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25¢

"LET'S TALK FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITIES"

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER

ESSEX COUNTY • EAST ORANGE • ORANGE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Happy Thanksgiving

I REGRET SAYING AOC WOULD BE PRESIDENT ONE DAY

By Kristopher Seals
OP/ED

Years ago, in a guest editorial I scribed, I proudly said that New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez would be a future President of the United States. I saw a young, educated, classy, witty and most of all, a kind-hearted candidate who represented the future as well the pros of diversity. As a bonus, she was - and still is - one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen.

Now, years later, I find myself absolutely alarmed by what has happened.

Over time, the witty repartee has been replaced by snarky vitriol, the pros of diversity have been replaced by the cons, and the most important quality - the kindness - is gone. I have no choice but to write this.

Recently, Georgia Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene announced that she will leave her seat in January. This comes after she had fallen out of favor with President Trump and a good portion of the Republican Party. Worst of all, Greene and her family have received death threats. No one deserves that, and as a human

being, I can understand why she would choose to leave.

Now, it is no secret that Greene, aka "MTG," and Ocasio-Cortez, aka "AOC," have butted heads in the past. Despite this, with MTG on the way out, you would figure that AOC would embrace the "classy" quality that impressed me all those years ago. Sadly, that is not the case.

Instead, AOC posted this on Instagram, "She's carefully timing her departure just 1-2 days after her pension kicks in and after

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MURPHY SETS PRIMARY AND SPECIAL ELECTION DATES FOR SHERRILL SUCCESSOR

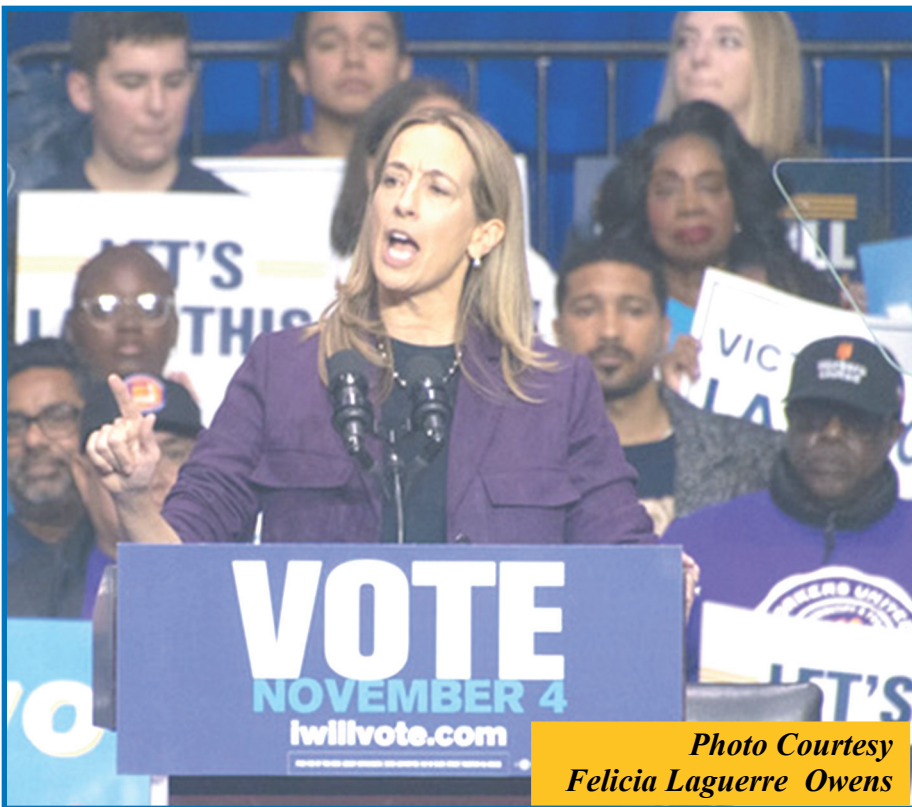


Photo Courtesy
Felicia Laguerre Owens

By Walter Elliott

TRENTON - Gov. Phil Murphy - by announcing, on Nov. 20, Feb. 5 and April 16 as Congressional District 11 special primary and general election dates to succeed Mikie Sherrill - has started the 2026 election season early.

Murphy (D-Rumson) called the dates the morning after Sherrill (D-Montclair) had officially resigned her House of Representatives seat 11:59 p.m. Nov. 19. Her stepping down is part of her transition to become New Jersey's 57th governor on Jan. 20 - thanks to a majority statewide Nov. 4 General Election voters' selection.

Sherrill's departure from Capitol Hill started a 30-day countdown clock on Murphy to

issue that writ of special election. His Feb. 5 primary election setting gives prospective primary candidates until Dec. 1 to attain at least 500 signatures onto to their petitions and to file them with county clerk - election division offices in Newark and 20 other counties.

Feb. 1 in-person early voting is to be Jan. 29-Feb. 3. Voting by mail will start as soon as their ballots have their candidate fields set.

Feb. 3 is the filing deadline for independent and "minor party" candidates for the April 16 special general election. These candidates have until 4 p.m. that day to file petitions with at least 250 signatures.

(Continued on page 4)



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Editorial
Kristopher Seals
Content Editor

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making millions of dollars insider trading stocks for weapons manufacturers and others while in office. She is saying a lot but her actions have not backed up the rhetoric. For all her talk, she's still voting with them to gut health care and advance self-dealing corruption schemes."

What is this?! The woman is getting death threats, and instead of wishing her well in her private life, you choose to kick her while she's down? Where's the classy attitude, the kindness, the empathy? Who are you, and what have you done with Sandy (her childhood nickname)?

What's the point? Think about it. Your biggest rival in Congress, your foil, your polar opposite, is leaving. YOU WON!!! Why are you acting like that guy you hate and call every name under the sun? (More on him in a minute.)

Okay, let's look at her post. First of all, anyone in Washington, any other public office, or even in private life, will NOT balk at the chance to ensure that he/she/they get a pension - including YOU Alexandria. Secondly, she has a family, and that certainly necessitates the need to secure a pension for their economic security.

Then there is the "making millions of dollars insider trading stocks" part. Did you make a statement like that towards Nancy Pelosi - whose "prolific" stock dealings inspired the PELOSI Act - when she announced that she was leaving after her term is done? Or are you afraid of her and kept your mouth shut like a good little robot?

Now, if MTG was a Democrat, instead of leaving and taking a pension, which is just a portion of the active salary, all she would have to do is - like a robot - vote for whatever the party wants and win reelection every term without caring about what's best for her constituents. In fact, she can hold office as long as someone like Sen. Feinstein did, being practically invalid and still collecting a FULL

check instead of a pension despite CLEARLY being unfit to serve. Do you want her to do that instead, AOC?

This is so sad. If only her inner beauty matched the exterior, then maybe she could have been the one to change things. Now, all I see is just another politician. Such a waste.

Speaking of Democrats who only exist to disappoint me, Texas Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett also chimed in on X, saying, "I didn't see this coming but the threats that come with being on the opposite side of Trump ARE REAL! People need to wake up! Trump only knows how to use people up & then cast them aside when he's done."

Again, not wishing her well but using the news to bloviate about a political agenda against that guy she hates and calls every name under the sun (again, more on him shortly). Anytime I see - or especially hear - Jasmine Crockett, only one word comes to mind: GHETTO. I have not seen one bit of class or kindness from her AT ALL.

