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**Letters to the Editor**  
**We Must All Start Attending  
 The County Freeholder Sessions**

I want to thank *The Westfield Leader* for attending the Union County Freeholder meetings. I will soon be a new subscriber. I attended my first freeholder meeting last Thursday, and I was appalled by the treatment citizens received if they were critical or challenged the freeholders.

A gentleman from Fanwood, I don't remember his name, delivered a very articulate presentation (of course in his allotted five minutes). He talked about how he tried to work with the freeholders before last year's budget to suggest ways to cut expenses instead of increasing taxes. He said he reviewed all of the county checks written to find out exactly where the money was going.

Instead of any interest from the freeholder board, he was given the run around. They refused to meet with him and [said] he had to use OPRA [Open Public Records Act]. I believe it. As soon as his time was up, the board chairman basically said, "You're done."

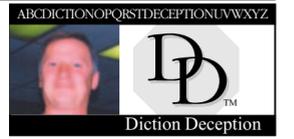
It seemed to me the board was day-dreaming or maybe even annoyed that he dare challenge its power and how they do business. They were simply watching the clock.

I followed up to agree with the gentleman from Fanwood, and I also questioned why we don't reduce expenses to maintain taxes at 2007 levels. All I got as a response were stares.

The leadership role *The Leader* is taking by attending these meetings is powerful. The overtaxed and ignored citizens must know what is going on. We must all start attending these sessions. I can only imagine the reaction the freeholders would have if 1,000, 2,000, or more people showed up at their clubby meeting and demanded a hold on expenses. This would be the fair thing to do because it at least gives the board a chance to remedy the situation before it is voted out.

Although I must admit—they appear so smug, they probably think they are untouchable, which is a good thing for their foes.

Lance Cook  
Westfield



Below are four arcane words, each with four definitions—only one is correct. The others are made up. Are you sharp enough to discern this deception of diction?

If you can guess one correctly—good guess. If you get two—well-read individual. If you get three—word expert. If you get all four—You must have a lot of free time!

**All words and correct definitions come from the board game Diction Deception.**

**Answers to last week's arcane words.**

1. Uberty - Abundance
2. Depilation - The act of or process of removing hair from the body
3. Tzigane - A Hungarian gypsy
4. Katabasis - A retreat to the sea

**TRIPARA**

1. A woman who has borne three children
2. Abnormal fear of germs
3. Government by three men or coalition of three parties. A triumvirate
4. A ballet dancer

**DEG**

1. To please, charm or delight
2. To stretch or distort
3. To gnaw or chew
4. To sprinkle

**TRILLACHAN**

1. An active young man
2. A harem slave
3. An oyster catcher
4. A web-spinning spider

**DEFLAGRATION**

1. Combustion
2. A cooling or simmering
3. Punishing; chastening
4. Enlivening; exhilarating

**These Programs Are Not Free  
 And More Than We Can afford**

Assemblyman Joseph Cryan's letter on page 5 regarding the closing of Muhlenberg Hospital gives rise to a question, "Are we giving away more than we can afford, thus causing our institutions to collapse?"

Perhaps with good intentions, New Jersey state government has been expanding unfunded benefits and services for a decade or more. Unpaid health care at Muhlenberg Hospital is only one example. Naturally, this overall situation in the state has attracted a large influx of illegal aliens to partake of these free programs. But, as these programs are not free, the promises cannot be met. It would be nice if we could feed the world, but we cannot.

Would it be better to guard our country's borders not by a fence, but by ceasing to make these promises that cannot be met? The driving force for illegals to come here might start to disappear. Would it also not be the kinder and more humane thing to do?

What is better—free hospitals, which eventually lead to no hospitals, or financially sound hospitals that actually exist? To us, it seems that the best thing to do is to only promise that which can be afforded. Anything else leads to collapse.

We don't believe Governor Jon Corzine or the

majority of the State Legislative leaders realize this yet—nor do we believe they are brave enough to address the reality. They seem to remain in the "Nero or Caligula" mentality. Unfortunately, too, we fear that most of our society remains in a state of denial. In the midst of institutions burning, life is proceeding for most with "business as normal" perception—even after the Governor spent more than a month holding meetings around the state telling of the state's emergency [this is not an endorsement of the Governor's proposed fixes].

Just this week, the State Senate passed a six-week paid family leave program, awaiting Assembly approval. Where are the minds of these lawmakers? The problem is at the top.

Union County government is proposing about an 8 percent rise in the property tax on Westfield. Where are the minds of the freeholders?

The problem is not illegal aliens—"We have met the enemy, and it is us."—Pogo.

