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Paul Peyton
 ASSIGNMENT EDITOR
Suzette F. Stalker
 COMMUNITY
Betsey Burgdorf
 EDUCATION & ARTS

Horace R. Corbin
 PUBLISHER
David B. Corbin
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Letters to the Editor

Thank You MS Voters, Volunteers For Passage of Referendum

As chair of the Mountainside Citizens Advisory Committee (MCAC) in favor of the referendum, I would like to extend a thank you to all the volunteers for their help and support. I would also like to thank all the voters who made their voices known during the election. Not only did our district families support it, but many residents without children in the schools supported it as well. This only reaffirms that we have all chosen a wonderful community to both live and raise our families.

The following people volunteered their time to serve on the MCAC: Beth Alder, Jim Alder, Annie Basile, Lubka Beke, Susan Berowitz, Ed Bezerra, John Caccamo, Brandee Conover, Jennifer Doll, Frank Duca, Jen Duca, Linda Esemplare, Sean Flannery, Amanda Galm, Bill Gottdenker, Rosemarie Graziano, Chrissy Kiesewetter, Evelyn King, Lenore Kline, Mary Koehn, John Koehn, Lisa MacGowan, Christina Nixon, Luisa Oliviera, Amy Radick, Hyona Revere, Venessa Rittman, Scott Schmedel, Jovan Siconolfi, Jeff Sobel, Don Steinmetz, Sue Tracy, Judy Wargaski and Crissy Zagami.

Thank you to our board of education and administrators for recognizing the problems and taking action. This is a tremendous vote of confidence in you. The board of education has advised me they intend on taking immediate action and will provide frequent updates on progress at the board meetings and in letters to the editor.

A special thank you to Dr. Lubarsky. She was available to answer questions, fact-check information and provide statistics on moments notice throughout this entire campaign. Our district is extremely lucky to have a CSA who is so dedicated to our community.

Our children will be attending top notch schools. The yearly operational savings of \$127,500 per year will enable additional monies to be re-directed into the curriculum and other activities. Mountainside's educational experience is going to shoot through the roof and our property values are bound to only increase. Sadly, Scott Schmedel passed away before the vote, but given his passion on this issue, we can be certain that he is doing a happy dance right now.

Wendy Fecch-Caccamo
 Mountainside

ABCD EFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
 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. Rog - To shake
2. Tilbury - A two-wheeled carriage for two persons
3. Tasco - A sort of clay for making melting pots
4. Yukkel - The green woodpecker

AMBLOSIOS

1. A condition causing swelling or bloating of the abdomen
2. Abortion or miscarriage
3. Sleepwalking
4. Alcohol poisoning

TRIBADISM

1. Acting like a heroic champion; in a knightly fashion
2. The state of being worldly; mundane
3. Obesity
4. Lesbianism

DEDUIT

1. A formal promise or pledge
2. Delight; sport
3. To cheat or defraud
4. Diminish in importance

TREPFA

1. A kind of weak cider
2. Muddy, turbid, thick
3. Fearful, threatening sound
4. Food that is not kosher

Will Sale of Runnells Produce Tax Relief for County Residents?

Now that the Union County Freeholder Board has made the decision to sell Runnells Specialized Hospital, a long-term care and rehabilitation facility in Berkeley Heights, we wonder if Union County taxpayers - specifically in high taxed towns like Westfield and Summit - will see any tax relief when this transaction is completed.

As we have been reporting, Runnells - which dates to the late 1800s, with the current facility built in the early 1990s - has been faced with a growing debt which county taxpayers have subsidized to the tune of \$30 million over the past two years alone. As Medicaid reimbursements have been declining, the county has realized balancing Runnells' budget may not be in the cards. How has the hospital survived for so many years? - And why is it now so unmanageable?

Selling Runnells' building itself to a long-term care facility operator is expected to generate around \$26 million, according to a 2013 report by Complete HealthCare Resources. The county is selling the building as well as the land, which equals 45 acres combined. Supposedly, the land cannot be converted

down the road for use for other purposes.

The county received five responses from its request for proposals and communicated with four of them before opting for Center Management Group, which owns five nursing homes.

Will the county use a portion of the money from the sale to pay off the \$6 million in debt Runnells has? Will the freeholders place the remaining funds in surplus to be used with other revenue to offset county taxes? Will the county deliver a flat county tax or even a reduction over the next few years?

In addition to revenue from the sale, the county and Berkeley Heights will share a combined half-million dollars per year in property-tax revenue as the property will be put back on the tax rolls.

