



A NEED TO REBOUND

PAUL GEORGE'S DRUG SUSPENSION ON THE HEELS OF A SERIES OF INJURIES IS JUST THE LATEST FIASCO FOR THE 76ERS FRANCHISE, FLAILING SINCE ITS 2001 RUN TO THE NBA FINALS. **E1**

STATEWIDE

Reported sightings of ICE sow confusion and stoke fear in N.J.



The presence of federal immigration officers has unsettled residents in New Jersey. Above, a traffic stop in Minneapolis. Adam Gray, AP

Without clear information about where federal agents are operating, local officials say they have little to allay the fears of residents speculating on social media. “Our people are scared,” one mayor says.

Rebecca Heath and S.P. Sullivan
For South Jersey Times

The messages started popping up on Facebook and in private messaging groups Thursday morning.

ICE in Teaneck. They stopped a man walking a kid to school. Did they just arrest a child?

Local police, who earlier in the week responded to 911 calls of “suspicious activity” only to find federal immigration officers conducting operations in their town, couldn’t say for sure.

It turned out that federal authorities “encountered” the child and her uncle on their way to school and questioned them but let them go after learning the man is a U.S. citizen, local officials later told NJ Advance Media.

The incident drew immediate parallels to Liam Conejo Ramos, the 5-year-old captured in a now-viral image wearing a Spider-Man backpack and a floppy-eared beanie as he was detained by immigration officials in suburban Minneapolis before a



People rally last month against a plan to open an immigration detention facility in Roxbury. Ian Peters, for South Jersey Times

federal judge ordered the child released.

“In the absence of any information provided to us by the federal authorities, we really are frustrated,” Teaneck Mayor Mark J. Schwartz said on Sunday.

“Our people are scared.”

Confusion over ICE operations abounds in New Jersey as President Donald Trump’s aggressive deportation campaign has met equally aggressive opposition from the state’s mostly Democratic leaders, who say they must guard against an unconstitutional crackdown that has spurred bloodshed in cities across the U.S.

“If you see an ICE agent in the street, get your phone out,” Gov. Mikie Sherrill, just

weeks into her tenure, said in an appearance last week on Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show” where she announced a new state-run portal to track ICE activity in the state.

Federal immigration officials, meanwhile, say they aren’t notifying local police when they come to town because “sanctuary politicians” are blocking local law enforcement from cooperating with ICE.

Until recent years, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies worked closely together on most of their operations to avoid potentially dangerous situations where one agency is operating in another’s jurisdiction.

During Trump’s first term, however, New Jersey’s attorney general issued an “immigrant trust” directive that more strictly defined how local police could help the feds enforce immigration law. More recently, lawmakers have been looking to codify those restrictions into state law.

Sherrill and other New Jersey officials say local cops shouldn’t be in the business of immigration enforcement, arguing it hurts public safety for them to be seen by their communities as aligned with ICE, which has violated court orders in its pursuit of deportations.

Federal officials counter New Jersey is being too soft on crime — and getting in their way.

On Jan. 26, ICE lodged an arrest detainer against Hernando Garcia-Morales, a homeless man from Mexico with a criminal record who is accused of tossing a rock from an overpass on the New Jersey Turnpike in early January.

The rock smashed through a window

SEE STATEWIDE, A4

TRANSPORTATION

Pressure grows to prevent long shutdown of Gateway work

Lawmakers exploring options, but taking the matter to court could stall project for months.

Larry Higgs For South Jersey Times

To supporters of the \$16 billion Gateway Tunnel, a possible shutdown of construction in less than a week may seem like a rewind of President Donald Trump’s Oct. 15 announcement that he “terminated” the project.

Once again, the plan to build two new tunnels and rehabilitate the two existing tunnels is caught between Trump and Democrats.

Stuck in the middle are thousands of commuters who face delays when there are problems in the existing 116-year-old tunnels and construction workers facing a layoff notice on Feb. 6.

U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-5th Dist., said he’s been working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle on a potential legislative solution to free up funding, while also talking to the White House to avoid a shutdown of the project.

“There was an attempted legislative solution during the initial appropriations

SEE TRANSPORTATION, A4

BRIDGETON

Why man known as the ‘Torso Killer’ is confessing crimes

It’s still unknown how many murders Richard Cottingham, now 79, is responsible for.

Anthony G. Attrino For South Jersey Times

There’s a theory about how New Jersey native Richard Cottingham, known as the “Torso Killer,” managed to get away with killing so many women and girls in the 1960s and ’70s.

It was a different era: no cellphones, no license-plate readers and far fewer surveillance cameras. But investigators were also missing something else — the framework to recognize what they were dealing with.

Serial killers were considered rare, and the idea itself wasn’t well understood.

“He was a serial killer before we really had that concept of serial killers that we have today,” said Peter Vronsky, a Toronto-based forensic historian and author who speaks with Cottingham by phone nearly every day.

“We didn’t have profiling. We didn’t have DNA and nobody had cellphones,” Vronsky said. “Guys like Cottingham

SEE COTTINGHAM, A6

NEWS

Jersey Shore motel lawsuit targets prom season age limits

Nearly three after Seaside Heights banned anyone between the ages of 18 and 21 from booking short-term rentals, two motels are fighting to revive their lawsuit challenging the Jersey Shore borough’s ordinance. **A3**



NEWS

Without a shadow of a doubt, this day belongs to the groundhog

From old wives’ tales to science fact, there’s a lot to learn about *Marmota monax* this Groundhog Day. (but don’t expect them to predict spring’s arrival accurately.) **C4**