Speaking of "that guy," President Trump indeed had a falling out with Greene. That said, this is what he posted on his Truth

Social platform, "Marjorie 'Traitor' Brown, because of PLUMMETING Poll Numbers, and not wanting to face a Primary Challenger with a strong Trump Endorsement (where she would have no chance of winning!), has decided to call it 'quits.' Her relationship with the WORST Republican Congressman in decades, Tom Massie of Kentucky, also known as Rand Paul Jr. because he votes against the Republican Party (and really good legislation!), did not help her. For some reason, primarily that I refused to return her never ending barrage of phone calls, Marjorie went BAD. Nevertheless, I will always appreciate Marjorie, and thank her for her service to our Country!"

Yes, in true Trump fashion, he piled on his trademark snark, even calling her "Brown" instead of "Greene." However, at the very end, he THANKED her for serving the country. You saw it here, and I will scream it in CAPS: DONALD TRUMP HAS MORE CLASS THAN AOC AND JASMINE CROCKETT.

Two reasons: One, like him or not, he showed a bit of kindness. Two, AOC and Crockett

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THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	PM Rain	Mostly Cloudy	Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
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PORT AUTHORITY ANNOUNCES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RICK COTTON WILL RETIRE FROM THE AGENCY IN JANUARY 2026

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey has announced that Rick Cotton, who has served as the executive director of the Port Authority since August 2017, will retire from the agency in January 2026. A successor is expected to be announced in due course and will work closely with Cotton to ensure a smooth transition.

Cotton's distinguished 8.5 year tenure makes him the longest serving executive director of the Port Authority since the 1940s. Under the leadership of Cotton and Chairman Kevin O'Toole, the agency has delivered an unprecedented wave of renewal and institutional reform, while successfully navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and one of the most difficult operating environments in its history. The Port Authority today is a revitalized, high-performing agency with a clear mandate, a disciplined operating culture, and a transformative, forward-looking capital plan.

Cotton said, "From the moment Chairman O'Toole and I

stepped into these roles in 2017, we shared a simple conviction: this region deserves world-class infrastructure equal to its people and its promise. Working in partnership across two states, political lines, and every corner of this agency, we have made historic progress toward that goal. Together, we transformed our airports from appalling laughingstocks into award-winning, best-in-class gateways, and jumpstarted the Midtown Bus Terminal, which had languished for decades. The foundation is now set for future generations to keep building a stronger, more connected region. The opportunity to help transform our facilities and elevate the travel experience for hundreds of millions of people has been deeply satisfying.

"Since 2017, I have devoted all my energy to this profoundly important work. It has been enormously rewarding - and exhausting. But nothing is forever. With the immense progress that we have made and the completion last week of our proposed



new 10-year capital plan - which will fund the agency's ambitious agenda through 2035 - it is simply time to hand over the reins, and I will do so in January."

Cotton continued, "Serving this agency and this region has

been the honor of my professional life. I am deeply grateful to New York Gov. Kathy Hochul for her unwavering commitment to our ambitious agenda and confirming my appointment as
(Continued on page 7)

ELECTIONS (Cont. from page 1)

General election in-person early voting is to be on April 6-14. Vote by mail is to start upon mailing of said ballots.

Murphy's writ of special election within 24 hours of Sherrill's Congressional legislation means that her House of Representatives seat, as of press time, remains vacant. The Governor has not announced appointing a "caretaker," who would not be running in the special elections in CD-11.

Murphy's next day writ makes moot State Sen. John McKeon's proposed amendment on shortening the governor's appointment window. McKeon (D-West Orange) wanted to cut that window to 10 business days.

CD-11, which Sherrill was first elected to in 2018, consists of 56 Essex, Morris and Passaic in whole or in part. The post-2020 Census redrawing included South Orange, Maplewood, Bloomfield, Montclair's Upper Montclair section, Glen Ridge, Belleville and Nutley.

The Feb. 5 and April 16, 2026 election dates slightly overlap the almost-done 2025 election season. Montclair voters are to decide on two public school budget questions Dec. 9. Voters in Hillside and Jersey City have Dec. 2 runoff elections to decide.

The Feb. 5 primary field, since Nov. 5, has grown to 12 Democratic candidates and one Republican candidate as of press time. Those getting petitions signed, organizing campaigns and/or receiving endorsements include:

Republican Primary

Joseph Hathaway - Mayor of Randolph has the endorsement of 18 Morris County municipal officials and GOP chairman, including three Randolph councilmen plus the mayors of Florham Park, Hanover and Jefferson.

Democratic Primary (in alphabetical order)

John Bartlett - Wayne attor-

ney, current Passaic County Commission and Harvard Law School graduate. Bartlett has been endorsed by the Port Authority Police Benevolent Association.

Zach Beecher - Morristown venture capitalist is an Iraqi war paratrooper.

J-L Cauvin - Bloomfield lawyer and internet personality known for his President Trump impressions makes first serious run.

Marc Chaaban - Montville social content creator who was a former Sherrill intern.

Cammie Croft - Montclair advocacy group Chief Community Officer was Deputy New Media Director in the President Barack Obama White House.

Dean Dafis - Maplewood Township Committeeman and former mayor is director of the state's Office of Eviction and Homelessness Prevention.

Brendan Gill - Montclair's Essex County Commission district representative and former Commission President managed Murphy's 2017 gubernatorial

campaign. Retail Warehouse and Department Store Union Local No. 108, the state Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Modia Butler, advisor to U.S. Sen. Cory A. Booker are among his endorsers.

Jeff Grayzel - was Morris Township's mayor, deputy mayor and township committeeman since 2007.

Tom Malinowski - Ringoes resident was CD-7 Congressman 2017-23 and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State. Murphy, U.S. Sen. Andy Kim, FP Action Network and Action Together NJ are among his endorsers.

Justin Strickland - Chatham Borough Councilman was a former Pentagon official, veteran and security expert.

Tanesha Way - Wayne resident and former Passaic County Commissioner was appointed to succeed the late Sheila Y. Oliver, of East Orange, as Lt. Governor and Secretary of State.

Anna Lee Williams - Morristown social justice activist who started her campaign in July.

SPORTS WRAP



By William Hathaway, Jr.

This past week, the Seton Hall University women’s basketball program has continued its great start. At Walsh Gym, the Lady Pirates won a three-hour marathon game over Fordham 90-83 in double overtime. SHU point guard Savannah Catalan had 20 points and 8 rebounds, along with going 10-10 from the free throw line. She had solid help from her team-

led by TK Simpkins with 18 points, Stephon Payne with 13 points and 11 rebounds, and AJ Staton-McCray who led his team with 12 points. Once again, SHU kept the turnovers low with 10.

In other local college basketball action, the Essex County College women’s basketball has started off to a 4-1 on the season. This past Saturday, the Lady Wolverines dominated Salem Community College 64-35. Ani-



mates, as Mariana Valenzuela had 21 points and 8 rebounds and Jada Eads had 16 points.

Seton Hall captured 28 points off of turnovers. Fordham was led by Alexis Black with 42 points, and Ugne Sirtautaite had 15 points and 11 rebounds. The Lady Pirates are now 4-0 on the season.

As for the men’s team, they easily defeated the New Haven Chargers at the Prudential Center in Newark 68-45. The Hall is now 5-0 on the season, and were

ya Brown had 14 points and 6 rebounds for ECC, while teammates Essence Cushionberry had 14 points and 12 rebounds and Mia-Marie Thomas had 13 points.

