



### Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

**Codye Forms Task Force on Security**

In response to the murders of 32 Virginia Tech University students on April 16, Acting Governor Richard Codye last week announced the creation of a task force made up of representatives from 30 of the state's colleges and universities to campus security issues, according to *The Star-Ledger*. In a press release, Mr. Codye said all of New Jersey's colleges and universities have agreed to submit campus security plans to the state's Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness by the end of May.

**Corzine's Condition Upgraded by Doctors**

Doctors updated Governor Jon Corzine's condition earlier this week from "critical but stable" to "stable" following his near-fatal April 12 car

accident on the Garden State Parkway. His chief of staff, Tom Shea, said the governor would not return to his duties as long as he is hospitalized at Cooper University Hospital in Camden, a state trauma center. Mr. Corzine sustained a fractured femur or thighbone and also broke his collarbone, breastbone, 11 ribs and a vertebra. He will be hospitalized for at least another week.

**Investigators Probe Text Msgs., Calls**

Investigators are looking into whether an alleged relationship between a state trooper Robert Rasinski, who was Governor Jon Corzine's driver during a near-fatal accident on April 12, and the married wife of a Berkeley Heights police officer, was a factor in the accident. Investigators are reviewing text messages, voice mail and phone records to see if Mr. Rasinski was distracted.

**Clinton, Brownback Make Speeches in NJ**

Presidential candidates Democratic New York U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton and Republican Kansas Senator Sam Brownback were in New Jersey last week. Mrs. Clinton delivered an address at Rutgers University to mark the 35th anniversary of The Eagleton Institute's Center for American Women and Politics. Mr. Brownback spoke at the conventions of the New Jersey College Republicans and the New Jersey Right to Life.

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## Kean U. Hires McGreevey, Draws Mixed Response

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

UNION — Former Governor Jim McGreevey has been teaching law, ethics and leadership courses at Kean University in Union since November 1, *The Star-Ledger* reported Thursday.

The report says the former governor, who left office in November 2004 after revealing an extramarital affair with former male staffer, receives a salary of \$17,500 and works out of the university's satellite office in Plainfield.

The former governor has 19 years in the state pension system and will receive additional credit for being on staff at Kean, a state public university. He would be eligible for a full pension should he accrue another six years in the system and reach the age of 60.

Assemblyman Richard Merkt (R, Morris County) said he intends to raise the university's decision to hire Mr. McGreevey during proceedings of the assembly's Higher Education Committee, of which he is a member.

"If Jim McGreevey is teaching ethics than maybe Willie Sutton (an infamous bank robber) should be teaching about bank security," Mr. Merkt told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*. Mr. Merkt said he taught an ethics course at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

"I just thought it (Mr. McGreevey's hiring) was incredibly inappropriate. I was stunned," he said, adding that he thought the news story reporting the hiring "was an April Fool's joke."

"I am just stunned by the lack of judgment shown by administrators at Kean University," he said.

State GOP Chairman Tom Wilson told *The Star-Ledger*. "It seems to me, Jim McGreevey teaching law and ethics is a little bit like Doctor Kevorkian teaching health maintenance."

Not everyone is opposed. Frank McDermott of Westfield, a member of Kean's Board of Trustees, and a former state senator and Union County Republican Party chairman, said he supports Kean's decision.

"I think Jim McGreevey is a good addition to the (Kean) professional staff. He is teaching courses that require experience in that area," he said, noting that Mr. McGreevey had also been a Woodbridge mayor, an assemblyman and a state senator.

Mr. McDermott, the father of former Westfield Mayor Greg McDermott, said he does not see Mr. McGreevey's pension as a factor in his hiring.

"He's only 49. He's got 11 years to go, six years to qualify (for a pension)," he said. "[He] is sure to teach those kids the ins and outs of politics. I think it was a good appointment."

When asked about Mr. McGreevey teaching an ethics class, Mr. McDermott stated, "I don't think his sexual orientation ought to be considered."

State Senator Ray Lesniak (LD-20, Elizabeth) said Mr. McGreevey's appointment at Kean University "is just a natural transition" from his efforts to help Kean open a campus in China.

"This is a guy who ran for governor twice, who almost beat the unbeatable Christie Whitman," Mr. Lesniak said. The senator said the former governor signed into law "some of the most important legislation," including auto-insurance reform and legislation protecting the Highlands, a 60-mile stretch of land from Phillipsburg to Oakland.

"If I was at Kean, I certainly would take [his class]," he said.

On Mr. McGreevey teaching a government ethics class, Mr. Lesniak said: "What did he do that was unethical? He did something immoral. Not one person in the administration has been charged with doing anything wrong. I think that (allegations of being unethical) is a bad rap."

In terms of the Kean teaching position increasing his state pension, Mr. Lesniak said, "If he is qualified for the position he holds, of course it (pension) is a non-issue."

Mr. Merkt said Mr. Lesniak is "not an impartial individual when it comes to this."

Asm. Jon Bramnick (LD-21, Westfield), who has taught at the college level, said he has no issue with the former governor joining the Kean University staff, but said his teaching a government ethics course "is a different question."

"It depends on what is in the course," he said. "I think Jim McGreevey would probably bring a lot of information to a classroom. I wouldn't want to deprive students of hearing his experiences in government. The question is whether he should be teaching ethics."

A secretary in the law office of Robert Cocker of Westfield referred *The Leader/Times* to Kean's office of university affairs. Mr. Cocker is chairman of Kean's board of trustees, serves as Westfield's town attorney and represents Union County on the state's Republican Committee.

