

Senator Torricelli Unveils Bill To Make Commemorative Coin For U.S.S. New Jersey Battleship

WASHINGTON, D.C. — United States Senator Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.) has introduced legislation that would authorize the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury to mint silver coins commemorating the U.S.S. New Jersey. The proceeds from the sale of the coins would be used to finance the transformation of the ship into an educational museum and historic center.

"After 56 years of service to our nation, this ship is ready to serve our country in a new and invaluable role," said Senator Torricelli. "The commemorative coin will help us raise the funds necessary to complete this project."

"Like all of the men and women from New Jersey who have served our country in the armed forces, the U.S.S. New Jersey is a battle tested, trusted leader in the military," said United States Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), who co-sponsored the bill.

"The funds raised by the commemorative coin we proposed will ensure that the battleship will have a permanent home in the state after which it was named," he added.

Senator Torricelli said that millions of dollars have already been raised through the purchase of Battleship License Plates, an annual tax check-off and contributions from New Jersey civic and

business organizations. He said the issuance of a U.S.S. New Jersey coin would add to these efforts and help commemorate a national treasure.

The U.S.S. New Jersey is believed to be the most decorated warship in the annals of the U.S. Navy, with 16 battle stars and 13 ribbons and medals. She is one of the four battleships of the 45,000 ton Iowa class, which are the largest, fastest and most powerful ships built in the United States. In addition to the size and physical characteristics, the U.S.S. New Jersey has an unmatched record of service.

With the easing of world tensions, the battleship was decommissioned in February of 1991 and now lays in reserve, ready, but destined never to sail again. In January 1995, the New Jersey was stricken by the Navy, meaning that she was available to become a museum.

For 24 years, the people of New Jersey have been organizing at the grass roots level to prepare for the eventual return of the ship. Senator Lautenberg joined Senator Torricelli in introducing the bill in the Senate and Congressman Rodney P. Freylinghuysen (R-11th) sponsored the bill in the House. The bill was referred to the Senate Banking Committee for consideration.



Sen. Torricelli

Freeholder Board Funds 1999 Grant Programs Through Bond Ordinance

By SONIA V. OWCHARIW
Specially Written for The Leader and The Times

ELIZABETH — The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders adopted a \$44.35 million bond ordinance July 22 that funds a number of programs, including the 1999 matching grant plan "Project Pocket Park" and the new grant project "Downtown Union County."

The "Downtown Union County" program is aimed at refurbishing business districts throughout the county.

Westfield, Scotch Plains and Fanwood will receive a combined \$1.5 million in grant funds through the "Project Pocket Park" and "Downtown Union County" grants, according to County Manager, Michael J. Lapolla.

Each town will receive \$100,000 through the 1999 "Project Pocket Park" program.

The park program allocations include \$80,000 to bring Westfield's Tamaques Park into compliance with American Disabilities Act (ADA). The remaining \$20,000 funds is for improvements to Clark Park adjacent to Roosevelt Intermediate School; for the creation of a park in memory of activist and entertainer Paul Robeson, a one-time town resident, on First Street on the site of Mr. Robeson's former home and for a playground barrier at Mindowaskin Park in downtown Westfield.

Scotch Plains will receive \$87,500 for improvements at Kramer Manor Park's ball fields and \$12,500 to bring Haven Park into compliance with ADA and for construction of a modular playground at the park.

Another \$100,000 will be distributed to Fanwood for expansion of the LaGrande Park recreation building.

Last month Freeholder Chairman Nicholas P. Scutari noted that to date, the two-year program, which involves matching municipal funds, has resulted in \$6.33 million in park upgrades around the county.

A total of \$1.2 million in "Downtown Union County" funds have been awarded for Westfield's Central Avenue corridor improvement project, for enhancements along Park Avenue in Scotch Plains' Park Avenue and for the streetscape along Martine Avenue in Fanwood.

The funds will help with the upkeep of each town's maintenance

and overall beautification efforts, according to Mr. LaPolla.

Also included in the overall bond ordinance, is \$549,000 for the purchase of additional equipment and machinery. These include a new communications and signal system consisting of a video equipment system for use at the John Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains, an automated optical-based image filing system equipment and various items for investigative security and forensic equipment.

