

Lesniak Urges Violence Panel to OK Measures

TRENTON — The Study Commission on Violence created by legislation introduced by state Senator Raymond J. Lesniak (D-20th, Elizabeth) met last week for the first time.

This legislation, signed by Governor Chris Christie last August, declares violence a “public health crisis” and creates a Study Commission on Violence to study the trends of violence, the source of violence, and the impact of violence on the community, to develop a method to address the epidemic of violence at the federal and state levels, the issues of insufficient access to mental health treatment, make recommendations for Congressional and state action, and create adequate funding for community-based mental health treatment programs throughout the state.

Sen. Lesniak said he was prompted to sponsor the legislation by the series of mass murders in Newtown Conn., Old Bridge, N.J., Aurora, Colo., Tucson, Ariz., and Fort Hood, Tex., as well as by the epidemic of violence in society which results in one murder every day and over 70,000 domestic violence offenses every year in New Jersey.

“Nationwide more than 5,000 children are murdered and an equivalent of 10,000 busloads of children have to go to emergency rooms for violence related injuries every year,” Sen. Lesniak said.

The specific measures Sen. Lesniak urges the Commission to recommend are the following:

1. Expand the Special Offenders

Units to handle mental health and violence.

2. Expand mental health treatment to handle involuntary commitments of potentially violent offenders.

3. Restore the After Three Program, which was cut by Governor Jon Corzine and eliminated by Governor Christie. (The most dangerous time in a child’s life is between the time school gets out and their parent(s) come home from work. It’s a fertile time for gang recruiting, Sen. Lesniak said.)

4. Adopt common sense gun control measures.

5. Require parole boards under certain circumstances to release inmates not convicted of a violent crime under the No Early Release Act at the time of parole eligibility.

6. Provide for issuance of certificate of rehabilitation to certain offenders with substance abuse disorders.

7. Adopt “The Opportunity to Compete Act,” which would establish certain employment rights for persons with criminal records.

“We must change the culture of violence in our society,” Senator Lesniak said. “The steps outlined in this proposal create a path towards changing the culture of violence in our society. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice. It’s up to us to change the culture of violence in our society and bend the moral arc of the universe towards justice by reducing violence in our society.”

“I will spend time in places where we have a chance to win,” Gov. Christie said Monday during a visit to Connecticut, the paper reported. In response, Mr. Astorino said, “If Governor Christie is unable to help a Republican candidate for governor, then maybe he should consider stepping down as chairman of the RGA. That’s his job.”



Peyton's Peek at the Week In Politics

By Paul Peyton of The Leader/Times

UCUA Reprimands Sullivan, Brennan for Stipends

The Union County Utilities Authority (UCUA) last week formally reprimanded its executive director — former freeholder Dan Sullivan — and deputy director Thomas Brennan and ordered them to repay the authority \$15,000 and \$6,000, respectively, according to a resolution approved by the UCUA board. The action was in response to a report by Vijayant Pawar, an attorney hired by the UCUA to investigate the unauthorized stipends made to the two directors and five other employees. Mr. Brennan was also suspended for five days without pay.

The stipends were first reported by the Union County Watchdog Association (UCWA). The probe was launched after UCWA President Tina Renna questioned the UCUA board at one of its meetings earlier this year after discovering the payments upon filing an Open Public Records Act (OPRA) request for the authority’s paid bill list.

The other five employees will not have to return their stipends and will not be disciplined as Mr. Pawar found they had no role in the unauthorized payments and had provided “valuable services on behalf of the authority.”

Bramnick, Handlin Call for End of DEM-Led GWB Probe

Two Republican lawmakers on the Legislative Select Committee on Investigations have called for an end to what they called “man hunt” regarding the Bridgegate legislative hearings, politickernj.com has reported.

Assemblywoman Amy Handlin (R-13th, Red Bank) and state Assemblyman Jon Bramnick (R-21, Westfield) asked why the committee, led by Chairman John Wisniewski (D-19th, Sayreville), has yet to turn up concrete results on what caused last year’s lane closings on the George Washington Bridge (GWB) despite already hearing from a number of top aides to Governor Christie.

