

## Courage to Connect Calls 2014 'Tipping Point' Year

TRENTON – Courage to Connect New Jersey is calling 2014 the “tipping point” for local government and school district consolidation in the state.

“If you look at what was accomplished in 2013 – with so many roadblocks to consolidation removed – New Jersey is primed for a sweeping statewide consolidation in the next few years,” said Gina Genovese, executive director of Courage to Connect New Jersey, a non-profit, non-partisan organization that helps citizens and local government through the state-mandated consolidation process. “We anticipate some incredible momentum in 2014. It’s the tipping point.”

Ms. Genovese said 2013 began with the successful consolidation of Princeton and Princeton Township, ultimately saving taxpayers in the combined municipality \$3 million a year.

It was also the year for the first citizen-driven campaign to form a municipal consolidation commission. Under the 2007 law, citizens in Scotch Plains and Fanwood petitioned to form the study commission, culminating with five members of each community seated on the volunteer board in 2013.

The year also brought the end to four school districts, as South Hunterdon voters overwhelmingly approved the creation of a regional school district serving West Amwell, Stockton and Lambertville.

“We think that 2014 is the year where it all comes together,” Ms. Genovese said. “There is such a drive now in towns throughout the state to explore the benefits of consolidation. We now receive a steady stream of phone calls from citizens and government leaders who want to explore how they can save money by connecting with neighboring communities.”

Residents of Roxbury and Mount Arlington in Morris County have submitted petitions to start a study commission exploring the benefits of consolidating both their municipalities and school districts. And Loch Arbour and Allenhurst in Monmouth County are working towards placing a question on a ballot this year asking voter support for the merger of the towns. At the State House in Trenton, lawmakers will be working on legislative fixes to the 2007 municipal con-

solidation law, simplifying the process and giving more towns the option to have successful consolidations.

Courage To Connect New Jersey is continuing the education and momentum by hosting a fourth-annual statewide seminar on Friday, May 2 at the Robert Meyner Conference Center at the PNC Bank Arts Center in Holmdel. Participants will learn from the school board members who worked many years to get school regionalization on the ballot in South Hunterdon. An announcement of panelists will be made in the upcoming weeks.

“Now is the time to get involved in this growing movement to save taxpayer dollars and create sustainability statewide,” Ms. Genovese said.

### New Law Increases Compensation to Wrongly Convicted

TRENTON — Legislation to increase the amount of compensation awarded to those wrongfully convicted and imprisoned and provide for additional services for such persons has been signed into law.

The law, A-1640/3066, increases the statutory damage amounts awarded in lawsuits that may be brought by a person convicted and imprisoned for a crime which the person did not commit. Prior to this bill becoming law, damages could not exceed twice the amount of the claimant’s income in the year before the incarceration or \$20,000 for each year of incarceration, whichever was greater. The newly signed law increases the amount per year of incarceration to \$50,000 per year.

A claimant may also be awarded other non-monetary relief, including vocational training, tuition assistance, counseling, housing assistance and health insurance coverage as appropriate.

### Foerst Joins Faculty Of SHU Law School

WESTFIELD — Westfield Councilman James Foerst has joined the faculty of Seton Hall University School of Law as an adjunct professor. Mr. Foerst will begin teaching in the spring 2014 semester offering a class entitled “Zoning, Planning and Land Use Policy.”

Mr. Foerst returns to his Alma Mater having graduated in 1999 with honors. “I am very excited to be teaching and hope to utilize my everyday experience in land use work to bring a great learning experience to my students,” Mr. Foerst said.

Mr. Foerst has served on the Westfield Planning Board since 2004 and engages in land use planning as part of his law practice. He will continue to work full-time practicing law in his current capacity.



## Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

### Kean, Weber Opt Not to Run for U.S. Senate This Year

Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21, Westfield) and Assemblyman Jay Webber (R-26, Parsippany) will not be candidates for U.S. Senate this year, according to media reports.

U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) is up for re-election for a full term in November after winning a special election in 2013 to complete the remaining year on the term of the late Senator Frank Lautenberg.

Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick (R-21, Westfield) and state Sen. Michael Doherty (R-23, Warren) are said to be the likeliest challengers to Mr. Booker, according to media reports, though neither lawmaker has said whether he will enter the race.

Mr. Kean lost to Senator Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) in 2006.

