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Letters to the Editor

Governor's Daughter Calls Father's Decision A Sad Day for New Jersey

When I look back on my life, I can't remember a time when my father wasn't a politician. But, I sat beside him on Wednesday, April 25, as he announced not only that he would withdraw from the race for Governor, but that he would never seek elected office again. We are the closest family I know and we felt not only the pain of our father, but the irony in the best man being the candidate that is wrongly maligned, thus no longer giving him the desire to run for office.

I have been bombarded with phone calls from colleagues and friends on how my father was wronged by the press and the Schundler campaign. The reason it was so difficult to withdraw from the race was because we wholeheartedly believe in our father. He is truly the best governor that this state could have. He is a real person that listens to others when deciding how to carry forth a true vision for our state. He is a person like your neighbor that feels with his heart and compassion that burdens of this state and works endlessly to make a better life for all New Jerseyans. Now, my father has pledged once again to work hard to leave a great legacy of tax reduction, clean water, open space, better education and children's programs.

I also feel that my father has not been vindicated from the innuendoes and manipulations of the truth that have surfaced over the past few months.

People want to know and should know the truth. The truth here is that my father never breached any code of ethics. If he had he would have been faulted as Senate President. In fact, I find the maligning of his character to be quite unethical. I read in *The New York Times* that he was faulted for ethics; this is a blatant lie. Years ago, a Democrat tried to remove my father from the office of town attorney.

Let me be clear, the documents were politically motivated with no real truth behind them and that is why Scotch Plains never asked to resign from office. They decided the allegations were politically motivated and the facts in the article were inaccurate. I find it very unfair that most papers would print stories that were so biased and only told one side of the story. Some journalists are motivated more by the idea of a Pulitzer than reporting the real truth.

Upon returning home on April 25, I heard on the radio and have read in several papers that my father was pushed out by the party. That is just a lie. Most of the party stood behind my father and many even tried him out of withdrawing. In fact, even today, my father holds a lot of support within the party and even among many Democrats.

The real reason that we as a family decided to end this campaign was for nothing more than to seek peace that we have so wrongly been denied. My father and my mother will work for the rest of the year to accomplish amazing things and then we will move into a private life. Many people of this state will be and have been positively affected by the politics that my father has put into place for many years and we feel good about

that. While many people think about him as a hero in cutting taxes, I believe his biggest impact has been the lives of children.

This is a sad time for New Jersey. If you really knew my father you would love him the way his supporters do. He is the best father that I could have ever dreamed of having. He is a man I admire and aspire to be and one that I am so proud of. He conducted this campaign with honor and integrity. I wish you knew the selfless man that I do. One who never ask for anything for himself — always putting others first. I wish you knew the man he is and has been for this state. My sisters and I love our dad. He will always be my hero.

Tracy DiFrancesco
 Hoboken

Passage of State Family Leave Law Is Pro-Family, Business-Friendly

The passage of a Paid Family Leave Law in New Jersey would be the best present received by a working parent on Mother's Day. This bi-partisan legislation, S-1923/A-3049, introduced in both houses of the State Legislature, authorizes the payment of up to 12 weeks of unemployment insurance to a worker taking leave to care for their newborn or newly-adopted child.

A gift of Paid Family Leave gives a family time together when they need it most. Paid Family Leave also ensures the economic stability of families and enables workers to achieve a healthier balance between work and family life.

This pro-family, business-friendly initiative promotes family values by making leave to care for children attainable and affordable for all workers. Current state and federal laws permit workers to take unpaid time off to care for newborn or newly-adopted children. But, unfortunately, most workers cannot survive without their incomes for any length of time. Therefore, most people do not take time off during these precious moments in their families' lives.

Today, 36 countries, mainly industrialized ones, have adopted parental leave without harm to their economies. Paid Family Leave improves New Jersey's business climate by attracting and re-



ARTESIAN WELL

artesian well — A major discovery was made in a well in the Artois province of Northern France in 1100 AD. The well, now known as an artesian wells and named after its place of discovery, was first developed there. Artesian wells are those in which the water rises above the surface of the ground.

According to the *World Book Encyclopedia*, "artesian wells are found where an aquifer (water bearing layer of earth), that is surrounded by dense clay or rock, slopes downward. The water is trapped because it cannot pass through the clay or rock. Gravity creates pressure through the dense layer above the aquifer, and this in turn forces the water up into the drilled opening." Artesian wells have been known to shoot water 200 feet up into the air when first opened.

Hiring Westfield Rec. Director First Step In Filling Vacant, New Town Hall Positions

Not too long ago we expressed concern about staff changes and vacancies at the Westfield Municipal Building. This week we felt it was only fitting to provide an update.

Last week, Bruce Kaufman began his duties as Director of Recreation. Mr. Kaufman, who has headed the recreation departments in Livingston and Summit, takes over a department that has an ambitious agenda this year. Westfield, which has begun a new field maintenance and preservation program using both Public Works employees and the various sports organizations that utilize the parks, will begin construction on the \$1.1 million expansion of the Memorial Pool complex shortly after Labor Day. The \$1.8 million Memorial Park project is slated for 2002.

