



Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

Allen Says Dems Want To Cut Senior Rebates

State Senator Diane Allen (LD-7, Burlington) said in a press release published on politicsnj.com that she is "deeply troubled" by the Joint Legislative Committee on Constitutional Reform and a Citizens Convention report released November 15, which she said states that New Jersey's seniors could lose their senior rebate checks and have them replaced by a lesser amount next year.

Ms. Allen said, "New Jersey's seniors should not be targeted by the state's Democrat leadership in order to find a way to save money. For far too long, New Jersey has been rapidly becoming a place where seniors cannot afford to live and enjoy their retirement years. While the Democrats have stated that the rebates 'could' be replaced with property tax credits, I do not believe this is the proper way to go...The fact that the Democrats are making a switcheroo has me concerned that they have their eyes set on ultimately phasing out any kind of a break at all for our elderly."

Kenny to Allen: 'Don't Scare Seniors'

State Senate Majority Leader Bernard Kenny, Jr. (LD-33, Hoboken), co-chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Constitutional Reform and Citizens Convention, called Sen. Diane Allen's statement "absolutely irresponsible."

"The most immediate message that has to be conveyed to seniors is that Senator Allen is dead wrong in her statements about seniors having their rebates jeopardized," Mr. Kenny said. "Hopefully, Senator Allen will recover from her misstatement by finding the decency to withdraw her statement because it is totally false on its face and a disservice to senior citizens."

BPU Commissioner Failed to Get Clearance

The Gannett State Bureau reported last week that Board of Public Utilities (BPU) Commissioner Connie Hughes failed to seek approval from Governor Jon Corzine's administration before attending the annual convention of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners in Miami. Although Ms. Hughes paid for the trip herself and used her vacation days, a spokesman for Gov. Corzine said Ms. Hughes should have sought approval before attending the conference. Gannett said its investigation found that BPU commissioners have trav-

eled extensively in the last few years even though the state has banned state-funded travel since 2004.

Will Stender Challenge Scutari for State Senate?

The Inside Edge column on politicsnj.com speculated last week that given her near upset of Rep. Mike Ferguson and the defeat of Linden Mayor John Gregorio, Democratic Assemblywoman Linda Stender of Fanwood might seek to challenge State Senator Nick Scutari of Linden for his State Senate seat in next June's Primary. Aides to Mrs. Stender reportedly said the legislator has no intention of challenging Mr. Scutari - with whom she served on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders - and was more likely to run against Mr. Ferguson again in 2008, a Presidential election year.

NJ Dems Seek House Chairmanships

With Democrats taking the majority in Congress this January, New Jersey Reps. Frank Pallone (D-Monmouth) and Donald Payne (D-Newark) could receive subcommittee chairmanships. Mr. Pallone is said to be eyeing chairmanship of the health Subcommittee of the Committee on Energy and Commerce. Mr. Payne is looking to chair the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Human Rights. Rep. Charles Rangel (D-Harlem, NY) will be the new chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, which deals with economic policy, international trade, welfare, Social Security, Medicare and health care policy.

Summit Taxpayer Meeting Set Dec. 14

SUMMIT — The Summit Taxpayers Association will hold a reorganization meeting at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 14 at the home of Mr. Ed Vant, Jr., Wellington Place Condominiums, 90 New England Avenue, No. 7, Summit. Mr. Vant is the new president of the association, replacing Mr. Bob Wolfenbarger. The public is invited.

According to the website summittaxpayers.org, the association is a "non-partisan, non-profit, all-volunteer organization whose purpose is to monitor the use of taxes, initiate action to reduce excessive taxation, eliminate wasteful government spending, and encourage the wise and common sense use of taxes at all levels of government."

For more information, please send an e-mail to edvantjr@aol.com.



