-3 and now heads to the Senate for more consideration.

Department since January 1 last year, will move into his new position on May 25, Sheriff Froehlich said.

Police Chief Daniel Vaniska will assume the title of acting public safety director.

Given the current economic crisis, the bureau was created by the Sheriff's Office to investigate and refer economic matters such as credit card fraud, ponzi schemes and identity theft to the Prosecutor's Office, and provide expert witness testimony for grand juries and the Superior Court. The office will also conduct public awareness programs on such matters to the public.

The office will also conduct internal investigation, develop and monitor internal audit programs, train appropriate personnel in the discipline of internal auditing, monitor internal controls, conduct the performance of fiscal analysis and diligence on prospective vendors and the periodic review of the financial profile of existing vendors, assist the county counsel in calculating economic damages in civil matters, and assist the county police internal affairs investigations as needed.

According to a county spokesman, there will be no additional cost for the creation of the office, as Mr. Childs will use existing resources and manpower. Mr. Childs currently earns \$113,470 and will retain this salary.

"As we have seen, the tough economic climate continues to breed complex fiscal criminality that requires a deeper level of investigation. I have strong confidence in [Richard] Childs, who will lead the way in investigating these matters, and raise awareness," Sheriff Ralph Froehlich said.

Childs said he looked forward to his new position.

"This is my area of specialization, and it is becoming increasingly important to be attentive to the protection and safeguarding of our assets," Mr. Childs said. "This bureau will also provide the county with the added benefit of investigating internal matters as well."

Mr. Childs is a former state Division of Criminal Justice detective and Newark police officer. Before serving the county as acting public safety director, Mr. Childs, 62, a Westfield resident, had served several years as a part-time civil litigation investigator in the county counsel's office, and has also assisted on accounting matters.

Mr. Childs has served as a self-employed certified public accountant, certified fraud examiner and state licensed private detective for the past 23 years.

A Newark native, he began his career by serving in the Newark Police Department in 1968.



HEALTH CARE REFORM...Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th, Union), left, speaks at a Washington, D.C. press conference on the Medical Rights Act sponsored by Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), center, and Charlie Dent (R-Pa.), right. Mr. Lance has joined on as a co-sponsor of the legislation.

## Court Rules Official Agency OPRA Forms Not Required

TRENTON — The Appellate Division of the New Jersey Superior Court last week reversed a lower court's decision when it ruled that people requesting access to government records under the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) are not required to obtain, fill out or submit government agencies' official request forms.

To be valid, the request need only be in writing, including letters, faxes and e-mails, and contain the required information. The ruling involved a case filed by Tina Renna, president of the Union County Watchdog Association, against the County of Union.

The decision reversed a September 6, 2007, decision by Union County Law Division Judge Kathryn Brock.

According to the lawsuit, on March 13, 2006, Ms. Renna sent an e-mail request to the county for an electronic copy of a 2005 resolution. She was denied the resolution on the grounds that the request was not made on county's official OPRA request form as per Government Records Council's (GRC) Advisory Opinion, which advised that requestors must use official forms in making OPRA requests.

The Appellate Division said the OPRA provision setting forth the requirements for a valid record request states, "[a] request for access to a government record shall be in writing and hand-delivered, mailed, transmitted electronically or otherwise conveyed to the appropriate custodian."

"We conclude that the form should be used, but no request for information should be rejected if such form is not used," according to the court ruling. "Nevertheless these legitimate policy concerns (of whether to require an OPRA form) must cede to the broader policy of governmental transparency and the right of citizens to have open and virtually unfettered access to government records."

In response to the court's ruling, Ms. Renna stated, "I'm glad that the courts have finally held that my 2006 e-mail record request was valid and shot down the stifling bureaucracy of having to obtain an official form."

Citizens should have quick and easy access to public records, they belong to us."

Ms. Renna's attorney Richard Gutman stated, "This decision will mean easier access to public records. That's what the Legislature intended when they wrote in OPRA's first sentence that public records should be 'readily accessible.'"

In defense of its position on county OPRA forms, county spokesman Sebastian Delia stated that, "the County of Union followed a directive from the state which actually simplified the procedure for residents seeking public records. The procedure worked well when used by thousands of people who received their requested public records."

