

## Sen. Scutari Sponsors Employer Car Insurance Bill

TRENTON – Legislation sponsored by Senator Nicholas Scutari (LD22-Linden) to require insurance companies to provide full uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage to employees under their employers' commercial policies was approved by the State Senate on Monday.

"Right now, you have a situation where two employees, riding in the same vehicle, covered by the same commercial policy, can be injured identically in the same accident and receive different levels of coverage," Mr. Scutari said. "The current system is arbitrary and misleading, leaving New Jersey's employers and employees exposed when they thought they were completely covered. My bill will guarantee that companies get the coverage they are paying for, and hardworking New Jerseyans get the protection they deserve."

The bill, S-1666, would stop insurance companies from using so-called

"step-down" clauses to lower coverage for individual employees to the limits specified in their personal policies, unless they are specifically named as an insured person under their company's commercial policy. On most commercial policies, only the company itself is named, meaning that the UM/UM coverage employers are paying premiums for is virtually inaccessible, Mr. Scutari said.

He said that the bill would respond to the state Supreme Court's ruling in *Pinto v. New Jersey Manufacturers Insurance Company* upholding the use of step-down clauses.

"Employers purchase uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage to make certain that their employees are protected on the road," he said. "By eliminating step-down clauses, we can make sure that they are paying good money for protection they can rely on."

The bill now heads to the Assembly for consideration.



FRIENDSHIP IS THE BEST GIFT...Charlotte O'Brien and Marci McKeivitt of Westfield share the load, carrying a tree through town last Saturday. The pals bought the tree from the Y Men's Tree Sale on Elm Street and planned to present it as a surprise to a mutual friend.

## SP Lions Club Takes Part In Annual Health Fair

SCOTCH PLAINS – The Scotch Plains Health Department conducted its 18th annual health fair on October 21 at the municipal building in Scotch Plains.

The Scotch Plains Lions Club participated in this event by arranging and paying for the Lions Eye Mobile to be in the municipal parking lot during the health fair and also hired an optometrist. Lions members helped patients register and read the distance eye chart. The optometrist then did the eye screening. More than 20 people took advantage of this service during the health fair.

There are more than 1.4 million members active in more than 40,000 Lions Clubs around the world. The

clubs are dedicated to meeting a variety of community needs, with serving the blind and visually impaired as the major initiative. For more information on the Scotch Plains Lions Club or to attend a meeting, call the club's president, Barbara Anilo, at (908) 322-4472.

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FOOD COLLECTION...Girl Scout Troop 993 of Holy Trinity Interparochial School in Westfield collected food for Eva's Kitchen in Paterson for its Thanksgiving meal. Pictured are Shannon Lenahan, Jennifer Puleo and Briana Femia. Eva's Kitchen serves a hot lunch 365 days a year. All who come are fed.



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## Freeholders Unveil Measure To Boost Directors' Wages

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

ELIZABETH – The Union County freeholder board last Thursday approved the introduction of an ordinance that will hike salaries of department heads between 2.75 and 4.88 percent. Non-union workers also received an average increase of 3.75 percent based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

If approved by the freeholders at tonight's meeting, County Manager George Devaney's salary would increase by \$6,059 to \$157,530. Deputy County Manager/Director of Administrative Services Elizabeth Genievich's new salary would be \$137,623, an increase of \$5,293. County Counsel Robert Barry's will earn \$141,619, up \$5,119.

Other salary raises are: Public Safety Director Harold Gibson, \$113,793, up \$4,000; Finance Director Larry Caroselli, \$126,377, an increase of \$4,375; Human Services Director Frank Guzzo, \$123,801, up \$4,378; and Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director Charles Sigmund, \$116,946, up \$3,130, and Director of Economic Development Al Faella, \$107,375, up \$5,000.

Only Director of Engineering and Public Works (DPW) Joseph Graziano, earning \$108,000, will not receive a raise. He joined the county over the summer from Berkeley Heights, where he was DPW director, following the retirement of Frank Dann, who was paid \$116,357. Directors' increases are retroactive to January 2006.

The freeholders, who will not increase their salaries this year, will be paid \$29,500 next year. The board chairman will make \$31,500 and the vice-chairman will earn \$30,500. The freeholders approved \$1.500 raises for themselves in 2005. Total salary increases for the nine directors combined are \$37,354, as compared to \$41,150 as awarded last year, not including benefits.

The board passed a resolution to set salary ranges for non-union employees based on the CPI for Northern New Jersey. According to Joseph Salemme, director of labor management relations, the county policy dates back to 1992 and impacts 600 employees. He said the county ordinance requires the annual adjustment of salaries to the CPI. Employees who fall below that average are given an increase to bring them to the CPI average.

"There are only a few people that fall below that (CPI)," Mr. Salemme said.

Another resolution approved by the board boosts non-union workers' wages by an average of 3.75 percent, although Mr. Salemme said some salaries will be increased up to 5 percent, while some workers might not receive any raise. He said the county manager makes the final determination on the raises.

"That's (5 percent) the most any-

one can get," Freeholder Dan Sullivan told reporters.

All increases are through workers' performance evaluations as conducted by supervisors. Mr. Salemme said that "traditionally," the freeholders have approved the raises, which are based on the average pay hikes given to unionized employees.

"It is a performance-based or merit-based system," he said.

In other business, per an inquiry by Tina Renna of Cranford, president of the Union County Watchdog Association, Mr. Barry said the freeholders agreed to settle a legal matter with corrections officer Michael Scarlata for \$6,000, the cost of legal fees in a disciplinary hearing.

The board approved a \$13,870 increase to Hoboken-based This Is It! Concept and Event Productions for the MusicFest concert held September 16 at Nomahegan Park. Mr. Devaney said the additional funds, bringing the contract's total cost to \$218,870, were due to additional production and stage setup work needed due to adverse weather conditions. The county also used the company for the Rhythm & Blues concert in Plainfield and the Kingdom Traveling Jubilee Tour for a cost of \$180,000.

During the public part of the meeting, Mrs. Renna said the board should include the county budget and the annual audit report on its website. She said the county spent \$5,000 to upgrade the website, but "you don't have any financial documents on there."

She cited a county prosecutor's Office legal opinion, which states the board needs to include specific litigation discussed in executive sessions within the minutes of those meetings. The opinion also said minutes need to be updated as litigation is settled.

"If you were interested in open government, these minutes would be on your website," Mrs. Renna said, noting that she paid \$49 to put last year's county audit on the Watchdog's Association's website.

"You make (it look like) you are doing us a favor," said Freeholder Chairman Al Mirabella.

Mrs. Renna responded, "You're (the freeholders) an open government disgrace."

Roselle Park resident Jacob Magiera, a former borough councilman and Korean War veteran, asked the board to promote the "Yellow Ribbon Campaign" of the Roselle Park Patriotic Society. He asked the board to promote the display of ribbons in homes and businesses in the county to remember veterans serving currently in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"This is a patriotic duty... Our soldiers have been gone for too long. We don't want them to be forgotten," said Roselle Park resident Mae Hokanson, who established the Roselle Park Patriotic Society.

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