



Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of *The Leader/Times*

Middlesex Prosecutor Won't Bring Charges Against Alvarez

A second prosecutor's office has declined to bring charges against a former Phil Murphy administration official Al Alvarez who was accused of sexual assault against Katie Brennan during the 2017 campaign, citing "a lack of credible evidence and corroboration that a crime was committed," according to a Gannett report.

The Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office's decision follows Hudson Prosecutor's decision not to prosecute Mr. Alvarez.

Ms. Brennan is chief of staff at the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency. Prior to his resignation, Mr. Alvarez was chief of staff of the New Jersey Schools Development Authority.

Ms. Brennan, who came forward late last year with a rape allegation against Mr. Alvarez, filed suit in the Superior Court of New Jersey, Mercer County, on January 7 against the State of New Jersey and Mr. Alvarez.

Guadagno Declines Request to Run for State Assembly Seat

Former Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno has been asked by Republicans to run for State Assembly in the 13th Legislative District which covers 16 Monmouth County towns, according to the Facebook group Monmouth Matters. She "has politely turned down the overtures, citing family issues and her commitment to her job as a partner as at the Connell Foley law firm," according to report. Assemblywoman Amy Handlin, a Republican, is not seeking reelection.

Lawmakers Warn of Impact \$15 Min. Wage Will Have on Budget

Senator Declan O'Scanlon and Assemblywoman DiMaso (both R-13th, Holmdel) warned fellow lawmakers that the increase in the state's minimum wage to \$15 an hour, approved by the Legislature and signed by Governor Phil Murphy, might have severe, unintended consequences.

"The impact this minimum wage legislation could have on the state budget, and further, the entire state economy, cannot be understated here. The Senate President confirmed [January 28] that the cost is anywhere from \$300 to \$600 million on the budget. How can we possibly talk about adding that kind of expense to

our budget when we already have a massive budget hole? It's irresponsible," Asm. O'Scanlon said.

"A large number of these residents are reliant on programs like Medicaid, Food Stamps, and utility assistance. If you rapidly increase someone's pay to \$10 an hour in the next year and assume there isn't any impact to their number of hours or job safety, something we know will happen due to the devastating impact on small businesses, then those workers won't be eligible for lower cost health benefits through the Medicaid expansion," Asw. DiMaso added.

"Any increase to their income is going to be eaten up by their net losses from Medicaid and other assistance programs. You can do the simple math here and realize a \$2-per-hour increase gives a full-time worker another \$300 a month before taxes. Maybe, they now need \$100 a month for health insurance, because they lost \$100 from food stamps, and \$50 from utility assistance. After taxes they are still going to be struggling to pay their bills and could possibly be worse off financially than they were before. You're going to wind up with even longer lines at food pantries if you aren't careful," Asm. O'Scanlon added.

Vitale Applauds Signing Of Minimum Wage Law

Senator Joe Vitale, a co-sponsor of the legislation (S-15/A-15) to increase the minimum wage, released a statement after Governor Phil Murphy signed the new law.

"This will put New Jersey on a steady path to a \$15 minimum wage, giving lower-wage workers a raise they need and deserve. Raising the minimum wage means raising the living wage, giving hard working people a greater ability to support themselves and their families and to improve their standard of living.

"Trying to pay a heating bill, fill a prescription or simply buy groceries can be an incredible challenge for those earning a low wage. No one who works full time should live in poverty and every worker deserves the right to build a better life," Sen. Vitale said. "Many minimum-wage workers are often employed in service jobs in the healthcare sector that are vital to the care of the most vulnerable and in jobs that serve the public. They deserve a fair wage that respects the dignity of their labor and the value of their work."



NEW UCC TRUSTEES...General Edward J. Chrystal and Daryl Palmieri were sworn in as new members of the Union County College Board of Trustees at the Trustees January 22 meeting. Pictured, from left to right, are: Union County College Board of Trustees Chairman Victor M. Richel, General Chrystal, Mr. Palmieri, and Union President Margaret M. McMenamin.

