

Nwk. Pair Charged With Springfield Bank Robbery

SPRINGFIELD — A Newark man and woman arrested late last week and charged in connection with a bank robbery in Parsippany-Troy Hills have been additionally charged with being responsible for a recent bank robbery in Springfield, acting Union County Prosecutor Grace H. Park announced Monday.

Quiama S. Harris, 29, and Avery Spotswood, 33, are being held at the Morris County correctional facility following a joint investigation by the Union County Prosecutor's Office, Morris County Prosecutor's Office, Parsippany-Troy Hills Police Department, Springfield Police Department, and the Newark office of the FBI. Spotswood is charged with two counts of first-degree robbery, two counts of second-degree conspiracy, and a third-degree charge of making terroristic threats; Harris is charged with two counts of second-degree conspiracy.

indicating that he was in possession of an explosive device, according to authorities. The teller complied with the demand, and Spotswood fled the area on foot with an undisclosed quantity of cash.

Parsippany-Troy Hills Detective Joseph Puso subsequently issued a notification to all law enforcement agencies in New Jersey describing the robbery, including the contents of the note and still images of the male suspect. In response, investigators learned of a similar incident that had occurred on December 18 at the Investors Bank in Springfield.

The subsequent investigation determined that Spotswood and Harris allegedly worked collaboratively to plan and carry out both robberies. They were arrested without incident, with bail for Spotswood and Harris set at \$200,000 and \$100,000, respectively.

Anyone with information relating to either bank robbery is being urged to contact the Parsippany-Troy Hills Police Department at (973) 263-4300 or the Morris County Prosecutor's Office Major Crimes Unit at (973) 285-6200.

Kean Bill Would Criminalize Distribution Of 'Knockout' Videos

TRENTON — Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21, Westfield) has introduced legislation to specifically criminalize the recording, sharing, distribution and publishing of assaults, such as "Knockout Game."

"The Knockout Game isn't the first trendy crime that has spread because of the popularity of Internet videos showing the incidents," Sen. Kean said. "This legislation makes it clear that people in New Jersey who record, share, post or publish people being assaulted will be criminally liable."

Senator Kean's bill, S-3216, would modify the third-degree crime of endangering an injured victim by clarifying in the statute that a person is guilty if they film, photograph or

otherwise record the act causing bodily injury for circulation, publication or distribution. Violators would face imprisonment for three to five years, a \$15,000 maximum fine or both under the bill.

"People need to realize that the assault of a fellow human being is not some trivial event or game of which to gain popularity or share a laugh with friends," Sen. Kean added. "In New Jersey, too many people have sat back and recorded people being beat up on the streets, on trains or in restaurants."

"I know there's legislation introduced to also increase the criminal penalties for acts of assault, but deterring the audience, popularity and spreading of these senseless crimes is just as important," Sen. Kean said.

Holt Bill to Guard Against Offshore Oil Disasters

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (D-12th) has introduced the Offshore Safety and Technology Improvements Act, a bill to establish an Ocean Energy Safety Institute and to promote the development and use of the best available offshore oil safety technology.

"Just three years ago, Deepwater Horizon showed us all the horrific environmental and economic risks of shoddy offshore drilling technology," said Rep. Holt, the ranking Democrat on the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources. "As domestic oil production continues to rise, we can't afford to become complacent. We need to make sure that offshore oil drilling is conducted only in limited circumstances and always in the safest way possible."

Mr. Holt's bill is based on recom-

mendations made in a November 2013 report by the National Academies, Best Available and Safest Technologies for Offshore Oil and Gas Operations: Options for Implementation. Primarily, the legislation would create the Ocean Energy Safety Institute as a federally-funded research and development center or university-affiliated research center. Funding would be through a \$1 per acre fee on offshore oil fields that oil companies are leasing but not presently using.

The legislation would also prioritize permits for offshore operations that incorporate new and innovative safety technology and establish a small business innovation and technology transfer programs to assist small businesses in developing and moving to market safer offshore oil and gas technology.



Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

Sweeney Slashes Funding to Kean, GOP Senators

The battle between state Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-3rd, Gloucester) and Senate Minority Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21st, Westfield) entered another round late last month as Sen. Sweeney cut \$140,000 from an account distributed to GOP Senators, nj.com has reported. The account is in addition to the \$110,000 Senators receive for district office staff salaries. Last year Republicans received \$330,000, but that number will be slashed to \$188,000 this year.

According to the report, Sen. Kean's additional leadership funding has been cut from \$73,000 to \$20,000. Sen. Sweeney, however, increased funding to Senator Kevin O'Toole (R-40th, Cedar Grove), who challenged Sen. Kean in the party's vote for minority leader held in November. Sen. O'Toole, who was to see funding drop from \$25,000 to \$10,000 along with Senator Chris "Kip" Bateman (R-16th, Somerset) under Sen. Kean's funding request to Sen. Sweeney, will now see an increase to \$35,000 with Sen. Bateman getting \$30,000.

Sen. Kean had sought to increase funding for four Senators who supported his reelection as GOP leader from \$10,000 to \$25,000. Under the allocations they will receive between \$4,000 and \$5,000.

Dems Wait Van Drew Decision On 2nd Congressional Dist.

Democratic Party leaders from six southern New Jersey counties are waiting word state Senator Jeff Van Drew (D-1st, Cape May) on whether he will be a candidate for the 2nd District congressional seat held by Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-2nd) since 1995, according to published reports.

The chairmen want to give Mr. Van Drew a chance to run if he wants since he easily was re-elected in his district even though Republican Governor Chris Christie carried the district by an overwhelming margin.

