



Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

Editor's Note: The following is a summary of some of best of *Peek at the Week*, which was launched in the September 14 issue.

September

Federal Prosecutor Investigates Menendez

State Senator Tom Kean, Jr. said, "After years of embarrassment, it should be perfectly clear to New Jerseyans that we must have leaders with the highest ethical integrity. Today's developments illustrate the need to clean up the corruption and scandal that has plagued Washington D.C. and our state, so we can finally restore the public's faith in government."

Mr. Kean's statement was in reference to news that his opponent in the U.S. Senate race, Senator Robert Menendez, had been placed under criminal investigation over a rental deal with a non-profit agency in Union City.

State Democrats called the timing of the investigation is "troublesome."

Stender: Ferguson Took \$\$\$ From Felon

"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. "(Mr. Ney) agreed 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."

Bryant Made \$38,000 For UMDNJ No-Show

State Senator Wayne Bryant worked a "no show job" at the University of Medicine and Dentistry that paid him \$38,220, according to a *Star-Ledger* article. 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. Mr. Bryant worked at UMDNJ three hours a week on campus and reportedly only read newspapers. He stepped down as chairman of the Budget and Appropriations Committee.

Menendez Blasts Senate On Ports

Mr. 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 Presi-

dent 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," he said.

Campaign Accused of Bogus Blog Postings

The operator of a Democratic blog, bluejersey.com, accused the Mr. Kean for U.S. Senate Campaign of putting bogus postings on the website that were critical of Mr. Menendez. Campaign Manager Jill Hazelbacker dismissed the report and said, during a taping for the CBS Evening News segment at the Westfield Fire Department with Mr. Kean, that it "must have been a slow news day."

Juan Melli, the blog's operator, said he traced the postings to the 70.90.20.85 IP address of the Kean campaign.

October

Assembly GOP Unveils 'Corrupt-Free NJ' Plan

The Assembly Republicans unveiled their "11-point Corrupt-Free New Jersey" plan, which included a ban on dual office-holding, stopping the pension boosting by public officials, expanding anti-nepotism laws to local governments, closing loopholes that allow state officials to hire relatives including first cousins, suspend indicted public officials without pay, mandatory jail sentences for convicted public officials and full pension forfeiture for convicted public officials.

Assembly Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman called the package a "warmed-over stew of existing legislative measures that were cobbled together for politically exploitative purposes six weeks before Election Day."

GOP Admits Knowledge Of Rep. Foley E-mail

Washington GOP Congressional leaders admitted that they had known for months that Florida Republican Rep. Mark Foley was sending sexually suggestive e-mails to an underage male page.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert said his aides referred the matter to authorities in the fall of 2005. GOP leaders created a toll-free hotline for pages and their families to call to confidentially report any incidents.

Mr. Kean and Democratic Congressional hopeful Linda Stender, an assemblywoman (LD-22, Scotch Plains), both called for Mr. Hastert's resignation.

Menendez Building Was Sold to Embezzler

Gannett News Service reported that Mr. Menendez sold a building he owned in Union City to convicted

felon Lourdes Lopez. Lopez served a federal prison term for helping Union City Treasurer Leonard Grazeola steal hundreds of thousands of dollars in public funds in 1989 and 1990, when Mr. Menendez was mayor and Lopez was assistant branch manager for a branch of National Westminster Bank.

Lopez reportedly paid \$500,000 for the building, which houses the North Hudson Community Action Corp. Authorities are investigating \$300,000 in rent paid by the non-profit paid to Mr. Menendez over nine years when he owned the building and during which time he served in Congress and helped garner federal grants for North Hudson.

State Says Retirement To Cost UC \$9.3 Mil.

Early retirement for 183 employees last summer has cost the County of Union \$9.3 million instead of saving \$8.5 million over five years as originally thought by county officials, according to a report in *The Star-Ledger*, which quoted a study commissioned by the state Division of Pensions and Benefits.

County Manager George Devaney called the report "flawed." The county's own study, he said, determined the program would save \$15 million over 20 years.

Ex-Publisher Accused Of Phony GOP Website

Rahway Republicans filed a complaint with the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELECT) alleging that former *Star-Ledger* Publisher James Devine, a Democratic campaign worker, created a website intended to misrepresent the GOP.

Judge Sentences Ex-AG's Boyfriend

Former Attorney General Zulima Farber's boyfriend, Hamlet Goore, was fined \$500 and ordered to perform five days of community service for going to Mexico rather than appearing in court for driving on the suspended list. The infraction led to the resignation of Ms. Farber as attorney general when she went to the scene of a motor vehicle stop involving Mr. Goore on May 26.

