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## State Offices, Congress Swapping; Scandalous Political Shenanigans

Earlier this year, Rep. Rob Andrews in South Jersey announced his last-minute entry to challenge Senator Frank Lautenberg in the Democratic Primary in June, ticking off many of the party's faithful supporters. But if that was not enough, his wife's name was put in to replace him in the House of Representatives. She was easily able to defeat two lesser-known and poorly funded candidates.

After promising not to run again if he lost to Mr. Lautenberg, Mr. Andrews has reversed course and decided to seek his old seat. And his wife has done what the couple had obviously long planned to do — withdraw from the race. We believe that this is political maneuvering at its worst. It even rivals the replacement of former U.S. Senator Robert Torricelli in 2002, and ex-state Senator Joseph Suliga (now deceased) in 2003, after the deadline to replace candidates on election ballots had passed. A Congressional or Senate seat is not some type of business that can be passed down to family members.

At least New Jersey bans candidates from running for two federal elections in the same year; otherwise, he probably would have sought both the Senate and House this year. Then again, maybe Mr. Andrews should move to Delaware or Connecticut, where a

candidate can run for two political offices at the same time. Senator Joseph Biden is running for vice president and another term as the United States Senator from Delaware, similar to what Senator Joseph Lieberman from Connecticut did in 2000, when he was Presidential nominee Al Gore's pick for vice president at a time when he was also seeking reelection to the Senate.

Even if Mr. Andrews' decision is legal, it certainly smells for its lack of ethics.

Then there's our latest backyard 'flip and hide' in the State Assembly. Former Assemblyman Neil Cohen from Roselle hasn't been heard of since his lawyer delivered a one-sentence letter in July — "I resign." Where is Neil Cohen? Where are the computers that were raided in July from the Legislative District 20 office in Union Township? What's on these computers? Why hasn't he been charged with anything if allegations of child porn have any weight?

The county political party has selected a replacement for Mr. Cohen. We now have another official who hasn't received a single vote from the citizens. Just how long can the public tolerate these scandalous shenanigans before government loses its validity? — Or are we there now?

## Education and Intellect in Crisis; How Typeface Impacts Learning

In March 30, 2006, Westfield Superintendent of Schools Margaret Dolan was assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction. She wrote then in a letter to this newspaper that "Everyone Has To Be Fluent In Numbers; Failure Is Not An Option."

She discussed the debate about Everyday Math teaching methods, an attempt to bring proficiency in mathematics to the American youth — in particular, our youth.

Parlayed with her discussion of Everyday Math was that of testing for proficiency by the state in hopes of determining if Johnny and Jane are really learning.

She noted the apparent "remarkable" improvement in test scores by some schools in Camden — so miraculous were the improvements in the scores that an investigation was triggered to learn their secret.

This year, the Camden School District officials involved were found out to have rigged the results. They have been thrown out of office and are, perhaps, on their way to jail.

Superintendent Dolan said last week that the current statewide proficiency test results were "not logical" — a comment, she said, that was echoed throughout other districts. Obviously, she is vindicated over her remarks about Camden in 2006.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) education laws are requiring substantially higher test results this year, and more so in the future, to attain what is defined as proficiency.

This is causing consternation in that we may be told that more of our Johnny's and Janes aren't proficient as defined by the more rigid standards. Can Johnny be on the honor roll while being "non-proficient?"

As the education debates rage in search of answers, we propose a thought about reading, publishing, texting, the Internet and the "boob tube" as it relates to learning.

Did you ever notice that some articles are difficult to read, hard to sustain interest? Others may grab your attention but only for a moment. They are soon dismissed as sound bytes with no depth. In contrast,

others are pleasant, maintain your interest and seem to flow with depth while sparking critical thinking.

Some of this paradox may be technical limitations of the media employed — such as the difference between books and the computer screen. Personal computers and Power Point have become ubiquitous and contribute to the problem.

Other elements of the problem may be the lack of knowledge of novices purporting to be publishers. Cell phones, TVs and computer screens must use fonts called sans serif because of the display limitations.

It's been known for generations in the printing industry that serif fonts (typeface) are best for engaging and bonding with the human mind for reading — without getting in the way.

From an article by Denny Hatch, dennyhatch.com, "Type is a medium; it is not an end in itself. The purpose of printing, whether a book, magazine or newspaper, is to make the text easy, pleasant and inviting to read... one of America's most distinguished printers, Daniel Berkeley Updike, ...expressed most concisely the aim of arranging type on a page by saying: 'Typography should be invisible.' If you pick up a book or a magazine and exclaim, 'Oh, isn't this beautiful type!' the designer has failed. Any type that gets between the reader and the author is not doing its job.