We need all levels of government and schools, and ourselves, to focus keenly and solely on fixing our problems—not starting new ones. If we don't, will the future hospitals be nothing more than MASH units scattered throughout Union County?

**WHS Girls Swim Photo Should  
 Have Been on Front Page, Too**

Why did the boys Blue Devil Swim Team in the February 28 edition of *The Westfield Leader* rate a front-page picture, and the girls Blue Devil Swim Team picture was placed on page 12 in the "Week in Sports?"

In my opinion, a smaller picture of both teams winning their state championships would have been a much better way to show both swim teams' accomplishments.

Ellen Frey  
Westfield

**Summit Taxpayers Association  
 Announces Meeting, Invites Public**

The third Summit City budget workshop meeting will be held Thursday, March 6, at 6 p.m. at which the police, community services and parking services will be reviewed. Past meetings were well attended by all council members. Unfortunately, not very many members of the general public attended.

Last Wednesday night, city administrator Chris Cotter started things off with a review of 2008 objectives. Then, Frank Macioce, chairman of the finance committee, opened the floor to discussion, and those present reviewed the budget figures for finance, administration, clerk and fire department.

Last Thursday, they reviewed the library and community programs. There was open and free discussion. Mr. Cotter was keeping score of reductions and increases. Unfortunately, there was no report on how we were doing as they were progressing.

I proposed that the budget for 2008 be capped at 3.5 percent [increase] instead of the 7.2 percent as it currently stands. The proposed increase in [the municipal

**Letters to  
 the Editor**

**Precocity of Letter  
 Comes Into Question**

I studied journalism at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In addition, I worked in the media for more than 20 years and taught at the Seton Hall Graduate School of Business.

My graduate students could not write as well as this sixth grader. [Letter to the editor, February 28—"Sixth Grader Says Cartoon Was Offensive to Students, Athletes"] and I find it amazing that a sixth grader could be so articulate, let alone be so intimately familiar with details of the Westfield Public School District.

Leslie Sullivan  
Westfield

**WF Lions Club Thanks  
 Local Community**

On behalf of the Westfield Lions Club, we would like to thank Vicki's Diner, Panera Bread and the Bagel Chateau for allowing us to collect for our White Cane fundraiser for the blind. To the patrons who donated, the club sincerely thanks all of you for your donations to our "Have a Heart, Help the Lions Help the Blind" campaign.

We welcome new members at any time. For more information, please see westfieldnj.com/lions.

Alberta Capria-Ryan  
Westfield Lions Club, President

**Councilman Refers to  
 Historian Ralph Jones**

Someone pointed out the bottom of column five, page 10 of your newspaper edition of last week. Although I am pleased the First Ward Councilman mentioned my name and that of The Choral Arts Society of New Jersey—and I would like to speak with Mr. Caruana about those of us who work in town and are assets to the community—I believe the good gentleman refers to the retired Westfield Town Historian Ralph Jones.

Nevertheless, it may be prudent to reach out to the councilman, since Suzy and I will be moving to town this fall, I believe. Politics are local, as they say.

Ralph J. Jones Marketing Director  
The CAS of NJ, Inc.

**Applications  
 Close This Week  
 Leader/Times Sets  
 Internship Program**

WESTFIELD—*The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* invite area college and high-school students with an interest in journalism and newspaper operations to apply to the 2008 Summer Internship Program. The longstanding program is divided into two types of part-time, paid internships: staff interns and correspondent interns.

The staff intern program will accept a limited number of students to work alongside the office staff in a work/study environment with hands-on assignments involving operations, writing, photography, copyediting, graphic design, layout, video, communications and the Internet.

The correspondent intern program will accept a limited number of students to undertake reporting assignments, such as covering local meetings and events for publication.

The newspaper staff will guide the interns on journalistic standards and accountability. The staff intern program will require greater time, while the correspondent program is more flexible. Applicants may apply to either or both programs. The newspaper advisory committee will complete the selection process by early spring. Application to the program must be done online at [goleader.com/internship](http://goleader.com/internship) by March 8. Early registration is recommended.

**Teachers' and Public Employees'  
 Pensions Are Their Earned Benefits**

The cartoon in the February 28 edition of *The Westfield Leader*, entitled "The Empire Strikes Back," (by Neeseman, dated 2004) is simplistic and offensive. Referencing the NJEA, there is a sign in the lower right-hand corner with the words, "Don't Even Think About Touching My Pension," suggesting, I assume, that teachers' pensions are some sort of unearned perk that bilks the public and should be eliminated.

