

McCain Boosts U.S. Senate Campaign Efforts for Kean

By MARIA WOEHRL
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SHORT HILLS — Seeking to build Republican representation in the northeast, U.S. Senator John McCain of Arizona jumpstarted fundraising efforts for Republican state Sen. Tom Kean Jr. of Westfield's campaign for the U.S. 2006 Senate race on Sunday in Short Hills, deeming him "a reformer who will restore the American people's confidence of the government."

Sen. McCain is one of several national Republican Party figures stepping forward to help Sen. Kean, the son of former Gov. Thomas Kean, face off with Democratic Sen. Robert Menendez of Hudson County in the November elections. Sen. Menendez was named to fill the remaining year on the Senate seat occupied Governor Jon Corzine prior to his election to governor.

"If I had ambitions to be President of the United States I would certainly think that Republican support would be very important," said Sen. McCain. "This is a very important race."

The fundraiser, which was closed to the media, was held Sunday at the Short Hills Hilton. In a private press conference previous to the event, Sen. Kean Jr. explained that he invited McCain out of admiration.

"He is a role model in so many ways," said Sen. Kean. "I look forward to working with him in the next several months of the campaign and of course in the next several years when we start working more directly together to make sure the reform monitors continue loud and strong in D.C."

Although political analysts have estimated the race is tight, Sen. Menendez, appointed to the Senate last month by New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, has held a fundraising advantage. Sen. Menendez has raised \$4.22 million, while Sen. Kean has \$860,571 in campaign funds.

"This is a very close race," said Sen. McCain, "and it's very important for people like me to encourage and support the next generation of senators."

In December Senator Elizabeth Dole of North Carolina flew to New Jersey to give her support to Sen. Kean's candidacy. Other Republicans who are expected to draw support for Sen. Kean are Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, former Mayor of New York Rudolph Giuliani, his successor Michael Bloomberg and Vice President Dick Cheney.

This event brought in 250 supporters including Congressman Michael Ferguson (R-7th). "I think Tom Kean Jr. will help to restore people's confi-

dence in our government in the same way that John McCain has."

Also attending the event was Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (LD-21). "Tom Kean is a brilliant guy, a real asset to the state," Asm. Bramnick said.

Mountainside Councilman Glen Mortimer was also in attendance. "I'm here to support Tom Kean, Jr. It's important to get a Republican in there and just like McCain he is anti-corruption, and Lord knows we need to clean up New Jersey."

To sustain his position, Sen. McCain touted Sen. Kean's advocacy to reform. "I know that Tom is a reformer," he said. "Right now we are going through a very bad period of corruption."

One of those issues being debated is over the Bush Administration's approval of a pending agreement that would allow Dubai Ports World, a state-owned company of the United Arab Emirates, to run operations at six major ports including ports in Newark and Elizabeth.

While many legislators including Sen. Kean have questioned whether the deal will make the states more vulnerable to terrorism, Sen. McCain said he supported President Bush and believes that with a review an agreement can be made. "I understand the concern, and I think we will go through a process of assessment or I hope that we will."

Sen. Kean reaffirmed that he was opposed to the deal. Currently, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey is suing the present port operator, Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company of Britain, for breaking the 30-year lease it signed in 2000 in the state Superior Court in Newark.

"The Port Authority is actually the one that owns the buildings in Newark and Elizabeth and the lease is in their hands," said Sen. Kean. "We need to look at the process at which the federal-level government and the state-level government are working in concert."

Important Election Dates Announced

AREA — Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi has announced a number of important dates for the upcoming school primary elections:

Tues., Mar. 28, last day to register to vote in school election; Mon., April 10, petitions for June primary election due by 4 p.m.; Tues., April 11, last day to apply by mail for an absentee ballot for school election; Tues., April 17, annual school election; Tuesday, June 6, primary election, hours are 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Michael J. Pollack for The Westfield Leader and The Times
LOOK WHO'S TALKING... Westfield Leader and Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times reporter Maria Woehr interviews Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (LD-22) during a Kean for U.S. Senate campaign fundraiser held Sunday at the Short Hills Hilton.

Fanwood to Update Environmental Inventory

FANWOOD — The Fanwood Environmental Commission recently received a Smart Growth Planning Grant from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) to assist in the updating of their Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI), which was last updated in 1991.

An ERI, also known as a Natural Resource Inventory, provides a comprehensive look at a municipality's natural resources, environmental features and unique characteristics. ERIs are used to increase public knowledge and understanding of the environment and are often used by planning boards, environmental commissions and other governmental bodies for municipal land-use planning and site-plan review.

The ERI, scheduled for completion in May, will include narratives and maps covering Fanwood's vegetation and wildlife, climate, air quality, noise, geology, soils, water supply and water quality, historic features and re-development area.

The Environmental Commission has retained Kupper Associates, Consulting Engineers, to assist them in developing and updating relevant maps. Fanwood will match the \$2,125 grant awarded by ANJEC with borough funds and in-kind services.

The Environmental Commission will be holding a public meeting in March to discuss the ERI and also to solicit any information regarding the borough's natural resources, which would enhance the ERI. In the interim, borough residents are encouraged to contact the Environmental Commission with any information or suggestions they may have regarding the ERI.

