



22nd District News On Affordable Housing Bill Signed By Governor Assemblyman Jerry Green Plainfield

Governor Jon Corzine last week signed legislation Assemblyman Jerry Green sponsored to establish a special legislative panel that would re-examine the state's system of providing fair and adequate access to affordable homes for working families and ensure New Jersey meets its housing responsibilities.

"Two decades have passed since towns across New Jersey were charged with providing their fair share of affordable housing," Asm. Green (LD-22,

Plainfield) said. "Until now, there has not been a single, unified review of the state's Fair Housing Act since it was enacted. We must ensure that there is enough reasonably priced housing being built and that New Jerseyans have fair access to affordable housing."

The state's Fair Housing Act was first enacted in 1985 in response to a series of New Jersey Supreme Court opinions - collectively known as the "Mount Laurel decisions" - that established a voluntary system for municipalities to follow for the provision of affordable housing.

Mr. Green said a recent state court decision invalidating the most recent rules promulgated under the Fair Housing Act focused attention on the need for a comprehensive statewide housing policy.

He said the new law (A-470) establishes a Joint Committee on Housing Affordability responsible for identifying legislative measures that could have a significant impact on the cost of housing, availability or affordability, in addition to assessing the financial cost of the bills to the state's taxpayers.

The committee also will conduct a continuing study on the availability of affordable housing, the financing and administration of programs that provide affordable housing and the state's land-use policies, among other issues that can impact housing affordability.

"Low- and middle-income New Jersey families are burdened by some of the highest rents and housing costs in the nation," Mr. Green said. "This new law allows for a thorough review of our housing practices to ensure New Jerseyans in every community across the state have an affordable home."

Tom Atkins Gives Talk At Westfield Old Guard

WESTFIELD - Scotch Plains Township Manager Tom Atkins was the guest speaker at the March 8 meeting of the Westfield Area Old Guard at the Westfield "Y," located at 220 Clark Street in Westfield.

Mr. Atkins, who has 27 years on the job, holds the distinction of being the only municipal manager in Union County's 21 municipalities and one of 41 among the 566 municipalities in New Jersey.

As township manager, he oversees the Township of Scotch Plains' 170 full- and part-time employees. He also conducts union negotiations and prepares the annual budget, which is then sent to the mayor and township council for review and voted upon for acceptance.

The Old Guard welcomes any men in retirement to share in fellowship over coffee and Danish pastries followed by a brief meeting and invited speaker.

For more information, interested individuals are invited to come to a meeting of the Old Guard at the Westfield Area "Y" any Thursday at 9 a.m. or to call Jack McHugh at (908) 233-1539 or Walt Halpin at (908) 889-2074.



MUNICIPAL MANAGER...Tom Atkins, Scotch Plains township manager, describes his duties to the Westfield Area Old Guard during its March 8 meeting at the Westfield Area "Y."

Freeholders Should Have Investigated Vendor Before Approving Contract

New Jersey Employment Agencies must be registered with the Department of Law and Public Safety this applies to executive search firms. Temp agencies and talent booking firms, among others. Under the heading of temp agencies are many healthcare providers who supply nursing staff members and sometimes physicians and other therapists, as well as nurses' aides who work temporarily in private homes and institutions.

Once a very tightly regulated industry, the business was deregulated somewhat back in the 1990s, which allowed headhunters, such as me, to legally work from the comfort of their own homes. However, there are still large fines levied against those businesses, which try to circumvent the remaining existing regulations, such as becoming legally licensed or properly advertised.

On March 8, the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders unanimously approved a resolution entering into a one-year contract with Correctional Health Services of Verona, in an amount not to exceed \$4,228,368, which was a 9-percent increase of what had been paid the same company previously.

They would continue to provide medical services to the inmates and residents of the county jail and juvenile detention center. At the appropriate time, I voiced my concerns about this vendor. I asked the freeholders if any of them ever, on their own, just out of curiosity Googled any of their vendors, just to check them out. Of course, the response was the typical "deer in the headlights" stare, which I had expected, and I knew that the answer was no.

