

Meeting the Transportation Challenges of Next Century

By BOB FRANKS

Bob Franks of Berkeley Heights has represented the Seventh District in Congress since 1993. He served in the State Assembly from 1979-1992.

Everywhere you travel in Central New Jersey, people are complaining about traffic congestion. It has become a major quality of life issue and is influencing where families decide to live and businesses choose to locate.

As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Vice Chairman of the Ground Transportation Committee, I have been a consistent champion of expanding and improving mass transit in our state.

As traffic delays grow, commuters are becoming more receptive to leaving their cars home and taking mass transit. In fact, every year, for the past eight years, there has been an increase in ridership on NJ Transit and buses.

The popularity of mass transit, especially for New York bound commuters, is welcome news but it also poses a new challenge.

In just a few short years, the commuter rail infrastructure into Manhattan will reach capacity. Without a major investment in long-term improvements, commuters will face long delays and overcrowding. Tens of thousands of New Jersey commuters will never get to enjoy the convenience of a one-seat ride to Manhattan.

The solution is the construction of a new commuter rail tunnel across the Hudson River.

Moving the rail tunnel project forward will take the full, coordinated and unequivocal support of every New Jersey committed to improving our state's quality of life. Perhaps the greatest hurdle is finding the funding sources for this multi-billion

dollar investment.

I have introduced legislation that would create a mechanism for the federal government to help finance critical regional transportation projects such as a new Trans-Hudson Rail Tunnel.

The RING program, an acronym for Regional Investments for National Growth, is aimed at fostering the development of large, multi-state or regional transportation projects.

It recognizes the tremendous financial investment and inter-governmental support required to get projects of this magnitude off the ground.

Under RING, Congress would earmark five to seven regional transportation projects that would make a significant contribution to the economy of the region and the nation. Washington would finance the initial engineering work and would continue to support the project by paying for 50 percent of the total cost.

The Trans-Hudson Rail Project would be an ideal candidate for the RING program. By building a new rail link between New Jersey and New York City, we will not only increase commuter rail capacity and relieve traffic congestion, but we will make an important contribution toward improving the economic competitiveness of the region.

The RING legislation is only a starting point. We also must wage an all-out effort to convince Trenton, Albany, New York City and Congress that the Trans-Hudson Rail Tunnel deserves their full support. That is why I have formed a special coalition to fight for the new rail tunnel.

If you are interested in joining, please call my Union office at (908) 686-5576.



Bob Franks

From the Governor's Desk

Governor Whitman Implores Voters to Support Republicans

By GOVERNOR CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

Christine Todd Whitman was elected the 50th Governor of New Jersey in 1993 and re-elected in 1997.

Although my name does not appear on the ballot this November, I have been busy campaigning around the state for numerous Republican candidates - candidates who share my commitment to lower taxes, fiscal responsibility, more efficient government, and greater opportunity for all New Jerseyans.

Working together with legislative leaders like Senate President Donald T. DiFrancesco and Assemblymen Richard H. Bagger and Alan M. Augustine, Republicans have built a solid record of accomplishment, making New Jersey a better place in which to live, work, and raise a family.

Over the past six years, we've enacted 34 tax cuts, saving the hard-working men and women of New Jersey nearly \$9 billion. Our economy has been transformed from the economic laggard of the region to the economic engine of the northeast, creating more than 360,000 jobs in the past six years.

Last month, our NJ SAVER program delivered the first installment of much-needed direct property tax relief to homeowners. When fully phased in, the average property taxpayer in Westfield will receive \$672 in annual direct relief, while Scotch Plains residents will receive \$726 and Fanwood residents will get \$731.

Our landmark auto insurance reforms have cut the average premium by more than 16 percent, according to the Insurance Council of New Jersey. Our reforms have put millions of dollars back where they belong - in the pockets of New Jersey drivers.

We have embarked on a historic effort to preserve and protect one million acres of open space and farmland over the next 10 years. Our strong environmental policies are also

reflected in the impressive progress we've made in cleaning up our environment - New Jersey's air and water are cleaner than they've been in years.

And while the air is easier to breathe, law-abiding New Jerseyans can also breathe easier, knowing that tough laws like "Three Strikes and You're In" and "No Early Release" have helped drive crime down to the lowest levels in 25 years. We have made New Jersey safer for everyone except criminals.