“It appears that the U.S. Attorney (Paul J. Fishman) is trying to turn off the John Wisniewski show, but John Wisniewski doesn’t want to turn the lights out. He wants to continue to spend despite the fact the investigations [haven’t turned up anything]. My reading is: don’t call any of these people, because what’s the next step? Stop the politicians investigating politicians,” Asm. Bramnick said.

In response to recent GOP press releases, Asm. Wisniewski said, “I’m just following the facts. I never expected the facts would lead to the governor’s office. For Republicans, it’s very uncomfortable and I appreciate their desire to change the topic.”

Chivukula Said to Be Under Consideration for BPU Seat

Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula (D-17th, Somerset) is said to be in line for an appointment to a vacancy on the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU), politickernj.com has reported. Compensation for BPU commissioners is \$141,000 annually. Asm. Chivukula’s term runs until the

end of 2015. The Somerset Democrat ran for Congress in the 12th District Primary, coming in third place behind Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson-Coleman (D-15th, Mercer) and state Sen. Linda Greenstein (D-14th, Middlesex). He also ran for Congress in the 7th Congressional District against Rep. Leonard Lance (R) in 2012.

Appeals Court Rules 34 States Not Eligible for AFC Subsidies

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit has ruled that participants in health exchanges run by the federal government per the Affordable Health Care Act (ACA) in 34 states -- including New Jersey -- are not eligible for tax subsidies, *USA Today* has reported. Residents of New York State, one of 16 states that setup their own exchanges, are still eligible for the subsidies.

The 2-1 ruling by the three-judge panel, which is likely to be appealed by the federal government, impacts five million Americans without employer-provided health plans.

Astorino Says Christie Should Step Down As Head of RGA

New York Republican gubernatorial nominee Rob Astorino said this week that Governor Chris Christie should resign as chairman of the Republican Governors Association if he won’t support Mr. Astorino’s candidacy, *The New York Daily News* has reported.

“I will spend time in places where we have a chance to win,” Gov. Christie said Monday during a visit to Connecticut, the paper reported. In response, Mr. Astorino said, “If Governor Christie is unable to help a Republican candidate for governor, then maybe he should consider stepping down as chairman of the RGA. That’s his job.”

Quijano Applauds House for Passing Bill to Tighten Security at Chem. Facilities

TRENTON — State Assembly Homeland Security Committee Chairwoman Annette Quijano (D-20th, Elizabeth) has applauded the U.S. House of Representatives for approving the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards Authorization and Accountability Act (H.R. 4007) and urged the U.S. Senate to quickly follow suit in the interest of national security.

Asw. Quijano introduced a measure in the state Assembly last month urging Congress to enact the measure in order to strengthen the security of chemical facilities and address the vulnerability of the chemical sector to terrorist attacks.

“This is a critical piece of legislation when it comes to protecting our citizens as a whole,” Asw. Quijano said. “The manufacturing, use, storage, and distribution of chemicals must be secured from threats, such as terrorism. The impact of a terrorist attack on certain high risk chemical facilities is far reaching and has the potential to cause a catastrophic number of deaths and injuries. The last thing we need is for stolen chemicals

Union County Dedicates Revolutionary Route

By KAITLYN FREY
Specialty Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

COUNTY — Union County became the first county in New Jersey to dedicate a portion of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route.

The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders officially marked the Union County portion of the march that helped win the American Revolution. The July 14th dedication ceremony took place on Mountain Avenue at the west end of Union County’s Echo Lake Park in Mountainside.

The ceremony occurred on Bastille Day, which is a holiday that celebrates the beginning of the French Revolution that brought France democracy and national pride — the same ideals that drove the American Revolution.

The Washington-Rochambeau Trail was established as a National Historic Trail by Congress in 2009 to mark the French contribution to the American Revolution.

“The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders is committed to identifying and preserving our historic routes. We take great pride in raising awareness of the Washington-Rochambeau march, and its role in winning our nation’s independence as the first modern democracy,” Freeholder Chairman Christopher Hudak said.

