

# Republicans Seek Three Seats on 9-0 Democratic Freeholder Board; Incumbents Run on Record; Sheriff's Race Pits Mr. Froehlich vs. Officer

By JEANNE WHITNEY  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

After this Tuesday, the nine-member Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders will know whether they still hold a 9-0 Democratic majority on the board. Republicans have not won a seat on the Freeholder board since 1994. Democrats picked up five additional seats the past two years, thus turning a 5-4 Republican edge into a 9-0 Democratic majority.

Democratic incumbents Lewis Mingo, Jr., Mary Ruotolo and current Freeholder Chairman Daniel P. Sullivan will be facing off against Republican challengers Andrew MacDonald, George Gore and Juan Fernandez. Republican candidate and current sheriff's officer Esther Guzman-Malcolm will seek to wrest the Union County Sheriff's title from Democrat and 21-year veteran Sheriff Ralph G. Froehlich.

Over the past year, Democratic Freeholders sponsored a hugely popular "pocket park" program that returned \$1.5 million in tax dollars to county municipalities for use towards new or existing parks.

However, former Fanwood Councilman and Republican challenger Mr. MacDonald called the pocket park program a "double dip" into residents' pockets saying it hit municipalities twice with its matching funds proviso.

"People are just fed up with high taxes," he said. "For government to ask people to dig deeper into their pockets each year is immoral."

Freeholder Democratic incumbents say they invested over \$5 million in county funds to protect open space from development without raising taxes at all. In fact, Freeholder Ruotolo explained that for the past two years, county taxes were lowered — one-half a percent last year and 1 percent this year.

"We've done this without a compromise of the services," she said.

The county sponsored for the first time a weekend jazz festival in Cranford's Nomahegan Park in September.

Under Democratic leadership, the county purchased 10 acres of property along the Elizabeth River across from Kean University in Union with

the idea of using at least some of that for soccer fields, Mrs. Ruotolo said.

Freeholder Chairman Sullivan has said he led the way for the county to invest \$3.5 million in improving existing county facilities as well.

Republican challengers have said they want to "downsize" county government and cut jobs. Mr. Gore emphasized the need for an overall five- to 10-year plan for county government that incorporates new technology, training for county employees and a closer look at how taxpayers' money is spent.

"We can not continue to move with business as usual," Mr. Gore said through a written statement.

Freeholder Mingo said the board's direction has actually been in providing human services to residents.

"My interest in this board has really been senior [citizens] and children, you know — people," Mr. Mingo said.

The county recently announced the creation of a county child advocacy office for families. Other projects expanded services at the Center for Hope Hospice and another aimed at getting computers into every classroom by the new millennium, a program known as "Access 2000."

There is now a "hotline" telephone number for residents seeking guidance through the morass of county services.

"We want to make county services available, usable, user-friendly," Mr. Mingo said.

He stated that he also wants to bring "the county's presence" to the western side of the county, for instance, to Plainfield, where he lives.

"If Plainfield suffers, the county will suffer," Mr. Mingo pointed out.

The county was one of only 49 recipients of grants nation-wide from the federal government's "Welfare to Work" program. Union County received \$5 million. The program is aimed at families who have long been on welfare. Hudson County was the only other recipient of a grant in New Jersey.

Recently, Republicans charged that the county-owned Runnels Hospital was poorly run and over budget. They proposed to privatize the facility at a

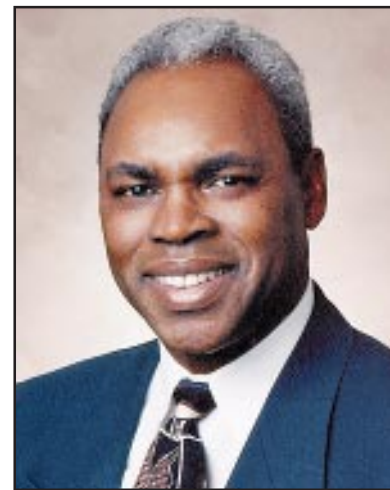
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Daniel P. Sullivan\* (D)



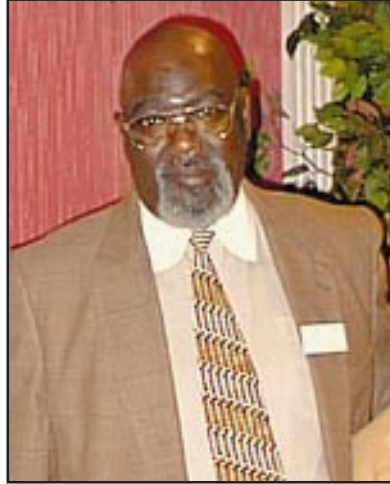
Mary P. Ruotolo\* (D)



Lewis Mingo, Jr.\* (D)



Ralph G. Froehlich\* (D)