Messages for Mr. Cocker, University President Dawood Farahi and Senator Tom Kean Jr. were not returned.



**MAN'S BEST CO-WORKER...** At Thursday's freeholder meeting, Union County Sheriff Ralph Froehlich, left, Union County Freeholder Chairwoman Bette Jane Kowalski, and Freeholder Chester Holmes (right) present a resolution to Sheriff's Officer Kevin Buckley of Rahway and his K9 Yahsha, congratulating them on Yahsha's induction into the New Jersey Veterinarian Medical Association's Animal Hall of Fame in the "hero" category.

## Campaign Urges Open Appointment Process

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

ELIZABETH — Representatives from the Citizens Campaign, an arm of Metuchen-based Center for Civic Responsibility, asked the Union County freeholders last Thursday to support its effort to open up the process for appointed positions on county boards and commissions.

The proposed ordinance would create a comprehensive public directory of vacancies, including memberships, expiration dates, meeting times and locations, an official application for prospective members to fill out on-line and the county's process for notifying applicants of the county's decision on their applications.

The group said there are 130 vacancies out of 652 positions on some 51 boards and commissions in county government, including all 18 positions on the Americans With Disabilities Advisory Committee and 30 of the 43 seats on the air traffic noise advisory board.

Dave Golush of Westfield, a retired CPA and Citizens' Campaign Union County chairman, said the draft ordinance presented to the board would "foster openness in government and provide Union County citizens with information concerning these appointed positions that exist within the county."

He told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times* that, "The real goal is to get it in 40 or 50 towns, and have the governor sign (a state law)." He told the board there are many retired professionals who could offer their expertise by serving on advisory boards.

Kevin Dick of Scotch Plains, a member of the Citizens' Campaign, told *The Leader/Times* that he envisions having an on-line database setup on the county website by a Union County College student at no cost to the county.

"You could put the thing on 80-percent automatic," Mr. Dick said.

"These measures would provide the county with a broad base for the selection of qualified candidates and would also create a standard and efficient way of responding to citizens interested in filling seats on boards and commissions," Mr. Dick said in a prepared statement to the board.

Lauren Skowronski, suburban coordinator for the Citizens' Campaign, said Sayreville, Woodbridge, Edison, South Plainfield, Asbury Park, Plainfield,

Hasbrouck Heights and the Atlantic County freeholder board have adopted the open-appointments process.

Berkeley Heights resident George DeCarlo, chairman of the state's Green Party, told the board that the process to fill vacancies needs to be open to all county residents, "not just those in either wing of the bipartisan stranglehold supported in New Jersey by a minority of its residents seated in the legislature." He said the state has one million registered Democrats, 900,000 Republicans and 2.8 million unaffiliated voters.

Freeholder Chairwoman Bette Jane Kowalski said the draft ordinance would be turned over to the county council's office for review.

"Union County does seek applicants (who) share our (interest) in public dedication," she said. "We will definitely consider the ordinance."

County Manager George Devaney said, "I think, conceptually, we believe it's a good plan." He said the list of boards and commissions needs to be updated, as a few of them are no longer functioning, including the juvenile detention and criminal justice advisory board, as the facility is site-based and being re-located to Linden.

In other business, Union County Watchdog Association President Tina Renna said she would like the county to make the prosecutor's office parking lot available to people attending freeholders' meetings. She also recommended having a police officer remain outside the county's administration building in Elizabeth where board meetings are held.

"People don't like coming here. It is a little bit intimidating," she said. Freeholder Dan Sullivan, an Elizabeth resident, said he was "terribly insulted" by Mrs. Renna's comment.

"There have been meetings here where there have been hundreds of people," he said.

During the business portion of the meeting, the board voted to adopt several ordinances to enable the county to purchase a building at 10 Cherry Street in Elizabeth for \$1.3 million. The building currently houses the offices of the county's improvement authority.

The board also introduced a \$5.3-million bond ordinance to pay for dredging projects underway at upper Echo Lake in Mountainside and Cedar Brook in Plainfield.

Marybeth Taylor of Berkeley Heights commented on a resolution to support state legislation requiring county offices for the disabled. She said current offices, housed in 18 counties including Union, are merely "fronts" that provide information but little services. She said office staff disrespect the ill and disabled population aged 21 to 65 on the phone.

Ms. Kowalski asked Ms. Taylor to provide information to county officials with information on any such incidents.

### 'Mad Hatter' Strikes for 13th Time in 7 Months

AREA — The Union County Prosecutor's Office has confirmed that last Thursday's robbery of the Commerce Bank in Union was carried out by the "Mad Hatter," his 13th robbery since last fall.

According to Union County Prosecutor Theodore Romankow, the robber entered the bank just before noon. "He was wearing his trademark hat," Mr. Romankow said. "This time it was a khaki-colored baseball cap."

The man reportedly showed a note demanding money to the teller. No weapons were shown, the prosecutor's office said. The teller handed over \$2,530 to the robber and turned and walked out the door.

"He was in the bank about a minute and a half," Mr. Romankow said.

Authorities said seven of the robberies have occurred in Union County, four in Morris County and two in Essex County. Nine of the 13 banks robbed have been Commerce Banks, two of which were in Union. The man has stolen over \$50,000 since September 22, 2006.

"No one has been injured in any of the robberies and, so far, no one has seen weapon," Mr. Romankow said. "We are encouraging anyone who has any information about this individual to call Crimestoppers."

Crimestoppers is an anonymous tip-line that offers rewards for information leading to the arrest or conviction of any criminal. The Crimestopper's Tip-line can be reached at (908) 654-TIPS.

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