Finally, after taking the North 2 Group 2 title last week, Shabazz High went on the road to defeat Westwood 36-6 in the next stage semifinal round. They will now head to the Group 2 championship game at Rutgers University on December 3rd.

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Attorney General Platkin Announces Important Settlement Protecting Access to Critical Services for Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Survivors

TRENTON - New Jersey Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin today secured an agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) that ensures DOJ will not apply alarming restrictions to critical Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) services supporting survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. The agreement is an important victory that successfully resolves New Jersey's lawsuit seeking to preserve access to these essential services.

Last month, Attorney General Platkin and a coalition of 19 other attorneys general sued DOJ over unlawful new conditions that threatened to cut off critical legal services for survivors who could not immediately prove their immigration status - conditions that would violate federal law.

As a result of the lawsuit, DOJ reversed course and today agreed to a binding resolution guaranteeing the federal government will not apply the restrictions to states' VOCA Vic-

tim Assistance and VAWA funds and ensuring that survivors can continue to rely on these crucial supports regardless of immigration status.

"The Trump Administration's attempt to cut off support for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence was cruel, reckless, and illegal - and now we've stopped it," said Attorney General Platkin.

"I am proud to have fought alongside our partners across the country against the threats made by the Trump Administration that targeted those who had already been victims of horrific crimes. The agreement we have reached with the Department of Justice ensures that we will continue to be able to support the recovery of these residents and allow them to rebuild their lives."

For decades, the VAWA and VOCA programs have enabled states to support survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other violent crimes. These grants fund services such as legal representa-

tion for protective orders, custody and visitation matters, child support, housing and relocation assistance, and civil legal assistance that helps survivors escape abuse and hold criminal perpetrators accountable. VAWA also funds rape crisis centers that provide urgent support to victims of sexual assault. Congress designed these programs to reach every eligible survivor, regardless of immigration status, because public safety depends on ensuring that all victims can seek help, report crimes, and rebuild their lives without fear.

In October, the coalition filed a lawsuit after DOJ informed states that they could no longer use VAWA or VOCA funding to provide certain services to undocumented immigrants - including assistance in navigating the criminal justice system. The new "Legal Services Condition" applied not only to future awards, but also to grants that had already been issued, some dating back years. The attorneys general warned that the restriction would impose

severe burdens on service providers, who do not collect or verify immigration status, and that forcing survivors to produce proof of status before receiving help would be dangerous and potentially impossible.

As a result of the lawsuit, DOJ has now agreed that the challenged restriction cannot and will not be applied to any current VOCA Victim Assistance or VAWA grant awards. Based on this binding stipulation, Attorney General Platkin and the coalition are voluntarily dismissing their lawsuit without prejudice, preserving the ability to refile if DOJ attempts to revive this unlawful restriction in the future.

Joining Attorney General Platkin in this stipulation are the attorneys general of Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Vermont, Rhode Island, Washington, and the District of Columbia.

FEDERAL COURT TERMINATES NEWARK POLICE CONSENT DECREE AFTER SUCCESSFUL REFORMS

On Nov. 20, the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey terminated the consent decree in *United States v. City of Newark*, marking the completion of a nine-year reform effort of the Newark Police Department (NPD).

Through the consent decree, NPD resolved prior Department of Justice findings by implementing constitutional policing requirements for stops, searches, arrests, and use of force. Based on completion of those and other requirements, Newark moved to dismiss the decree; the Justice Department supported the City's motion.

"We are proud to stand by the men and woman of NPD as federal oversight ends, and the court returns control of local law enforcement to the City of New-

ark," said Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "We look forward to the continued, effective policing of the City - in a constitutional manner - to protect all Americans from crime."

"Over the last decade, the Newark Police Division has made tremendous improvements to ensure constitutional policing and to increase community trust," said Acting U.S. Attorney and Special Attorney Alina Habba for the District of New Jersey. "NPD remains a valuable law enforcement partner, and we will continue to work with it to reduce gun crimes, drug trafficking, and gang violence. The men and women of NPD should be proud of what they accomplished, and we appreciate the

hard work they do every day to keep the people of Newark safe."

In 2011, the Justice Department and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey jointly initiated an investigation into the NPD under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Title VI of the Civil Rights act of 1964, and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968.

After concluding the investigation, in 2016 the United States and the City of Newark entered into a consent decree to address the investigation's findings that NPD engaged in a pattern or practice of conducting stops and using unjustified and excessive force in violation of the Fourth Amendment; allegations of bi-

ased policing; retaliating against individuals who questioned police action in violation of the First Amendment; and subjecting individuals to theft by NPD officers in violation of the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments.

NPD has been implementing the decree since its entry. In 2024, the Court granted the parties' joint motion to terminate several of the consent decree's requirements that NPD completed by that time.

The Special Litigation Section of the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and the District of New Jersey U.S. Attorney's Office's Civil Division and jointly handled the investigation and litigation.

COTTON (Cont. from pg. 4)

executive director when she assumed the governorship in 2021. I am also grateful to New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy for his steadfast support of our collective priorities. I want to especially thank Port Authority Chairman Kevin O'Toole for his enduring partnership and dedication to collaboration and progress. And I also offer my gratitude to former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo for originally appointing me to the position in 2017."

"Rick took on one of the toughest public-service jobs in America and delivered extraordinary results," said New York Gov. Kathy Hochul. "LaGuardia's transformation alone would define a career, but Rick's impact spans airports, transit systems, bridges, and tunnels, as well as the renewed culture of a more accountable Port Authority. I was proud to work with him on so many critical projects, including the modernizing of the Midtown Bus Terminal and John F. Kennedy International Airport. His leadership rebuilt public confidence in our capacity to deliver world-class infrastructure. The Port Authority today is stronger and more resilient than ever, and his impact will be felt for generations."

"I am thankful to Rick Cotton for his service to the Port Authority and wish him the best in his future endeavors," said New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy. "I am grateful for Rick's partnership over the past eight years, and for his leadership on several transformative transportation and infrastructure projects that will benefit our region for decades to come."

"Rick has been the driving force behind the Port Authority's resurgence as a high-performing, modern public agency," said Port Authority Chairman Kevin O'Toole. "He delivered once-in-a-generation projects that transformed critical transportation assets,

strengthened the region's economy, and enhanced connections across New York and New Jersey. And his vision and discipline are embedded in the capital plan that will guide our next decade. Over 40 years in public service, I have never met a more dedicated, disciplined, and focused executive. I am lucky to have forged a strong professional and personal relationship with Rick. We will miss Rick dearly, but his legacy and presence will be felt for many decades to come."

"As someone who has carefully studied the history of the Port Authority and served on this Board for nearly 15 years, I can say without hesitation that Rick Cotton is one of the finest leaders this agency has ever had," said Port Authority Vice Chair Jeffrey Lynford. "His clarity, discipline and steady hand guided the Port Authority through some of the most challenging years in its history. Rick brought a level of integrity and purpose that strengthened this institution from the inside out. Rick elevated the Port Authority's standards, restored trust in its mission, and inspired all of us who served alongside him. It has been a true honor to work with him."