While we are hopeful that Runnells will remain a leading long-term care facility in the region, taxpayers cannot continue to subsidize this facility at \$13 million a year, with that number expected to continue to climb. How can a private company run the hospital without losing money?

The freeholders must realize it's time to reduce the tax burden on residents and reduce the debt.

County Must Get Control of Ballooning Debt of \$469 Mil.

The Union County Freeholder Board has introduced a \$508-million budget with a tax levy of \$331 million. One glaring figure is the county's current outstanding debt - \$469 million (the balance equals \$100 million interest and \$369 million principal). This year's debt service payment will be \$60 million, a figure which is larger than most municipal budgets.

Not included in the county debt are "shadow" debts that exist by the county's utilities and authorities - debt that is backed by the county should anyone default.

Over the past 10 to 15 years, the county has embarked on major building plans, which have included the public safety building in Westfield, a new engineering and public works building in Scotch Plains, expansion of the Trailside Nature and Science Museum in Mountainside and a 45,000-square-foot clubhouse and banquet facility at the Galloping Hill Golf Course in Kenilworth. Construction also is underway for the new family court

building in Elizabeth.

While the county has been promoting that the average taxpayer will only see a property-tax increase of \$84, we know that the increase will be significantly more in towns like Westfield, Summit and Berkeley Heights. Last year, Westfielders paid \$34 million in county taxes, up \$2 million over the previous year; Summit paid \$33.4 million, up \$2.6 million, with Berkeley Heights paying \$15.6 million, an increase of \$1.1 million. The average Summit homeowner saw an increase of over \$330 in their county property tax, with Westfield and Berkeley Heights residents seeing tax hikes of over \$200.

County salaries and wages for 2014 total \$174 million for 2,519 full-time county employees, up \$5 million and 24 employees over last year.

We believe the county must get control of its operation and debt to reduce these levels before they become fully unmanageable. They already consume a big chunk (arguably too big of a chunk) of your property taxes.

Registered Voters Made Decision Not To Participate In Established System

Concerning your editorial of March 3, 2014, unaffiliated (u's) voters are not disenfranchised by the present partisan primaries. These registered voters made the decision not to participate in an established system. It is not any different from those who decide not to register to vote or, if registered, not to vote. And they can vote in the primary if they declare a party at the voter sign-in table.

Among unaffiliated voters, it is estimated that between 13 percent and 20 percent actually are "independent." (Coincides with my study of Roselle where 20 percent of u's live in u-only households. The rest generally vote with the partisan leanings of households of party registered family members live. This is not unknown consideration in creating the gerrymander.)

Furthermore, u's vote less regularly in the four-election cycle than do Democrats who follow Republicans in voter turnout.

Roger Stryeski
 Chairman
 Roselle Republican Committee

Lance And 'Tea Party Friends' Are The Ones Circumventing Obamacare

I was at first amused, but then sad when I read Congressman Leonard Lance's recent press release stating that, "The President has once again, through UNILATERAL executive action, circumvented Congress..." regarding a provision of the Affordable Health Care Act (Obamacare). With the House of Representatives, the United States Senate, the Supreme Court and the President all having already approved of the law, it seems to me that Representative Lance and his far right wing conservative Tea Party friends are the ones who are trying to UNILATERALLY circumvent the law.

Does the Congressman really think that his 7th District constituents don't realize that he has voted over 25 times to prevent Americans who cannot afford health care insurance from

Letters to the Editor

Thank You MS Voters For Passing Bond Ref.

On March 11, the Mountainside community voted overwhelmingly (over 80 percent of the vote) for the bond referendum that will enable us to make much needed upgrades to our schools. On behalf of the board of education, I want to share that we are extremely grateful for the support of the voters. Every single vote truly counted.

I would like to thank the Mountainside Citizens Action Committee, and the chairperson, Wendy Caccamo, for their tireless energy and efforts toward the success of this campaign. We are excited to embark on a new journey with the community and look forward to developing a much improved educational environment for the children of Mountainside.