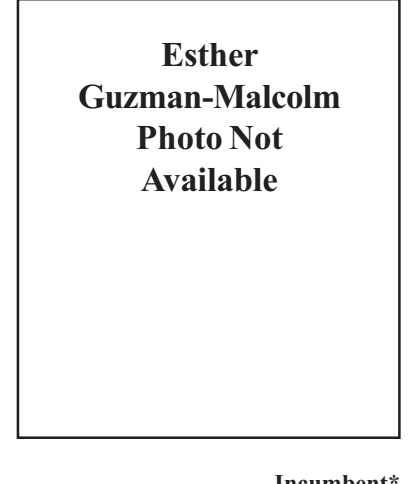
George P. Gore (R)



Juan Fernandez (R)



Andrew MacDonald (R)



Esther Guzman-Malcolm  
Photo Not Available

Incumbent\*

## County Freeholder Candidates Square Off on Issues During League of Women Voters Forum in Cranford

By KIMBERLY A. BROADWELL  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Three incumbent Democrats on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders squared off last week against their Republican opponents during a forum focusing on issues such as property taxes, economic development and county matching grant programs.

Approximately 50 Union County residents attended the October 15 "Know Your Candidates" forum,

sponsored by the Union County League of Women Voters.

Moderated by Renee Lane, from the West Orange League, the six candidates running for three seats on the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders talked about such issues as "Project Pocket Parks," the current board's open space initiative; "Access 2000," a program by the Democrats aimed at computerizing all classrooms in the county by the year 2000, and property taxes.

Freeholder Daniel P. Sullivan, a Democrat from Elizabeth, who currently serves as Chairman of the all Democrat, nine-member board, talked about the success of the county's "Pocket Park" program.

According to Freeholder Sullivan, the program has provided \$1.7 million in funds to build or revitalize parks and athletic fields and open space in all 21 municipalities in the county. Freeholder Sullivan praised the efforts of each municipality to improve their recreational fields, parks and playgrounds with the matching funds program.

Freeholder Lewis Mingo, Jr., a Democrat from Plainfield, addressed the voters on what he termed "people issues." Freeholder Mingo, who was appointed less than one year ago to fill the seat of vacated by new Plainfield City Administrator Walter McNeil, serves as the board's liaison to the county's Division on Aging. He stated that there are a lot of

seniors in Union County who are not happy with the care they are currently receiving. He stated that he felt "a responsibility to represent the seniors and children in the county; those who are innocent and have no voice."

Democratic Freeholder Mary P. Ruotolo of Westfield introduced herself as a single parent of three children who has a strong commitment to public education and child care.

The widow of the late county Prosecutor Andrew K. Ruotolo talked to the audience about the county's Access 2000 program which is a county education program that will provide matching grants to all 21 school districts to put new computers in every classroom by the quickly approaching 21st century.

Freeholder Ruotolo, who was appointed to the board earlier in the year to replace new Union County Counsel Carol Cohen of Westfield,

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## Mayor Connelly and Congressman Franks in Race For Seventh District Seat Long Held by GOP

By SUZETTE F. STALKER  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Voters in the Seventh District will decide on Tuesday, November 3, whether to return Republican Congressman Bob Franks for a fourth term or to make Fanwood Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly the first Democrat to hold that seat in three decades.

The Seventh District includes all or portions of 34 municipalities across Union, Middlesex, Somerset and Essex Counties. In Union County, the district spans 17 towns, among them Westfield, Scotch Plains, Fanwood and Mountainside.

Mrs. Connelly, making her inaugural bid for Congress this year, has served as Mayor of Fanwood since 1995. She was previously a councilwoman for nine years, during which time she was also Fanwood's Council President and Police Commissioner.

The candidate, who retired earlier this year after 28 years with AT&T, is the immediate Past President of the New Jersey Association of Elected Women Officials.

While a member of Fanwood's governing body, she has served as council Liaison to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education, and as a member of the Planning Board, the

Environmental and Housing and Historic Preservation Commissions, and the Fanwood Memorial Library Board of Trustees.

Congressman Franks, a resident of Berkeley Heights, was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1992, succeeding former longtime Congressman Matthew P. Rinaldo.

Before that, he represented the 22nd Legislative District as a state Assemblyman from 1979 to 1992. He served as Republican State Chairman from 1988 to 1992.

Mayor Connelly said she learned during her campaign that district residents are primarily concerned about the future of Social Security, as well as school safety and quality education, and health maintenance organization (HMO) reforms.

"As I go around door-to-door, this is what they talk about," she revealed. "It's time to get Congress back to work for us."

Mayor Connelly has advocated using 100 percent of the Federal budget surplus to bolster Social Security; making pensions transferable if an individual changes a job, and expanding tax deductions for Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs).

Mayor Connelly has called for

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Congressman Bob Franks (R)



Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly (D)

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