The trail runs over 600 miles from Virginia to Rhode Island. Within Union County, the trail runs through Raritan Road and Lamberts Mill Road in Scotch Plains; West Broad Street in Westfield; Mountain Avenue in Westfield, Mountainside and Springfield; Morris Avenue in Springfield, and Morris Turnpike in Summit.

“I want to commend my colleagues on the board for committing funds to

mark this historic trail, adding it to the list of cultural and historic landmarks across the 21 towns here in Union County. I recognize the educational and recreational value of this project,” Freeholder Bruce Bergen said.

Phil Correll, program manager of the Washington-Rochambeau Trail from the National Parks Service, spoke about the significance of the trail during the ceremony.

The trail commemorates the movement of French and American troops between 1780 and 1783 from New England down to Yorktown, Va., Mr. Correll said. The arrival of General Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur (comte de Rochambeau), who brought an army of 450 officers and 5,300 men to Rhode Island, was the beginning of the most successful military cooperation.

The cooperation between American and French troops culminated when they laid siege to the British forces in Yorktown until Charles Cornwallis surrendered. It was one of the last major military campaigns of the Revolutionary War.

Gabriel Gluck, the Union County director of public policy and community outreach, was presented with the Washington-Rochambeau National Trail Association pin for his active role in marking the route throughout Union County.

Union County plans to place more than a dozen markers throughout the county to recognize the historic Revolutionary route.

“I hope the residents of Union County will have an opportunity to take advantage of this trail — not only to walk it and put it to physical use, but also to learn about its rich history and its significance in our history,” Mr. Bergen said.

Residents Urged to Apply Early for Passports

COUNTY — Union County Clerk Joanne Rajoppi reminds county residents to apply for their Passports as soon as possible to avoid any complications that may disrupt their upcoming travel plans. Travelers to Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, countries in the Caribbean or anywhere overseas must have a valid Passport to enter or depart from the United States.

Due to a current backlog of applications at the National Passport Center, it can take six weeks for a regular Passport application to be processed and returned to the customer. Even the more expensive expedited delivery option can take three weeks for delivery.

Passport application forms may be obtained at the county clerk’s main office in the Union County Courthouse at 2 Broad Street in Elizabeth or at the county clerk’s office annex in the Colleen Fraser Building at 300 North Avenue, East in Westfield. Applications for Passports and related information also can be found online at ucnj.org/Passports.

The Elizabeth office opens at 7:30 a.m. and it has English and Spanish-speaking staff. The Westfield office has evening and Saturday hours and is also fully staffed.

The Westfield Annex is the only county clerk’s office in the state that is open during evening hours. The Westfield Annex is open from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays; from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The phone number at the Westfield Annex is (908) 654-9859.

The Elizabeth office is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number in Elizabeth is (908) 527-4966. Clients are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to closing time to allow for staff assistance with the Passport process.

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Dentistry Today

by Scott B. Schaffer, DMD



JET-AGE FLOSSING

As everyone knows, daily flossing (along with brushing) is an essential part of the oral health care regimen that must be practiced at home. Without it, bacterial plaque and food debris accumulate between teeth, providing the ingredients necessary to create tooth decay and gum disease. However, not everyone is adept at flossing, particularly those with severe arthritis or other dexterity problems. In addition, patients who have bridge work may find it difficult to get the floss directly into the crevices where it needs to go. If so, dentists often recommend that patients with limited dexterity or replacement teeth (crowns, bridges, and implants) use a dental water jet “oral irrigator” to effectively clean hard-to-reach areas with a concentrated stream of water.

People have all sorts of excuses for not flossing their teeth. As today’s column states, there are some straightforward ways to floss which address many excuses. By brushing and flossing we help to eliminate the bacteria which can lead to bad breath, gingivitis, and periodontal disease, hence creating smiles which can last a lifetime. We provide gentle dental care for the entire family. Please call us to schedule an appointment. Our staff is made up of well-trained professionals who work together as a team to bring you the highest quality treatment in a warm and caring setting. We are the proud recipient of the 2013 Best of Clark Award in Dentistry.

P.S. In addition to brushing daily, the American Dental Association recommends that everyone floss at least once a day.

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