"Any type that makes the message difficult to read, that makes the printed page strident, brazen, and uncomfortable to the eye, is wrong, except for one purpose for which sans serif was designed by the Germans: advertising." (This paragraph is sans serif — Arial typeface.)

This newspaper otherwise uses serif — Times New Roman typeface.

So, when you see glitzy web pages or Power Point presentations with a lot of colors and sans serif typeface, you're probably viewing only "sound bytes."

There's no merit to accepting a decline in the art of publishing, along with this "dumbing down" of our intellect. Reading is good for you.

## Letters to the Editor

### Commercial Lawnmowers Causing Ugly 'Soundscape' in Westfield

I, too, was bemused to read that \$75,000 had been allocated for a "Quiet Zone" at a rail crossing. Meanwhile, most days of the week, the entire township is subject to seemingly endless blasts of noise from commercial lawnmowers, weed whackers and leaf blowers. Just as you can have a pleasing or ugly landscape, you can have a pleasing or ugly soundscape.

Westfield is a handsome town; I think all would agree. But close your eyes and open your ears, and it can be a distressingly different story when it comes to our soundscape. We've fought for quieter airliners and won. We've long ago outlawed loud un-muffled cars, trucks and motorcycles because they disturbed the peace (and quiet). But when it comes to these racket-making yard machines, it's still the wild, wild Westfield. Other communities have taken the reins to control noise. They have enacted ordinances

against the louder machines. Follow-up studies showed that the lawn-maintenance guys still stayed in business, and the gardening still got done. Think about it: a 235-horsepower Dodge Ram pickup can drive down your street, and you hardly know it is there. But, a 25-horsepower lawnmower two blocks away is so loud you can't hear anything else. The pickup is gone in 30 seconds. The lawnmower may blast away for 30 minutes before moving next door and starting all over again. I find the excessive noise intrusive and an assault on the quality of life.

This is an area where the town council can make a huge contribution to a town-wide "Quiet Zone," and it doesn't need to cost us a cent.

Jess Gregory  
Westfield

### WF Should Limit Hours for Contractors Using Motorized Equipment Outside

I would like to thank Glen Macdonald for his letter to the editor on noise pollution. The grassroots organization WECARE has been asking the mayor and town council for several years now to change the hours that paid contractors can use motorized equipment. Now I specifically use the term "paid contractor" because if the only time your neighbor could cut his own lawn is some off-hour time, so be it.

If you were outside eating, before he started to cut his lawn, your neighbor would probably ask you if it is OK to cut his lawn now.

WECARE has asked the mayor to change those hours to be Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. On Sundays, Westfield would prohibit all motorized equipment.

Several years ago, former councilman Peter Echausse (where are you Peter? We need your help.) was very much in favor of changing the hours. He decided not to

run again for council, and our voice on the council was gone. No other councilman has decided to take up the cause. Why? I do not know.

By the way, changing the use of motorized equipment for paid contractors does not affect inside contractors (plumbers, sheet rockers, painters, electricians and etc.) because they are in the house. For all we care, they could work till midnight.

This change will affect mainly lawn care companies. With this change, the quality of life in Westfield will improve 100 percent. Imagine coming home from work, you and your family sitting outside eating dinner doing that family bonding thing and no longer have to deal with your neighbor's lawn care guy disrupting your family's quality of life.

I have more to say, but I have to close my window because the weed whacker guy outside is making a heck of a lot of noise.

John Mancini  
Westfield

### Vulgarity and Skewed Political Views At County Freeholder MusicFest?

Dear Ms. Smith: Thank you for your e-mail (below) regarding the 2008 Union County MusicFest. We never condone inappropriate language and advise performing artists of this as well.

MusicFest was planned to enable families and youngsters to enjoy child-friendly music and activities during the day, including the entire "Kid's Kingdom" area that is staged in a separate part of the park, while older youths and adults can enjoy an evening of live performances by popular artists and rising stars, including local New Jersey artists.

The artist you wrote about performed well into the latter part of the evening and enjoys both local and national appeal. We will continue to do our best to book entertainers who have broad appeal, and we believe will continue to bring people to the park and showcase Union County. We have a good track record of working with artists who are mindful of our audiences, and we apologize if you were of-

fended by what you heard.