The commission may be reached at Environ@visitFanwood.com or by leaving a message in its mailbox at Borough Hall.

On completion, the ERI will be submitted to the planning board for adoption as an appendix to the borough's master plan and will be available on the borough website and by hard copy so residents can learn about the natural resources of the borough.

MS Democratic Club Names 2006 Officers

MOUNTAINSIDE — Richard "Rick" Schkolnick of Long Meadow was elected president of the Mountainside Democratic Club at its first meeting of 2006 on February 23.

Club members also chose Ron Zuzovsky of Wood Valley Road as vice president and Michael Krasner of Old Tote Road as treasurer.

Pressing local, state and national issues in this year's election campaign was the subject of extended discussion. The group considered plans for a major meeting to introduce these issues to the community.

Mountainside residents interested in the club and its activities may call Mr. Schkolnick at (908) 789-0664 for more information.

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Highline Media LLC Promotes WF Resident

WESTFIELD — Thomas Fowler of Westfield has been promoted to executive vice president a Highline Media LLC, a publisher and information provider to the insurance and financial industries.

Mr. Fowler has nearly doubled the size of his division, according to a company spokesman. Mr. Fowler works from the company's Hoboken office.

Privatizing Golf Courses Could Depend on Wages

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

ELIZABETH — Efforts to privatize the county's three public golf courses may depend on whether golf employees are required to be paid according to the state's prevailing wage law. Privatizing is being considered as a way of reducing costs as the county looks to reduce its proposed \$413-million county budget.

At last Thursday's Union County freeholder finance committee meeting, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities Charles Sigmund explained that there are four companies that would be interested running the golf courses — Ashbrook in Scotch Plains, Galloping Hill in Union and Oak Ridge in Clark.

In terms of parks and recreation operating budget, Mr. Sigmund said 85 to 90 percent of the budget is for salaries and wages. He said if golf courses were privatized they would still be public courses. He said private operators would likely hike greens fees and look to reduce salaries of golf operations staff, budgeted at \$1.9 million.

He said if privatized it is likely county employees would be offered jobs but at lower salaries and without benefits. He said if prevailing wage rules apply privatizing would not generate much revenue for leasing the facilities.

"Anything that we do has to make sense," said Freeholder Angel Estrada, finance committee chairman.

Mr. Sigmund said he has reached out to Pepsi to see if the county could place Pepsi vending machines in county parks to generate revenue through an agreement with the company.

"I think there is room for revenue enhancements" in the recreation department budget, he said.

Another area the committee is looking at is the division of youth services. Department of Human Services Director Frank Guzzo said he supports privatizing of Juvenile In Need of Supervision (JIN), the shelter home program located on Acme Street in Elizabeth, to a community-based organization. The program is an alternative to institutional services for juveniles needing temporary placement following a juvenile/family crisis.

The state-mandated program, which used to house 30 to 35 kids, only has one youth at a time now. Mr. Guzzo said he was opposed to shutting the Youth Services Bureau in Linden, a 24-hour juvenile justice system through a 24-hour juvenile/family crisis. The program is in the division of youth services that is slated to be eliminated in recommendations by County Manager George Devanney. The county's new juvenile deten-

tion center is scheduled to open in the summer of 2007. "We are in good shape and moving forward," Mr. Guzzo said.

In anticipation of staffing needs, Mr. Guzzo said he would need another 14 staff members at the new facility in Linden.

Mr. Guzzo has requested a \$400,000 increase in funding for the county's Paratransit program to maintain the level of service. The program provides rides for senior citizens who are either disabled or who are "economically disadvantaged." He said this is the first time in his 15 years as department director he has asked for money to maintain the level of service as opposed to expanding a program.

He said Paratransit is utilized to transport Rahway residents to their jobs at the Watchung Square Mall. Mr. Guzzo said NJ Transit does not offer service from Rahway to the mall.

Human services is the largest county department with a budget of \$71 million and 740 employees.

Director of Administrative Services Elizabeth Genievich said insurance costs have increased due to the opening of the new public safety building in Westfield, public works facility in Scotch Plains and expanded Trailside Nature and Science Center in Mountainside.

In terms of insurance claims, despite the county efforts to educate employees, slips and falls are the third highest area for claims, Ms. Genievich.

Some freeholders asked if the county should consider contracting out the maintenance operation for the county's fleet of vehicles. Ms. Genievich was concerned that a private company would not due the extensive checks county workers provide. She said every vehicle is thoroughly checked when it is brought in for servicing to extend the life of the vehicle.

In an effort to save costs, the county has its own tanks and purchases fuel from the same wholesalers that supply gasoline stations. She said the county is paying \$1.60 per gallon at the present time. Some municipalities utilize the facility.

FW Bridal Shop to Close After 16 Years

FANWOOD — After 16 years, Janet H. Bridal Ensembles (formerly the Song Wedding Gallery) will be going retiring this May. Wholesale liquidation prices on all existing stock, including wedding gowns, jewelry, party dresses and shoes are being offered. For information call (908) 322-9551 or visit the shop at 193 South Avenue in Fanwood or at janethbridal.com.

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