Key highlights of Cotton's and O'Toole's tenure include:

- Reimagined the region's airports with a \$50 billion transformation program - the largest in agency history - delivering a new LaGuardia, Newark Liberty's award-winning Terminal A, and launching the full rebuild of JFK.
- Rebuilt LaGuardia from the ground up, replacing the nation's most outdated airport with a unified, world-class facility, delivered through an \$8 billion public-private partnership (with the airport fully operational throughout construction) and recognized with multiple prestigious awards, including being named best airport in the

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- Opened Newark Liberty's new Terminal A, a five-star, next generation gateway - which was named Best New Airport Terminal in the World in 2024 by preeminent global airport evaluation firm Skytrax - while breaking ground on the new AirTrain Newark and delivering a funded blueprint to transform the entire airport, including a new Terminal B and rebuilt roadway network.
- Set the new JFK fully in motion, with a \$19 billion rebuild including best-in-class, privately financed terminals 1 and 6 under construction, a com-

plete rebuild and simplification of the roadways more than halfway complete, and multi-billion investments in expansion and modernization of existing terminals.

- Refocused the agency around customer experience, driving stellar third-party customer recognition through new beloved local concessions, riveting public art, a distinctly New York and New Jersey sense of place, upgraded facilities for taxi and for-hire vehicle drivers, real-time digital tools, and a consistently higher standard of airport service.
- Moved the long-stalled Mid-

(Continued on page 8)

TWELVE INDIVIDUALS CHARGED IN \$11 MILLION STOLEN TREASURY CHECK CONSPIRACY

NEWARK - Twelve individuals have been charged for their roles in a conspiracy to commit bank fraud by depositing stolen checks and withdrawing the funds, Acting U.S. Attorney and Special Attorney Alina Habba announced.

"As alleged in the complaint, the Defendants deposited stolen checks into fraudulent bank accounts for their own personal gain, taking advantage of a COVID-19 pandemic relief program earmarked for struggling businesses," said Acting United States Attorney and Special Attorney Alina Habba. "Rooting out fraud on pandemic programs and holding the alleged perpetrators accountable continues to be a top priority of this office and our law enforcement partners."

Wayne Bessant, 44, of Hamilton, New Jersey; Britany Brown, 39, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; John Gerard Ebert, 42, of Hamilton, New Jersey; Joseph Graves-Carmichael, 43, of Trenton, New Jersey; Andrew Hooper, 37, of New Brunswick, New Jersey; Thomas Lee, 55, of Beverly, New Jersey; Patricia Kearse, 46, of Philadelph-

ia, Pennsylvania; Clarence Semmon, 41, of Trenton, New Jersey; Ryan Small, 32, of Ewing, New Jersey; Dwayne Reddon, 39, of Trenton, New Jersey; Shabazz Rouzard, 33, of Ewing, New Jersey; and Raymond Wade, 42, of Morrisville, Pennsylvania, are charged by criminal complaint with one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud. Ten Defendants appeared on November 13 before Magistrate Judge James B. Clark, III in Newark Federal Court. One Defendant was already in custody on a state case and one Defendant remains at large.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court: From March 2023 through May 2025, the Defendants conspired to deposit stolen checks - including U.S. Department of Treasury Checks - at various banks in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Defendants impersonated the businesses listed as payees on the stolen checks by acquiring business documents in the names of the payees.

Once the Defendants acquired the fraudulent business

documents, they used them to impersonate the victims and open fraudulent business bank accounts where they deposited the stolen checks. In total, the Defendants deposited or attempted to deposit approximately 84 Treasury checks, and 27 commercial checks totaling over \$11 million and split the proceeds. Many of the Treasury checks were refunds issued under the Employee Retention Credit, a program the Internal Revenue Service created during the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage businesses to retain employees.

The bank fraud conspiracy is punishable by a maximum potential penalty of 30 years in prison and also carries a fine of up to \$1,000,000.

"Just as the twelve subjects schemed and conspired to cheat the system by depositing stolen checks meant for COVID-19 pandemic relief efforts, the FBI and our federal partners worked together to follow the facts and evidence that would lead to this charge. This case is a textbook example of the partnerships we build to prevent fraud against the

Government and protect taxpayers from fraud in any form," said FBI Newark Special Agent in Charge, Stefanie Roddy.

"This investigation underscores HSI's commitment to protecting the integrity of our nation's financial system and ensuring that those who exploit COVID-19 relief programs are held accountable," said HSI Newark Special Agent in Charge Michael S. McCarthy. "HSI will continue to work closely with our law enforcement partners to uncover complex schemes targeting American taxpayers and to relentlessly dismantle the criminal networks responsible, stripping them of their illicit gains."

"COVID-19 relief programs, including the Employee Retention Credit, were implemented to help honest Americans keep their jobs during an unprecedented time of hardship. Through deception and fraud, the Defendants allegedly stole over \$11 million from the hardworking businesses these pandemic relief programs were meant to benefit," stated Special Agent in

(Continued on page 13)

COTTON *(Continued from page 7)*

- town Bus Terminal replacement into construction, securing all approvals and beginning work on a \$11 billion community-supported project after decades of paralysis.
- Revitalized the World Trade Center campus, opening 3 WTC, the Perelman Performing Arts Center and the St. Nicholas Church and National Shrine, while bringing the site to life through events, activations, and public art.
- Elevated the Port of New York and New Jersey to the nation's second-busiest, maintaining fluid operations through the COVID supply-chain crisis, and expanding capacity through harbor deepening and intermodal rail enhancements.
- Invested billions of dollars to modernize PATH's aging

infrastructure, including major track replacement, establishment of 9-car train service, 20 percent expansion of the rail car fleet, and rebuilding and renovations of stations.

- Built the largest PAPD force in agency history and strengthened cybersecurity capabilities to meet rising safety and digital security demands across critical regional infrastructure.
- Achieved historic milestones in minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE) participation, including \$2.3 billion at LaGuardia and \$3 billion at JFK - both New York state records - expanding opportunity for diverse firms at unprecedented scale.
- Advanced sustainability leadership, becoming the first U.S. transportation agency to adopt Paris climate accords in 2018, launch a

roadmap to net-zero emissions, expand clean-energy and electrification programs, and introduce pioneering emissions-reduction initiatives across airports, the seaport and rail.

- Launched the agency's employee innovation hub, piloting emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicle and electric air taxi deployment and industrial use cases for artificial intelligence, while investing in technology to deliver real-time security and customs wait times at the airports, fast and free Wi-Fi at Port Authority airports, cell service and countdown clocks in PATH stations.
- Modernized the agency, improving efficiency, transparency, governance, and cross-state coordination, while strengthening the employee experience and building a high-expectation, high-

performance culture.

- Issued the Port Authority's record \$45 billion proposed 2026-2035 Capital Plan, setting the blueprint for the next decade of ambition and advancing a suite of generational projects, including completion of the new JFK and Newark Liberty airports as well as the new Midtown Bus Terminal, among many others.

In 2025, Cotton received the Citizen Budget Commission's Felix G. Rohatyn Award, which "honors an individual whose career exemplifies its namesake's commitment to public service and New York's sound fiscal management." In 2021, Cotton was honored with the Regional Plan Association's Zuccotti Award, its highest award, recognizing "a leader who has made extraordinary contributions to the built environment in the tri-state metropolitan region."

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DISCLAIMER: The following items are primarily drawn from first responders. Responders' accounts may not be their full activity range. Grand juries hand down indictments when evidence presented them warrant a trial. Named suspects/defendants are innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

NEWARK - The projected Nov. 17 federal jury selection in the U.S. vs. LaMonica McIver trial has been postponed until U.S. District Court Judge Jamel K. Semper decides on the defendant's third motion to dismiss.