TICKET TO RIDE...NJ Transit has dedicated its first multilevel rail cars to nine communities its rail lines serve. The trains will debut to commuters on the Northeast Corridor line on December 11. A new multilevel rail car is pictured above; inset, the new cars feature two-by-two seats designed for improved comfort and support.

NJ Transit Dedicates New Multilevel Rail Cars

SUMMIT — NJ Transit dedicated its first multilevel rail cars to nine communities served by the state's commuter rail system, including Summit. It also dedicated rail cars to Trenton, Hamilton, West Windsor, Edison, Rahway, Woodbridge and Elizabeth in a ceremony held last week during the League of Municipalities gathering at the Atlantic City Convention Center.

Each of the 234 multilevel cars will display a commemorative plaque in honor of a community served by the rail network as they are delivered over the next two years.

"These municipalities recognize the importance of public transportation, both to their own residents and to New Jersey as a whole," said Assemblyman John Wisniewski, chairman

Red Cross, WF Rec. Call on Seniors for Drill

WESTFIELD — The American Red Cross Chapter and the Westfield Recreation Department seek senior citizens to participate in a disaster drill to be held on Saturday, December 9 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Seniors should report by 10 a.m. The drill is titled "Disaster does not take a holiday."

The Red Cross will simulate a disaster involving the senior citizens and set up a shelter at the Municipal Building Community Room. After the drill, the Red Cross will provide a hot meal and hold a brief seminar for participants to better assist them in understanding how to react to a disaster and how to be ready for any disaster that may become a part of their lives.

The Red Cross and the recreation department said the cooperative effort "is sure to be an educational and valuable event for everyone involved." Anyone interested can call the recreation department at (908) 789-4080 to pre-register.

Alternative Parties File Suit on NJ Election Laws

NEWARK — New Jersey's three alternative political parties—the Green Party, Conservative Party and Libertarian Party — have filed a lawsuit against the State, the State Division of Elections and the Attorney General regarding state election laws, which they say discriminate against independent-party candidates.

The lawsuit, filed in Superior Court in Mercer County, seeks to declare the state's definition of political parties unconstitutional for purposes of campaign finance and lobbying, to strike down restrictions on ballot petitioning by out-of-district petitioners, to require the inclusion of the Conservative Party on the state's voter declaration forms and to require a unified set of rules for updating the forms as alternative parties qualify or fail to qualify for inclusion.

According to a lawsuit served on October 30 by New Jersey Applesseed Public Interest Law Center and Emery Celli Brinkerhoff & Abady LLC, counsel for the three parties, New Jersey's statutory scheme places a hurdle, "the most restrictive of all 50 states," on political parties seeking official state recognition.

"That recognition...exempts the dominant Democrat and Republican parties from further restrictions involving access to voter registration, campaign financing and access to legislators," a November 14 press release said.

"New Jersey election law is patently discriminatory against our clients," said Renee Steinhagen, executive director of New Jersey Applesseed, "so much so that we believe it is unconstitutional under both the federal and New Jersey constitutions."

The release said they the state's definition dates back to 1920. New Jersey law defines a "political party" as a party that attains 10 percent of the

total vote cast in state assembly races.

"No other state in the Union has such a restrictive definition of 'political party,'" said Richard Winger, editor of *Ballot Access News*. "Some states provide for qualification of political parties by registration totals or petitioning. Of those that use a percentage of the vote, the majority use 5 percent or less. Of the few that use more than 5 percent, all but New Jersey use a statewide race, such as the races for governor or president."

"This effort seeks judicial relief to overcome barriers created by two parties sustaining their monopoly begun in 1920 via the New Jersey Legislature under their control," said George DeCarlo, Green Party chairman.

The three state's alternative parties said they are seeking recognition to "level the playing field."

"Our clients are political parties under the common law," said Eric Hecker, co-counsel with Emery Celli Brinkerhoff & Abady LLC.

"By any reasonable standard, the Libertarians, Conservatives and Greens are political parties, yet New Jersey sees no difference between them and political action committees," Mr. Hecker said.