On the contrary, teachers' pensions, and those of other employees, public and private, are a part of their compensation package that also includes salary, medical benefits, holidays, vacation time and sick leave. They have contributed to their

**Why Are Freeholders Wasting Public  
 Funds to Benefit M&E Railroad?**

Over the last several months, five municipalities in Union County have passed resolutions citing breaches of contract in agreements made between the M&E Railroad and the Freeholders of Union County—and between the freeholders and the NJ State Department of Transportation. These resolutions cite the opposition of each town's elected officials to the state and county continuing to honor contracts, which must be voided due to non-performance and third-party injury to the taxpayers of New Jersey.

Over six years ago, the board of freeholders assured local communities that deactivated, abandoned rail lines in Union County would never carry rail freight without full agreement of affected communities. In fact, a letter signed by then-Freeholder Senator Scutari was sent out to assure mayors, town councils and citizens that the century-old tracks would never be returned to service.

The freeholders reneged on their commitment, signed a 10-year agreement with the M&E, leasing the 22-mile right-of-way for 17 cents a month. Additionally, the M&E was awarded a no-bid contract to restore the railroad. To date, \$14.6 million in public funds have been appropri-

**What Does Land for Peace  
 Really Mean in Gaza Region?**

We are now witnessing in Gaza the peace that Israel has achieved in trading land for peace. The Secretary General of the United Nations has condemned Israel for using excessive force. The people of Gaza are starving, and the innocent Palestinian civilians, including children, are being killed in the course of the fighting.

Leading up to this fighting, people in Gaza were killing Israeli's, including children, shooting at farmers and destroying buildings, including schools. The United Nations did not meet, and the only issue seemed to be that the people of Gaza were suffering.

On Sunday, as usual, even though there was fighting going on, an Israeli convoy of trucks set out to bring food to the people of Gaza. The Palestinians fired mortar rounds at the convoy and forced it to return to Israel without delivering the food. Yes, it is a shame for any person to be deprived of basic needs. We should all, like the Israeli's, not forget that each person should be treated with dignity and cared for.

Those who call for Israel to trade more land for peace should go to Gaza and explain to the people firing missiles at innocent Israeli civilians, and those who cheer each Jewish death, what the concept of land for peace really means.

Dick Samuel  
Scotch Plains

**The Lieberman Dilemma:  
 Moving On from MoveOn.org**

As a dedicated political enthusiast, I have always been fascinated by the tasteless ideological polarization of candidates of both major parties during the interminable primary season. Although the means by which American choose their leaders is often a source of vast wonder and amusement in other nations, we seem to have become inured to extreme, and frequently bizarre, rhetoric and positions.

In their efforts to appeal to their party's primitive base, several of the Republican contenders almost fell over each other to publicly genuflect before the altar of the Second Amendment, demand the deportation of undocumented gardeners, proclaim pious fealty to their various Christian faiths and display their embarrassing ignorance of scientific truths. The title "conservative," despite its having been defiled and debased for seven long years by Cheney-Bush, is still claimed by Republicans as the gold standard of presidential suitability.

Similarly, many of the Democrats lined up to chant, in unison, their revisionist litany of how they never really meant to approve military intervention in Iraq and to declare their intentions to withdraw our forces by specific deadlines and negotiate with the Islamic fascist leader of Iran. Their ringing rhetoric of hope has somehow, in their skewed judgment, supplanted the hard realities of a hard world.

Presumably, once the respective parties choose their candidates and the nominees gravitate to more centrist positions, we will all pretend that this unseemly electoral prelude bore some tenuous relationship to rationality.

Of course, extreme oratory and willful blindness are not merely confined to the primary candidates. The right-wing media persists in filling the airwaves with their ugly and crepuscular mutterings. At the opposite pole of the political spectrum, stary-eyed leftists who believe in the fantasy of good-faith negotiations with Hitler's heirs preach a naive ethic of defeatism and weakness.

And that finally brings me to MoveOn.org, an organization that I once respected and supported. Some time ago,

when I asked to be deleted from its electronic mailing list, I received an e-mail asking me to detail the reasons for my request. This is what I wrote in response:

"You have asked why I have chosen to unsubscribe from the MoveOn email list. It would have been easy to ignore your request, but our country owes you its gratitude for helping achieve Congressional change in last year's elections, so the very least that I can do is to take a few moments to pen these words.

I supported your efforts to elect a Democratic Congress because I believed and still believe that the Cheney-Bush regime and its primitive "base" have assaulted truth, education, the poor, our Constitution, scientific realities, civil liberties and freedom of and from religion. In that regard, you have succeeded. Last November, the American people, in essence, fired Cheney-Bush and some of its most awful Congressional cronies.

