



FIRST IN THE STATE...Union County Prosecutor Thomas V. Manahan, pictured at podium, announces the county's new policy regarding motor vehicle stops and detentions. Also pictured, left to right, are: Freeholder Linda d. Stender, First Assistant Prosecutor James F. Keefe, Hillside Police Chief John Bryson and State Assemblyman Jerry Green.

Prosecutor and Police Chiefs Issue New Policy on Stopping Motorists

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — As of Sunday, July 1, some 2,000 Union County police officers will be under a new mandate which was developed following reports of racial profiling by some New Jersey State Police officers. Union County is the first county in the state to launch such a policy.

The new "Union County Law Enforcement Traffic Stops and Investigatory Detention Policy" applies to both motor vehicle stops and the detaining of persons for possible criminal activity.

It was formally announced at a Monday afternoon press conference by Union County Prosecutor Thomas V. Manahan, who emphasized that the policy "is not limited to racial profiling."

The policy was signed by Mr. Manahan, Union County's 21 municipal police chiefs, the Union County police chief, county sheriff, police academy director and the head of the Kean University police department.

"The policy is not limited, in any fashion, to race. It is broader than race. It covers gender, ethnicity, national origin and age," Mr. Manahan told reporters gathered at the John H. Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains, adding that his office and the Union County Police Chiefs Association felt it was important that all residents of the county or anyone traveling through or visiting the county "feel that they are going to receive the equal protection of the law."

When making motor vehicle stops in the future, officers will "not consider the race, national or ethnic origin or gender of individuals," except when detaining or apprehending a suspect in a crime who has been identified on such basis.

Officers may also make the stop on the basis of skin color or gender, among other criteria, when an individual's conduct "rises to the

level of a reasonable and articulable suspicion of potential or actual criminal activity."

Officers will only be able to request the search of a vehicle when they detect "a reasonable suspicion that the search would reveal evidence of a crime or offense," according to the new policy. If an individual withdraws his or her consent, the officers must end the search.

Prosecutors are available 24 hours a day to answer questions from officers regarding searches, seizures, custodial interrogations and other legal questions, officials said.

Mr. Manahan said reports on consent to search vehicles must include who asked for the search, the person who was asked to consent to the search, the results of the search and the reason for it.

All law enforcement agencies will be required to adopt procedures for written reports, logs, radio communications, radio recordings and/or video recordings. Collected data will be reviewed every 30 days by the local police agencies.

The Prosecutor will also receive quarterly reports from the head of each law enforcement agency analyzing the data collected.

Data will be scrutinized for such criteria as demographics, traffic patterns, areas of patrol and so-called crime "hot spots."

"If I believe further steps should be taken (on a particular report), it will be done," Mr. Manahan said.

Reports will be required to include the name and identification number of the officer who initiated the stop; date, time and location of the stop; reason for stop; license number and state of stopped vehicle; gender, race/ethnicity and age of the individual, if known; information on whether a search was conducted of the vehicle and the basis for and results of the search, and whether the driver was issued a summons or warning and/or the category of the violation and specific violations cited or warned.

Hillside Police Chief John Bryson, who headed a special committee of the Union County Police Chiefs Association, which adopted the policy last Thursday, said the document will be modified as changes are warranted.

"Public confidence in the criminal justice system can be eroded whenever it is believed that law enforcement officers are not performing their duties in an impartial, professional and unbiased manner," according to a statement explaining the new policy.

Mr. Manahan, who has served as Union County's highest law enforcement official since 1997, explained that law enforcement officers in the Union County Police and Sheriff's departments, as well as the municipal departments, will be trained on the new procedures within the next few months, as will new recruits at the Stamler Police Academy in Scotch Plains.

"We hope that this (improper traffic stops and detention of citizens) is not a problem in Union County. But if it is a problem in Union County, we will not run from it, we will face it," the Prosecutor added.

State Assemblyman Jerry Green (D-17th), an African-American from Plainfield, called the new policy "a giant step" in addressing "a very sensitive subject." He said it is important that all citizens learn that while no one is above the law, all persons will be treated equally by law enforcement officers and prosecutors.

Union County Freeholder Linda d. Stender of Fanwood added that, "it is a good day for Union County" when law enforcement agencies "can come together and confront racial profiling."

She said being the first county in the state to adopt such procedures, "says a lot about the values that we have" in Union County.

"When we protect one person, we protect all of our rights," Mrs. Stender added.

Muñoz Sworn in as State Assemblyman; Running With Bagger, Kean in District 21

TRENTON — Summit City Councilman Dr. Eric Muñoz was recently sworn into the New Jersey State Assembly to represent the 21st Legislative District.

He will fill out the unexpired term of Kevin O'Toole, who moved up to the Senate from the Assembly following the retirement of C. Louis Bassano.

Dr. Muñoz is seeking a full Assembly term on the Republican line that includes Senate candidate Richard H. Bagger, a four-term Assemblyman, and Assemblyman Tom Kean, Jr. of Westfield. The Town of Westfield was moved into the 21st District as of January on the state's new legislative map.

"I am honored by the opportunity to serve my friends and neighbors in the State Assembly," said Dr. Muñoz. "I am prepared to fight for the issues and concerns of the 21st District in Trenton."

Besides being a City Councilman, Assemblyman Muñoz is the Republican Municipal Chairman in Summit. He is currently President-elect of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-University Hospital staff in Newark, Professor of Surgery of the New Jersey Medi-

cal School and a trauma surgeon at University Hospital.

"My experience in medicine will be a tremendous asset to my constituents," said Dr. Muñoz. "I know the issues confronting both patients and doctors and will use my background to ensure New Jersey's health care system is the best in America."

Lamp Lighting Slated For Memorial Day

In Downtown Fanwood

FANWOOD — Mayor Louis C. Jung and the Borough Council, the Fanwood Downtown Revitalization Committee and the Fanwood Business and Professional Association have invited the public to attend "The Fanwood" lamp lighting ceremony on Memorial Day, Monday, May 28, at 12:30 p.m.

The ceremony will take place at the Fanwood Clock, located at the entrance to the Fanwood train station at South and Martine Avenues.

Besides the ceremonial lamp lighting, the program will also recognize the contributions of the many individuals who have made installation of the light fixtures possible.

Dr. Muñoz becomes the only current Hispanic Republican member of the State Assembly and one of just a handful of surgeons in the nation serving as a state legislator. He said he would fight to cut wasteful spending and help municipalities lower property taxes.

"I will bring a new voice to Trenton, a voice that echoes the concerns of all constituents," said Dr. Muñoz. "I will work to ensure that each one of us has a chance to achieve the American dream."

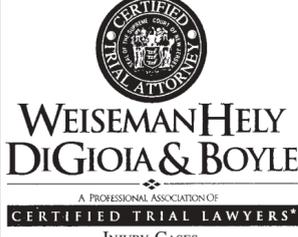
Dr. Muñoz was born of immigrant parents and raised in an apartment above a convenience store in Monmouth County.



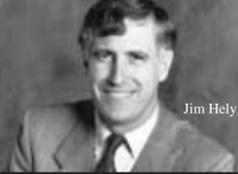
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