We've also helped extend opportunity to every New Jerseyan who wants to work. Our WorkFirst New Jersey program has helped cut the welfare rolls in half, giving welfare recipients the incentives

and the skills they need to become productive, contributing members of our communities.

None of this would have been possible without the hard work of leaders like Assemblymen Bagger and Augustine. And although they will definitely be back in Trenton next year (since they are running unopposed), it is important you get out to vote - there are important local races taking place in Westfield, Scotch Plains, and Fanwood.

Candidates such as Louis C. Jung, who is running for Mayor of Fanwood, Frank Rossi, Township Council candidate in Scotch Plains, and Gregory S. McDermott, Neil F. Sullivan, Janis Fried Weinstein, and Matthew P. Albano, who have earned re-election to Westfield's Town Council, share my commitment to lower taxes, fiscal responsibility, more efficient government, and greater opportunity.

I hope you will go to the polls to give them your support next Tuesday, November 2, so we can continue, from Trenton to town hall, to build on our record of success.



Christine Todd Whitman

Westfield to Washington: Service Starts at Home

By ROBERT G. TORRICELLI

Robert G. Torricelli of Englewood was elected to his first term as a United States Senator from New Jersey in 1996.

I am often reminded of my days growing up in the community of Franklin Lakes. My mother, a school librarian, and my father, an attorney and local mayoral candidate, shaped my young mind by becoming involved in the local scene.

My commitment to public service began in the fifth grade when I ran for class president in elementary school.

As a teenager, my mother undertook the responsibility of exposing me to the everyday issues that have a profound impact on people's lives. We traveled together to rural Georgia to see, in person, the inhumane reality of segregation and to Israel to tour the Holy City of Jerusalem.

In my house, a person of value was measured by what they did for other people. It is this spirit and these experiences on the local level that I bring each day to the floor of the United States Senate.

I have always believed that the most important and meaningful form of public service was that of running for local elected offices. As Speaker Tip O'Neil once said, "all politics are local."

Ask anyone who has a broken sidewalk or piles of garbage that lie uncollected in their neighborhood and they will reaffirm the notion that politics begin at their front lawn. Fostering volunteerism and a sense of personal responsibility for one's community should be a fundamental belief in our neighborhoods.

We cannot solve every problem, but we all have a responsibility to do something. In Washington, I am working everyday on a variety of issues. For example:

- Rebuilding our crumbling schools and fighting to secure funding for 100,000 teachers.
- Putting more police officers on our streets.
- Giving our citizens still stronger gun safety laws.
- Giving citizens the right to sue their HMO if they are injured.
- Passing a true "Patient's Bill of Rights."

But while I work in Washington,

their is much to do here at home.

Parents must be vigilant about their children's behavior. Teachers must be on the look out for warning signs of our troubled youth. Police officers must work hand in hand with citizens to make our streets safer and more people need to be engaged in public affairs to ensure that our quality of life is preserved and improved.

One such way to do so is to vote in every election and encourage people to run for public office. Our success as a nation begins at the local level and there is no tougher job in government today than that of a local council person or mayor.

The promise of America is only fulfilled when its leaders have exhausted every opportunity to help its people do better and live better.

It is this sense of community and perseverance that I encourage every citizen to fulfill their responsibility as members of our great Republic.

Every citizen has within themselves the power and ability to make a difference. Our future rests in the classrooms and neighborhoods of communities like Westfield and we cannot afford to fail.

Westfield is fortunate to have people like Surrogate candidate James LaCorte, Freeholders Linda d. Stender, Nicholas P. Scutari and newcomer Angel Estrada running for Union County Freeholder.

You also have four candidates running for Westfield Town Council who share my vision that more can, and should, be done to make our communities better. I am confident that Marilyn Gulotta, Joseph Stoner, Claire Lazarowitz and Schuyler Quackenbush would serve your community well as members of the Westfield council.

Today, there are no excuses left for deferring our dreams. There are no reasons to deny any longer our obligation to our children and meet the needs of working families.

The cornerstone ideal of this country has always been that if you work hard, you will have the opportunity to achieve all that we can. That noble and heavy task begins at the local level and it's a responsibility we must not shy away from if we, as a nation, desire to remain strong and free.



Robert G. Torricelli

Legislature Acts to Assist County After Hurricane

By DONALD T. DIFRANCESCO

Donald T. DiFrancesco, a Scotch Plains resident representing the 22nd District in the State Senate, has been President of the New Jersey State Senate since January, 1992.

