



HELPING CHILDREN... Underprivileged children are treated to a Christmas Eve breakfast by the Mountinside Rotary and Jimmy Giannakis, owner of Sheffield's Restaurant on Route 22 in Mountinside. Pictured above, from left to right, are: Rotary President Judith Burt, Thibault Tebra Moses and her daughter Regina.

Surcharge Proposed for All NJ Auto And Traffic Fines

TRENTON – Assemblyman Neil Cohen (D-Union) introduced legislation (A-3764) to establish a \$10 surcharge on all motor vehicle and traffic fines in New Jersey. According to the bill, funds from the fines would be used to finance the state's homeland security programs.

"With the increased costs of protecting our state from terrorist attack, we cannot live at the whim of the federal government to fund our homeland security programs," said Mr. Cohen. "New Jersey is as vulnerable as neighboring New York, yet the Bush administration has turned a blind eye to our security needs and chosen to place partisan politics over the safety of millions of New Jersey residents."

In a press release, it is stated that: In federal Fiscal Year 2005, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has cut by \$12.8 million grant money to Newark and Jersey City. However, it was announced last week that New York City would receive a \$114 million increase in federal homeland security funds. Likewise, New Jersey receives approximately \$6 per resi-

dent (\$48 million) in anti-terrorism funding while Wyoming collects \$30 per resident (\$15 million). The federal government's funding formula allocates 40 percent equally among all states, with distribution of the remaining 60 percent based on population.

"If the federal government chooses to protect cattle in Wyoming rather than our citizens and economic and transportation hubs in Newark and Jersey City, then New Jersey is left with no option other than to generate its own funding," said Mr. Cohen. "Until Washington establishes an equitable and stable method of distributing homeland security dollars, we must take care of ourselves."

Under the Cohen bill, all money collected from the surcharge would be deposited into a non-lapsing "New Jersey Homeland Security and State Preparedness Fund" to be allocated through the Department of Law and Public Safety. The surcharge would generate approximately \$30 million per year.

"New Jersey is near the top of the list in the number of residents lost in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the amount of high-profile targets – such as chemical and nuclear plants, and infrastructure – located within our borders," said Mr. Cohen. "We should not tolerate being at the bottom of the heap in terms of anti-terrorism funding, and we will protect ourselves even if President Bush continues to abandon our security needs. A surcharge on motor vehicle and traffic fines is a small price to pay for the safety of 8 million New Jerseyans," he said.

The bill was introduced January 24 and referred to the Assembly Homeland Security and State Preparedness Committee.



22nd District News Senate Panel Advances Contract Reform Bill

Senator Nicholas Scutari, Linden

The Senate State Government Committee approved a bill this week sponsored by Senators Ellen Karcher and Nicholas Scutari to reform state contracting procedures. The bill aims to establish accountability, improve ethics and save taxpayers millions of dollars annually.

"It's bad news for taxpayers when State contracts are awarded based on campaign contributions," said Senator Karcher, D-Monmouth and Mercer. "The bill reflects the lessons learned from the bungled E-ZPass and Parsons motor vehicles inspections contracts of the Whitman Administration."

Senator Scutari said the bill, S-2194, includes recommendations from last year's E-ZPass contract probe by the State Commission of Investigation called The Making of a Procurement Disaster. The committee vote to release the bill was unanimous.

"Basically, the bill addresses what the SCI found to be widespread mismanagement and manipulation of the contracting process by senior officials of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority and the Department of Transportation during the Whitman Administration," said Senator Scutari, D-Union, Middlesex and Somerset. "As a no-bid professional services contract, the E-ZPass award to MFS Technologies of Omaha, Neb., in March 1998 cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of wasted dollars in consultant spending, poor performance and flawed revenue projections - all with virtually no accountability, according to the SCI probe."

"It's incredible to think that no system was in place to say, 'Prove it,' when the E-ZPass hucksters said fines from toll cheats would help provide an electronic tolls system at no cost to the public," said Senator Karcher. "In fact, the projected revenues from toll cheats came in under \$20 million when the official projection was \$311 million, the SCI found."

"Under our bill, vendor evaluators will have to be proficient in the area of the contract, written records will have to be kept of all conversations by state contacts with would-be vendors and tight restrictions will be imposed on State agencies awarding no-bid contracts," Senator Scutari said.

"People have to trust the integrity of a system that spends more than \$28 billion a year of their money," Sena-

tor Karcher said. "Anything less is simply intolerable."

Other aspects of the Karcher-Scutari bill would: Permit a state agency to put notices of intent about an upcoming contract on the Internet to solicit information from potential bidders; Ban members of contract evaluation committees from having any family ties, personal interest or financial links to any potential vendors; Direct the Director of the Division of Purchase and Property to set regulations for contract oversight and for monitoring contract performance; Authorize the Purchase and Property Director to enter into bulk purchase agreements with other states or agencies for supplies deemed necessary for domestic preparedness and homeland security; Require all State employees who communicate with potential or actual bidders on contracts to keep written records of those contacts for at least three years; and Establish a clear line of authority for a State Contract Manager to oversee and monitor complaints and to settle disputes about vendor performance in all major state contracts.

Parents and Adm. Invited to Forums on Education Standards

AREA – Depending upon whom you ask, the state's grades range from above average to well below. New Jersey United for Higher School Standards (NJUHSS) believes that while the opinions of experts are valuable, more important is that the students, parents, teachers, administrators and community members understand the standards and how they are being implemented in our schools.

NJUHSS provides information and fosters communication on key issues such as the quality of our state's standards. Schools are invited to co-host a forum for discussion with NJUHSS. NJUHSS understands that involved communities with a solid knowledge of education issues create better outcomes for all students. The best way to encourage understanding is by fostering an open exchange of ideas – getting input from all sides of the debate.