Daryl Palmieri, Gen. Chrystal Join UCC Bd. of Trustees

CRANFORD - At the January 22, meeting of the Union County College Board of Trustees, Daryl Palmieri and General Edward J. Chrystal, Jr., both of Scotch Plains, were sworn in as trustees. Union County College Board of Trustees Chairman Victor M. Richel welcomed Mr. Palmieri and General Chrystal to the meeting and initiated their swearing in.

Mr. Palmieri is the interim executive superintendent of Union County Schools. In this position, he works for the New Jersey Department of Education and oversees the Union County Office of Education. The county office's responsibilities include performing onsite evaluations of school districts every three years in accordance with the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC), reviewing and approving district budgets, and reviewing and approving district administrative contracts.

Mr. Palmieri has been a physical education teacher for 17 years and has served as head coach for the boys' basketball team at Westfield High School since 2011.

He holds a master's degree in educational administration and supervision from Kean University, and a Bachelor of Science degree from Manhattan College in physical education. At Manhattan College, he was a member of the men's basketball team and Phi Epsilon Kappa National Honors Fraternity for Physical Education.

General Chrystal is a Brigadier General for the New Jersey Army National Guard. As Brigadier General, he was responsible for the management of the response and support operations during Hurricanes Irma, Harvey, Sandy, Irene, Katrina, and Floyd. For his work, he received multiple accolades including the Bronze Star Service Medal and the Meritorious Service Award.

General Chrystal is employed by the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs as the superintendent for Veterans Haven North, a New Jersey state transitional facility for homeless veterans. He is responsible for more than 100 residents and a staff of counselors, kitchen and maintenance workers, and members of the administration. Previously, General Chrystal was a member of the New Jersey State Police and retired at the rank of lieutenant.

He holds a Master of Science in Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College, and from Seton Hall University, he holds a Master of Arts in education administration and a Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice.

"Both Superintendent Palmieri and General Chrystal are pillars of the community. Superintendent Palmieri's experience as an educator and a coach will be a valuable perspective. General Chrystal's service to our country and past leadership experience brings beneficial insight to the board, and we are happy to welcome them," Mr. Richel stated.

GOP Bill Protecting Child Abuse Victims OK'd

TRENTON - The Assembly has approved legislation increasing the penalties for failing to report child sexual abuse. Sponsored by Assemblywoman Nancy F. Munoz (R-21st, Summit), the bill (S-641/A-850) requires those who believe a child has been sexually abused to immediately report it to police.

The bill passed the Senate in June and now goes to Governor Phil Murphy for his consideration.

"When you have information about the abuse of a child, the only proper thing to do is turn that over to law enforcement," said Asw. Munoz. "It is everyone's responsibility to fight abuse and neglect. A child's life may depend on someone reporting it."

Research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control estimates that

approximately one in six boys and one in four girls are sexually abused before the age of 18.

The bill makes failure to report the abuse a fourth-degree crime with penalties up to 18 months in prison and a \$1,000 fine. Currently, the state Division of Youth and Family Services must be notified if abuse is suspected, and failure to do so if a disorderly person's offense.

Giblin to Be Speaker at Chamber Event

CRANFORD - The Cranford Area Chamber of Commerce will hold its second networking event for 2019 on Wednesday, February 13 at 8 a.m. at Atria Senior Living, 10 Jackson Drive in Cranford. The guest speaker will be Cranford's Mayor Patrick Giblin.

The Mayor's discussion will include an overview of 2019 projects and developments relating to Cranford.

The cost of this event is \$15 for members and \$20 for future members. Breakfast is included. Registration is required at cranfordareachamber.com or by calling the chamber office at (908) 272-6114.

Legislation Would Help Retirement Savings

TRENTON - A bill making it more affordable for New Jerseyans to save for retirement is being considered by the Legislature after the Assembly Financial Institutions Committee heard testimony this week. The measure (A-4899) exempts contributions to qualified retirement plans from the state income tax.

A poll by AARP found that 80 percent of New Jersey residents are concerned they can't save enough for retirement.