In the meantime, Mr. Kaufman will address his department's staffing needs. The department added the now-vacant position of program director last fall. In addition, the department has been without the services of an assistant director since Jim Gildea was promoted to Assistant Town Administrator.

Having the void (since Director Glenn Burrell left several months ago) now filled is an important step in advancing the major capital projects as well as continuation and enhancement of the department's popular programs. We would like to note the special

efforts made by Recreation Commission Chairman Keith S. Hertell and Mr. Gildea in ensuring that the department continued to function while the search for a new director went on.

We hope the town will be as studious in the hiring of a parking manager. This position, long-discussed but never advanced until this year, is a crucial step for Westfield in realizing that parking is one of the town's greatest assets. Residents have seen the rates for short-term meters double to 50 cents per hour while parking permits have also jumped to an average of \$45 per month as the town continues to move forward on plans for a \$12 million parking garage of 600 to 800 spaces on existing surface lots at Elm and Prospect Streets.

The town has anticipated a \$125,000 hike to \$700,000 in revenue generated from parking fees and permits in 2001.

We also hope the Town Council will soon take action to ensure that Westfield is competitive with surrounding towns in salaries and wages. The town has lost two Deputy Town Clerks over the past year due in part to a non-competitive wage scale for the position.

It is our hope that Westfield will look to fully staff town hall so that the town will not miss a beat in offering new and expanded services for residents.

Leader/Times Offers Congratulations To People of Elizabethtown Water Co.

We understand that yesterday, after working continuously day and night since last Tuesday in murky underground excavations, the people of Elizabethtown Water Company have completed repairs to a primary water pipeline that supplies over one million people in a multi-county region.

According to a spokeswoman for Elizabethtown, "This was the largest break the company has ever experienced. The crater caused by the break was large, and made even larger, by the excavation to expose and then repair the damage to the pipe. Repair crews worked around the clock to safely and carefully repair the main. Elizabethtown's customer service center was manned 24 hours a day and handled a peak of 10,500 calls on Tuesday."

In our view, the media performed more adeptly this

time, too, compared to during the water emergency created by flooding from Hurricane Floyd in September of 1999. This time, accurate and clear information reached the people. It was effective and responsible.

Understandably, the public, in general, has little understanding of the intricacies of how our infrastructure works. Because it normally works so well, the public needs to think little about it. The operation runs effectively, in large part, because of the "little guys" in the trenches who don't make the news and don't get the "big bucks."

To this newspaper, it seems like everyone from secretaries to accountants to the President of Elizabethtown Water Company pitched in to manage this emergency. We say, "Well done."

Ferguson, Mirabella and McDermott Have Had a Busy First 100 Days in Office

While many news organizations are concentrating on the first 100 days in office of President George W. Bush, we have decided to take a look at the first 100 days of local Congressman Michael A. Ferguson, Union County Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella and Westfield Mayor Gregory S. McDermott.

Congressman Ferguson has had a busy first 100 days. The freshman federal lawmaker has been holding monthly town hall meetings where anyone can come and ask questions of him.

He has issued legislation to fully fund special education as was promised in 1975 through the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Mr. Ferguson is set to unveil new comprehensive gun legislation within the next two weeks.

The Congressman voted in favor of President Bush's budget, which includes a 12 percent of over \$44 billion hike in education funding, and in support of legislation to eliminate the marriage penalty tax. He also supported increasing the per child federal tax credit from \$500 to \$1,000.

He supported legislation for a Social Security lock box so that surplus funds generated through the Medicare and Social Security entitlement programs are kept separate for these programs. Mr. Ferguson also co-sponsored a bill, HR-179, "Keep Our Promises to America's Military Retirees," which provides lifetime health benefits to veterans as promised but never fulfilled. Mr. Ferguson has also urged the Bush Administration to rethink its environmental policies as they relate to clean air, carbon emissions, toxic chemicals from power plants and cleanup of the Hudson River.

More recently, he asked Mr. Bush to continue former President Bill Clinton's road construction and commercial logging ban on nearly 60 million acres of public lands.

In January, Freeholder Mirabella announced a series of initiatives for his year as Chairman of the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders. These include "New Millennium ... New Jobs," a program aimed at connecting employers with persons seeking

jobs and "Access 2001," geared toward connecting municipal and school libraries through creation of Web-links aimed at developing methods for libraries to help young people with their homework.

Mr. Mirabella also unveiled a program to expand the Office of Veterans Affairs and create a new Office of Volunteer Services.

On the positive side, the county is moving forward with its Open Space and Historic Trust Fund, where land acquisitions and recreation land improvements are planned. Plans for a new county police headquarters in Westfield and a county engineering building in Scotch Plains are also moving forward.