For more information, please visit www.newjerseyunited.org or call (888) 694-9900.



Photo courtesy of CPT Monte C. Hibbert, 116th BCT Public Affairs
DUTY IN IRAQ... The commanders of the 216th Military Intelligence Company; B Company, 250th Signal Battalion; and Headquarters, Headquarters and Service Company, 1-148th Field Artillery Battalion stand at parade rest in front of their soldiers at the transfer of authority ceremony held at FOB Warrior in Iraq on January 13.

Editor's Note: Westfield Armory Update

116th BCT Units Assume Authority for Iraq Operations

By Capt. Monte Hibbert, 116th BCT Public Affairs Officer

Near KIRKUK, IRAQ — In a special ceremony conducted here on January 13, three more 116th Brigade Combat Team units have fully taken over the responsibilities of the units they are replacing in Iraq.

The New Jersey Army National Guard's B Company, 250th Signal Battalion, joined with two units from the Idaho Army National Guard — the 216th Military Intelligence Company and the headquarters company of 1-148th Field Artillery Battalion — in a joint transfer of authority (TOA) ceremony held at the Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warrior Army gymnasium.

"This ceremony that you witness today is a visible symbol of America's unwavering commitment to the people of Iraq," said Lt. Col. George Glaze, 2nd Brigade deputy commander and keynote speaker at the event. "We are determined to fight terror and bring stability to this nation."

Col. Glaze praised the unselfish service of B Company, 125th Signal Battalion; B Company, 125th Military Intelligence Battalion; and B Battery, 1-62nd Air Defense Artillery Battalion, the outgoing 2nd BCT units.

"For the last year, the soldiers of these separate companies have been

giving their all to the 3,200 soldiers of the Warrior Brigade Combat Team," he said.

The event was the second TOA ceremony to be conducted since the 116th BCT arrived in Iraq mid-December. The first ceremony occurred December 27, when Task Force 3-116 took full responsibility for operations formerly conducted by the 2nd BCT's Task Force 1-14th Infantry.

"The enemy won't know what hit them after the leaders and soldiers of this great unit strike," said Col. Glaze of the 116th BCT toward the end of his speech.

The entire process of the 116th BCT's assumption of authority from the units of the 25th Infantry Division's 2nd BCT is not expected to be completed until sometime in February, when a special brigade-level TOA ceremony is being planned.

State Sets Tests For School Bus Drivers

TRENTON – The New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC) is administering new knowledge and road tests to the state's 40,000 school bus drivers as mandated by federal act, required to be completed by October 1.

Details are available at www.njmvc.gov.

Save These Dates

Westfield Spring Fling on Sunday, April 17, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., rain or shine.

Westfield Car Shows on Wednesdays from 6 to 8:30 p.m., June 15, July 20 and August 17.

Westfield Farmers' Market on Saturdays, July through October from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Westfield Festival on Sunday, September 25, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., rain or shine.

For more information, contact the Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce at (908) 233-3021.

Do You Have To Go To Court?

JON M. BRAMNICK

Certified Civil Trial Attorney
Personal Injury Law

BRAMNICK, RODRIGUEZ
MITTERHOFF
GRABAS & WOODRUFF

1827 East Second Street
Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

908-322-7000

E mail: jonbramnick@jonbramnick.com

TAKE THE HOME TOWN ADVANTAGE!

Rated ★★★★★ by BauerFinancial, Inc.



Open a Blue Devil CD and We'll Add 1.00%

3.38% APY

Available Terms:
6 Months to 5 years

Minimum to open \$1,000

Makes a great investment for IRAs.

APY (Annual Percentage Yield) is variable and based upon the prior four-week average of the 91-day U.S. Treasury Bill discount rate plus 1.00%. Minimum interest rate is 1.50%. The current 91-day US Treasury Bill is 2.32%, resulting in an APY of 3.38%. The APY assumes interest will remain on deposit. A withdrawal will reduce your APY. This offer may be withdrawn without further notice. There is a substantial penalty for early withdrawal.

520 South Avenue
Westfield, NJ 07090
908.301.0800

44 Elm Street
Westfield, NJ 07090
908.518.9333

The Town Bank
You Will Notice the Difference...



www.townbank.com

PRESIDENTS DAY CLEARANCE MATTRESS FACTORY

Visit Our Website • www.mattressfac.com

Mattresses & Box Springs
Made on the Premises

• Open To The Public •



Tired of Your Mattress

- Hi-Risers
- Brass Beds
- Bunkie Boards
- Custom Sizes
- Electric Beds
- Folding Cots
- Split Box Springs
- Crib Mattresses
- Sofa Bed Mattresses
- California King Sizes

FUTONS

FREE • DELIVERY
• SET-UP
• REMOVAL

Now Manufacturing
Visco Foam Mattresses

\$25 OFF
With purchase of any premium bedding
Not valid with any other offer. Exp. 3/31/05

Garwood Factory Showroom
518 North Avenue, Garwood
(908) 789-0140 or Toll-free (877) MATT-FAC



MON-FRI 10 TO 6 • THURS 10 TO 8 • SUN 12 TO 5

It's Not Too Early to Think Spring.

If you want to debut a custom landscape when the weather turns warm again, then you need to start the planning process today.

Call Garden Associates. Our award-winning design team will help make your landscape dream a reality, and your yard the envy of the neighborhood.

Call David Chewey, CLA, ASLA, at 908-823-3330 for a complete on-site consultation and design fee options.



Garden Associates
Landscape Architecture, Inc.

Beauty by design.

3470 Route 22 West, • Somerville, NJ 08876 • (908) 823-3330 • www.gardenassoc.com