The ordinance also funds \$16 million for the rehabilitation, renovation and construction of an addition to the Union County Police Headquarters and Forensic Laboratory complex on North Avenue in Westfield. The county will borrow \$15.2 million over 15 years for the project.

Another \$1.16 million is included for Scotch Plains' Union County Vocational-Technical Schools.

The funds will be used for the acquisition of computers and other instructional equipment and machinery for various educational programs. Funds will also be spent for interior improvements to the school, installation of new doors and locking systems, repaving and curbing of the Vo-Tech parking lot and roadway, connection of the interior walkways at the school, roof replacement at the Magnet High School for Science, Math and Technology and the installation of a campus-wide fiber optics network.

In other Freeholder business, two local Westfield residents received accolades from the board.

Union County Magnet High School Sophomore, Jennifer Phillips, was awarded for her debate performance and team's success as the Cross Examiner and Rebuttalist for the June 2nd debate sponsored by Manhattan Chase Bank and the New Jersey Department of Education.

Participating as a first-time debater, Jennifer cross-examined and made rebuttals on the topic of affirmative action. New to the debate arena, Union County Magnet High School took first place in the inexperienced category.

Next year, the school will return to the competition and vie for the experienced category.

Westfield resident Ron Albino, of Boy Scout Troop No. 72, was cited for the Eagle Scout project he completed in the Watchung Reservation.



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY...Union County Freeholder Mary P. Ruotolo, pictured at right, presents a resolution to Sandra Fleming, President of the Optimist Club of Westfield. Ms. Fleming accepted the resolution from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders, which acknowledged the club on its 10th anniversary. Ms. Fleming was joined by her son, Greg, 16, and daughter, Alena, 10.

Prosecutor's Move to Offices Goes Off Without a Hitch

ELIZABETH — The main office of the Union County Prosecutor's Office has completed the massive movement of more than 165 employees, criminal files and equipment into a renovated office at 32 Rahway Avenue, located across the street from both the administration building and the courthouse complex in Elizabeth.

Prosecutor Thomas V. Manahan said the undertaking, in the planning stages for more than a year, went off without a hitch as detectives, assistant prosecutors and clerical and support staff carried most of their own files, supplies and paperwork, while workers from the county's Division of Building Services moved large file cabinets and furniture to save taxpayers thousands of dollars.

The main operation of the prosecutor's office vacated space it had occupied since 1979, when the growing demands of the criminal justice system required a move from the courthouse tower building. It is now located primarily on the second, third and fourth floors of the Andrew K. Ruotolo Jr. Justice Complex named for the late prosecutor who died in 1995 at age 42.

In a letter to Union County Manager Michael J. Lapolla, Mr. Manahan thanked the many employees who made the transition easy by assisting with the planning and relocation effort.

"It could not have gone more smoothly, and I know Drew would be very proud of this building," Mr. Manahan said. "Once the freeholders gave approval to the overhaul of the building, we knew we would have a

beautiful and secure facility for our employees."

During the move, employees uncovered a number of used notebook binders that were no longer needed that wound up being collected and donated to needy schoolchildren. They were collected by the Community Service Committee of the Greater Union County Association of Realtors and will be distributed to young students from the St. Joseph's Homeless Program in Elizabeth, to the Plainfield Area Y Program for the Homeless, the Interfaith Council and the United Way of Union County.

The prosecutor also sent a letter to Mr. Lapolla thanking him for the financial approval by the county's Board of Chosen Freeholders that allowed the building to be refurbished and made secure for the prosecutor's office.

On the ground floor, along with the Office of Victim Witness Advocacy, the county is planning a day care center for children of county employees. The building will also house a one-stop information center as well as the meeting room of the Union County Grand Jury.

Executive Assistant Prosecutor Robert P. O'Leary said the Mr. Manahan, who moved his own personal items and personally cleaned up, was amused to watch the parade of attorneys, detectives and support staff wheeling their own chairs and files across the street.

The move officially began on July 9 and was completed with no disruption to the Grand Jury schedule or the criminal court calendar, he added.



DOWN ON THE FARM...The Arc of Union County's Community Support Program (CSP) recently visited Alstedes Farm in Chester. Charles Smith of Plainfield, left, feeds the llamas with Winston Buckridge. This trip was made possible through a donation from the Knights of Columbus, Westfield Council No. 1711. The CSP has also acquired new equipment and musical instruments as a result of the Knights' gift of \$900.

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