Nancy Lubarsky
 Chief School Administrator
 Mountainside Board of Education

Trenton Quips

- (1) - Legislation (A-2135) was introduced to allow illegal aliens to obtain driving privilege cards. The logic stated is that many illegal aliens are driving illegally without legal insurance.
- (2) - With many New Jerseyans continuing to celebrate St. Patrick's Day throughout the entire month of March with parades and celebrations, some legislators have partnered with the New Jersey Ancient Order of Hibernians to speak out against defamation and bigotry surrounding Irish culture and those of Irish descent.
- (3) - Senate Democrats advance bill to require mortgage lenders to maintain vacant homes during foreclosure proceedings. It was noted that homes have been abandoned everywhere from urban to rural and suburban communities across New Jersey - and that all possible efforts must be done while working through this crisis.
- (4) - A Senate Democrat wants to raise the gas tax by 4 cents a gallon to generate funds to repair infrastructure that they have for a long time neglected while spending tax money on other items. The logic appears to be that the state gas tax, 14.5-cent-per-gallon, is second lowest in the nation and it is time to bring it in line with property taxes, which are the highest in the nation.
- (5) - Senate Republicans reintroduced legislation requiring county prosecutors to determine a sexual offender's risk of re-offense, or tier, prior to the inmate's release from incarceration.
- (6) - Rutgers' University faculty again voted to rescind former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's invitation to speak at the upcoming commencement.

MOUNTAINSIDE PASSES BOND TO UPGRADE SCHOOLS...

NESEMAN ©14 THE LEADER/TIMES

Chivukula Seeks Voters Support for Candidacy for Congress in Dist. 12

I am writing you today not just to ask for your support of my candidacy for Congress, but also to talk to you about what I believe in as a Democrat, an elected official, and most importantly a human being. I believe in America. More specifically, I believe in the America that gave me the opportunity to get a quality education, to start a career and a family when I came to this country with only a few dollars in my pocket.

Throughout my life, I've faced impossible odds, first as an immigrant, then as a community organizer just starting out in Franklin Township where we turned a Republican council Democratic. Whenever I've been told no, I've always said, "if what we are doing is good for the community, then we will find a way." I have taken this approach as an Assemblyman and will take this approach to Congress.

I am not the only one who has faced down impossible odds, however. Over the past few years, working and middle-class families have had to endure one of the most difficult recessions in our country's history. In my capacity as deputy speaker of the General Assembly, I've spoken to folks all over the state. They are frustrated because the recovery has yet to reach their doorsteps. This is compounded by the fact that we have had a Republican-led Congress that

has been systematically dismantling programs that are meant to help hardworking Americans.

As an engineer, I am trained to look at the facts and the facts are we need to fight for progressive values, not because of blind partisanship, but because every single American deserves a level playing field. We can't continue the barbaric practice of cutting programs like food assistance and unemployment insurance. We have to fight back.

Ultimately, this isn't about me or the other candidates in this race, but rather about our broader calling to advocate for economic empowerment and to engage in genuine problem solving. From the time I arrived on America's shores as an aspiring graduate student to my career as an engineer and elected official, I have faced down difficult odds. I humbly ask you now to stand with me to make sure that the hardworking people of this district have a representative in Congress that won't take no for an answer.

I would be honored to represent you in Congress.

Assemblyman Upendra Chivukula
 Candidate for Congress (D)
 District 12

State LD-21
 Sen. Thomas Kean, Jr. (R)
 425 North Ave. E.
 Westfield, N.J. 07090
 (908) 232-3673
 Asm. Jon Bramnick (R)
 251 North Ave. West
 Westfield, N.J. 07090
 (908) 232-2073
 Asm. Nancy Munoz (R)
 57 Union Place, Suite 310
 Summit, N.J. 07901
 (908) 918-0414

State LD-22
 Sen. Nicholas Scutari (D)
 1514 E. Saint Georges Ave.
 Linden, N.J. 07036
 (908) 587-0404
 Asm. Linda Stender (D)
 1801 East Second St.
 Scotch Plains, N.J. 07076
 (908) 668-1900
 Asm. Jerry Green (D)
 17 Watchung Ave.
 Plainfield, N.J. 07060
 (908) 561-5757

7th Congressional District
 Representative Leonard Lance (R)
 425 North Avenue E., Westfield, NJ 07090
 (908) 518-7733
 [Westfield, Mountainside, Garwood, Summit and Cranford are in the 7th Congressional District]

12th Congressional District
 Rep. Rush Holt (D)
 50 Washington Rd., West Windsor, N.J. 08550
 (609) 750-9365
 [Fanwood, Plainfield and most of Scotch Plains are in the 12th Congressional District]

senkean@njleg.org, senscutari@njleg.org
 asmbramnick@njleg.org, asmunoz@njleg.org
 aswstender@njleg.org, asmgreen@njleg.org

Union County Freeholders
 Elizabeth, New Jersey
 (908) 527-4200
 Al Faella, Mgr. afaella@ucnj.org
 Chris Hudak, chair
 chudak@ucnj.org
 Sebastian D'Elia, Public Info.
 (908) 527-4419
 sdelia@ucnj.org

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To Reach Us
 E-Mail - editor@goleader.com
 Phone - (908) 232-4407

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