"The fact is this procedure is timely and efficient, and the only one who ever complained about it was the one individual who filed yet another lawsuit that wasted taxpayers' money."

### Lance Co-Signs Bill to Med. Rights of Patients

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th, Union) announced he has co-sponsored health care reform legislation that would prevent the federal government from taking control over health care decisions doctors make for their patients.

The Medical Rights Act, which is co-authored by Republican Reps. Mark Kirk (Ill.) and Charlie Dent (Pa.), would guarantee that private health care cannot be denied by government restrictions. The legislation bans government interference into the doctor-patient relationship by protecting the rights of Americans to receive the care they need, when they need it.

Mr. Lance said he believes healthcare reform should be a bipartisan effort that strengthens and retains the current employer-based insurance system; lowers costs through legal reform and electronic medical records; provides refundable tax credits for individuals and families to help them afford and buy insurance, and allows businesses and the uninsured to band together and buy insurance in multi-state pools.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said Congress would consider a health care reform bill by July 31.



**JUNE 2009 EVENTS**  
at the Westfield Memorial Library  
Library Hours: Monday-Thursday 9:30 AM to 9:00 PM  
Friday and Saturday 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM Sunday 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM

**Closed Friday, June 12 for Staff Development Day**

**ADULT PROGRAMS**

6/5	1:30 pm	TGIF! Andrew Wyeth (TGIF! programs are movie/videos)
6/6	1:00 pm	Local authors present book talk & signing: "No Excuses"
6/8	7:00 pm	"Job Hunting through Social Networking" program
6/9	10:00 am	Computer class: Email Basics (intermediate level)
6/10	7:00 pm	The Frost Kings R&B/Swing Band
6/11	10:00 am	Computer class: Intro to the Internet (beginner level)
6/12	—	No TGIF! Library is closed for Staff Development Day
6/16	7:00 pm	"Memory Enhancement" Program
6/17	7:00 pm	The History of Chocolate (limited to the first 50 sign ups)
6/19	1:30 pm	TGIF! Annie Oakley
6/20	12:30 pm	Violin Concert w/Orchestra-S. Wolosonovich-Teacher
6/22	12:00 pm	Harpist Merynda Adams
6/22	7:00 pm	"How to be an Educated Wine Buyer" Program
6/23	10:00 am	Computer class: Intro to Microsoft Word (beginner level)
6/24	7:00 pm	Ariane Duarte from "Top Chef 5: NY" Bravo Television
6/26	1:30 pm	TGIF! Classic Movie: "Annie Get Your Gun"

**CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS**

6/15	—	Summer Reading Club and Little Listeners Club: registration begins (preschool-grade 6)
6/15	—	Online Summer Reading Program for Teens: registration begins (grades 6-12)
6/29	3:45 pm	Origami for Tweens (for ages 9 and up)
6/30	7:00 pm	Kidz Korner on TV-36 (ages 3 and up)

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## Meringolo Wants Fairer Formula for School Funding

By PAUL J. PEYTON  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

AREA — Developing a fairer approach to state funding for education is the central theme of Republican Bruce Meringolo's bid for state Assembly in the 21st Legislative District against Assemblyman Jon Bramnick of Westfield and newly sworn-in Nancy Munoz of Summit. A fourth candidate, Long Hill Mayor George Viturera, dropped out of the race earlier this month citing an undisclosed health issue.

A former Fanwood resident, now residing in Long Hill where he serves on the school board, Mr. Meringolo said school boards are limited in controlling school costs. He said funding for Abbott districts along with a lack of adequate special-education funding has caused school taxes to jump.

"A fair and efficient formula that distributes the money evenly is the best solution for the finances in the state and the home owner," he told *The Westfield Leader* during an interview May 21.

The Abbott v. Burke lawsuit, filed in the 1980s by the Election Law Center, charged that the state was discriminating against poorer districts by not funding them to the levels of wealthier suburban districts. There are now 31 Abbott districts in New Jersey, including Elizabeth and Plainfield in Union County.

