

Imprisoned Iraqi War Vet Sgt. Chemidlin Retires

FANWOOD — After serving 26 years and two wars, Sergeant Michael Chemidlin has retired at the age of 60.

His career began June 28, 1968, when he was 20, in military intelligence repairing counter mortar radar during the Vietnam War, and ended in the kitchen as a food service sergeant during the Iraq War. Sgt. Chemidlin has served over five active years in the military and 21 years in the Reserves/National Guard. His first six years, from June 1968 to June 1974, include three years of active duty and three years of an inactive reserve duty.

Following a 10-year civilian break in service, Sgt. Chemidlin then joined the National Guard at the Plainfield Armory from September 1984 to September 1994. The unit was transferred for the next 10 years to the Westfield Armory until May 2004 when it was

deployed to Iraq.

He said training at Fort Dix and Fort Monmouth prepared him for Vietnam, Japan, Germany (a European discharge), then later after further training at Fort Lee, Va., and Fort Drum, N.Y., he was deployed to Iraq.

He said the years after the war, 2006 to 2008, in a medical hold unit until his retirement. After serving a span of five decades and reaching four continents, Sgt. Chemidlin said he is not ready to put up his feet just yet.

Having begun church work in Africa in 2006, where he was held 82 days and imprisoned, he said he still desires to continue serving in the church. At present he is employed for United States Postal Service in the maintenance department.



Sgt. Michael Chemidlin

Campaign Release, Linda Stender for Congress Stender Asks Opponent

To 'Repudiate' Bush Policy

Seventh Congressional District Democratic candidate Linda Stender has called on her opponent, Republican Leonard Lance, to join her in "repudiating the entire failed Bush energy plan and calling for an end to tax breaks and subsidies for Big Oil."

"As those same Big Oil companies continue to report record profits, the Department of Labor yesterday released new figures showing our economy is moving dangerously toward a recession, with the rate of inflation increasing and consumer prices rising 5.6 percent in July from one year earlier. This was the highest one year jump in 17 years.

"American families faced an increase in energy costs for the third straight month in July. Energy prices rose 4 percent, gasoline prices rose 4.1 percent and natural gas prices rose 7.4 percent. Meanwhile, Exxon Mobil reported the largest quarterly profits for a corporation in history from April through June — almost \$90,000 per minute," according to a Stender Campaign release.

"New Jersey families are struggling to afford the rising costs of everything from gas to food to

healthcare, and they need real relief," Mrs. Stender said.

"At the same time Big Oil companies are reporting record profits and benefiting from Republican-sponsored tax breaks, our economy is in shambles and families are just trying to make ends meet. Too many parents are forced to choose between filling up a tank of gas or taking their child to the doctor," Mrs. Stender said.

"This election offers a real choice between more of the same failed policies of the Bush Administration or change and a new direction for our country. I'm running for Congress to bring the change New Jersey families need," the candidate said.

Mrs. Stender said she is asking Mr. Lance to join her "calling on oil companies to start drilling on the 68 million acres of federal land currently leased for energy production but not being used."

"We need an energy policy that lowers gas prices and ends our dependence on foreign oil, through investments in renewable energy sources and green technologies. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to leave them a cleaner, greener world," Mrs. Stender said.

Campaign Release, Leonard Lance for Congress

Lance for Congress Launches New TV Ad

Seventh Congressional District candidate Leonard Lance has begun airing his new television ad, which he said highlights his "independent record and bi-partisan support."

"This ad clearly demonstrates Leonard's ability to look beyond partisanship and party lines to serve the public's interest and that is exactly what we need in Washington D.C. to bring about the fundamental change necessary," the campaign said in a release.

"Whether it's protecting our environment or protecting our pocketbooks, Leonard Lance is the only candidate in this race that has a record of reaching across the aisle in a bi-partisan way to reduce taxes, reduce wasteful spending and make New Jersey a better place to live and work," Campaign Manager Amanda Woloshen said.