"We're not looking for special treatment," said Ken Chazotte, state chairman of the Libertarian Party. "We want to level the playing field by ending 'affirmative action' for Democrats and Republicans."

The state created a party-affiliation declaration form that included a number of alternative political parties after it lost a 2001 lawsuit that challenged state law restricting registration of party affiliation to Democrats and Republicans. Because it did not participate in the 2001 lawsuit, the Conservative Party was not added to the list. The party said it wants to remedy that.

Your IRS News

Tax Refunds Are Due To Area Individuals

Gregg Semanick, Local IRS Office, Springfield



SPRINGFIELD — The Internal Revenue Service is looking for 2,881 New Jersey taxpayers who can claim their share of undeliverable refund checks totaling approximately \$3 million. The IRS can reissue the checks, which average \$1,054, after taxpayers correct or update their addresses with the IRS. In some cases, a taxpayer has more than one check waiting.

Refunds are due for the following individuals of last known address in the service area of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*:

Springfield

Menlow, David L
Mobley, Michael
Rosado Vazquez, Maritza
Daly, William F

Westfield

Gomez, Armando
Gysen, Ted

Summit

Apgar, Andrew
Bechelli, Steve & Susan
Figuroa, C & M
Gutierrez-Figueroa
Karunanayake, Punar Jeeva
Martinez, Carlos

Berkeley Heights

Santamaria, Melvin

Warren

Trinka, Vincent J
Durante, Mark
Shilova, Anastasia

Cranford

Buonaguro, Michael J
Carotenuto, George A
Fekete, Nikolas
Gansel, Gregory L
Rupy, Michael W
Suggs, Lula M

Kenilworth

Calabrese, Justin
Flores, Gaspar

Tennessa, Maria R

Garwood

Kadesh, Sandra
Vargas, Henry & Delores

Clark

Adams, Martyn D
Espina, Gretel

Nationally, there are 95,746 taxpayers with undeliverable refunds, totaling approximately \$92.2 million with an average refund of \$963.

"Every year, many taxpayers miss their refunds because they move without notifying the IRS or Postal Service of a change of address," IRS Commissioner Mark Everson said.

"For those missing their check, the IRS is making it easier than ever for taxpayers to update their information and claim their refunds."

Taxpayers can use the "Where's My Refund?" feature on the home page of the IRS.gov website to learn the status of their refunds. To use it, a taxpayer must enter a Social Security number, filing status (such as single or married filing jointly) and the refund amount shown on the taxpayer's 2005 tax return. When the information is submitted, "Where's My Refund?" will display the status of a refund and, in some cases, provide instructions on how to resolve potential account issues.

Taxpayers can access a telephone version of "Where's My Refund?" by calling 1-800-829-1954.

Those who do not have access to the Internet and think they may be missing a refund should first check their records or contact their tax preparer, then call the IRS toll-free assistance line at 1-800-829-1040 to update their address.

CPA's to Hold Tax Seminar Dec. 2

GARWOOD — The Union County Chapter of the NJ Society of CPAs will present its 45th Annual Tax Seminar on Saturday, December 2 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Westwood in Garwood. Registration and breakfast begin at 7 a.m.

Howard Bookbinder will provide an IRS update, and Alan Preis will speak on NJ tax changes. Alan Drucker will discuss IRS criminal investigations, and Martin Davidoff will speak on tools and strategies for navigating the IRS.

The Chapter will sponsor a toy/food drive in conjunction with the seminar. Attendees are asked to bring an unwrapped, unopened toy or non-perishable food item. All donations will be sent to the Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside.

The seminar fee is \$95 for NJSCPA members who register on or before November 23. The fee is \$105 for non-members and for members who register afterwards, November 23.

The seminar qualifies for five hours of CPE credit in taxation. For additional information, call (973) 226-4494 or visit njscpa.org/union.

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THE TALKING



Michael Kohn

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