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Letters to the Editor

God Was Watching Over Mike in the Form of Two Professionals



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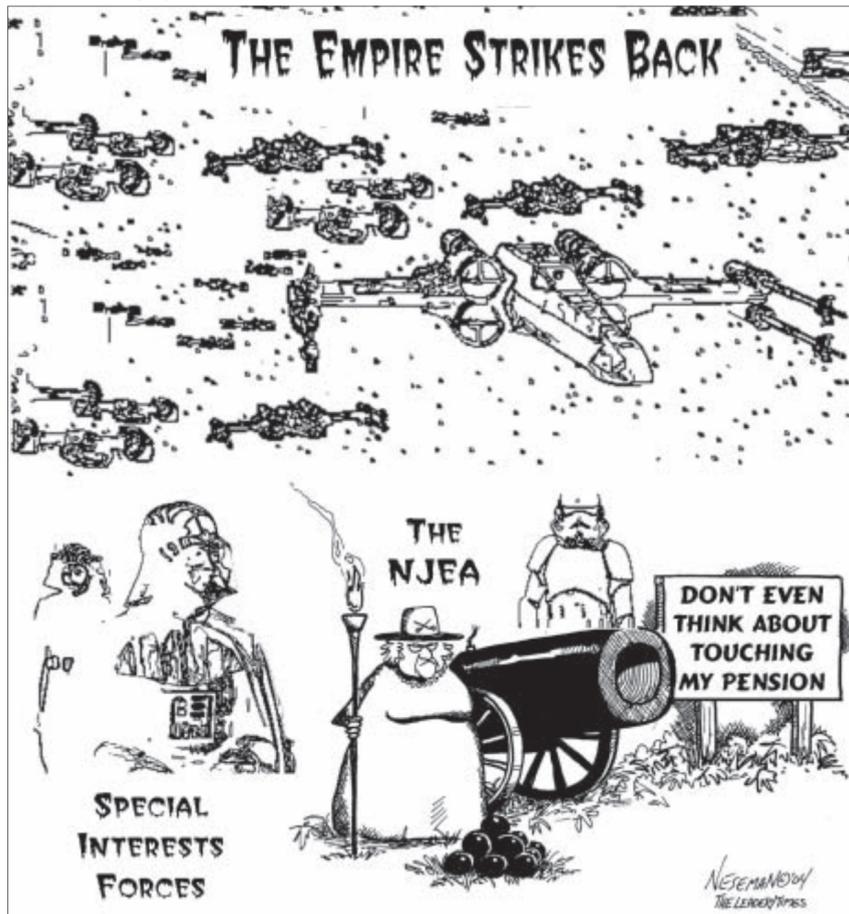
See more letters & government news on page 18

The Governor Took the First Step In the Tremendous Battle Ahead

New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, on Tuesday, took the first step in Trenton toward dealing with the fiscal crisis in the state. We must give him credit. He proposed a budget that does not increase from last year.

Still, he and most others know the problem is not solved with his proposal. The next several months

will involve a tremendous battle - unfortunate, but necessary for us to right ourselves. The battle can take many directions. Hopefully, the outcome will be for the good of New Jersey citizens. We urge everyone to remain vigilant and to express themselves - and to think of the public good over self-interests.



Kudos to County Clerk for Discovering Error in Presidential Primary Results

Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi was double-checking election results from the February 5, New Jersey Presidential Primary when she kept coming up with errors on a handful of machines. The results between the machine cartridges and the paper back-ups showed discrepancies.

After checking and rechecking the results, Ms. Rajoppi called other New Jersey county clerks, who then checked their elections results. Similar errors on the Sequoia electronic voting machines were found in Bergen, Gloucester, Middlesex and Ocean Counties.

In a close election, an error of this magnitude could have resulted in a successful recount challenge. In

2005, Democrat Tom Bigosinski beat Republican Eric Leuthold by a single vote out of 2,937 tallies cast in the race for a Westfield Town Council seat. His victory was upheld after a recount.

We offer our kudos to Ms. Rajoppi for bringing her findings to the forefront. We need to get this issue resolved in time for the June Primary and, more importantly, the November General Election when the public will elect a new President and Congressman/Congresswoman from the 7th District.

Sequoia had blamed the error on a "corrupted chip." That's an interesting choice of words in this state. At least it's not a hanging chad.



I am writing to publicly acknowledge and thank the two doctors who quickly and carefully attended to Mike Fitzhenry last Monday after he was struck, dragged and seriously injured by a driver who lost control of her car.

For anyone who has had any first-aid training, we recognize the first few minutes of a non-breathing victim are critical. If Dr. Streko and Dr. Schwartz were not present immediately to remove the obstruction and open Mike's airway, the outcome would have been drastically different.