I went on that regardless of what I had to tell them about this company that they would approve the contract anyway, and of course they did. Even after sharing the abysmal track record that this company has including the deaths of two inmates in Essex County facilities, for the same reason on the exact same day (*Star Ledger*, August, 2004), and in New York of withholding necessary medication, understaffing and unqualified personnel leading to inmate deaths (*New York Times*, February 2005). And of Morris County taking back the medical care in their facilities and hence saving tax dollars and still providing quality care.

Correctional Health Services, Verona, is listed in McRae's blue book as having a temporary agency providing medical staffing services; however, a search of the

New Jersey State website did not turn up a trace of them in the latest agency listings, so are they licensed? A subsidiary of Prison Health Services out of Tennessee, a company who has numerous complaints filed against them in facilities around the country. CHS appears to have been awarded their first Union County contract in excess of \$4 million in early 1999, for the period October 1, 1998 through December 31, 1999.

They made their first political contribution to the Union County Democratic Committee on October 25, 1998, followed by another \$2,500 on November 5, 1998 and have given in the neighborhood of \$20k in Union County alone with thousands more spread around the state. It should be pointed out that here in Union County we have had three deaths in three years in our correctional facilities, which could be attributed to a lack of medical attention under CHS's watch, and that the families are in the process of suing the taxpayers for millions.

During their closing comments at the meeting, County Manager George Devanney reported that CHS received the contract because they were the lowest bidder, and Chairwoman Bette Kowalski related that with regard to the medical services, "we do the best we can."

Well, it seems to me that this contract is not about the purchase of paper clips and rubber bands, and since the freeholders defend the no-bid contracts, which they award for roads and bridges as going to the most qualified companies with good track records, certainly they can do the same when they are dealing with human life. I am sorry to say, Madam Chairwoman, that the best you can is definitely not good enough for the taxpayers of Union County and especially for the families who lost their loved ones all too soon.

Patricia Quattrocchi
Garwood

Voter Registration, Candidate Filing

AREA - The last day to register is Tuesday, March 27, 2007 to vote in the Tuesday, April 17 School Board Election.

Candidates seeking state, county and municipal office must file their petitions by Monday, April 9 for the Primary Election which is to be held on Tuesday, June 5.



21st District News Transportation Panel Stalls NJ Vehicle Snow Bill Assemblyman Eric Munoz, Summit

The State Assembly's Transportation Committee has stalled legislation that would require motorists to clean snow and ice off their cars.

Sponsored by Assemblyman Eric Munoz (LD-21, Summit), the legislation, A-959, would make failure to remove accumulated ice or snow from a motor vehicle prior to operation a motor vehicle offense.

"We have seen far too many instances where snow or ice dislodging from the roof or trunk of a car (has) resulted serious injuries to motorists traveling behind those vehicles," Asm. Munoz said.

Under the bill, each driver of a motor vehicle, whether a non-commercial or commercial vehicle, would be required to remove ice or snow from hood, trunk and roof prior to its operation.

On March 12, the Assembly Transportation Committee posted A-959 for a vote. However, under pressure from lobbyists for the trucking industry

and NJ Transit, the chairman of the committee held the bill from a vote, according to a press release from Asm. Munoz.

"We shouldn't allow pressure from lobbyists to prevent us from protecting New Jersey drivers. Does death or serious injury need to happen before we move this bill?" Asm. Munoz questioned.

Under current law, the penalties only can be imposed after snow or ice has already dislodged from the car and endangered motorists traveling behind that vehicle. Asm. Munoz' bill would permit police officers to proactively issue tickets if they believe the accumulated ice or snow may pose a threat to persons or property.

UC Engineers Society To Meet on March 27

MOUNTAINSIDE - The Professional Engineers Society of Union County will meet on Tuesday, March 27, starting at 6 p.m. with a cash bar at L'Affaire Catering in Mountainside. Dinner will be served at 7 p.m. before a presentation of "Technical Energy Audits."