Nineteen-ninety-nine will be a year that every New Jerseyan, especially those of us in Union County, will not soon forget. It was a year that set new records in terms of weather-related events. Who would have imagined that in the same year we would experience a drought of historic proportion that we would also endure a tropical storm of the century?

For most of us, these once-in-a-lifetime happenings made for interesting conversation and sensational news stories, but for many New Jersey residents the weather of 1999 brought sorrow and suffering.

Farmers watched their livelihoods wither and die in the intense heat of this summer and then just last month, thousands of New Jersey citizens watched helplessly as their homes and businesses were swept away in Hurricane Floyd's flood waters.

While flood-prone communities, like Bound Brook, experienced the most devastation, many areas that had never flooded before, particularly Scotch Plains and parts of Westfield, also suffered significant damage.

As with any natural disaster, financial loss is only part of the burden borne by affected residents. In many cases, the emotional toll is much worse.

Now more than ever, New Jersey residents need not just our sympathy, they need real relief. In the aftermath of Floyd, the Legislature has responded with an initiative that we hope will help New Jerseyans, including citizens of Union County, rebuild their lives and in many cases, reclaim their livelihoods.

In September, I introduced an initiative designed to provide New Jersey residents in need with Emer-

gency Disaster Relief. This proposal dedicates \$80 million in emergency disaster relief aid to assist individuals who have suffered due to the drought or the recent tropical storm.

Known as the "Emergency Disaster Relief Act of 1999," the bill dedicates more than \$50 million to flood victims, including funds to provide direct grants to homeowners whose homes have been damaged or lost. As the bill's name implies, we are looking to offer relief by filling the gaps in the financial assistance available and by providing a resource of last resort.

The Legislature recognizes that those affected by the flood need immediate assistance, which is why we are moving the bill as quickly as possible through the legislative process, while at the same time providing the time necessary for the many state departments involved in administering the program to develop a fair, efficient system for distributing the aid.

I'm pleased that the measure is now poised for final approval in the Senate and will soon be ready for the governor's signature.

Of course, total assistance is not limited to this initial appropriation as the Relief Act affords the Governor the opportunity to recommend additional aid in the future if it is deemed necessary. Furthermore, the state must also explore long-term responses to this situation that address both environmental and economic needs.

Nobody expects to become a statistic, but the truth is that thousands of New Jersey residents became part of the record books this year. These extraordinary circumstances demand an extraordinary response and our response must be to treat victims not as statistics, but as individual survivors who know they can count on New Jersey to offer a measure of relief. We can and we will.



Donald T. DiFrancesco

Spending Wisely in Good Economic Times is Valuable

By RICHARD H. BAGGER

Richard H. Bagger of Westfield has represented the 22nd District in New Jersey State Assembly since 1992. He was Mayor of Westfield in 1991, an elected position, after serving six years on the Town Council.

The Legislature recently enacted the state budget that will carry New Jersey into the new millennium. It is the final budget of a decade that has witnessed successes and failures based primarily on economic and fiscal policies implemented through the annual budget process.

The decade of the 1990s began with a budget that needed to address the unbridled spending policies of the late 1980s, when the Legislature spent, rather than saved, the revenues that were generated during a period of sustained economic growth.

Unfortunately, the remedy in the 1991 state budget was a \$2.8 billion state tax increase that failed miserably and drove the state into the deepest economic downturn in over 50 years.

In 1992, however, a new fiscal agenda began for New Jerseyans with a rollback of the state sales tax from seven to six percent and was followed with several income tax rate reductions. In all, over 20 tax reductions totaling more than \$5 billion have been included in recent budgets.

The fiscal 2000 budget is the capstone for a decade that started in search of a cohesive and sensible fiscal policy and is ending with unprecedented economic success for New Jersey. Our state is now enjoying the benefits of a vibrant and robust economy.

In this past year alone, we have seen New Jersey's unemployment rate plummet to below the national average and have witnessed state revenues grow to record heights.

But we cannot live on our past economic successes. Our fiscal year 2000 spending plan continues to meet our state's basic needs and obligations while continuing to provide tax relief for its citizens.

This budget will be returning to taxpayers the fruits of a successful economic policy. On April 15, Governor Whitman signed legislation establishing a \$1 billion property tax relief program that will benefit more than 1.9 million state residents who pay school property taxes. This historic tax relief program will be phased in over a five-year period, and the first installment was sent to taxpayers just last month.

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Richard H. Bagger

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