Mr. Lance won the GOP nomination by winning a seven-candidate Primary Election in June.

Bramnick to Lecture On Trial Techniques

WESTFIELD — Certified civil trial attorney Jon Bramnick, will speak in West Orange on Thursday, September 25 and in Mount Laurel on Saturday, September 27 on behalf of the Continuing Legal Education program established for lawyers in New Jersey.

Mr. Bramnick, a personal injury lawyer from Westfield, will address preparing for trial, cross-examination of experts and depositions. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Syracuse University and former president of the Richard J. Hughes Inn of Court, Mr. Bramnick has been asked by the New Jersey Institute for Continuing Legal Education (NJICLE) to conduct these seminars. He is a recipient of the attorney-of-the-year award from the Union County Bar Association, is also a state assemblyman and serves as the Republican minority whip.



Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

Arkansas Dem Party Chairman Killed By Gunman In Office

The Head of the Arkansas Democratic Party was shot to death in his Little Rock office on August 13, the *International Herald-Tribune* reported. The shooting occurred a few blocks from the state capital.

Reports state that Bill Gwatney, 48, was shot by Timothy Johnson, 50, after Johnson barged into his office after bypassing an employee. Mr. Gwatney was a state senator from 1993 to 2003.

Little Rock Police had no motive as of last week. Johnson then left the scene and next went to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention where he pointed a gun at an employee, but did not shoot, the *Tribune* reported.

The suspect was then shot following a car chase and shootout with police. He later died at an area hospital.

Roselle Mayor Looks to Have Linden Take Over Fire Dept.

Roselle Mayor Garrett Smith introduced a resolution before the borough council last week to have Linden take over the firefighting duties of the borough's fire department, according to *The Star-Ledger*.

Congressman Helping Family of Trapped Girls

The parents of two young girls who are trapped in the Republic of Georgia due to the invasion of Russia have enlisted the help of Rep.

Chris Smith (R-Hamilton) in trying to ensure their safety and return home, according to news reports.

According to the Associated Press, the girls, ages 3 and 7, were on their annual summer vacation at their maternal grandparents' farm in the western village of Chiatura when Russian troops invaded Georgia. Attempts to get the girls out have been unsuccessful, as Russian troops have blocked the roadways leading to the airport.

Rep. Smith has said he has been in touch with the U.S. State Department, as well as the U.S. ambassador in Georgia.

School Administrators Sue Davy Over New Regs.

The New Jersey Association of School Administrators has filed a lawsuit challenging new state regulations that give the state's education commissioner, Lucille Davy, the power to review and reject the contracts of superintendents, assistant superintendents and business administrators, according to *The Star-Ledger*.

PA Proposes to Replace Aging Goethals Bridge

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has announced plans to replace the Goethals Bridge, which links Elizabeth to Staten Island, with a new span by 2015, according to *The Star-Ledger*. One billion dollars is earmarked for the project, with contracts to be awarded in 2011.

Lance and Stender to Debate September 16 in SP

SCOTCH PLAINS — Two candidates vying for Congressional representation in the 7th District, Republican State Senator Leonard Lance (LD-23, Clinton) and Democratic Assemblywoman Linda Stender (LD-22, Fanwood) will debate for the first time at 7:15 p.m. on Tuesday, September 16.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Central New Jersey will host the debate at their offices, located at 1391 Martine Avenue in Scotch Plains.

The event will offer voters insight into critical issues, including key domestic and foreign policy questions. The race, to fill the seat vacated

by retiring Republican Mike Ferguson, is likely to be one of the most closely watched in the country.

Organizations co-sponsoring this event include: American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League New Jersey, Community Relations Committee of United Jewish Communities of MetroWest NJ, JCC of Central New Jersey, Jewish Community Relations Council of Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County, National Jewish Democratic Council, New Jersey State Association of Jewish Federations, Republican Jewish Coalition, Westfield Chapter of Hadassah, and The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring, New Jersey region.

