

Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

Restrictions Eased On McCain-Feingold

A U.S. District Court (federal court) last week eased restrictions on corporations, unions and special interest organizations that run political advertising during the election season, the Associated Press reported last week. Groups may mention candidates by name in commercials to influence public policy but cannot try to sway an election. The ruling was in response to a challenge to the McCain-Feingold law designed to reduce the influence of big money in political campaigns.

State Sen. Set for Permanent Deanship

State Sen. Fred Madden (D-Washington Township), acting dean of Gloucester County College's Division of Public Safety and Security since May, is set to be named to the permanent appointment, which currently pays \$76,128, according to a *Courier-Post* report. Current dean Lloyd Dumont, who is on an extended sick leave, has requested and received a transfer to a faculty teaching position. Mr. Madden, a former acting superintendent of the state police, oversees the Gloucester County Police Academy, Fire Academy and the criminal justice program.

Madden, 53, makes \$49,000 per year as a state senator and collects a \$6,600 per month pension after retiring from the State Police. Mr. Madden, who was elected to the Senate in 2003, does not receive health or pension benefits from the college. The *Courier-Post* reported speculation that Sen. Madden will not seek a second term in the Senate and that Washington Township Mayor and state Assemblyman Paul Moriarty will run in his place. When named acting dean, he said he intended to seek reelection to the Senate.

State Prosecutors' Indictments Decline

The number of indictments by New Jersey state prosecutors is down from last year, according to *The Star-Ledger*. The state's Division of Law and Criminal Justice obtained 574 indictments as of December 21, compared to 621 for the same yearlong period in 2005. Attorney General Stuart Rabner, who replaced Zulima Farber in September after she resigned as the result of an ethics scandal, said the focus has shifted to large-scale criminal enterprises and public corruption, which net fewer prosecutions but would lead to a bigger impact in crime. Since 2001, the number of attor-

neys in the division has been reduced from 183 to 152; most prosecute insurance fraud cases. Investigative staff for criminal cases has dwindled from 376 to 342. Two former deputy attorney generals said the reduced staffing has impacted the lower number of indictments, *The Ledger* reported. Also, two investigators and three prosecutors were laid off this month in an effort to eliminate 38 jobs at the division.

Ferguson Opts Not To Seek U.S. Senate Seat

Nipolitics.com reported last week that Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-7th, New Providence) has decided not to seek the U.S. Senate seat held by Frank Lautenberg when he comes up for reelection in 2008. The 36-year-old Ferguson, who since 2001 has represented the Seventh District, which includes Westfield, Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Mountainside and Garwood, is said to be looking at running for a fifth term instead. The website said State Sen. Thomas Kean, Jr. (LD-21, Westfield), Assemblyman Bill Baroni (LD-14, Hamilton Township) and Assemblyman Michael Doherty (LD-23, Washington Township) are the most likely contenders for the GOP nomination. Mr. Lautenberg will be 84 at the end of his current term.

Ex-Sen. President Heads to Jail Jan. 15

Former State Senate President John Lynch will report to prison January 15. Lynch admitted he accepted payments in exchange for helping a firm obtain a permit from a state agency as well as to federal income tax evasion. U.S. District Court Judge Stanley Chesler sentenced Lynch to 39 months in prison.

Ex-School CEO Indicted for Bribery

Howard M. Schoor, 67, the founder of Manalapan-based Schoor DePalma Inc., was indicted December 14 by a federal grand jury in Newark on one count of bribing two municipal officials in Ocean Township on current and future contracts. Founded in 1968, Schoor DePalma, has been involved in numerous high-profile projects including the Jersey Gardens Mall in Elizabeth and the New Jersey Turnpike's Interchange 13A.

Mr. Schoor was charged with accepting \$16,000 in cash bribes between 1998 and 2001 from two Ocean Township officials, according to a single-count indictment returned in federal district court. He also reportedly courted them with use of his condo in Florida at the firm's expense.



HAPPY TO HELP...Needy families in Scotch Plains received holiday gifts this year due to very generous help from many area groups and residents. Pictured, from left to right, are: Marie Davis, front, Janet Kestner, Amy Davies and Lynn Payne sorting gifts for distribution for families at the Scotch Plains Municipal Building on Dec. 21.

SP Welfare Dept. Thanks 'Wish Tree' Participants

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Welfare Department extends its heartfelt thanks to the residents of Scotch Plains, Fanwood and Westfield for their overwhelming response and generosity to the department's Holiday "Wish Tree." Special thanks are extended to the mayors, councils, administrations, employees and librarians of Scotch Plains and Fanwood; the Scotch Plains-Fanwood YMCA, the Scotch Plains Post office; Joan Donovan, Kids Care at Evergreen School, Kids Care at McGinn School, the churches, temples, organizations, merchants, scout troops and school clubs.