Semper, saying he needs more factual evidence, is reviewing video recordings of the May 9 scuffle in front of the Delaney Hall detention center here that involved Cong. McIver (D-Newark), Cong. Blonnie Watson Coleman (D-Camden), Mayor Ras Baraka and agents from ICE and DHS. Semper will then announce whether he will accept or turn down McIver's third injunction to dismiss federal charges against her.

Semper dismissed McIver's charge to dismiss assault of a federal law enforcement officer and interference of law enforcement on grounds of selective prosecution. The judge found no specific mentions of the Congresswoman from New Jersey District prosecutor Alena Habba or President Donald J. Trump in comparison to the latter's statements on or around Jan. 6, 2021.

The judge also dismissed McIver's claim that the government interfered with her, as a federal official, from inspecting Delaney Hall. McIver had toured the detention center after the scuffle.

Bey Wins

Participating voters in Newark's Central Ward Council Special Election Nov. 4, have chosen Amina Bey over Gayle Chaneyfield Jenkins by a 98 vote plurality in essexclerk.com's Nov. 19 final and certified Nov. 4 General Election results.

Bey, the daughter of WISOMMM founder Frederica Bey, drew 3,302 votes or 39.40 percent. Former councilwoman Chaneyfield Jenkins tallied 3,204 or 38.23. There will be no runoff since this election is to fill out the remaining term of now-Congresswoman LaMonica McIver.

IRVINGTON - A former township resident, Columbia High School graduate and original member of "The Fugees" recording group will be appealing a 14-year prison sentence handed down Nov. 20 in a Washington, D.C. federal courtroom.

U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly sentenced Prakazrel "Pras" Michel, 52, that Thursday on 10 counts of illegally funneling foreign contributions for President Barack Obama's 2012 reelection campaign and related charges that a federal jury found him guilty of April 26, 2023. The counts included being an unregistered agent of a foreign government and conspiracy.

Peter Zeindeberg, who represented the Grammy-winning rapper that Thursday, said that he and his client are filing an appeal. Zeindeberg, who asked for three years in a federal prison, said that the sentence was "completely disproportionate" to the conviction. Department of Justice-D.C. District attorneys had been advocating life in prison, saying that Michel had "betrayed his country for money."

Michel had replaced his 2023 lawyer, David Kenner, with Zeindeberg and had filed an appeal based on Kenner using an AI-generated program in the closing argument. Kollar-Kotelly rejected that appeal Aug. 30, 2024. Kenner, who used to represent Snoop Dogg and Suge Knight, later plead guilty of leaking grand jury information to the public.

Michel was accused of laundering some \$120 million from Malaysian businessman and film financier Low Taek Jho to the Obama campaign through shell or straw donors. Low, wanted by

Interpol since 2016 on an unrelated charge, is believed to be hiding in Shanghai, China.

The Brooklyn native was a CHS classmate with Lauryn Hill in 1989 and formed the nucleus of The Fugees.

EAST ORANGE - The northeast corner of William and North Clinton streets, starting next year, will see three houses and a garage dating back to 1925 replaced by a 115-unit, seven-story apartment building.

The East Orange Planning Board approved 430 William LLC's plans to build 81 one bedroom and 24 two bedroom units above a 54 parking space ground floor and mechanical basement. 418-430 William Street is being built within the city's Transit-Oriented Development Zone and Arts and Culture District.

The 54 spaces were allocated in part to encourage public transportation. The spaces are to be "smart managed" for efficiency.

418-430 will merge four lots - three of whom have 2.5-story wood frame houses built in 1925.

430 William, currently NOS Complete Auto Repair, started life in 1940 as Paul V. White's Service Station. It became an Esso and Exxon 1959-76. The station began concentrating on auto repair-only by 1996.

ORANGE - Ken's Coffee Shop ended at least 66 years of serving caffeine and a century of food service when it closed its doors here at 266 Main St. 4 p.m. Nov. 7 - but briefly reopened for a tribute 3 p.m. Nov. 11.

Councilman Wheldon "Monty" Montague III and Clifford Ross joined outgoing owners Anna and Andy Hadjitoouli in celebrating their 30 years' owning and operating the eatery. The service also posthumously honored Georgoulla "Georgina" Hadjitoouli, 52, of Bloomfield, who died Oct. 9, 2023.

Real estate and telephone records had Louis Schreiber replacing a small bowling alley at 266 Main with a Jersey Farms grocery store in 1925. It became the Cake Masters Bake Shop by 1952. Cake Masters became Joy's Coffee Shop in 1959 and Ken's by 1965. ("Local Talk" was unable to divine who Joy or

Ken were by press time.)

Ken's closing coincides with Zakis Furniture Outlet, at 264 Main, holding a closing sale of its own. Zakis has since moved to the former Rent A Center at 349 Main. (Rent A Center, of Plano, Texas, had closed its stores here and in East Orange, Newark, Irvington and Bloomfield in September.)

264-266 Main are owned by Louis M.G. Ruggiero. There are no site plan applications from Ruggiero on the Orange Planning Board or Zoning Board of Adjustment agenda to date.

WEST ORANGE - When property owners opened their Nov. 1 quarterly tax bill and did a double-take - so did those in the tax assessor and collector's offices.

They had discovered that the figures for interest charges and late fees are wrong. Officials and their contracted software vendor are inserting the actual figures on the tax bills they have so far received. They will be posting the corrected interest and late fee figures online.

Township elders have meanwhile posted and are mailing out new 2025 Final and 2026 Preliminary for arrival during the last week of November. They will have the actual interest penalty charges and late fees.

Taxpayers are meanwhile having the grace period to pay the tax bills without penalty extended until Dec. 22. Bill postmarked or received after Dec. 22 will have their interest penalty rates based on the statutory Nov. 1 date.

The Preliminary 2026 tax bill rates are based on the Calendar Year 2025 Municipal Budget which the Township Council passed Nov. 12 -- ending an eight-month process that began with Mayor Susan McCartney's April introduction. The \$104.95 million budget carries a \$31.56 increase on the value of an average assessed house, an 87 percent reduction on the introduced \$243.31 increase.

SOUTH ORANGE - Mayor Sheena Collum has promised residents along Warren Court Nov. 10 that village officials will be "looking into" their parking situation with their Montrose section street.

(Continued on page 14)

The Doctor Is In



OP-ED BY DR. ADIL MANZOOR

The Impact of Cannabis Use on Developmental Milestones in Youth Users

There used to be a time when smoking cannabis (marijuana or weed) used to be the peak of rebellion among adolescents. For real. It was real *gangsta*! But we are in a new era, where smoking weed is barely even considered a vice by many. It has become so normalized (and even legalized in some states) in the United States.

However, that something is normalized or legalized does not make it healthy. Just look at alcohol, which is responsible for so many health issues and casualties - directly and indirectly - in the United States. The same conviction does not appear to weed, though, and there seems to be a never-ending debate about its health benefits and risks. So, is smoking weed really good for you?

If you ask any healthcare provider this, their answer will almost always be no. What if you ask me? Well, also no. Smoking any substance - natural or synthetic - is not good for you. Weed, tobacco, and cocaine (of course!) are all substances that are typically smoked, and this act comes with different health concerns, including increased risk of stroke, lung cancer and disease, heart disease, and other vascular problems.

