

Letters to the Editor

Westfielder Calls BOE Encounter An Exercise in Futility

Prior to receipt of the "principal swap" announcement, I had no interaction with the BOE or Dr. Foley and no interest in weighing in on routine personnel decisions. However, the principal swap decision is far from routine as it affects almost 1,000 children, their parents, and the teaching staff at both schools.

In fact, Dr. Foley acknowledged that: "Losing a principal is like losing all the memory in a hard drive. It is a major change." Because the initial "change is good" rationale offered for this major change simply did not withstand scrutiny, many concerned parents questioned Dr. Foley's decision and requested that he reconsider or delay its implementation to allow for a period of transition. When Dr. Foley made it clear he would not, many parents turned to the BOE; this would prove to be an exercise in futility.

I attended the June 6 board meeting expecting that the board members would address their constituents' concerns, answer questions, and keep open minds. The tone was set when the board announced that public comments would be limited to an hour and the board attorney stated that members would not respond to questions due to privacy issues. Nevertheless, I thought the board would take notice of the Wilson and Washington teachers attending the meeting and give serious consideration to the fact that the teaching staff at both schools did not support the decision.

I thought the board would listen to people with years of experience at both schools who advanced the many well-reasoned arguments as to why the sudden change in both schools' leadership was unwelcome in both its timing and its content.

Although one of the board's stated goals is to "improve community engagement," it is clear the BOE never had any intention of considering the public's comments or otherwise engaging the public. At the conclusion of the comment period, many board members simply turned to prepared statements supporting the decision. To further exacerbate the ill-will surrounding the decision, Dr. Foley subsequently chastised the faculty members who attended the meeting.

By rubber stamping Dr. Foley's decision, the board did a disservice to itself

Stop Playing Politics and Investigate Where the True Waste Is

I read Jim Baker's letter to *The Westfield Leader* last week concerning Westfield legal representation. In the spirit of full disclosure, I want to make it clear that I am a member of Westfield Republican Committee; it is also worth mentioning that Mr. Baker is a member of the Westfield Democratic Committee.

It is with this in mind that I wish to explain my opinion that Mr. Baker is very insincere in his views of Westfield's legal fees and is simply playing politics. I say this because Mr. Baker's premise is based on "a fair review of how the citizen's tax dollars are spent," "competitive bidding" and "qualitative judgments."

If Mr. Baker was truly concerned about our tax dollars, fairness, competition and quality (and not politics) he would be a regular attendee at the Union County Freeholder meeting held every Thursday at 7 p.m. in Elizabeth.

Ratner Says Stender's Swift-Boated; It's Call for Book Boycott, Not Ban

One of the most amazing things about what passes for Republican political rhetoric is its tedious and sleazy transparency. Take, for example, the three letters that lambasted Congressional candidate Linda Stender for allegedly calling for Ann Coulter's latest work of political pornography to be "banned."

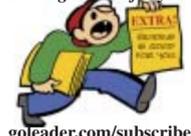
As a dedicated Democrat (and recovering Republican, having strayed to the "dark side" during college and law school), I was initially alarmed to read the letter-writers' allegations. Advocating that any book, however offensive it may be, be censored, is a very serious thing. In the hierarchy of assaults upon the Constitution, book banning certainly ranks way up there with, say, warrantless wiretaps, torturing prisoners and other Republican-favored pursuits. Prohibiting the sale or purchase of books, like restricting the teaching of evolution, is alien to the core principles of the Democratic Party and I would never vote for anyone who supports it.

Well, as it turned out, I had nothing to worry about. It took less than five minutes of easy Googling to confirm that allegations that Linda Stender called for Coulter's sadistic tome to be "banned" are no more factual than weapons of mass destruction, compassionate conservatism, Social Security reform and other Republican myths. If you don't believe me, feel free to check for yourselves. The exact text of Linda's statement can be found at www.assemblydems.com/press/0606/PR/QuigleyStenderOnCoulter.htm. The word "banned" is simply nowhere to be found. After being exposed to a steady diet of Republican nonsense since Bush was judicially appointed to office in 2000, this revelation will hardly surprise anyone.

Now that the letter-writers' complaints have been exposed as political fiction, what, exactly, did Linda have to say about Coulter's moronic musings? It's simple: "Godless" is a revolting and sadistically cruel work that deserves to be boycotted. Not "banned."

There is a huge difference between forbidding the sale of a book and calling upon retailers to voluntarily choose not to sell it. For example, while bookstores have the constitutional right to offer Mein Kampf to their patrons, they are equally entitled to refrain from doing so. This principle is fundamental to our freedom and Linda should be thanked for reminding us of it.

Reading is good for you!



