

By GOP Candidates for Scotch Plains Council Comment on State Budget Impact

Republican Scotch Plains Township Council Candidates offered comments on the recently completed state budget process and how it will affect municipalities like Scotch Plains.

Deputy Mayor Nancy Malool, herself a former legislative aid to the late Assemblyman Alan Augustine said, "In my experience it has been quite common for June budget negotiations to be a rather tense time in Trenton. With the yearly June 30 deadline looming, squabbling and posturing rules the day; but normally the tension is between Republicans and Democrats.

"The 2006 budget fiasco turned out to be a rather messy and embarrassing battle amongst Democrats as key Democratic legislators faced off with our new Governor, Jon Corzine. As state spending proposals rose to unprecedented levels and large deficits were left over from the McGreevey administration, the battle amongst Democrats turned out to be just which taxes were going to be hiked to cover the spending. Ultimately, Governor Corzine got his way and the sales tax was raised to a level we haven't seen since the days of Jim Florio."

Councilwoman Carolyn Sorge stated, "Although our new governor raising the sales tax to 7 percent received most of the attention from the media, there were several other taxes and fees raised to cover the runaway spending. Especially disturbing was that at the last minute, after agreements were reached on the tax increases, legislators were scrambling to include special pork spending projects for their districts back home.

"Our residents should also understand that, for the third year in a row, the state budget froze state aid to municipalities and this has a direct

effect on property taxes. The New Jersey constitution dictates that state aid should reflect yearly cost of living increases and once again our state government is acting in an unconstitutional manner. For the last three years our municipal tax increase has been minimal and we firmly believe that had Trenton passed on the constitutionally mandated increases in state aid we would have been able to freeze municipal property taxes this year."

Rich Duthie, the third member of the GOP council ticket offered, "I have been following the property tax issue for some time now and that is one of the reasons that I am now a candidate for the township council. This year I attended municipal budget hearings and spoke first hand with our mayor and council regularly to get an understanding of the process.

"It has really been enlightening to see that contrary to state government, there is not a lot of discretionary spending that goes on in Scotch Plains municipal government. Reviewing what the recent trend in both municipal and school aid has been from Trenton shows quite clearly how state government action, or inaction as the case may be, directly affects property taxes. While I am pleased that special hearings are taking place in Trenton regarding the statewide property tax crisis, I fear that the clout of special interests, looking to protect their respective pieces of government spending, will be too much for our legislators in Trenton and no real changes will take place.

"I am firmly with Mayor Marks, our township council and so many other municipal officials across New Jersey who are calling for a Citizens Convention to address real property tax reform."



THANK YOU...Union County Police and Fire Pipes and Drums celebrate their fifth anniversary at their annual "Pub Night" at Roselle Catholic High School. Pictured, left to right, are: Union Fire Chief Fred Fretz, piper Dennis Conner, Linden Deputy Fire Chief Joe Dooley and Pipe Major Ed Donnelly.

Public Records Seminar Set September 28 in Cranford

CRANFORD — Union County citizens are invited to a seminar on using the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) to obtain public documents from their local governments. The seminar will be held on Thursday, September 28 at 7 p.m. at the Cranford Community Center, 220 Walnut Avenue, Cranford. The meeting is free.

The Union County Watchdog Association (UCWA) is sponsoring the seminar. The New Jersey Foundation for Open Government, the state advocacy organization dedicated to open government, will provide training and materials. Questions from attendees will be answered and follow-up support will be provided.

"Hosting events such as this one in Union County gives us the opportunity to educate the public and give them the necessary tools to participate in the legislative process thereby holding elected officials accountable

at all levels of government," said Tina Renna, President of the UCWA.

Approximately 100 people attended a UCWA-sponsored program last year on effective advocacy and participation in municipal government. Many who attended then expressed an interest in learning more about OPRA.

Please RSVP by contacting Tina Renna at (908) 709-0530, or e-mail at TinaRenna@UnionCountyWatchdog.org.

The New Jersey Foundation for Open Government seeks to increase transparency, accountability, honesty and democracy in government. See www.njog.org for more information. The Union County Watchdog Association believes that good government can only be achieved through a checks and balance system that includes the watchful eye of the people. See www.unioncountywatchdog.org for more information.



Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

Point and Counterpoint

Deadlines: Don't Do the Switcharoo

State Republican Committee Chairman Tom Wilson sent a letter to State Democratic Committee Chairman Joe Cryan last week requesting that he sign a pledge to follow state laws by not replacing U.S. Senate candidate Robert Menendez on the November ballot after the September 20 state statute deadline. Democrats replaced Robert Torricelli with Frank Lautenberg in 2002 after winning a legal challenge of the state deadline to change candidates.