It's not all bad, though, as studies suggest. There have been identified benefits of marijuana,

and there is even a medical-grade of the plant. Whether or not marijuana will be useful to you is up to your doctor. However, the risks are always present if these plants are smoked, and healthcare providers never fail to educate people on these risks. There is a risk to smoking that people don't really discuss, though, and that is its effects on the adolescent brain.

The human brain develops throughout adolescence. In fact, scientific research suggests that the brain does not stop growing until 30. So, there is no doubt at all that the brain is still developing during adolescence. The research in question evaluated the use of cannabis in adolescents over 18 months. Here's the interesting bit.

The results showed that adolescents who repeatedly took cannabis had a lower intelligence quotient and slower cognitive function. What's more, researchers concluded that smoking during adolescence may have detrimental effects on the brain's resting functional connectivity. Aside from the impact on intelligence and task-solving, problems with the brain's connectivity can also predispose the individual to different mental health conditions.

There's more. The research found that simply stopping cannabis exposure does not reverse any cognitive impairments that may have taken place. Yeah, it's pretty bad. The findings of this study are also not isolated or unique. Other studies have found similar results, linking a higher prevalence of mental health problems to adolescents and other youths.

Considering how difficult it is to control cannabis now in the country despite the restrictions from states, one can only imagine what the situation will be when restrictions ease up, which they surely will from the look of things. So, access to cannabis by adolescents may get even easier, and this will undoubtedly be associated with a corresponding increase in smoking and other forms of cannabis exposure. In the same vein, the impairments in cognition and other mental problems will only increase.



It is clear, then, that an effective solution to the problem is needed. Some have suggested increasing the difficulty of adolescents getting cannabis when restrictions are lifted across the country. That will be pretty hard to implement, however, as most of the adolescents who get it now already do so through the back door.

Of course, there are still some who do not believe marijuana should be legal at all, and I suspect this population will be even more energized in their stance when revelations like this penetrate the mainstream media. Again, this seems like a dead end, and it seems a matter of "when" and not "if" cannabis will be widely accepted as a recreational drug.

Personally, I believe the best solution will be proper education on studies like this that highlight the risk of cannabis exposure to adolescents and younger populations. This education also has to start at the grassroots level - right from high school and different homes.

My recommendation certainly does not preclude the role of the government and health organizations. More studies have to be conducted, and on a larger scale, to get more representative and encompassing results on the influence of cannabis on adolescents. And, yes, I also support the need for some restrictions (much more stringent ones) that limit the exposure of cannabis to adolescents.

An important detail to also include in our thinking is that exposure to cannabis can also be through second-hand smoke. Not everyone exposed to marijuana

actually does so intentionally. This means whatever strategies are employed to address this problem also have to account for accidental exposure.

This article was written by Dr. Adil Manzoor, DO, a Board-Certified Internist; Board Board-Certified Pediatrician who works as a Hospitalist and Emergency Room Physician. He is also the current President of Garden State Street Medicine, a non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to provide free preventive and acute urgent care services for the homeless. He is also the co-founder of his own unique medical practice, Mobile Medicine NJ; House Call Doctors. He is also currently pursuing an Executive MBA and a Master's of Science in Healthcare Leadership at Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management and the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences.

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NASA SETS COVERAGE FOR CREW LAUNCH TO JOIN STATION EXPEDITION

NASA astronaut Chris Williams will launch aboard the Roscosmos Soyuz MS-28 spacecraft to the International Space Station on Nov. 27, accompanied by cosmonauts Sergey Kud-Sverchkov and Sergei Mikaev, where they will join the Expedition 73 crew advancing scientific research.

Williams, Kud-Sverchkov, and Mikaev will lift off at 4:27 a.m. EST (2:27 p.m. Baikonur time) from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. Live launch and docking coverage will be available on NASA+, Amazon Prime, and the agency's YouTube channel. Learn how to watch NASA content through a variety of platforms, including social media.

After a two-orbit, three-hour trip to the orbital complex, the spacecraft will automatically dock to the station's Rassvet module at approximately 7:38 a.m. Shortly after, hatches will

open between Soyuz and the space station.

Once aboard, the trio will join NASA astronauts Mike Fincke, Zena Cardman, and Jonny Kim, JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) astronaut Kimiya Yui, and Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergei Ryzhikov, Alexey Zubritsky, and Oleg Platonov.

NASA's coverage is as follows (all times Eastern and subject to change based on real-time operations):

Thursday, Nov. 27

- 3:30 a.m. - Launch coverage begins on NASA+, Amazon Prime, and YouTube.
- 4:27 a.m. - Launch
- 6:45 a.m. - Rendezvous and docking coverage begins on NASA+, Amazon Prime, and YouTube.
- 7:38 a.m. - Docking to the space station

- 9:50 a.m. - Hatch opening and welcome remarks coverage begins on NASA+, Amazon Prime, and YouTube.
- 10:10 a.m. - Hatch opening

Williams, Kud-Sverchkov, and Mikaev will spend approximately eight months aboard the space station as Expedition 73/74 crew members, before returning to Earth in summer 2026. This will be the first spaceflight for Williams and Mikaev, and the second for Kud-Sverchkov.

During his stay aboard station, Williams will conduct scientific research and technology demonstrations aimed at advancing human space exploration and benefiting life on Earth. He will help install and test a new modular workout system for long-duration missions, support experiments to improve cryogenic fuel efficiency and grow semiconductor crystals in space, and

assist NASA in designing new re-entry safety protocols to protect crews during future missions.

For more than 25 years, people have lived and worked continuously aboard the International Space Station, advancing scientific knowledge and making research breakthroughs that are not possible on Earth.

The station is a critical testbed for NASA to understand and overcome the challenges of long-duration spaceflight and to expand commercial opportunities in low Earth orbit.

As commercial companies concentrate on providing human space transportation services and destinations as part of a robust low Earth orbit economy, NASA is focusing its resources on deep space missions to the Moon as part of the Artemis campaign in preparation for future human missions to Mars.

MONEY LAUNDERER PLEADS GUILTY TO RICO CONSPIRACY THAT STOLE \$263 MILLION IN CRYPTOCURRENCY

WASHINGTON - Kunal Mehta, 45, of Irvine, California, pleaded guilty in connection with his role in a multi-state conspiracy that used social engineering to steal hundreds of millions of dollars in cryptocurrency from victims throughout the United States, announced U.S. Attorney Jeanine Ferris Pirro.

Mehta, aka "Papa," "The Accountant," and "Shrek," pleaded to participating in a RICO conspiracy before U.S. District Court Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly and admitted that he helped to launder at least \$25 million.

According to the court documents, the social engineering enterprise began before October 2023 and continued through at least March 2025. It grew from friendships developed on online gaming platforms and was comprised of individuals based in California, Connecticut, New York, Florida, and abroad.

Mehta was a money launderer for the group which also included database hackers, organizers, target identifiers, callers, money launderers, and residential burglars targeting hardware virtual currency wallets.

According to court documents, members of the enterprise stole cryptocurrency from vic-

tims throughout the United States through elaborate ruses committed online and through spoofed phone numbers. They then used the stolen virtual currency to purchase, among other things, nightclub services ranging up to \$500,000 per evening, luxury handbags valued in the tens of thousands of dollars that were given away at nightclub parties, luxury watches valued between \$100,000 and \$500,000, luxury clothing valued in the tens of thousands of dollars, rental homes in Los Angeles, the Hamptons, and Miami, private jet rentals, a team of private security guards, and a fleet of at least 28 exotic cars ranging in value from \$100,000 to \$3.8 million.