The department gives special thanks to the Goddard School in Branchburg for selecting Scotch Plain's program as this year's project. Jenn Harper for coordinating and the parents of Goddard students for their overwhelming generosity.

The department thanks the "elves" - Debbie and Bob Knoller, Lynn Payne, Amy Davies, Ingrid Bordman, Janet Kestner, Joanie Donovan and

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SP-F BOE Applauds Band; Alters School Testing

By SAMANTHA R. HERMANN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS - In its final meeting of the year this past Thursday, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education opened by recognizing the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Marching Band, after which board members addressed high school standardized testing and concerns regarding the upcoming budget process.

The marching band earned first place in the U.S. Scholastic Band Association New Jersey Championship on October 29. The board commended the band on capturing the state championship with their program entitled "Mystic Journey." It featured music from the cinematic scores of *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* films.

Following recognition of the marching band, the board turned to its regular public meeting agenda. A switch from the current standardized test administered in grades 9 and 10, the TerraNova, to the New Jersey Pass test, was approved. SPFH Principal David Heisey presented the request to the board.

Mr. Heisey said the New Jersey Pass more closely resembles the High

School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) that students are required to complete in grade 11. Both the HSPA and the New Jersey Pass are criterion reference tests, meaning that students are assessed with respect to a set bar that does not move.

The TerraNova, on the other hand, is a norm reference test, which assesses students by comparing them against one another, creating a bell curve. Mr. Heisey said the New Jersey Pass would be, "an excellent tool for us in terms of identifying those students who may be partially proficient in the HSPA."

He encouraged the board to make the switch, saying, "The trend is that more and more districts are moving away from the TerraNova and moving to the New Jersey Pass." Board member Linda Nelson also pointed out that the New Jersey Pass test was less expensive than the TerraNova.

Concerns about the 2007-2008 budget comprised much of the remainder of the meeting. Board members expressed doubt about the projected enrollment statistics they have received. Business Administrator Anthony Del Sordi said a 100-student increase was expected for the 2007-2008 school year.

Ms. Nelson said she worried the board was under-budgeting because enrollment increases in recent years have been more substantial. Mr. Del Sordi assured board members that enrollment is "something we are looking at very closely" as part of the budget review process. He also said there is a great deal of "confusion coming out of Trenton," which was complicating the process.

Budget concerns remained in the spotlight when the floor was opened to public comments.

Nancy Bower, president of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Ice Hockey Association, addressed board members and asked that, as they go through the upcoming budget process, they consider providing some funding for new sports programs. Ms. Bower said this was important because of the benefits children receive from participation in extracurricular activities and "so that Scotch Plains, like all our neighboring towns, can have not only ice hockey, but lacrosse and field hockey."

Scotch Plains resident Anthony Giannaci, president of the Turfit citizens group, which advocates the installation of turf playing fields for the high school, questioned the board as to where it was on the turf issue and how the issue would work into the upcoming budget process. Board members assured Mr. Giannaci that they were still on track with the process and that the issue would be addressed further at upcoming meetings.

Trans. Planning Authority Appoints County Planner

COUNTY - The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority has appointed Union County Planner Kamal Saleh as the Chairman of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (R-TAC). The R-TAC serves as an advisory committee to (NJTPA) Board of Trustees.

The NJTPA administers Federal Transportation funds and coordinates efforts with the New Jersey State Department of Transportation, New Jersey Transit and other regional transportation agencies.

"Kamal has served as vice chairman of R-TAC and has done an outstanding job," said Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella. "He has demonstrated his knowledge on both the state and county level on numerous transportation issues."

Additionally, Mr. Saleh has been selected as Executive Committee secretary to the New Jersey County Planners' Association (NJCPA).

The NJCPA, a statewide organization is involved in regional policies and planning, which include the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, Storm water plans, and policies related to the Council on Affordable Housing.

"Both appointments will provide the county with access to state and local transportation organizations," said Freeholder Daniel Sullivan,

Transportation Advisory Board liaison and the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the NJTPA. "The county will have a strong voice on significant issues relating to Planning and Transportation."

Mr. Saleh previously served as vice chairman of R-TAC. He currently works in the Union County Office of Economic Development as a supervisor for the Bureau of Transportation and Land Use Planning.

SU Names Salisbury University Scholar

SCOTCH PLAINS - Allyson Salisbury of Scotch Plains was among more than 150 students honored as a University Scholar at Susquehanna University (SU).

The annual Scholars Dinner was held on Friday, November 10, to recognize and congratulate SU's most successful student scholars. In order to be named a University Scholar, students must have earned a cumulative grade point average of 3.75 in full-time study for the past two semesters or equivalent credit hours of part-time study.

Allyson, a 2004 graduate of Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School, is a junior environmental science major at SU and the daughter of Brian and Connie Salisbury.

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