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and to the community. Furthermore, the board members and Dr. Foley did a disservice to both principals and Ms. Berkowitz by raising "personnel issues" as a shield to deflect questions and to justify asking the community to accept their decision. In retrospect, it is unfortunate these individuals were not asked if they would waive their rights to privacy as doing so would have prevented Dr. Foley and the BOE from creating an aura of suspicion around the "personnel issues" they discussed in private session.

Although Dr. Foley persisted in raising the "change is good" smokescreen, a board member confirmed that the impetus for this major change was the need to place a vice principal at Wilson. We do not know why Dr. Foley believed Mr. Malanga and Mrs. Berkowitz would be a better team than Dr. Perry and Mrs. Berkowitz. The more pressing question is why Dr. Foley did not find someone who would work well with Dr. Perry if he did not believe Perry/Berkowitz would work well as a team, particularly since Mrs. Berkowitz has no experience as a vice principal.

I still wonder what consideration was given to other candidates. We can only speculate as to why Dr. Foley was not willing to reallocate human resources in a manner that would not have resulted in the abrupt loss of two "hard drives." One would hope that "personal" issues did not effect important "personnel" decisions, which impact so many students, teachers, and parents.

Although there are many people who disagree with Dr. Foley's decision, each school community will say goodbye to its current principal and embrace a new leadership. If by doing so Dr. Foley and the board think that this matter will soon be forgotten, they are mistaken. Dr. Foley claims that "input from the public will be of paramount importance as we continue to plan for the years ahead," yet in this situation he made it clear that such input was unwelcome and undeserving of any consideration.

This has seriously undermined community support, support which is critical in a period of limited resources and substantial overcrowding.

Cynthia Benn
Westfield

Westfield Stamp Collector Wins Top Int'l Award

WASHINGTON D.C. — Westfield resident and Vice President of the Westfield Stamp Club Edward J.J. Grabowski won the top award, the Grand Prix d'Honneur, at the recently completed Washington 2006 International Philatelic Exposition.

The eight-day show was held in the nation's capital from May 27th through June 3rd and was attended by more than 200,000 visitors from around the world. The United States is permitted to host such an international exposition only once every ten years and the 2006 show marked the tenth time this has occurred.

Of more than 1,300 collectors from across the globe who had applied during the past year to have their exhibits accepted for competition at the show, only 640 were chosen to compete at various levels. Mr. Grabowski's exhibit, Guadeloupe Postal History, was one of only 24 invited to compete at the highest level, known as Championship Class. To qualify for the Championship Class, an exhibit must have won three Large Gold Medals at the international level, each during a different year, within the previous ten years.



Le POST POUR VOUS...Shown above is a letter mailed in 1852 from Guadeloupe employing the stamps of France, which were used on a trial basis in the colony at this time.

Dems Change 'Ban' to 'Boycott' On Coulter Book

By PAUL PEYTON
Specially Written by The Westfield Leader and The Times

TRENTON — A spokesman for the New Jersey Democrats told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times* Tuesday that Assemblywomen Linda Stender (D-22, Fanwood) and Joan Quigley (D-Hudson County) are calling for a boycott, not a ban, of a book by conservative author Anne Coulter.

"We are calling for a boycott of the book by New Jersey residents and merchants," said Joe Donnelly, director of communications for the Assembly Majority Office. He said Assemblywomen Stender and Quigley are urging residents not to purchase the book and merchants not to sell it.

Mr. Donnelly called the original press release issued June 8 (see this page) "unfortunate. That's not what the intent was or is," he said.

James Sverapa, another staffer for the Assembly Democrats, said a lower level staffer changed the word "boycott" to "ban" in writing the press release.

Assemblywoman Stender spokeswoman Pat Polipano said, "Linda of course is opposed to banning books," he said. He said that while Ms. Coulter has the right to say the "false and hurtful things she has" in her book then Assemblywoman Stender likewise has the right to "educate the people of New Jersey" on the statements Ms. Coulter has said about 9/11 widows.

Union County Republican Committee Chairman Phil Morin said, "From Assemblywoman Stender's call to impeach the President to her attempt to trample First Amendment rights, this is typical of the Union County Democrats who are happy to hear everyone's opinions as long as you agree with them."

Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (R-21, Westfield) said while he agrees with Assemblywoman Stender's "concept" that Ms. Coulter was critical of the widows of 9/11 victims in her book,

Canada and Germany. Two days later, at a gala black tie dinner, the final votes were counted in front of 700 attendees and Mr. Grabowski was declared the winner of the Grand Prix d'Honneur for the Washington 2006 International Philatelic Exhibition. The level to which an exhibit must rise to achieve this award is demonstrated by the fact that having won the award, the exhibit may never again be entered into competition anywhere in the world. "It's just that great!" said fellow members of the Westfield Stamp Club.