The original indictment alleges that on Aug. 18, 2024, Mehta's co-conspirator Malone Lam and another associate contacted a victim in the District of Columbia and, through the communications with that victim, fraudulently obtained over 4,100 Bitcoin - valued then at \$263 million, and valued this week at more than \$384.5 million.

Mehta first met the members of the in early 2024 through a money exchanger who was friendly with the owner of a Los Angeles exotic car dealership.

The money exchanger solicited Mehta's assistance with crypto-to-cash conversions in the tens of thousands of dollars. Mehta charged a 10% fee for converting the cryptocurrency to fiat cash.

Mehta created multiple shell companies in 2024 for the purpose of laundering funds through bank accounts created to give the appearance of legitimacy. To facilitate crypto-to-wire money laundering services, Mehta received stolen cryptocurrency from the group which they had already laundered. Mehta then transferred the cryptocurrency to associates who further laundered it through sophisticated blockchain laundering techniques. The stolen funds returned to Mehta's shell company bank accounts through incoming wire transfers from additional shell companies organized by others throughout the United States.

When members of the conspiracy requested cash, Mehta often delivered it himself. Mehta also performed wire transfers for the group, sending stolen funds to an exotic car dealership, a private jet company and real estate rental companies in exchange for a 10% fee for himself.

In addition, Mehta used his shell companies to facilitate ex-

otic car purchases for members of the criminal enterprise. The co-conspirators - predominately 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds - did not want Lamborghinis, Rolls Royces, Porsches, Ferraris and the like held in their true names because it would bring unwanted attention to their unexplained wealth as unemployed young men. Mehta titled the vehicles in the names of his shell companies to help disguise the true owners. He also sought out straw signers who would place their names on the car titles and purchase documents in exchange for payments which exceeded \$10,000 per signing. In turn, Mehta would typically charge a 10% fee for his services.

The FBI, IRS-CI, and U.S. Attorney's Office are committed to helping prevent Americans from falling victim to cryptocurrency investment fraud schemes.

If someone claiming to be a company "representative" contacts you and asks you to provide personal information or to verify your account by providing a code, you should initiate a new call to that company by dialing the company's verified customer service line. You can visit the FBI's website for more information about cryptocurrency investment fraud.

CHECK CONSPIRACY*(Continued from page 8)*

Charge Jenifer L. Piovesan, IRS Criminal Investigation, Newark Field Office. "IRS-CI will continue to partner with our federal law enforcement colleagues to investigate those who defrauded pandemic relief programs and victimized those in need."

Acting U.S. Attorney and Special Attorney Habba credited special agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Newark-Trenton Resident Agency under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Stefanie Roddy; special agents with Homeland Security Investigations, Cherry Hill, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael S. McCarthy; special agents with the Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, Newark Field Office, under the direction of Jenifer L. Piovesan; special agents with Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, Northeast Field Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael Carpenter; special agents with the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Northeast Field Office, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Christopher Silvestro; special agents with the U.S. Air Force - Office of Special Investigations, Detachment 307, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Rebecca B. Bates; and postal in-

spectors of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Philadelphia Division, under the direction of Inspector in Charge, Christopher Nielson, with the investigation leading to the arrest.

The District of New Jersey COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Strike Force is one of the five strike forces established throughout the United States by the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute COVID-19 fraud. The strike forces focus on large-scale, multi-state pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces are interagency law enforcement efforts, using prosecutor-led and data analyst-driven teams designed to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Aja Espinosa and Benjamin D. Bleiberg of the Economic Crimes Unit in Newark.

The charges and allegations contained in the complaint are merely accusations, and the Defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

EDITORIAL *(Cont. from page 2)*

are supposed to know better. They clearly do not.

Back to AOC, is this what comes with being a "Democratic Socialist" in leadership? I was going to let you people just do your thing and fall on your face when your little "movement" was over. (Democratic Socialism = Occupy Wall Street. Here today, gone tomorrow.) However, the nation needs to be very careful around you.

As a reminder, I am NOT a Republican. I do not agree with the viewpoints of the GOP, MTG, or Donald Trump. With that in mind, read this VERY carefully. If ANY socialist says the phrase "Q.E." ... I personal-

ly will help the Republican Party to defeat you FREE OF CHARGE. For all you comic book fans, that is the "Anti-Life Equation" for America. If "Q.E." comes up, they MUST be stopped.

These Socialists may not have enough steam to really do something constructive, but they can do enough to be extremely destructive.

Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day, but a big fire scorched it in one.

Have a nice week. If there's any typos, sorry in advance. No one gives me time to look over my writing anymore, so there you go.



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Justice Department Requires RealPage to End the Sharing of Competitively Sensitive Information and Alignment of Pricing Among Competitors

The Justice Department's Antitrust Division filed a proposed settlement today to resolve the United States' claims against RealPage Inc. as part of its ongoing enforcement against algorithmic coordination, information sharing, and other anti-competitive practices in rental housing markets across the country. The proposed settlement would help restore free market competition in rental markets for millions of American renters.

"Competing companies must make independent pricing decisions, and with the rise of algorithmic and artificial intelligence tools, we will remain at the forefront of vigorous antitrust enforcement," said Assistant Attorney General Abigail Slater of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division.

RealPage is a provider of commercial revenue management software and services for the conventional multifamily rental housing industry. As alleged in Plaintiffs' complaint, RealPage's revenue management software has relied on nonpublic, competitively sensitive information shared by landlords to set rental prices. RealPage's software has also included features

designed to limit rental price decreases and otherwise align pricing among competitors. In addition, RealPage has hosted meetings attended by competing property management companies where competitively sensitive information was shared.

If approved by the court, the proposed consent judgment would require RealPage to:

- Cease having its software use competitors' nonpublic, competitively sensitive information to determine rental prices in runtime operation;
- Cease using active lease data for purposes of training the models underlying the software, limiting model training to historic or backward-looking nonpublic data that has been aged for at least 12 months;
- Not use models that determine geographic effects narrower than at a state level, which is broader than the markets alleged in the complaint;
- Remove or redesign features that limited price decreases or aligned pricing between competing users of the software;
- Cease conducting market



- surveys to collect competitively sensitive information;
- Refrain from discussing market analyses or trends based on nonpublic data, or pricing strategies, in RealPage meetings relating to revenue management software;
- Accept a court-appointed monitor to ensure compliance with the terms of the consent judgment; and
- Cooperate in the United States' lawsuit against property management companies that have used its software.

As required by the Tunney Act, the proposed settlement,

along with a competitive impact statement, will be published in the Federal Register. Any interested person should submit written comments concerning the proposed settlement within 60 days following the publication to Danielle Hauck, Acting Chief, Technology and Digital Platforms Section, Antitrust Division, U.S. Department of Justice, 450 Fifth Street NW, Suite 7050, Washington, DC 20530. At the conclusion of the public comment period, the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina may enter the final judgment upon finding it is in the public interest.

TOWN WATCH

(Continued from page 10)

Chinedu Onyema and his mother Caroline suggested to the mayor and Village Council that Monday night at SOPAC that residents of that one block street receive residential parking permits to prevent their being ticketed by the South Orange Parking Authority and police.