"The Abbott decision and the way schools are funded in this state is just wrong. It's broken, it's wrong, and there are millions of dollars wasted every year," Mr. Meringolo said. "I think we should distribute the money evenly. I think we should expand the voucher program in the Abbott districts and use competition as the basis for improving education in Abbott, not dollars."

The candidate said he believes tax reform to reduce the overall amount raised locally for school taxes is a "harder battle" to win than changing how the state distributes some \$11 billion in state education aid.

"Without public outcry on tax reform, the Legislature is not going to do anything," he said. "But taking the current funding and reallocating it so that you have an even distribution will be possible with a new governor and will reduce taxes in every district in this state."

Breaking down education aid, the candidate said Camden, an Abbott district, receives \$19,000 in aid per pupil compared to \$750 per pupil in Westfield. Total per-pupil spending in Abbott districts is around \$20,000 to \$25,000. Long Hill per-pupil spending is \$11,000.

"So, competition through a voucher program...into those Abbott districts I feel is the best way to improve education," he said.

Mr. Meringolo said transportation and out-of-district placements are "just eating a larger and larger portion" of school budgets. He proposed having counties "designated as the delivery mechanism for special education."

He said he was disappointed that the state opted to close 18 special-education schools to save \$4 million. Some 560 children were moved back into the mainstream districts. "That's (special-education schools) only about \$7,100 per kid. Well guess what, we can't deliver services for \$7,100 per kid. So, the school is either cheating that kid, or they're not disclosing the real cost... But if they can deliver that cost, we should close every Abbott

school and put them into special-education schools," Mr. Meringolo said.

The candidate said the state must cut spending while cutting taxes "across the board" to grow the state's economy. "Eliminate the death tax, reduce business taxes so that people want to invest in New Jersey," Mr. Meringolo said.

Mr. Meringolo favors the elimination of the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). A licensed real estate broker, he said it is "ridiculous" that the state is "forcing municipalities to spend time and energy on affordable housing when the inventory of housing is currently rising."

"If we are set on spending public money for housing, why don't we just buy some of the inventory that's out there? Reduce the supply, and that will stabilize the market," he said.

He said he feels the next governor, which he believes will be a Republican, will appoint state Supreme Court judges "that will not legislate from the bench" but will "interpret" law.

Mr. Meringolo said he favors "smaller, limited government" and "more individual rights."

"We've got a growing problem. We've got all these pensions out there for people who are not working any longer," he said. "When times are good, it might be easy to pay out those things, but when times are bad, that's an awfully tough pill to swallow."

He called the state's property tax rebate program, which has been canceled except for seniors and the disabled, a "silly program."

"We borrow money so we can give it back to you around election time," Mr. Meringolo said. "How about you reduce my taxes so I don't have to give you the money in the first place?"

He said New Jersey's income tax is 9 percent compared to 3 percent in Pennsylvania and 6 percent in New York. He said lower taxes would attract people and businesses to the state.

Commenting on the selection of Nancy Munoz to fill her late husband's Assembly seat, Mr. Meringolo said, "Union County bosses picked who runs on the [Union County Regular Republican Organization] line" as opposed to Morris County, where ballot position is selected by draw, "so it is a much more open and fair process."

Polls are open Tuesday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. The legislative district spreads across parts of Union, Morris and Somerset counties, as well as Millburn in Essex County.

### PA Thanks Feds for Rescinding Auctions

AREA — The Port Authority (PA) of New York and New Jersey has applauded United States Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood's decision to cancel the previous administration's decision to auction off flight slots at New York-area airports to the highest bidder.

The PA argued that the slots "would raise ticket prices with no improvements in service."

"We share the secretary's concern about alleviating delays, which is why we have begun a broad-based National Alliance to Advance NextGen to replace 1950's era air-traffic technology with NextGen GPS technology, which will route planes much more efficiently," the FAA said.

For more information, visit panyj.gov/NextGen.

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	KING SET 2080 <del>\$1149</del> <b>\$1034</b>	KING SET 2590 <del>\$1399</del> <b>\$1259</b>	KING SET 3200 <del>\$1799</del> <b>\$1619</b>

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