As a nurse, a Westfield resident and one who has known Dr. Schwartz for over 25 years, I could not let another moment go by without making sure that both doc-

tors are hailed as heroes. Yes, humbly, Dr. Schwartz said that anyone who had proper training would have done the same thing, but on that Monday, it was Dr. Streko himself who rendered life-saving care to that very vulnerable boy in a most serious and tenuous state.

I cannot help but say that I believe that God was watching over Mike, his family and friends as he sent direct aid to Mike in the form of those two professionals at the exact moment it was needed.

I, for one, am grateful for the outcome and comforted knowing that we have such dedicated and skilled physicians as a part of our community.

Robin Ince, MSN, RN
Westfield

We're All Americans; Let's Break Down Special-Interest Groups

During the Presidential primaries, we often hear about someone pandering to special-interest groups. The next thing we here is how different groups are voting: seniors, men, African-Americans, Hispanics, women, blue-collar workers, etc. Each group supports candidates they believe will best benefit themselves. They also contribute their hard-earned money to the candidate of their choice.

This makes each group of voters a "special-interest group." However, no

candidate will ever refer to any of their groups as a "special interest" for fear of voter backlash.

We are all Americans. Years have been spent trying to break down the barriers between the races and ethnic groups; yet, we turn a blind eye when it comes to elections and accept the division between each group by how they vote.

Thomas Lienhard
Westfield

Sixth Grader Says Cartoon Was Offensive to Students, Athletes

As a sixth grader at Edison Intermediate School, I was deeply offended by your cartoon in the February 14 issue of *The Westfield Leader*.

The cartoon featured a football team running onto a field with student fans holding signs such as "beet dem bludy" and "go team."

On the side is a man talking to his wife about how he doesn't think the budget money for the board of education is properly spent. I completely disagree with this.

The students of Westfield do much more than play sports. The BOE helps support a wonderful fine-arts department in our school district. Four Westfield High School (WHS) students were selected for the 2007 All State Chorus and Orchestra. *Hi's Eye*, the WHS newspaper, also won six individual awards from the Gar-

den State Press Association. On the academic side, 19 WHS students achieved an "800" on their SAT I and II tests. In addition, 93 percent of WHS students will be continuing on to higher education.

The school district often uses the positive effects of sports, such as teamwork and leadership, to their advantage in the classroom.

However, to say that the BOE spends more money on sports than actual education is simply incorrect. I found the cartoon insulting to the hard work of students from all nine schools, and I believe that the other students, teachers and parents would agree. Thank you for listening and go Blue Devils!

Jack Lynch
Westfield

Editor's note: We congratulate the precocity of the writer.

Scotch Plains Town Council: Ethical Ethos Withholding Public Information

I have often heard Mayor Martin Marks lament the poor attendance at public township meetings. On the front page of the February 21, *Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* we have an inkling of why this is so. It is a sordid tale of our town officials attempting to suppress and limit access to information about the town budget.

As reported in *The Times*, copies of a one-page document concerning the town budget were being circulated to the council members and the press at a public conference meeting. Richard Samuel, the well-respected chairman of the Democratic Party in town, was in attendance at the meeting as a concerned citizen. When Mr. Samuel requested a copy of this document, Tom Atkins refused, outrageously accompanying his refusal with a derogatory personal attack on Mr. Samuel.

Mr. Samuel was then content to look over someone's shoulder to see what was in the document being discussed.

Mayor Marks, who was chairing the meeting, decided at that point to stonewall by taking the session behind closed doors to confer with the town lawyer on the legality of denying Mr. Samuel access to this information. Behind closed doors, they decided they had no legal obligation to give this information to a specific member of the public.

I contend, however, in a Democratic society, that they most certainly are violating a moral obligation to the principles of open government. Moreover, this kind of

disrespectful and downright abusive treatment of a concerned citizen is deplorable and, in all likelihood, directly responsible for the lack of public participation that Mayor Marks so often laments.

Sadly, this incident calls into question the ethical ethos of town officials who would go to such extreme lengths to withhold public information about the town budget from interested citizens. We live in a democracy, and the public deserves full and reasonable access to any and all materials relating to the town budget.

Mayor Marks, Mr. Atkins, your behavior begs the question: What are you trying to hide?

I find this whole incident the most blatant and appalling display of pernicious negativity perpetrated by Republican town officials to date.

On behalf of the citizens of Scotch Plains, I call on the town council to make any and all materials relating to the town budget available on a town budget section of the Scotch Plains website for all to examine. Stop hiding in the shadows and let the sun shine in on local government affairs.

A quote from the Revolutionary War patriot Patrick Henry seems particularly relevant: "The liberties of a people never were, nor ever will be, secure, when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them."

