



Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

Corzine Signs Bill to Repeal Death Penalty in New Jersey
On Monday, after Governor Jon Corzine signed the legislation, New Jersey became the first state in the nation to repeal the death penalty, according to nj.com. The Assembly passed the bill, 44-36, last Thursday, following passage in the Senate on December 10 by a tally of 21-16.

Senators Tom Kean, Jr. (LD-21, Westfield) and Nick Scutari (LD-22, Linden) voted against the repeal. Assemblywoman Linda Stender (LD-22, Fanwood) and Assemblyman Jerry Green (LD-22, Plainfield) supported it; Assemblymen Jon Bramnick (LD-21, Westfield) and Eric Munoz (LD-21, Summit) voted against it.

"Today, New Jersey is truly evolving. I believe society first must determine if its endorsement of violence begets violence...To that, I answer 'yes.' Therefore, we must evolve to stop endorsing violence," Mr. Corzine said.

New Jersey has not performed an execution in 44 years. Eight prisoners have been placed on "death row" since the New Jersey Legislature reinstated the death penalty in 1982. The eight prisoners and future capital-punishment inmates will now serve life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Christie Pulls Fed. Monitor From UMDNJ in 2008

U.S. Attorney Chris Christie has announced that the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) will no longer have a federal monitor as of next year. The monitor was put into place after the hospital admitted to Medicare fraud.

Essex GOP Names Bramnick As Legislator of the Year

Last week, Essex County Republican Party Chairman Kevin O'Toole presented Assemblyman and Minority Whip Jon Bramnick (LD-21, Westfield) with the Essex County Legislator of the Year Award before 200 Essex County GOP Committee members.

Mr. O'Toole, senator-elect for the 40th legislative district, recognized Mr. Bramnick for the "hard work and dedication" and his "leadership" in Trenton. Mr. Bramnick holds the third-ranking Republican position in

the Assembly.

Rules Now Require Additional Immunizations for Children
New Jersey Health and Senior Services Commissioner Fred Jacobs has approved amendments to the state's immunization rules, which will require four additional immunizations for children beginning in September 2008.

The new rules will require children attending licensed child-care centers and preschools to receive annual influenza vaccinations and a pneumococcal vaccine.

Children born after January 1, 1997 and enrolled in grade 6 or transferring into a New Jersey school from another state or country will be required to receive a booster dose of the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine, as well as one dose of meningococcal vaccine.

The *Star-Ledger* reported that New Jersey is the first state to require shots for pre-schoolers.

Bagger to Replace Lazzara On Kean Board of Trustees

The appointment of former State Senator Richard Bagger of Westfield to the Kean University Board of Trustees has cleared the Senate Judiciary Committee. Mr. Bagger would replace Richard Kinney.

The board considered Joann Lazzara of Wayne for reappointment to the Kean board and Anthony Sartor of Scotch Plains for another term on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Assembly Ups Maximum Death Benefits for Volunteer Firefighters

The State Assembly approved legislation, 80-0, last week to increase the maximum death benefit from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for life-insurance policies for volunteer fire-department members. Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (LD-21, Westfield) was a sponsor of the bill. The legislation, which passed the Senate 39-0, will head to Governor Jon Corzine for his consideration.

Senate to Vote to Rename Rt. 23 After Ex-Rep. Robert Roe

The State Senate approved legislation Monday to rename Route 23, which runs from Verona in Essex County to Montague Township in Sussex County, as Robert A. Roe Highway. Mr. Roe served 24 years in Congress before retiring in 1993.



GIVE THEM A HAND...Holy Trinity Brownie Troop 555 collected more than 100 pair of socks, mittens and scarves for organizations including St. Joseph's, St. Claire's, Madonna House in Neptune and the Union County Family Organization, located in Westfield. The Westfield Girl Scouts have held a mitten-tree collection for more than 15 years.

Children's Specialized Opens New Brunswick Hospital

MOUNTAINSIDE - Children's Specialized Hospital has announced the opening of PSE&G Children's Specialized Hospital (CSH) in New Brunswick.

The new 60-bed pediatric rehabilitation hospital provides inpatient rehabilitation care for infants through patients 21 years of age affected by traumatic brain injury, spinal-cord dysfunction or premature birth. The hospital is the 11th site for CSH.

PSE&G Children's Specialized Hospital is located adjacent to the Bristol-Myers Squibb Children's Hospital at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital and the Child Health Institute of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

"This new infrastructure of combining acute, rehabilitation and research is critical to providing the best care for our patients," said Amy Mansue, president and chief executive officer for CSH. "We interviewed 1,000 people - nurses, physicians, patients' families - and incorporated all of their best ideas into this new hospital. It's all about the kids for us, and creating this new healthcare campus has changed the way we provide care to our patients forever."