November

State Supreme Court Rules on Gay Marriage

The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in a 4-3 decision that homosexuals are entitled to the same rights as heterosexuals, but said legislators would have to legalize same-sex marriages. The ruling gave lawmakers 180 days to rewrite state marriage

laws or create a new system of civil unions for gay couples.

Subpoenas Examine Menendez Rent Deal

Federal authorities stepped up their investigation of a rent deal between U.S. Senator Robert Menendez and the North Hudson Community Action Corp. New subpoenas sought information pertaining to the \$300,000 in rent Mr. Menendez collected between 1994 and 2003 from the non-profit organization for a building he used to own in Hudson County's Union City.

Federal Agents Raid Union Offices of Giblin

Agents from the Department of Labor and U.S. Postal Inspection Service raided the West Caldwell offices of International Operating Engineers Local 68 operated by Assemblyman Thomas Giblin, a former state Democratic Party chairman. The investigation centers on possible union corruption.

Feds Widen Probe Into Investigation of James

Federal investigators sent out subpoenas to staff members of former Newark Mayor Sharpe James, including his son, as part their investigation of real-estate deals that benefited some of Mr. James's biggest supporters.

The probe was initiated in August regarding the travel expenses the mayor charged to a police department credit card. The James Administration's sale of surplus city lots to developers at cut-rate prices and the awarding of no bid contracts are included in the probe.

December

Tpke. Authority Head Under Investigation

Joseph Simunovich, chairman of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, is the subject of a state Ethics Commission complaint. He reportedly acknowledged taking three flights to and from Florida on a private jet owned by Joseph Sanzari. Mr. Sanzari was involved in a joint venture that received \$52 million in Turnpike contracts.

Ex-Sen. Pres. Lynch Gets 39 Months In Jail

Former State Senate President John Lynch, 68, was sentenced to 39 months in prison for taking bribes from a developer. U.S. District Court Judge Stanley Chesler said during sentencing that he hoped New Jersey public officials "will get the message." Mr. Lynch was fined \$50,000.



VOLUNTEERS... Westfield Foundation Trustees gather at Echo Lake Country Club in Westfield during the organization's annual Cornerstone breakfast meeting. Pictured, left to right, are: former presidents Gail Cassidy, Frank MacPherson, Michelle Picou, Lee Hale, Gerald Glasser, current President Barbara Frantz and David Owens.

Westfield Foundation Year Grants Total \$252,000

WESTFIELD — Westfield Foundation Trustees completed their final grant cycle for 2006 by awarding \$74,000 in grants, bringing the 2006 total to over \$252,000. Two major grants dominated the fourth cycle, a \$30,000 grant to the Westfield "Y" representing the third of five pledged payments to the "Y's" capital campaign, and a \$20,000 grant to the Friends of the Westfield Memorial Library for the upcoming renovations at the library. Also, \$20,000 was pledged to the library to be paid over the next two years.

Other grants awarded included funding for a crisis counseling program at the Westfield Community Center, scholarships for a home care respite program run by the Alzheimer's Association, a technology upgrade for the Literacy Volunteers of Union County and support

for the Oratorio Singers of Westfield. The foundation awards grants to programs and projects serving the arts, health care, education, social services and civic needs. In the year 2006, grants were awarded to over 40 different area non-profits serving the Westfield community.

For more information on the Westfield Foundation, call Elizabeth Chance, Executive Director, at (908) 233-9787 or e-mail to foundation@westfieldnj.com.

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United States Senate News Statement On Passing Of President Gerald Ford

Senator Robert Menendez, New Jersey

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) released a statement on December 27, 2006 following the passing of President Gerald Ford.

"Like all Americans, I was saddened by the recent passing of President Gerald Ford. America will be forever indebted to President Ford for his selfless service and for bringing calm and stability to a nation besieged by conflict and scandal. My thoughts and prayers are with the Ford family during their time of grief and sadness."

The Senator also released a statement following the passing of the

Rev. James Loughran, president of St. Peter's College in Jersey City.

"As a St. Peter's College alumnus, I join in mourning the recent passing of Father James Loughran. Father Loughran was a kind, compassionate man full of conviction and an abiding faith. His death is not only a loss for the St. Peter's family but to all who have been under his tutelage and care throughout his distinguished career. St. Peter's College, my alma mater, is a stronger institution because of Father Loughran's service and dedication — and he will be terribly missed."

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* Instant Rebate on Pillowtop sets: \$50 twin, \$75 full, \$100 queen, \$200 king. - Instant Rebate on Non-Pillowtop sets: \$25 twin, \$50 full, \$75 queen, \$100 king. After rebate prices based on purchase of complete set — no rebate on purchase of mattress or boxspring only. Applies to Shifman Ultra Premium sets (8-way hand-tied styles).

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