Mr. Grabowski first began collecting postal history of the French colony of Guadeloupe in 1975 and entered his first exhibit of the material in the annual Westfield Stamp Club Show in 1978. Over the course of more than 30 years, he acquired additional pieces, refined the presentation, and advanced from the local show level, through the national, and finally into the highest forum of international competition. The final version of the exhibit consisted of approximately 400 different envelopes showing the numerous stamps and postal rates used by the tiny French colony between 1851 and 1910.

On June 22, at the monthly meeting of the Westfield Stamp Club, the membership honored their Vice President and Grand Prix d'Honneur winner, Edward Grabowski, with an appropriate libation.



PHILATELIST HAVE FUN...Westfield Stamp Club member Steve Rod leads the club in a toast to Ed Grabowski's (right) international award.

By Freeholder Candidate Pat Quattrocchi

What Does Public Info Officer Do?

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders has an official spokesperson held up in the county administration building in Elizabeth, the seat of Union County Government. According to the county website, this "office disseminates information regarding County Government operations to the general public and acts as a liaison for media inquiries regarding the activities of the Freeholders and various departments of County Government."

Well that certainly sounds extremely important, but oddly, this office does not have its own budget and probing over the past several years has revealed that no one is quite sure how many people the office employs and who they are. One thing for certain is that the man in charge is listed on the county payroll records as Confidential Aide/Director of Public Information, working out of the Office of the Clerk of the Board and earning \$99,533 per year.

The County Public Information Dept. churns out press releases by the dozens primarily extolling the "good works" of the freeholder board and announcing upcoming events, such as the so-called free concerts in the parks series. This department also has the duty for "damage control" to keep the freeholders looking good in the eyes of the citizenry. Events such as the recent dumping of contaminated soil on county property and the passage by the freeholders of the county's \$400 million plus budget requiring a 4.8 percent increase in the tax levy on property owners are skillfully spun to either cast a positive light on or portray the freeholders as hapless victims of extenuating circumstances.

Whenever a freeholder is around, it is a sure bet that the "PIO" can't be too far away. This phenomenon applies to not only official public appearances but to

politically oriented events as well, especially when the freeholders are campaigning for reelection. It is no secret that he is compensated handsomely for his duties as a political worker for the Union County Democratic Committee, as well as campaigns for specific party members; this is borne out by filings with NJ Elect and can be accessed on the state's website.

All of the aforementioned begs the question: where do this "PIO's" official duties end and where do his personal political ones begin, as well as just who is paying for what? County employees, it has been repeatedly suggested, are encouraged to do volunteer work for the party and support party fund raising efforts. When a single party administration is ensconced for a number of years, one has to conclude that the line of demarcation could easily become blurred. Government employees holding positions which have the level of responsibility and status that he enjoys must be especially mindful to avoid any conflict of interest or breach of ethics. These employees must fully understand exactly where their work days start and their personal lives begin.

The Office of Public Information by all estimates costs the taxpayers hundreds and thousands of tax dollars every year and it seems to me that it has become simply a vehicle to make everyone feel and look good, rather than to disperse factual information to the public in a courteous manner upon request.

Patricia Quattrocchi, GOP Candidate for Union County Freeholder, to learn more please call 908-789-0200 or visit www.unioncountygop.org.

For Information on Clubs and Organizations, see goleader.com/organizations

Smart Wines

From Everywhere, At Every Price

DAVIS BYNUM'S RIVER BEND PINOT NOIR \$13.99
Somebody in New Mexico messed up and so we get great pinot from a great Russian River location from a great winemaker, at an almost silly price. Just enough time, five months, in French oak to add body, structure and a small hint of smoke. Gentle cherry tinged fruit with rosemary like spice that lingers on the palate. A perfect backyard summer red.

YAMHILL VALLEY VINEYARDS PINOT BLANC \$16.99
Oregon has proved to be very friendly to this white mutation of pinot noir. Aged in neutral French oak, it gains its richness from aging on its lees. Lots of mineral and floral notes to accompany the pear, apple and melon toned fruit.

SANTA BARBARA WINERY ZCS \$14.99
A blend of zinfandel, carignane and sangiovese, this is what really good affordable California wine can and should be like. Big but not overbearing and the perfect partner to most anything you might want to grill. Filled with jammy cherry fruit and spicy smoky accents, this does burgers, steaks, or simply serves as that last satisfying glass when the sun goes down.

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!!

Wine Of The Week

Veraison Krupp Vineyard Merlot \$49.99

From Atlas Peak in the Napa Valley, this is that rarest of creatures, a high end California merlot that doesn't just deliver on its promise but makes you feel like you got a real bargain. Elegant and complex, with small amounts of cabernet and malbec added. Black currant, kirsch, leather, earth and sage. This is a treat. We didn't spit this out when we tried it.