John Thompson
Scotch Plains

Samuel Charges Atkins and Marks With 'Trying to Demean People'

In a rare public temper tantrum, normally displayed only in private and reserved for township employees and others who challenge our municipal manager's perceived dictatorial powers over the running of Scotch Plains' affairs, Tom Atkins accused me of writing "things that are trash."

When challenged to point out anything I had written that was false, he had nothing to say on the merits.

In the past, I have accused Mr. Atkins, in writing, of improper conduct in the administration of municipal affairs and

provided the writing to him and distributed it to the press.

For example, in November 2007, I submitted my recommendations on the upcoming 2008 budget, in which I included the following charge of misconduct in very polite language as follows:

"No money should be appropriated or used by the town for political purposes as was done in the 2006 election... This practice not only adds to the towns expenses but also is illegal and could add legal costs in defending an appropriate lawsuit."

This statement was not challenged because it is true, and I stand ready to prove it if called upon to do so.

I have alluded, in the past, to some special provisions Mr. Atkins had succeeded in having prior township councils authorize, which provide benefits to him and cost the township money.

An example is article 8.3 of our personnel code, effective January 1, 2005, which provides for reimbursement of 75 percent of an employee's health insurance after retirement until age 65, if the employee has 25 years of service at the time of retirement. Tom Atkins appears to be one of a few, if not the only, employee to fit the bill.

Tom Atkins and his cohort Mayor Marks like to put on dog-and-pony shows telling the taxpayers how only they understand the finances of the town and present so-called facts to support their positions.

What they don't do is present the real state of Scotch Plains' finances or the ultimate cost to Scotch Plains of the actions they favor. They also insult and try to demean people who suggest doing things that will benefit the people of Scotch Plains, such as a cell tower ordinance, but do not suit their agenda.

The truth is that the township is neither in as bad of financial shape as they would want you to believe, but it will be if their policies and practices are allowed to be continued.

Dick Samuel, Chairman
Scotch Plains Democratic Committee

ABCDICTIONOPQRSTUVEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ



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An Open Letter of Thanks to Westfield

I would like to say how proud I am of our town and its public servants - the police, firefighters, rescue squad and building department. On Monday, February 18, a near tragedy occurred outside and inside my office at 169 Mountain Avenue. But, due to the quick response of our police, firefighters and rescue squads, that tragedy was averted and a precious life saved.

I would like to personally thank the Westfield police officers, firefighters and EMTs who were quick to respond to the scene to aid in this mini-miracle. A special thanks to Dr. Malcolm Schwartz for his quick response and aid in that dire situation. And I would also like to thank and congratulate my staff members on their quick reactions and unselfish acts in a critical situation in getting all the patients out of the office safely.

And finally, I would like to thank God, for surely he was looking down upon this town at my office, lending a guiding hand at a scene where split-second decisions were made, and unusual circumstances occurred, which averted what could have been a horrible tragedy.

Again, my sincerest of thanks.

Dr. Thomas Streko, DMD
Westfield

Thanks for the Fun WF Victory Parade

Sunday was a great day for Westfield swimming, when the Westfield High School girls and boys teams performed terrifically and both won their State Championships.

The coaches Brooke Smith and Jeffrey Knight were real inspirations in leading their teams. The Westfield, Hillsborough and Bridgewater-Raritan fans at The College of New Jersey provided loud support.

Thanks also to Mayor Andy Skibitsky, Sergeant Christopher Battiloro and Lieutenant Edward Maguire of the Westfield Police, and the Board of Education for planning the fun victory parade through town and the celebration at the high school.

Larry Budnick
Westfield

WF Champ Swim Team Thanks Supporters

On behalf of the state champion Westfield Blue Devil swim teams, we would like to express our gratitude to all the people who went out of their way to welcome us back when we returned from our championship meet. The Westfield Fire Department, Police Department and Rescue Squad did an exceptional job escorting team busses and the rest of our rowdy procession back through town and to the high school.

Mayor Andrew Skibitsky, councilmen Mark Ciarrocca, Sal Caruana and Frank Arena, along with Ginny Leiz and Jane Clancy from the board of education, met us there for an enthusiastic victory rally. *The Westfield Leader* also was terrific in sending their photographer to cover the celebration.

Our town's great support and recognition of our accomplishment will be a lifetime memory for us, and we are very grateful for the enthusiastic support we received from everyone. We were proud to bring our record 21st State Championship trophy back to Westfield, and deeply appreciate the great show of support from our town.

Thanks to all of you who made our special night possible.

Matt Bluffield, Matt Green, Matt Haddad, and Jon Holt, WHS Boys Swim Team Captains

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