### Sweeney Won't Commit to Kean GOP Committee Assignments

After slashing Republican senators budget by \$140,000 including Minority Leader Tom Kean Jr.'s by \$53,000, Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3rd, Gloucester) is now believed to be considering making committee assignments for GOP senators himself instead of honoring the requests from Mr. Kean, [politicickernj.com](http://politicickernj.com) reported.

“I have the authority now [to make committee assignments] and I’ve done that every year since I’ve been Senate president,” Sen. Sweeney told [politicickernj.com](http://politicickernj.com).

By tradition, the Republican minority leader hands the Senate president his committee requests after Sen. Sweeney decides on the Senate blueprint which has not been completed yet.

“He (Sen. Kean) gives a recommendation. But it doesn’t mean I have to agree,” Sen. Sweeney told [politicickernj.com](http://politicickernj.com).

### N.J. Pastor to Challenge Rangel for House Seat

Pastor Michael Walrond, an Edgewater, Bergen County Democrat, is challenging veteran U.S. Rep. Charlie Rangel (D-N.Y.) for his House seat in New York’s 13th Congressional District, [nj.com](http://nj.com) has reported.

Mr. Walrond would have to relocate to the district, which covers upper Manhattan and a small portion of the Bronx. *The Huffington Post*, reported that a spokesman for Mr. Walrond said the candidate plans to move to Harlem.

Rep. Rangel, 83, has served in the House of Representatives for 42 years. He was censured in 2010 by the House for ethics violations including failing to pay taxes, inaccurate financial disclosures and accepting favors from corporate donors, according to the report.

Mr. Walrond is part of Rev. Al Sharpton’s National Action Network and is the senior pastor at Harlem’s First Corinthian Baptist Church.

### N.J. Bill Would Require Warrants for Drone Use

New Jersey law enforcement agencies would be required to get a warrant each time they deploy a drone to

probe a crime under legislation, A-4073, up for a vote before the state Assembly, *The Star-Ledger* has reported.

A similar bill in the Senate would require the agency head to approve each request to use a drone instead of the need for warrants. Drones, or unmanned aerial vehicles, are set to enter U.S. airspace in 2015 under a new federal law.

### Automatic Gratuities Now Subject to Payroll Tax

As of January 1st the Internal Revenue Service has begun classifying automatic gratuities as service charges that are taxable as regular wages and subject to payroll tax withholding, according to media reports.

Automatic 18 percent automatic gratuities are typically charged for large parties. Also, wait staff that used to receive these tips at the end of their shifts will now have to wait two weeks when payroll checks are issued.

### Dems Laud Hike in State's Minimum Wage to \$8.25

Senate Democrats commented last week on New Jersey’s \$1 hike in the state’s hourly minimum increase.

“In the face of strident opposition from those who’d rather condemn hard working people to a life of poverty, Democrats in the Legislature and the good people of New Jersey made this day happen. We are proud that we stood firm to support those forced to work two and three jobs simply to make ends meet.

“Raising the minimum wage will provide real, positive results for our state. Not only does it mean fathers and mothers being able to provide more for themselves and their children, but it also provides a boost to our local economies. We have no doubt that as the years go by, tomorrow will be looked at as an historic and great day in New Jersey’s history.”

### Senate Budget Panel Again OKs Bill Delaying Water-Quality Rules

The state Senate budget committee has approved legislation that would again delay the implementation of water-quality rules, *The Star-Ledger* has reported. The federal government and environmentalists say the bill, S-3107, would roll back clean water protections while expanding where developers can construct houses in rural areas. The bill was approved 11-2 by the committee.

Environmentalists also contend it would threaten the New Jersey’s drinking water supply and increase suburban sprawl. The implementation of water-quality rule are five years over due under rules approved in 2008 by the federal Department of Environmental Protection (EPA), according to the report.

The bill is expected to be voted on today, January 9, by the full Senate and likely by the Assembly before the legislative session ends on Monday, January 13.

The rules are aimed at limiting sewer lines and septic systems on more than 300,000 undeveloped acres across New Jersey, *The Ledger* reported.

## Governor Christie Takes Action on Legislation

TRENTON – Governor Chris Christie has taken action on the following legislation:

### Bills Signed:

A-248/S-2458 – Requires the commissioner of education to change deadline for municipal review of defeated school budgets whenever he changes the annual school election date.

A-2061/S-1991 – Directs the Board of Nursing to encourage nursing schools to give academic credit to students for training received in U.S. military as corpsmen and medics.