The Chairman and board members endured some criticism from corrections officers from the closing of the old county jail. We applaud Mr. Mirabella's decision to hold four of the board's meetings this year "on the road" outside of the county's offices in Elizabeth. This enables people who may not regularly attend meetings to be able to come out and learn more about county projects.

In Westfield, Mayor McDermott has been working quietly behind the scenes on a number of issues. The Building and Town Property Committee is developing new zoning restrictions to ensure that new homes conform with the neighborhoods in which they are constructed.

The Laws and Rules Committee is reviewing the parking ordinance along with a new "in lieu" provision that will assess the downtown community for parking deficiencies. This additional money will support parking management plans. The Department of Public Works and users of town fields are working together in unison to preserve and maintain the ball fields under a new program initiated this year.

On the parking front, the town is moving forward on starting a valet service at the South Avenue train station lot, a plan that will add another 125 spots for commuters; on a jitney service that will eventually bus over 200 persons to and from the train station; as well as educating the public and enforcing speed limits and other municipal traffic and parking laws.

Hovnanian Used 'Almighty Dollar' To Ram Through Development Plan

I wish to express my disappointment and surprise that the Scotch Plains Planning Board unanimously approved developer K. Hovnanian's application to construct 100 townhouses on 7.7 acres of land north of Route 22.

Despite the fact that this application had been denied twice previously due to very legitimate concerns about flooding and safety, Hovnanian did not give up. Instead it used its financial muscle to bring suit against the Township, claiming the Planning Board's earlier decisions were "capricious, arbitrary, and unreasonable."

Capricious, arbitrary and unreasonable? Concern about the wisdom of building 100 townhouses on the side of a hill, just above an area that already floods during heavy rain is capricious, arbitrary and unreasonable? No it is not, and no it was not the past two times when the application was denied. But this time around, Hovnanian managed to put, as Mayor Martin Marks commented after the Planning Board's vote, "a \$10 million gun at my head," along with a hare-brained scheme about a moving Jersey barrier on Route 22, and lo and behold, we now have an oversized development in a location that certainly does not need it. Corporate greed rules the day here, and the public was damned.

So once again, we lose another piece of virtually undeveloped, environmen-

tally sensitive land. Why was no consideration given to purchase this property using funds from the Union County Open Space Preservation Program? This certainly would make sense, especially since this property directly abuts the Watchung Reservation. And what consideration has been given to the inevitable increased runoff that will spill out of "The Reserve" as Hovnanian has so ridiculously dubbed this complex?

If you think the flooding situation on Route 22 and Park Avenue is bad now, just wait. And of course, if you think rush hour traffic at Bonnie Burn and Diamond Hill Roads is bad now, just wait.

But I suppose these concerns might be construed by some to be capricious, arbitrary, and unreasonable. I construe them as using a little common sense.

Shame on K Hovnanian in its pursuit of the almighty dollar at the expense of the residents of Scotch Plains and the surrounding communities. Shame on our Planning Board for caving in to Hovnanian's big legal guns. And shame on all of us, as residents, for again permitting this kind of unchecked, illogical development to continue unabated, and unopposed. Surely, little by little, subdivision by subdivision, we are destroying the quality of life in our very own town.

Chris Walsh
 Scotch Plains

Environmental Group Launches Local Campaign In Westfield

Editor's Note: Westfield is among some five towns in the state selected by NJ PIRG as part of its campaign to protect the environment. The group will be focusing on a population of some 200,000 persons.

NJ PIRG, the New Jersey Public Interest Research Group, has launched a local grassroots campaign in Westfield to protect the environment and public health from threats to our core environ-

mental protections.

In his campaign, President George W. Bush provided environmentalists with reasons to be cautiously optimistic. He came out in support of cleaning power plants to reduce emissions of smog-forming nitrogen oxides, soot, carbon dioxide, and mercury. He also said he supported more funding for national parks.

Unfortunately, President Bush has recently decided to consider repealing new standards for arsenic in drinking water, delayed a policy, to preserve pristine wilderness areas in national forests, and reversed a policy requiring mining companies to pay clean-up costs for toxic waste sites they create of public lands.

He also abandoned his campaign promise to regulate emissions from power plants and undid a year's of work in the international fight against global warming by turning his back on the Kyoto Protocol. In a state like New Jersey, where pollution is making people sick, we need stronger, not weaker environmental protections.

We have a higher risk of getting cancer than nearly any other state in the country because of the air that we breathe. Unfortunately, President Bush so far has been listening to the oil, mining, timber and chemical industries as well as their allies in Congress who are eager to continue the attack on the environment.

NJ PIRG will be gaining public support in order to prevent the rollbacks on these key environmental and, in turn, public health issues.

Specifically, we will be asking residents of Westfield to help us influence the upcoming governor's race and provide a healthier environment for New Jerseyans through membership and donations of NJPIRG. NJPIRG is a non-profit public interest environmental and consumer advocacy organization. For more information or to get more involved in the campaign, please visit www.wildforests.com on the Internet or call (732) 214-8272.

Tory Gripping
 NJPIRG
 New Brunswick