Construction of the new hospital was funded in part by CSH Foundation's capital campaign. The Building Begins with Children, which raised \$33 million toward the project.

Forty-six patients from CSH's Mountainside and Toms River facilities were moved in two shifts, with the adolescents moving in on December 4 and the infants and toddlers moving in on December 5, officials said.

CSH will continue to provide long-term care and outpatient services from the Mountainside site, officials said.

Westfield BOE, Town Develop Joint Mission Statement

WESTFIELD - The liaison committee, representing the Westfield board of education and the town government, has developed a mission statement to:

Support a positive working relationship of the town government and the public schools for the mutual benefit of the community;

Develop common understanding of public and educational priorities and expectations, financial constraints and

NJ TRANSIT Ridership Continues Record Growth

NEWARK - During the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2008, the three-month period ending September 30, 2007, NJ TRANSIT ridership increased to 64.4 million trips, 3.2 percent over the same period last year.

The corporation reported that improvements of service, strong regional employment trends and higher gas prices pushed ridership to the highest ever first-quarter level, with gains registered on rail, bus and light-rail modes.

Ridership reached an average of 881,700 trips each weekday, while weekend trips averaged 712,800. The weekend trip total was the highest for any quarter in the corporation's history.

"These results demonstrate that NJ TRANSIT is providing the transportation services that residents demand in a way that benefits the customer, the environment and the economy," said NJ TRANSIT Chairman and Transportation Commissioner Kris Kolluri.

"Our continued ridership growth is a reflection of a strong regional economy and our commitment to creating connections for our customers so they can travel on one or more of our modes during their trip as conveniently as possible," said NJ TRANSIT Executive Director Richard Sarles.

"New Jersey residents are increasingly making NJ TRANSIT their preferred travel choice. During the first quarter, customers took 40.6-million bus trips, 18.9 million rail trips and 5-million trips on the system's three light-rail lines.

Rail ridership increased by 5.4 percent compared to the first quarter of FY 07, with rail customers taking an average of 275,850 trips each week-

day. Trips into and out of New York Penn Station (NYPS) increased 7.1 percent over last year. Nearly 80 percent of all new rail trips started or terminated at NYPS.

"[The fact that] almost four of every five new rail trips [are] originating or ending at NYPS highlights how important it is for us to continue advancing the Access to the Region's Core project, which will double commuter rail capacity in and out of New York," Mr. Sarles said.

The Main/Bergen County Line led all lines in ridership growth, with an overall increase of 8.7 percent and a 23.5-percent increase on weekends.

Northeast Corridor ridership increased 7.4 percent, including 14.7-percent ridership growth at Newark Airport Station.

North Jersey Coast Line ridership increased 3.9 percent, with summer weekend ridership setting a new record with 6.7-percent growth.

Raritan Valley Line ridership increased 3.5 percent, with most of the gains in weekday peak periods.

The Morris and Essex Lines recorded 3.2-percent growth, primarily during their trip over the weekend.

Customers took 5-million trips on the three light-rail lines - Hudson-Bergen, Newark and River Line - during the quarter, a 13.5-percent increase over last year. Customers took an average of 65,150 trips per weekday and 61,500 per weekend. Recent system expansions fueled ridership growth on the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail and Newark Light Rail lines.

Hudson-Bergen Light Rail ridership grew 18.4 percent in the quarter, with two of every three new trips associated with the system expansion to Tonelle Avenue.

The Metropolitan Transit Authority S89 bus that now connects Staten Island residents with the 34th Street Station (Bayonne) generated more than 400 trips per day by the end of the quarter.

Newark Light Rail ridership increased 9.1 percent, with the Broad Street Extension averaging 2,235 weekday trips, up 35 percent from the first quarter in FY 07.

RiverLine ridership increased nearly 3 percent, with weekday ridership averaging 7,900 trips, the highest ever. Bus customers took 40.6-million trips during the quarter - 1 percent more than the previous year - and averaged 540,700 trips per weekday, also a 1-percent gain. Weekend trips averaged 488,150 trips or three percent more than last year.

Commuter routes to New York City registered a 3.1 percent increase.

Gains on the 62 route (Newark-Airport-Perth Amboy) and the 64, 67 and 68 routes serving Monmouth and Ocean counties helped increase North Jersey commuter ridership by 2.6 percent.

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