The Onyemas said that they and other residents there are "sandwiched by Seton Hall University (a block southeast across South Orange Avenue) and the Marshall Elementary School (the next block north) Cars can park on only one side. We have four cars, a single-lane driveway and hybrid work schedules."

"It's always a balancing act, especially (with) the location of the street, its proximity to the school," replied Collum. "A lot of the time when we allow alternate (side of the) street parking, they generate concerns by the people who live on the block, and then also the ability of emergency vehicles to get through."

Collum said that she will be "deferring to the administration," police department, park-

ing authority and Councilwoman/Public Safety Committee Chair Olivia Lewis-Chang.

Caroline and Chinedu Onyemea happen to be relatives of Assemblyman-elect Chigozie Onyema - who had recently moved from Newark to the village's Newstead section.

MAPLEWOOD - When "Three Miles to Maplewood: The Rahway Valley Railroad" presenter Michael J. King projected a 1920s map slide of the railroad's Newark Heights Branch northern terminus before an estimated Durand-Hedden House parlor audience of 21 Nov. 16, a "What If" question appeared.

The Kenilworth-based RVRR had built the 2.9-mile northern branch 1915-18 to just 100 feet short of the Springfield Avenue/Burnet Avenue/Tuscan Road intersection in the Hilton section. Prospective railroad passengers who wanted to transfer to Public Service's No. 25 streetcar line found themselves in Woolley Fuel's backyard instead.

"There had been newspaper editorials urging the railroad to make a connection and the branch's concrete bridge abutments had the capacity for a second track," said King, of Union. "Railroad president Louis Keller wanted to have Public Service run its street-

cars on that track but nothing came of it."

King, in his hour-long presentation, explained that the short track freight line once had Public Service and Morris County Traction Company trolley cars meet their church or company excursions to Asbury Park in Summit or Springfield. RVRR also provided its cars to bring workers to factories along the branch - labor runs - during the First World War effort.

Passenger service on the Newark Heights Branch and elsewhere on the three-branch 11-mile railroad was sporadic at best. The RVRR was originally built to bring Baltusrol Golf Course members to the links -- but there was not enough rider volume.

The RVRR turned to linking 21 factories along the branch with access to the Lackawanna Railroad in Summit and the Lehigh and Central of New Jersey railroads in Roselle. One third to one half of its coal shipments went to residential and commercial customers along the branch - until the switch to fuel oil diminished its revenue in the late 1960s.

"When Interstate 78 was being put through Union in 1969, the railroad couldn't afford building a bridge over it - even when

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TOWN WATCH

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NJDOT offered to pay half the cost," said King. "RVRP petitioned the state to abandon the Newark Heights Branch north of the highway in 1971 and south to Unionbury Junction in 1973. The bridges over Rutgers Street, Stanley Terrace, Vauxhall Road and Morris Avenue were later removed."

BLOOMFIELD - Those who want to speak in person or online during the public hearing portion of future Township Council meetings here are being reminded of pertinent rules and decorum.

The rules, as physically posted outside the Council Chamber and online by Mayor Jenny Mundell include:

- Speakers have five minutes to say their peace. They must stay behind the dais rail unless authorized by the mayor.
- Speakers must address the mayor as the presiding officer as per Robert's Rules of Order. That includes asking questions to council members and other government officials.
- The Mayor will respond or answer the questions unless he or she grants permission for a council member or public official to speak.
- Exceeding the five-minute limit or other infractions will incur a one-time warning from the mayor. Further violations may prompt the mayor to summon a law enforcement officer to enforce the rules - including possible expulsion.

Mundell said that reposting the existing rules was in response to one public speaker's Oct. 27 remarks, calling Indigenous people as "uncivilized natives." That remark was in response to a continuing debate on whether the Christopher Columbus statue on The Green, donated by Bloomfield UNICO in 1971, should remain or be removed.

MONTCLAIR - The New Jersey Department of Education is providing a \$7 million safety net for the Montclair Public Schools should a majority of participating registered voters reject one of two Dec. 9 budget questions.

Superintendent of Schools Ruth B. Turner told a capacity Montclair Fire Department Headquarters conference room audience Nov. 18 that NJDOT will advance the district the \$7 million towards a structural deficit in the current 2025-26 school budget if that public question fails. That proposed advance, however, comes with a stipulation.

"Should we get an advance on our state aid (they) will automatically deduct

\$2 million in aid every year until that advance is paid off," said Turner in the Montclair Board of Education's last pre-Dec. 9 meeting. We'll make some difficult decisions to ensure that we have a balanced budget."

Turner added that NJDOT will loan the district the \$19.2 million to balance the 2024-25 budget should that public question fail at the polls. Details on whether MPS would be subject to a state monitor and repaying that debt through a 30-year bond issue - as happened in the Nutley and Belleville districts - were not available.

The NJDOT promise's reassurance may be seen in MPS' nurses stations. The seven school nurses set for layoffs will stay - which may be a forerunner in sparing the other 98 employees slated to be cut.

BELLEVILLE - One of "Belleville's Finest" was a literal lifesaver whose heroism earned her the township's October Officer of the Month designation.

Oct. 1, as told by the Belleville Police Department's Oct. 31 announcement, started off like most days for Off. Susan Asali until she received 911 calls from Planteson Park. She was told that there was a medical emergency - a child had collapsed while playing youth soccer.

Asali, "without hesitation," arrived at the park and started applying CPR until Belleville Fire EMS arrived and took over.

"Her swift response, calm under pressure and decisive actions directly contributed to saving the child's life," declared the BPD. "In addition to this heroic act, Off. Asali displayed exceptional initiative throughout the month with numerous directed patrols, issuing summonses and being involved in arresting suspects connected to multiple burglaries and thefts."

Asali, who was previously honored on Sept. 12's National Police Women's Day, was recognized by Mayor Michael Melham and, on Nov. 14, WXRK-NJ101.5 FM.

NUTLEY - About 21 people came to the Nutley Historical Society and Museum here Nov. 19 to witness the honoring of a bicycle racing champion who died here 40 years ago.

Nutley and bicycle racing historian Michael Gabriele presented a copy of the U.S. Bicycle Racing Hall of Fame 2025 Induction Award in honor of Chester "Tino" Reboli to the society that Wednesday night. Gabriele represented Reboli's family and Nutley at the USBRHoF biennial induction ceremony in Chicago Oct. 18. Reboli, 72, was named into the Davis, Calif. hall's Pre-World War Two Veteran Road and Track category Aug. 7.

The hall honored Reboli for his versatile championships in his 1930-47 racing career. He won the 1929 Newark national road race championship and the 1931-32

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NJ senior road racing titles. He won two six-day bicycle races - grueling runs on indoor or outdoor cycling velodrome ovals - and finished in the top three 14 other times from 72 starts 1934-42, 45-47.

Reboli, who was born in Newark Sept. 9, 1913, competed in the Nutley Velodrome's June 3, 1933 opening day. He went on to win the 1938 national professional Motorpace championship - where cyclists drafted behind motorcycles - on the one-eighth-mile, 45-degree banked wooden oval.

Reboli, whose family lived at Newark's 151 Bank St. during WWII, eventually retired to Nutley - where he died Nov. 18, 1985. He, Alf Goulet and other velodrome stars were first interviewed by the then-local journalist Gabriele in the early 1980s.

The Nutley Velodrome, rock quarry and Camp Nutley site is now the township's Father Glotzbach Park.



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