A-2920/S-2778 – Establishes New Jersey Advisory Council on Youth and Collegiate Affairs.

A-3529/S-2701 – Designates Paterson Plank Road bridge in the Town of Secaucus as “Joseph F. Tagliarieni, Jr. Memorial Bridge.” Mr. Tagliarieni was a Secaucus volunteer firefighter who suffered a massive heart attack when responding to a car fire on the New Jersey Turnpike on May 31, 1999.

### Bill Vetoed:

A-3059/S-2108 – Conditional veto – Requires Financial Policy Review

Board to issue certain reports and create and maintain website.

In his conditional veto, Governor Christie said, “expansion of the board’s oversight responsibility is unnecessary as the Department of Transportation engages in a constant, ongoing review of the program, and the Legislature reviews the program each year as part of the budget process. I believe that the board best serves the taxpayers in its fundamental role as an independent entity that annually reviews and certifies the state’s transportation financing. Altering those duties would only impede the board’s ability to discharge that critically important task.”

“The bill should be amended to statutorily require the Department of Transportation to include information on the program on its website. Accordingly, I recommend that the bill be amended so that it maintains the board’s current responsibilities and codifies into law the transparency my administration has brought to the program,” the Governor said.

## Lance Joins Colleagues to Unveil Exchange Security, Transparency Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7) joined his fellow Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee colleagues on Monday in introducing the “Health Exchange Security and Transparency Act” to require federal health care agencies to notify individuals of any breach on the health care law exchanges — both state and federal — that endangers their personal data and information. The full U.S. House of Representatives is expected to vote on the measure on Friday, January 10.

“The Obama Administration’s lack of transparency in implementing the President’s health care law raises serious concerns about the security of Americans’ personal health and financial information on the exchanges,” Rep. Lance said. “All Americans have the right to know if their personal information is safe and secure under ObamaCare.”

The bill, authored by Rep. Joe Pitts (R-Pa.), would ensure Americans receive notification from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) when their personally identifiable information has been compromised through the Affordable Care Act’s (ACA) state or federal ex-

changes. Specifically, the bill would require HHS to notify individuals no later than two days after discovery of a breach of an exchange system.

“Given the lack of security testing and risks associated with healthcare.gov, this measure is a reasonable step to ensure federal officials are required to notify individuals in case of a breach,” Rep. Lance said.

The 7th District lawmaker said he has long been concerned about the readiness, functionality and security of the ObamaCare health exchanges. Last September, he authored an opinion piece on the issue, which can be viewed at [lance.house.gov/opeds/delay-obamacare-until-privacy-can-be-protected/](http://lance.house.gov/opeds/delay-obamacare-until-privacy-can-be-protected/).

### Inaugural Committee Announces Events

STATE – Governor Chris Christie’s 2014 Inaugural Committee has released the official schedule of events for Inauguration Day, Tuesday, January 21.

The day’s schedule will include a morning inaugural service at The New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, the formal swearing-in ceremony for Governor Christie and Lieutenant Governor Kiim Guadagno at noon at the War Memorial in Trenton, and the evening inaugural celebration at historic Ellis Island.

Attendance to the inaugural service and swearing-in ceremony are by invitation only. A select number of tickets are available to the general public for the governor’s swearing-in ceremony on a first-come, first-served basis.

Members of the public can request tickets by e-mailing [swearingin@inaugural2014.org](mailto:swearingin@inaugural2014.org) or by calling the Inaugural 2014 office at (732) 548-7840. Attendance to the evening inaugural celebration is open to the public with the purchase of a ticket. Anyone can purchase a ticket by going online to [www.inaugural2014.org](http://www.inaugural2014.org) or by downloading a contributor form.

The service at New Hope Baptist Church, 106 Sussex Avenue, Newark, begins at 8 a.m. with the swearing-in ceremony and inaugural address starting at 11:30 a.m. Doors open for the Ellis Island event at 7 p.m. The event begins at 8 p.m. at the Great Hall Ellis Island.

See it all on the Web!  
[www.goleader.com](http://www.goleader.com)

### Assembly Amendment On Baking Contests

TRENTON — The General Assembly has concurred with a Senate amendment and passed a bill that ensures state residents can legally participate in contests of skill, including cooking and baking contests. The bill was introduced after a constituent, Sally Ball of Atlantic City, was refused entry in the American Pie Council’s annual pie championship.



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