Your Favorite Wines		
Blackstone Merlot	\$8.99	750ml
J Lohr Chardonnay	\$10.99	750ml
Simi Chardonnay	\$12.99	750ml
BV Coastal Cab/Merlot/Chardonnay/Pinot Noir	\$7.99	750ml
Hess Select Chardonnay	\$9.99	750ml
Toasted Head Chardonnay	\$10.99	750ml

Your Favorite Whiskey		
Jack Daniels	\$35.99	1.75L
Jim Beam	\$24.99	1.75L
Seagrams 7	\$15.99	1.75L

Your Favorite Rum		
Captain Morgan	\$24.99	1.75L
Bacardi Silver	\$19.99	1.75L
Bacardi Gold	\$19.99	1.75L
Malibu	\$23.99	1.75L

Your Favorite Value Wines		
Mondavi Coastal Cab/Merlot/Chardonnay	\$16.99	1.5L
Beringer Founders Cab/Merlot/Chardonnay	\$15.99	1.5L
Woodbridge Cab/Merlot/Chardonnay	\$10.99	1.5L
Vendange Cab/Merlot/Chardonnay	\$6.99	1.5L
Feltzer Cabernet/Chardonnay	\$12.99	1.5L
Cavit Pinot Grigio	\$11.99	1.5L
Walnut Crest Cabernet	\$8.99	1.5L
Cesar Pinot Grigio	\$10.99	1.5L
Bolla Soave	\$10.99	1.5L
Beringer White Zinfandel	\$8.99	1.5L
Franzia Burgundy/Chablis/Chianti	\$10.99	5L
Carlos Rossi Burgundy/Chablis/Paisano/Sangria	\$8.99	4L
Opici Homemade Barbarone	\$11.99	4L

Your Favorite Gin		
Bombay Sapphire	\$34.99	1.75L
Tanqueray	\$30.99	1.75L
Hendricks	\$27.99	750ml
Beefeater	\$28.99	1.75L
Gordons	\$14.99	1.75L
Seagrams	\$15.99	1.75L

Your Favorite Scotch		
Dewars White Label	\$29.99	1.75L
Chivas Regal	\$53.99	1.75L
Johnnie Walker Black	\$56.99	1.75L
Johnnie Walker Red	\$29.99	1.75L
Clan MacGregor	\$16.99	1.75L

Your Favorite Cordials		
Baileys	\$17.99	750ml
Romana Sambuca	\$17.99	750ml
Kahlua	\$15.99	750ml
Southern Comfort	\$13.99	750ml
Amaretto Di Saronno	\$18.99	750ml

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Editor's Note: This e-mail has sparked controversy over freedom of the press as evident by several letters to the editor last week and this week. Letters this week state that the call was for a book boycott and not for a book ban. This release was published in The Leader/Times June 15 edition.

Assembly Democrats News Release
www.assemblydems.com/news.htm For Release: June 8, 2006
Assemblywoman Quigley; (201) 217-4614; James Sverapa IV (609) 292-7065; Assemblywomen Stender; (908) 668-1900

Quigley/Stender Call On NJ Merchants To Ban Sale Of 'Vicious' Coulter Book

Hate-filled Attacks on NJ 9-11 Widows Has No Place on NJ Bookshelves

(TRENTON) - Assemblywomen Joan M. Quigley and Linda Stender today castigated political commentator Ann Coulter for vicious remarks made against four New Jersey September 11th widows in her new book "Godless: The Church of Liberalism."

In her book, Coulter refers to the women as, "the Witches of East Brunswick," after the town where two of the women reside, and writes she has "...never seen people enjoying their husbands' deaths so much." In promoting the book, she added further insult to injury by saying the women used their grief "...to make a political point," and used "...the fact that [they] lost a husband as the basis for being able to talk about it [political viewpoints]."

In response to these incendiary, hate-filled attacks on women who suffered a terrible personal tragedy four-and-a-half years ago and have selflessly advocated to improve national security in the intervening years, the Assemblywomen issued the following statement, denouncing Coulter's attacks and asking New Jersey retailers to ban the sale of her book throughout the state:

"Ann Coulter's criticism of 9-11 widows, whose only desire since the attacks have been to repair their shattered lives

and protect other families from the horrors they have experienced, is motivated purely by petty greed and hate.

"Her assertion that these women enjoyed watching their husbands die on national television is hateful, hurtful, and runs counter to every sentiment expressed since the September 11th tragedy.

"Coulter's vicious characterizations and remarks are motivated by greed and her desire to sell books. By making these claims, she proves herself worse than those she is attempting to vilify - she is a leech trying to turn a profit off perverting the suffering of others.

"No one in New Jersey should buy this book and allow Ann Coulter to profit from her hate-mongering. We are asking New Jersey retailers statewide to stand with us and express their outrage by refusing to carry or sell copies of Coulter's book. Her hate-filled attacks on our 9-11 widows has no place on New Jersey bookshelves."

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