Even at that time, however, while sharing your elation (and, evidently, that of the majority of the electorate) at having effectively influenced and achieved regime change, I felt a growing sense of unease at your strident campaign against Senator Joseph Lieberman. Joe has consistently and forcefully supported moderate Democratic values in the face of extreme polarizing pressures from the left and the right. His belief that continued military force in Iraq is essential to prevent a sectarian bloodbath and the advent of a militant Islamic regime is held by large numbers of Americans, not just Republicans. And, yes, despite my revulsion at the hard-right extremists who have hijacked our presidency, despite the lies that led us to Iraq and despite the Administration's dangerous incompetence in national security, it is also my belief.

Since the election, it seems that you have become a single-issue organization that is no longer interested in, or capable of, focusing upon the broad spectrum of vital issues and challenges that confront us. This unfortunate change of course has carried MoveOn far from its original purpose to the fringes of a left-wing ideology that is, in its own way, no less blind and

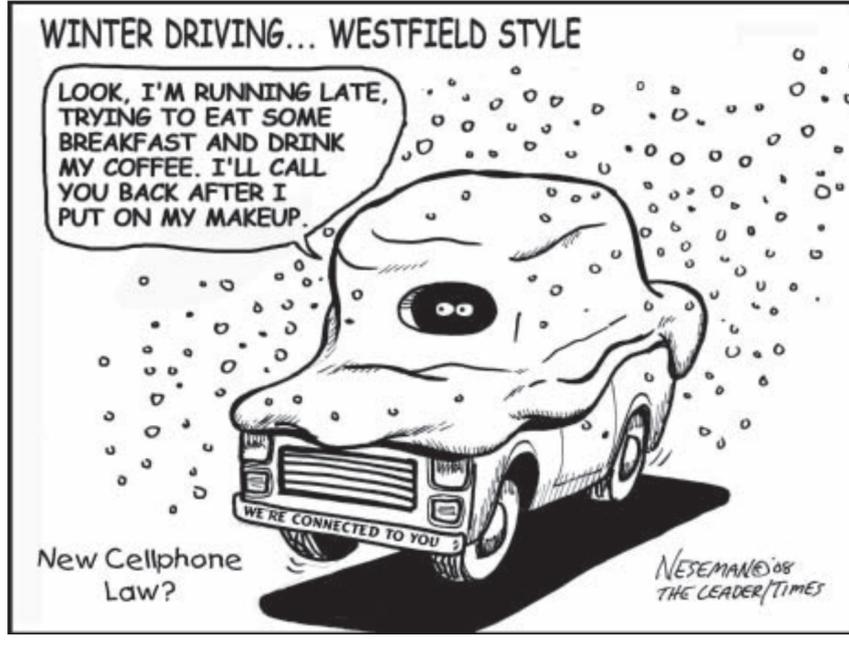
immoral than the Republican right's mindless fanaticism.

Until last week, I continued to believe that the aggregate good that you have done outweighed what I had hoped was no more than a transient aberration. I was wrong. In savaging General David Petraeus' patriotism and honesty, you have strayed well beyond the bounds of rational and civil discourse. Your characterization of the general's service as betrayals raises deep concerns regarding your tactics, motivation and values. The purported moral legitimacy of your cause cannot justify running roughshod over a man's well-earned honor and reputation. You owe General Petraeus and your members an unqualified and public apology. Until that time, I will have no greater interest in your communiqués than in the pronouncements of a hapless and weak President or his unbalanced putative second-in-command.

Over three decades ago, I cast my first Presidential vote for Richard Nixon. Years later, I voted for Jimmy Carter. Viewed through the lens of Watergate, enemies lists, the Iranian hostage crisis, economic malaise and "Peace Not Apartheid," I recognize and acknowledge that these choices were wrong. In the larger scheme of things, my votes had no more than a minuscule effect upon the elections of two of the three worst Presidents in American history. In contrast, your egregious and defamatory words, amplified by the "force-multiplying" effect of full-page newspaper advertisements, have the far greater potential to inflict lasting harm upon General Petraeus' reputation, career and legacy. I freely admit that I've made bad political decisions. Will you have the moral courage to do the same?"

Months have passed. I am not surprised that I never received an answer to my e-mail. You see, I've come to understand that the niceties of reason or the prospect that they might, after all, be wrongly rarely affect true believers. Ultimately, though, it no longer really matters because I, too, have already moved on.

Robert Ratner  
Westfield



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**Daylight Saving Time  
 Starts Sunday  
 Spring Ahead  
 One Hour**