**Nicole DiRado**  
Union County Clerk of the Board  
*Mrs. Smith's Letter to the Freeholders*

My husband and I attended Music Fest last night (last weekend) at Nomahegan Park, and all I could do was shake my head and wonder, who is going to take the fall for choosing Everclear as headline artist for Friday evening? Could you have possibly picked a worse band for a family venue?

Aside from the profanity, vulgarity and skewed political views, the lead "singer" couldn't carry a tune. We left after the band's deliverance of "You Make Me Feel Like a..." (expletive deleted.)

Come on, guys! This is my taxpayer dollars at work?

Cathy Smith  
Scotch Plains

### We All Could Pay the Price for Sarah Palin Running This Country

I write to express how appalled I am by Senator McCain's choice of Governor Palin as his Vice Presidential running mate. He says he would rather lose an election than a war, as the measure of his devotion to the welfare of our nation, but he has clearly selected a running mate for her electability and not for the quality she will bring to running the government in the event that came to pass.

Since she was announced, we have learned that she ran for Mayor of Wasilla against the incumbent Lutheran as the "real Christian;" that she tried to get the "bad" books out of the public library; that she probably got her ex-brother-in-law fired from his job for divorcing her sister; that her governmental style as mayor and as governor is notable for its concern for secrecy, loyalty and vindictiveness (sounds a lot like President Nixon — don't you think?) and that when it comes to foreign policy, she knows so little that she repeats the old saw that Iraq was involved with 9/11 — a position which even President Bush has come to disavow after using it to justify the invasion.

While she says she is a governmental reformer, the fact that she selected a childhood friend to head Alaska's Department of Agriculture when her major qualification for the position was the fact that she "liked cows" as a young child, suggests her idea of

reform is similar to that of President Bush, who put a guy in charge of FEMA whose qualifications had something to do with raising show horses. The impact of that choice, as everyone knows, was that 1,300 died in New Orleans not long ago.

Candidate Palin made a big splash this week when her son's unit was mobilized for Iraq. She announced that her ticket must win if reform and the war in Iraq is to be won. To use her son's mobilization for partisan political purposes is appalling. To his credit, Senator McCain has deliberately not used the fact that he has a son fighting in Iraq for partisan purposes. He apparently understands from his own terrible experiences the cost that can be paid by the child of an important governmental official if captured by the enemy. He is unwilling to risk the welfare of his son to advance his own political carrier. Too bad, Palin doesn't.

But too bad for this nation if she is elected and winds up as the President. With her reform attitude and her articulated willingness to see herself as carrying out God's mission, we all could pay the price for McCain's choice to put partisan need to win the election over the welfare of this country. And this does not speak well for him.

Larry Cary  
Westfield

### SP Elected Officials Thanked For Supporting Recreation Projects

Over the past several years, elected officials of Scotch Plains have spearheaded a movement to improve and create opportunities within our community for our youth in the area of recreation. As both coach and volunteer, as well as parents of four young children, my wife and I were excited over the prospect of much-needed improvements but were also slightly dubious that our children would ever play on the fields in their lifetime. We were both very pleased and surprised at the outcome of those promises.

Some major accomplishments are the new turf field at Southside, the two new turf fields and track at the high school, the improvements on the multi-use fields at Vo-Tech including the lights, the improvements and expansion of Jerseyland Park and the establishment of Memorial Field.

I had the opportunity to attend the town youth baseball association awards dinner this week and was proud to see such

exuberance and commitment from not only the coaches and parents, but that of Scotch Plains Recreation Director Ray Poerio and members of the township council who were either in attendance or mentioned in high regard for their hard work and commitment to our recreation community.

I publicly thank Ray Poerio, our recreation commission, and those members of the township council who made a long-term commitment to the youth of our community.

I find it embarrassing that the entire council did not support these efforts and am not sure why. At the public hearing for the southside field project, Councilman Glover actually abstained from the vote, showing nothing but pure apathy towards our recreation community.

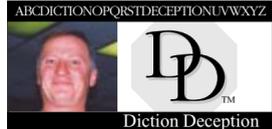
Thank you council members Jeff Strauss, Nancy Malool, Paulette Coronato and Mayor Martin Marks for voting your conscience and supporting the needs of the community in a truly bipartisan effort. Perhaps Mr. Glover will soon realize that voting against the majority for the sake of appearing different only goes to show his indifference, if not antipathy, to the recreation community, and I wish him luck in the mayoral election in November as he will need it.