The state is one of three that doesn't allow people to exclude retirement contributions from taxes like the federal government. New Jersey is also ranked the second worst place to retire in the country, according to WalletHub, which considered affordability as a main factor.



DISPATCH SERVICES...Union County Freeholder Kimberly Palmieri-Mouled, a resident of Westfield, recently toured the Union County Public Safety Regional Dispatch Center with Public Safety Director Andrew Moran. The Regional Dispatch Center facility is located in the county's Ralph J. Froehlich Public Safety Building in Westfield. It opened in October 2012 and provides public safety dispatch services for 12 Union County municipalities, and 24 agencies including police, fire, EMS, and hospital-based paramedics. Also in the photo is Union County dispatcher, Carmen Malave (sitting).



Aftermath of Superstorm Sandy on October 29, 2012 in Westfield, NJ

How Safe are Your Trees?

Hazardous trees suffering from decay and weakness pose a danger to people and property. Every year homeowners experience losses from fallen, uprooting, split and decaying trees. Some of it can be prevented by realizing some simple guidelines and observations. A tree with a strong lean usually develops hairline cracks on the lower lee side. Once air and moisture find their way into the hardwood past the cambium layer, internal decay is usually the result. Superficial healing tissues are camouflaging the decay inside.

Open wounds, cavities and splits are often occupied by bees, squirrels, birds and even raccoons. First there is decay and all these aforementioned critters look for a hiding place to get away from bright lights, cold, draft and noise. They often raise their young in these hiding places. When these cavities are too deep and too extensive, it would be better to have these trees removed. Cavities near the soil often harbor termites and carpenter ants, and since moisture promotes decay, the presence of insects and fungus infections have certainly a detrimental effect to the structure of a tree. Painting of wounds with a tree wound dressing and installation of cement or fiberglass fillings have been questioned by Alex Shigo, a scientist from the University of New Hampshire. They have been abolished after extensive research has been done, on both methods. The painting of wounds has blocked oxygen from promoting cell growth in wounded areas, and the cement and fiberglass fillings in tree cavities have not stopped the decay enough to expect any internal healing resulting from it.

At the base of extremely weak trees, sometimes shoestring-like fungus strands develop; they are black in color. The botanical name is Armillaria mellea. The sight of such fungus strands indicates that a lot of damage has been done to the roots and the base of that tree. Since the damage is irreversible, trees infected by this fungus can become unstable due to the loss of roots. Flat headed mushrooms are also a sign indicating a weak root system.

V crotches are joints in trees which are considered genetic defects. They have no connecting tissues to keep a double or multiple trunk formation from splitting. Water is usually seeping into the separations of a V crotch and rot begins, which cannot be controlled and is the reason why many trees split. The splitting can happen without any provocation like wind, ice, old age, etc. Heavy-duty galvanized cables or steel rods can be installed to insure that these multi-trunk trees will not split and cause damage.

If you see distortion on the tree trunk within your reach, you can spot a hollow trunk by testing the density of wood by listening to the hammer strokes you test the trunk with. If it has a high pitched sound, the trunk seems to be fairly solid. If the strokes sound like you are hitting a cardboard box, you have good reason to doubt the stability of the base of the tree.

If you see vertical splits in a scar that is not covered by bark, it is not really alarming. If you see a horizontal crack in an identical tree wound, you have to be alarmed, because you have an internal fracture, which could be considered a hazardous condition.

For tree removals call the specialists:

SCHMIEDE TREE EXPERT CO.

908-233-TREE (908-233-8733) • www.schmiedetree.com

Did You Know?

Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12th, Trenton) invited Victorina Morales, a former housekeeper Trump National Golf Club Bedminster employee, as her guest for Tuesday's State-of-The-State address by President Donald Trump to Congress. Ms. Morales was an undocumented worker at the club for five years, according to published reports.

Funniest Lawyer in New Jersey



Jon Bramnick to open at Catch a Rising Star in Princeton Friday, February 15th 2019

Catch a Rising Star Comedy Club at the Hyatt Regency Princeton 102 Carnegie Center on US1 North Princeton, NJ 08540

Buy tickets online: www.catcharisingstar.com