Constitution Party Gains Ballot Access in NJ

TRENTON — New Jersey voters unhappy with Barack Obama and John McCain will have a different choice this November, as Chuck Baldwin — the Constitution Party presidential candidate — has received enough petition signatures to appear on the ballot.

"Alternative parties have a disadvantage compared to the Democrats and Republicans," said Cal Wortman, the Constitution Party of New Jersey's ballot access coordinator.

"You must collect enough signatures to appear on the ballot. We almost missed the deadline because the state put the wrong date on the petition, but we made it in time to get on the ballot," Mr. Wortman said.

Mr. Baldwin said, if elected, he would work to protect the lives of the unborn, abolish the Internal Revenue Service and the Federal Reserve, support home schooling, and "eviscerate" vast numbers of unconstitutional federal programs, such as the Department of Energy.

He promised to get "the U.S. out of the U.N. and the U.N. out of the U.S.," to abolish the Department of

Homeland Security and to end foreign aid.

Mr. Baldwin said his Washington "outsider" status would likely be considered a plus in this election, saying many "dissatisfied Americans have come to view political insiders as carriers of 'big government disease.'"

The platform of the national Constitution Party affirms limited, Constitutional government and tax policies and focuses on Right-to-Life, Second Amendment rights, U.S. sovereignty, energy independence, border enforcement and celebrates the Judeo-Christian foundations of the American political system.

Mr. Baldwin is a pastor, writer and conservative talk show. He founded the Crossroad Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla.

The Constitution Party of New Jersey is fielding a local candidate, Peter Boyce (BoyceYourChoice.com) for the state's Second Congressional District in South Jersey. Rep. James Saxton (R-Burlington).

Delegates choose Mr. Baldwin over Alan Keyes in April.

Bramnick Debates Coleman On Affordable Housing Regs

TRENTON — Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (LD-21, Westfield) appeared as a guest speaker on Cablevision's "We've Got Issues" to discuss the recent Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) regulations approved by the State Legislature.

In a debate against Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman (LD-15, Ewing), Mr. Bramnick raised concerns about how COAH determined how many units of affordable housing should be built and where.

It was reported that COAH used outdated aerial images to determine affordable housing obligations, counting backyards, school fields, preserved farmland and the grass median of the Garden State Parkway as open space, which can be developed.

"Many towns lacking developable land will receive affordable housing requirements based on this flawed methodology," Mr. Bramnick said.

Mr. Bramnick also addressed the 2.5 percent tax that would be implemented on all commercial buildings. "This will have a negative effect on

the development of hotels, strip malls and other businesses in the state. With our current economic condition, this is not a good time to discourage growth," he said.

The new COAH regulations also prohibited Regional Contribution Agreements (RCA), which gave urban areas the opportunity to redevelop existing properties.

Mr. Bramnick said COAH changes are not exclusively a partisan issue. He said the president of the League of Municipalities, Democratic Mayor Robert Bowser of East Orange, has filed an appeal with the Appellate Division of the Superior Court of New Jersey regarding the regulations adopted by the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing.

The program will air on Cablevision's local public affairs show, which can be seen throughout the state on local programming channels. For more information on the show or other topics, contact the Legislative Office at (908) 232-2073.

County Employees Confess To Unlawful Conspiracies

ELIZABETH — Two Union County employees pled guilty in state Superior Court yesterday for their roles in smuggling illegal items into the Union County jail. A third man, an inmate in the jail, also pled guilty to similar charges, announced Union County Prosecutor Ted Romankow.

Stephen Matthews, 48, of Union pled guilty to one count of second-degree conspiracy to commit official misconduct. Matthews had worked as a corrections officer at the Union County jail for more than a decade, said Assistant Prosecutor William Kolano, who prosecuted the case.