Teresa Moore  
Westfield

**Fraud Hotline**  
U.S. Attorney Chris Christie asks anyone with a complaint about suspected wrongdoing by government actors (elected and appointed officials, holders of contracts, etc.) to call him at (973) 645-2700 or call the FBI's Newark office at (973) 792-3000.

Rich Duthie  
Scotch Plains

ABCDICHIKNOPIQJSTDECEPTIONLUVWXYZ



Diction Deception

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. Radeau — A raft
2. Davit — A boat hoist used for raising and lowering smaller boats
3. Tarve — To bend or turn
4. Abaddon — Angel of the bottomless pit

- CTENDIDIUM**
1. Respiratory organ of a mollusk
  2. A thousand of anything
  3. A Roman mineral bath
  4. A horsefly
- ADMINICLE**
1. To ridicule
  2. To force or drive out; expel
  3. Help; support
  4. Enslave or imprison
- CONCULCATE**
1. To mix or jumble
  2. To waver or sway
  3. To chill or harden
  4. To trample under foot
- BANIAN**
1. A Hindu trader or merchant
  2. A heavy barge used for freight
  3. A bold, boisterous girl; a tomboy
  4. A cavern or large cave

More letters on pages 5 & 18

## Letters to the Editor

### Ads Reduce Election To Juvenile Level

Leonard Lance has followed John McCain's descent into the gutter; he has revived the infamous "Stender is a Spender" television ads from the 7th Congressional District campaign two years ago.

The hypocrisy of such ads is astounding, given the \$407 billion federal budget deficit this year and the more than \$9.6 trillion hole in national debt that the Bush administration has spent this country into over the past seven and a half years. But leaving that aside, whether or not Linda Stender has voted for more government spending than Lance would is not the issue. It is the tenor and tone of the ads, engaging in mere schoolyard name-calling without any meaningful context, much less discussion of the issues that is most insulting to voters and the public at large.

Those ads reduce the importance of an election to such a juvenile level that it is an insult to our entire electoral system. Instead of "approving" those ads, Lance should be ashamed.

Charles Stotter  
Westfield

### Shining Spotlight on Public School Spending

Thank you for publishing recently [August 21] a survey of the employment terms for school superintendents in Union County. The information was voluminous.

It's a relief that it boiled down to assurance that in Union County, we don't have Keansburg-esque situations in which a giant golden parachute awaits school district superintendents who leave their positions, over and above already-generous payouts for unused sick, vacation and personal days. In your August 21 issue [front page], you printed a chart with base salaries and salaries that include a "bonus" for the superintendents in Westfield and Scotch Plains-Fanwood (as well as other school districts), but in the employment agreements on your website [www.goleader.com/08contracts], there are no cash payments that constitute bonuses. What entitles the superintendents to receive a salary that includes a bonus?

Keep up your efforts to shine a spotlight on public school spending in our towns. I would like to see more in-depth coverage of how 67 cents of our property tax dollar is spent in Westfield, Scotch Plains-Fanwood and Mountainside. Taxpayers could benefit greatly from independent discussion and analysis on your editorial pages of specific spending proposals.

School budget planning is a prime example of a topic that is worthy of close scrutiny. Another is personnel costs. Reporting on collective bargaining proposals before — not after — the deals are sealed would be a public service and, ideally, would aid in governmental accountability.

In Westfield alone, three of the five CBAs that the district has with its unions expire in June 2009 and, presumably, will be renegotiated in coming months. I would welcome coverage in *The Leader* of contract negotiation issues.

Teresa Moore  
Westfield

**Editor's Note:** For the other forms of compensation, one must read each individual contract. The contracts are on the website, [goleader.com/08contracts](http://goleader.com/08contracts). The forms are varied and include items such as annuities and stipends. We chose the word "bonus" to describe the general category. A spreadsheet from the Department of Education is provided, which also lists additional forms of compensation. Some contracts state compensation for performance as may be determined by the board, although no amounts are given.

We suggest reviewing the editorial page [August 21, page 4] available at [goleader.com](http://goleader.com). The article "Superintendent Contract Excerpts" summarizes examples of compensation other than salary. The main editorial discusses the impact of the retirement packages.

Contract negotiations are not public, and we are unable to report on the details in progress. It took several months for us to obtain a copy of the settlement, after the fact, between the teachers and the school board in Scotch Plains-Fanwood. OPRA law says it should be provided immediately. Under the law, every citizen has the right to this information.