This is a joint meeting with the NJ Energy Engineers and is a NYS-approved course. The public is invited. Please RSVP by e-mail to Mike@MichaelErnst.Eng.Pro or call (908) 687-0290; fax (908) 964-5584.

On April 24 at 2 p.m., a tour of Conoco Phillips Bayway Refinery will be conducted. Dinner will follow at Big Stash's in Linden. Reservations are required seven days in advance.

For more information, contact Harry McNally, Jr. by phone at (908) 322-6487 or by e-mail at McNallyHar@aol.com.

Humane Society Selects Ferguson for Award

WASHINGTON - The Humane Society of the United States, the nation's largest animal protection advocacy group, has selected Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-7th, New Providence) for its "Humane Advocate Award" for supporting legislation that promotes the protection of animals.

The Humane Society annually ranks lawmakers on their voting records and co-sponsored legislation, and Mr. Ferguson received a 100 percent rating for the 109th Congress, which includes 2005 and 2006. The average score for House lawmakers was 57 percent, according to a spokesperson for Mr. Ferguson.

The group singled out Mr. Ferguson for supporting legislation to prohibit animal fighting, prohibit the sale of wild horses, and prohibit the Agriculture Department from certifying for human consumption meat from sick or injured livestock.

Mr. Ferguson also introduced bipartisan legislation last year to require all fur and fur-trimmed apparel sold in the United States be clearly labeled, regardless of how much fur is used.

The Humane Society's congressional scorecard is available online: fund.org/pdfs/HumaneScorecard2006_final.pdf.

Captain Siebelts Named Grade Officer of Year

BERKELEY HEIGHTS - Air Force Reserve Captain Robert S. Siebelts has been named the Company Grade Officer of the Year.

Selection was based on the individual's exemplary duty performance, job knowledge, leadership qualities, significant self-improvement, specific achievements, notable accomplishments and community service and support.

The captain is a maintenance supervisor assigned to the 514th Maintenance Squadron, McGuire Air Force Base in Trenton.

Capt. Siebelts has served in the military for 10 years. He is the son of Frederick and Sandra Siebelts of Berkeley Heights. His wife, Elizabeth, is the daughter of Gail Souren of New Providence.

Capt. Siebelts graduated in 1990 from Governor Livingston Regional High School in Berkeley Heights and received a bachelor's degree in 1994 from Arizona State University at Tempe.

Garwood GOP Seeks Citizens' Interest

GARWOOD - The Garwood Republican Committee is currently interviewing potential candidates for the upcoming election cycle. Nominations are being accepted through Wednesday, April 4, to meet the filing requirements for the June Primary election.

Those Garwood residents interested in learning more about Republican Party activities in the borough and/or joining the municipal slate are urged to contact John Quattrocchi, chairman of the Union County Republican Committee of Garwood, at (908) 451-9988.



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Memory Loss? What's Normal & What's Not?

AN OPEN HOUSE &
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Dr. Joseph Ryan, Morristown Memorial Hospital's Chief of Geriatrics and Amy Matthews, Coordinator of Education and Training for the Alzheimer's Association of New Jersey present "Understanding Memory Loss."

Memory loss that disrupts everyday life is not a normal part of aging. Whether it's for you or for a loved one, this program will explore the difference between normal age-related memory changes and abnormal changes that are associated with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia disorders; including the ten warning signs of Alzheimer's disease. The speakers will discuss the importance of receiving a thorough diagnostic evaluation when symptoms first arise, the current treatment modalities, and research advances.

Monday, March 26, 2007
from 5:30 - 8:30 PM

Park Place Assisted Living at Fellowship Village

9000 Fellowship Road, Basking Ridge, NJ
R.S.V.P. (908) 580-3800

5:30 - 7:00 PM: Open House offering tours and opportunities to meet our team of professionals and learn about the various disciplines of this Unique Assisted Living Community.

7:00 PM: Memory Loss? What's Normal & What's Not? A lecture by Dr. Joseph Ryan & Amy Matthews.



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www.fellowshipvillage.org

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