"Over the last six weeks the public has been bombarded with news stories detailing the many questionable, certainly unethical and possibly illegal dealings of your current candidate for U.S. Senate, Bob Menendez. Last week, a federal subpoena was served seeking records in connection with \$300,000 in rent payments Mr. Menendez received from an entity for which, as a member of Congress, he actively sought federal funding," Mr. Wilson said.

Menendez Blasts Senate For 'Status Quo' On Port Security

U.S. Senator Robert Menendez released a statement September 13 following the defeat of his port security amendment, which he said "would have required a plan for scanning 100 percent of cargo containers entering our country."

"It is inconceivable to me that President Bush and the Republican Congress can talk about providing real security for the American people, yet insist on only scanning 5 percent of cargo containers entering our country," Mr. Menendez said. "The Senate Republicans crafted legislation designed to cover their shameful vote on this critical issue."

Kean Criticizes Mendendez on Security of U.S. Ports

GOP U.S. Senate candidate Tom Kean, Jr. told Gamett Newspapers, "Bob Menendez has proven yet again that he's ineffective in getting the job done for the people of New Jersey." He said he supports screening all cargo arriving and leaving U.S. ports.

House GOP Unveil September 'Border Security Now' Agenda

House Republican leaders announced their September "Border Security Now" agenda. The agenda includes 10 border security priorities that House Republicans said they would pass before the end of the month. The first item on the list, the Secure Fence Act, passed the House on September 14. Included are more border fencing and improved surveillance technology, more funding for secure border initiative, funding for more border patrol agents, "Catch and Return" instead of "Catch and Release" on immigration, detention and deportation of alien gang members, expedited removal of alien criminals, increase in prosecution of alien smugglers, criminalization of construction and financing of border tunnels, detention of dangerous aliens unable to be deported and reaffirmation of the authority of state and local law enforcement to enforce immigration laws.

Menendez Amendment Passes For Risk-Based Port Grants

U.S. Senator Robert Menendez hailed the Senate's passage of his amendment requiring the Bush administration to award port security grants using a single, "consistent standard in determining risk." The Senate voted unanimously to include Mr. Menendez's measure in the final port security bill set for passage late Thursday. "We must determine risk the same way for all U.S. ports to ensure that those who face the greatest risk receive the funds they need," Mr. Menendez said.

College GOP 'Street Theater' Does 'For Rent' for Menendez

In response to the ethical questions raised by recent disclosures concerning Senator Bob Menendez, the New Jersey College Republicans performed a "Street Theater" presentation of "For Rent" during a Democratic fundraiser on Saturday, September 16, in East Brunswick.

"Senators should be role models for the future leaders of the country, but Mr. Menendez has shown poor judgment and questionable ethics on several decisions he's made while representing the citizens of New Jersey—collecting hundreds of thousands of dollars personally while fighting successfully to secure federal funding for the group paying him, aggressively supporting an attorney general who used her position to get her boyfriend out of a traffic ticket and accepting campaign contributions from 37 convicted felons. We're outraged and doing our part to spread the truth about the real character of Senator Menendez," said College Republicans Chairman Frank Luna.

The performance included portrayals of real estate agents, some Hudson County bosses and an impersonator of Mr. Menendez.

Stender Criticizes Mendendez Accepted \$\$\$ From Convicted Felon Ney

"Rep. Mike Ferguson has taken thousands of dollars from convicted felon Rep. Bob Ney and should immediately divest himself from those funds," said Linda Stender for Congress Campaign Manager Ed Oatman. "(Rep. Ney) agreed on Friday to plead guilty to federal criminal charges that he made false statements and conspired to commit fraud and violate federal lobbying laws in the congressional corruption probe spawned by disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff."

Mr. Oatman said, "Mr. Ferguson's financial ties to Ney and former House Majority Leader Tom DeLay are reason enough for voters to vote him out of Congress."

Report Says State Sen. Bryant Made \$38,000 for UMDNJ No Show

State Senator Wayne Bryant, chairman of the Budget and Appropriations Committee, worked a "no show job" at the University of Medicine and Dentistry that paid him \$38,220, according to a Star Ledger article published September 17. He allegedly used the position to lobby for taxpayer funds. Mr. Bryant resigned in February, shortly after federal authorities and Governor Jon Corzine began looking into the scandals at the hospital, the article stated.

The Ledger quotes sources as saying that Mr. Bryant worked at UMDNJ three hours a week on campus and reportedly only read newspapers.



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