

On politics

By John Toscano

In an effort to boost loyalty for local professional sports teams, Assemblymember Ivan Lafayette has introduced bills in Albany to bar misguided fans from getting license plates bearing the name of the Boston Red Sox, the Yankees' longtime rival.

Lafayette (D-Jackson Heights) also wants legislation passed which would prevent the Jets and Giants pro football teams, which play their home games in New Jersey, from using the word "New York" in their team titles.

Explaining his action, Lafayette said, "It's a great opportunity to start the season with a bang and a little controversy. And it will help New Yorkers realize where their loyalties should be."

According to the *Daily News*, which first reported Lafayette's legislation, plates with the Red Sox logo are currently not available at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), according to a spokesman. They were available previously.

WEPRIN EYEING COMPTROLLER'S JOB? There's talk that City Council Finance Committee chair David Weprin is making plans to run for City Comptroller in 2008 when the Term Limits law ends his present eight-year stint as a councilmember.

Weprin (D-Hollis), who has held the powerful Finance Committee post since he was first elected in 2001, has scheduled a fundraiser on May 2 which will also celebrate his 50th birthday. Weprin garnered some previous government job experience when he held a high-level post in the state Insurance Department during the Cuomo gubernatorial administration.

Also interested in succeeding incumbent Comptroller William Thompson Jr. when he's relieved of his office by term limits at the end of 2008 is Martha Stark, presently city Finance Commissioner. She's a Brooklyn resident.

KATZ ON BILL WITH ORLANDO:

The Queensborough Performing Arts Center (QPAC), on the Queensborough Community College campus in Bayside will provide an entertainment pro-

gram on Sunday, April 23, featuring veteran singer Tony Orlando in concert.

Of greater local interest, however, is that Councilmember Melinda Katz, also an accomplished singer, will perform at the event, which starts at 3 p.m.

Katz (D-Forest Hills), who comes from an artistic family, is known for her singing voice and has performed often at public events since her political career started over a decade ago. Her dad, the late Maestro David Katz, founded the Queens Symphony Orchestra in 1953 and conducted it throughout his lifetime. Her mother, the late Jeanne Dale Katz, founded the Queens Council on the Arts.

Katz is a sponsor of QPAC, along with her colleague, Councilmember John Liu (D-Flushing). Other sponsors are the Astoria Federal Savings Bank, Flushing Savings Bank, JPMorgan Chase, and the city Department of Cultural Affairs.

Orlando recently celebrated the 30th anniversary of his super hit recording "Tie A Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old

Lafayette Boosts Home Teams

Oak Tree." He also has four million-selling records and has appeared in television variety shows, movies and Broadway musicals.

The concert starts at 3 p.m. and will be held on the Queensborough Community College campus in Bayside. To make the event more memorable, the first 65 people who purchase a \$25 raffle will be invited to a post-show reception to meet Orlando. For information, call 718-631-6311, Monday-Friday, 10 am.-4 p.m.

NOLAN BILL PROTECTS EMS VEHICLES: At the request of the New York Police Department, Assemblymember Catherine Nolan (D-Ridgewood) has introduced a bill to increase penalties for anyone vandalizing emergency vehicles such as patrol cars, fire trucks and emergency medical vehicles, such as ambulances.

"These emergency vehicles must be in working order to help our emergency responders do their jobs—to protect and serve the people of our city," Nolan said.

Nolan's bill would make it a felony to intentionally cause damage to any authorized emergency vehicle.

QUEENS GOP ENDORSES PIRRO: The

Queens County Republican Party, headed by state Senator Serphin Maltese, has endorsed former Westchester District Attorney Jeanine Pirro as the GOP candidate for state attorney general.

Maltese said he was particularly impressed with Pirro because she brings "a wealth of experience" as one of New York state's most successful district attorneys. He noted that during her tenure as DA, her office maintained a 98 percent conviction rate in superior court and violent crime in Westchester County decreased by 30 percent.

Party Vice Chairman Phil Ragusa of Beechhurst and Vincent Tabone of Bayside also cited Pirro's record as Westchester DA. Tabone particularly cited her articulate advocacy for civil confinement legislation and her focus on domestic violence, child abuse and "putting away sexual predators".

DANIELS QUILTS, BACKS FASO: In a move that strengthens the candidacy of former Assembly Minority Leader John Faso for the GOP gubernatorial nod, former state Secretary of State Randy A. Daniels quit the race and threw his support to Faso.

Daniels said he would urge

his conservative and upstate supporters to get behind Faso, who has already been endorsed by the state Conservative Party, headed by Michael Long.

Daniels' withdrawal leaves the Republicans with a two-man race for the governor's nomination, between Faso and William Weld, the former Massachusetts governor. A recent Quinnipiac poll showed Faso leading Weld 22 percent to 16 percent among GOP voters with Daniels at 8 percent.

GOP SENATE RACE SHOWS SOME SPARK: Former Yonkers Mayor John Spencer, who has already attracted some conservative Republican support in his quest to become the party candidate opposing U.S. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, announced last week that he plans to reach out to conservative GOPers nationally for financial support.