Under the terms of the plea, Union County Superior Court Judge Douglas Fasciale ordered that Matthews be removed from his position and may never again seek employment in the public sector.

In court on August 12, Matthews admitted that, in exchange for cash, he brought tobacco products into the jail on multiple occasions, said Kolano. The items, including cigarettes and loose tobacco were passed on to inmates.

Matthews was arrested on August 22, 2007 following a months-long investigation.

Also arrested was Joseph Pecoraro, 37, of Elizabeth, who was employed as a senior maintenance repairman for Union County. He pled guilty to second degree conspiracy and third degree providing an electronic device (cell phone) to an inmate.

In court Pecoraro said he met with a woman outside of the jail, and in exchange for a cash payment, he delivered a cell phone to an inmate. He also smuggled tobacco products into the jail, Mr. Kolano said. Pecoraro was removed from his county position and is barred from seeking public employment in the future.

In addition to Pecoraro and Matthews, Sheriff Raymond, 27, of Elizabeth, who is currently incarcerated at the jail on robbery and weapons charges, pled guilty to second degree conspiracy and third degree bribery.

He admitted in court that he purposely tried to corrupt government officials to get tobacco products into the jail and that the employees were being paid to do so, Mr. Kolano said.

The investigation was spearheaded by Lieutenant Robert McGuire of the Union County Police Department and Investigator Donald Johnston of the Union County Police Department's Internal Affairs Unit.

Sentencing for all three men is scheduled for September 26 before Judge Fasciale.

The investigation also resulted in the indictments of four other people, three of whom are incarcerated. Cases are still pending against Abdul Griggs, 36, of Piscataway; Jeremy Watson, 22, of Plainfield; Jadon Russell, 29, of Linden, and Kelly Spicer, 36, of Elizabeth.

Quijano Named to Replace Cohen in State Legislature

UNION — Annette Quijano won a special Democratic Committee election, Tuesday night, to fill the 20th Legislative District seat left vacant by the resignation of Assemblyman Neil Cohen (D-Roselle).

Mr. Cohen resigned last month after reports that child pornography was discovered on his legislative office computer.

An Elizabeth resident, Ms. Quijano is the first Latina to serve as a state legislator in the 20th district, which includes Elizabeth, Union, Roselle and Kenilworth. She edged out Elizabeth Councilwoman Patricia Perkins-Auguste, 87-82, and will now fill the legislative seat through November, when a special election will be held to fill the remaining year on Mr. Cohen's term.

"I'm going to represent people in my community. We're going through a tough economic period, and I want to make sure that seniors don't have to decide between groceries and medication. I want to bring jobs back into the district," she said in a written statement.

Two other Latino contenders, Union County Freeholder Director Angel Estrada and Elizabeth businessman George Castro, withdrew their names before Tuesday's vote, according to news accounts.

Ms. Quijano has been serving as assistant counsel for Governor Jon Corzine and previously served in that position under Governors Jim

McGreevey and Richard Codey. She served as chief of staff for the 20th Legislative District office from 1992 to 1994.

After Ms. Quijano was named as the replacement, Union County Republican Committee Chairman Phil Morin criticized the appointment.

"The Union County Democratic machine had an opportunity to fill a disgraced former assemblyman's seat with a fresh face of change. Instead, party insiders have selected someone who represents more of the same," Mr. Morin said.

He said Ms. Quijano would be a "loyal foot soldier who will blindly vote for higher property taxes, bigger government and sweetheart deals for connected insiders" in Trenton.

In 2002, she was appointed as clerk of the board for the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders at a salary of \$72,000. Prior to that, she served as assistant county counsel.

She was a law clerk for the state's Department of the Public Advocate, in the office of the governor's counsel under former Governor Jim Florio, and for the New Jersey Superior Court Judge Julio Fuentes.

Ms. Quijano was a commissioner on the Congressional Redistricting Commission in 1992. Congressional and legislative districts are realigned every decade to reflect changes in population based on the United States census.

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