News reports also say Bill Hughes Jr., the son of former U.S. Rep. William Hughes, has already announced that he is running for the seat as a Democrat.

School BOE Filing Deadline Changed to Late July

A measure that changes the state's filing deadline for November school board elections in an attempt to increase the number of individuals running to serve on the boards has been signed into law.

The law, S-2086, changes the deadline for school board candidates to file petitions to the last Monday in July. Previously, candidates had to file by 4 p.m. on the day of the Primary, held on the first Tuesday in June.

A 2012 law allows for school districts to move their annual elections from the third Tuesday in April to coincide with the General Election held in November. Since the law's adoption, more than 500 school districts have moved their election dates, including all Union County districts.

Menendez Wants FTC Briefing On Target Security Breach

U.S. Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.)

said he wants a full briefing by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regarding last month's security breach at Target Corporation retail stores," politickernj.com has reported.

"Our country's consumers depend upon safe and secure transactions, and especially at this crucial time of year, our country's retailers must commit to fulfilling that expectation," Sen. Menendez said in a letter to FTC Chairwoman Edith Ramirez. "Unfortunately, these data breaches are becoming increasingly common."

Target has said a data breach at its stores impacted 40 million credit and debit card accounts, compromising customers' names, card information and security codes. The breach occurred between November 27 and December 15.

Sen. Menendez has introduced the Prepaid Card Consumer Protection Act of 2013, aimed at reining in hidden fees and strengthening financial protections for consumers who use prepaid cards.

O'Toole Wants Probe of Christmas Deliveries

Senator Kevin O'Toole (R-40th, Cedar Grove) has sent a letter urging the state Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to conduct an investigation into UPS and FedEx failing to make their as promised deliveries for Christmas. The Senator also wrote the companies, urging them to fully refund all customers affected by Christmas delivery delays.

"Both UPS and FedEx 'guaranteed' to certain customers that their deliveries would be made by Christmas, and claimed that they failed many customers as a result of 'higher than anticipated volume' and 'weather conditions in the Midwest,'" Sen. O'Toole stated. "Millions of customers across the United States and, in particular, here in New Jersey took that 'guarantee' to mean that they will be able to bring Christmas joy to their loved ones that they could not be with. Unfortunately, that was not the case."

Sen. O'Toole said each year there is always higher delivery volume and the potential for severe weather around Christmas. He acknowledged some corrective action being taken by hard working employees of these companies, but urged that the businesses fully correct the situation by standing by reimbursing impacted people.

Fla. Teen Charged In False Bomb Threat

KENILWORTH — A Florida teenager has been charged with making a false bomb threat against a Kenilworth residence earlier this year, acting Union County Prosecutor Grace H. Park announced Monday.

Complaints of threatening to discharge a destructive device, making a false report of planting a bomb or explosive, issuing a false police report, fraud, and other offenses were filed by the Seminole County Sheriff's Office against the 16-year-old defendant, whose name is being withheld due to his age.

The date was July 21, 2013 when the Kenilworth Police Department received a 911 call via Skype, according to Union County Assistant Prosecutor Susan Gleason, who assisted Florida authorities investigating the case. The person making the

threat, whose voice was modified during the call, claimed to be a 19-year-old resident of the 600 block of Newark Avenue in Kenilworth and threatened to kill two of his younger siblings and blow up his home, Ms. Gleason said.

Responding police found a 19-year-old resident at the home and took him into custody, but quickly determined that he had not placed the threatening call — the victim did not even have any younger siblings, and no one else was home at the time. Using phone and Internet records, investigators later managed to trace the call to a residence in Florida and identified the 16-year-old as a suspect.

The emergency response to the false bomb threat resulted in expenses exceeding \$7,000, and the juvenile defendant, if convicted, is expected to be ordered to pay restitution.

Lance Unveils Mental Health Act Legislation

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7th) has joined colleagues from the House Energy and Commerce Committee to introduce The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, a package of legislative proposals that concluded a year-long study of violence and mental health.

The bill incorporates many ideas and suggestions from numerous hearings of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which was tasked with leading on this critical issue after a series of tragic events gripped the nation.

"As we mark the somber anniversary of the loss of innocent life at Sandy Hook Elementary School, we are reminded that our mental health care system is broken. The vulnerable who need the most care are instead incarcerated, unemployable and — in some cases — a danger to themselves and others," said Rep. Lance, a member of the Health Subcommittee. "This is one of the great health care challenges we face in our nation: making available the tools to match people with the right care."

The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act takes a clinical approach to supporting families and individuals undergoing sudden or long-term mental health crises. The bill targets programming and resources on psychiatric care for patients and families most in need of

services by increasing inpatient and outpatient treatment options. The bill makes judicial reforms by clarifying standards used to commit an individual to medical care and updates legal framework to help families and physicians make informed decisions. The legislation holds federally qualified mental health centers to a higher standard, incentivizing them to build upon their current services by providing a full range of care to individuals seeking treatment as well as fixing patient access problems in the Part D program and Medicaid.

"High quality mental health care is of great importance to the American people. Recent data suggest that fewer than one-third of Americans with diagnosable mental illness actually get treatment," Rep. Lance said.

"Experts estimate that more than half of those who suffer from severe mental disorders do not receive treatment in a given year. And at least 25 percent of returning troops from Iraq and Afghanistan will experience some type of mental health condition. We owe our servicemen and women and veterans this effort to get them the care they need and deserve."

The package now heads to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. The package expands on Mr. Lance's bipartisan "Excellence in Mental Health Act," which was introduced earlier this year.

Work Related Accidents Workers' Compensation



Jon Bramnick
Certified Civil Trial Attorney

908-322-7000

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