Spencer, who's already gained the support of Congressman Tom Feeney (R-Florida), chairman of the House Conservatives Fund, plans to woo possible 2008 Republican presidential candidates, emphasizing to them that their financial support for him

could result in a Clinton defeat or a poorer show, thus hurting her chances to run for president in 2008.

Spencer said he plans to cover 30 states in his fundraising drive. Meanwhile, Spencer's opponent for the Republican Senate nomination, Kathleen Troia McFarland, is planning a barnstorming and fundraiser trip similar to Spencer's.

Spencer has picked up the pace of his campaign since McFarland entered the race in an attempt to get her to end her campaign before the state Republican party meets next month to designate its statewide ticket.

However, McFarland indicated last week she has no thought of quitting as she added Rich Galen, a top GOP strategist, to her campaign staff.

PADAVAN HONORED: The Greater Whitestone Taxpayers Civic Association last week honored state Senator Frank Padavan (R-C, Bellerose) in appreciation of his many years of dedicated service and commitment to the association and the Whitestone community.

Legislation Helps Foil ID Thieves

In an effort to protect his constituents and consumers statewide from identity theft, state Senator George Onorato (D-Long Island City) is sponsoring new legislation (S6363) that would prohibit credit card companies from mailing "convenience checks" to their customers without their prior knowledge or consent.

"Almost everyone who has a credit card has received unsolicited convenience checks in the mail that can be used to transfer balances from other cards or make purchases," Onorato said. "However, some of these checks come with blank amounts or are pre-printed with the customer's name and address, making them easy for identity thieves to steal and cash. This leaves consumers in a position where they need to prove that the check was fraudulently cashed, which can often constitute a real burden."

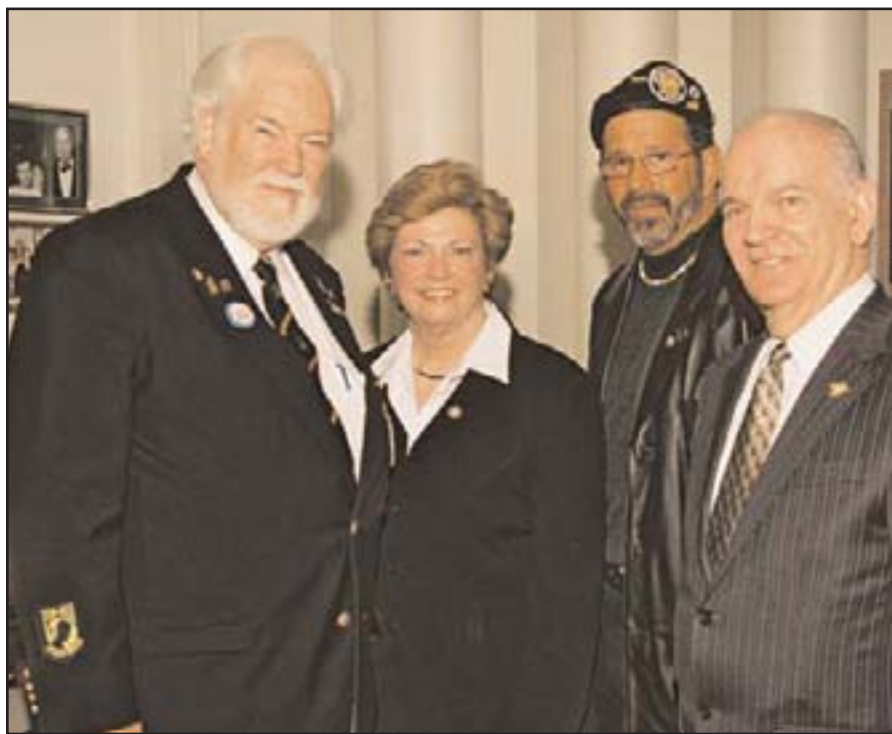
Under the senator's legislation, credit card companies would be prohibited from mailing unsolicited checks, drafts or other negotiable instruments to consumers without prior written authorization. The bill would impose a civil fine of up to \$1,000 for a first violation, and up to \$5,000 for subsequent violations. The measure is currently under consideration by the senate Standing Committee on Consumer Protection.

"While some credit card companies require that consumers call a specific number to verify their identity before activating the checks, that isn't the case across the board," Onorato said. "This can leave consumers vulnerable to identity theft and financial harm."

A number of other states have already passed laws addressing this issue or are considering similar legislation.

"In the meantime, I urge my constituents to contact their credit card companies to inquire about their policies concerning convenience checks, and to speak up if they don't want to receive them," Onorato said. "Furthermore, those who do receive convenience checks and don't plan to use them should shred or otherwise completely destroy them before they go out in the trash."

Markey Meets With Vietnam Vets Of America



Assemblywoman Margaret Markey (D - Maspeth) and State Senator Serphin Maltese (R - Middle Village) met with Vietnam Veterans Association National President John Rowan and VVA Queens Chapter 32 President Pat Toro Jr. to discuss Queens and national veterans issues. Pictured from l. to r. are John Rowan, Assemblywoman Markey, Pat Toro and Senator Maltese.