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HEALTH



The Journal News

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Trustee's ICE job controversial

Mahopac school board stands by member

Nancy Cutler

Rockland/Westchester Journal News
USA TODAY NETWORK

MAHOPAC – The school board has stood by trustee Christopher Harrigan amid calls for his dismissal after a social media video showed him on the job as a deportation officer with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

In this diverse Putnam County dis-

trict, a school board trustee's employment with ICE has raised questions about trust among students and families.

The agency, under the umbrella of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, has come under scrutiny amid the Trump administration's use of "roving patrols" and clashes, including two U.S. citizen's killings, in Minnesota.

Harrigan, a school board member since 2024, has not publicly spoken about the conflict.

He did not immediately respond to requests for comment from The USA

TODAY Network.

Are immigration, trustee roles incompatible?

While Harrigan's campaign and information on the Mahopac Central School District's website state he is a longtime member of law enforcement, his federal employment with ICE was not specified.

New York State Department of Education did not immediately return a request for comment about Harrigan's service on the school board.

Jay Worona, legal consultant to the New York State School Boards Association, said he was not aware of any incompatibility of office in this situation.

"Communities are going to have to make decisions at the ballot box," Worona said, "to see what they think is the best person to serve their interest and make people feel safe and secure."

What Mahopac school board says

At a Jan. 22 school board meeting,

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State Sen. Pete Harkham expresses support for the Accelerate Solar for Affordable Power Act (ASAP) in Albany on Feb. 10. PROVIDED BY THE NY STATE SENATE

Senator pushes solar over nuclear energy

Harkham's approach at odds with Gov. Hochul

Thomas C. Zambito

New York State Team
USA TODAY NETWORK

Gov. Kathy Hochul wants to add more nuclear power to a state energy grid that's increasingly dependent on natural gas as electric bills are surging. Climate goals the state established for renewable energy production also appear out of reach.

The solution? Solar power. A lot more solar power, State Sen. Pete Harkham declared Feb. 10.

"Solar is far cheaper than a kilowatt of natural gas, of oil, of coal, or especially nuclear," Harkham said in Albany, as he rallied support for a measure that would create incentives for the state to tap into more of the sun's energy. "Solar is much more rapidly scalable than any of these technologies ... I mean nuclear we're at best talking about 15, 20 years

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The Accelerate Solar for Affordable Power Act (ASAP) would expand on one of the state's more successful renewable energy initiatives – distributed solar installation.

Bonomolo starts GOP bid for seat

Challenging Wieder for Rockland Assembly post

Chris McKenna

New York State Team
USA TODAY NETWORK

Lifelong Pearl River resident Rob Bonomolo has stepped up as a Republican challenger for freshman state Assemblyman Aron Wieder in a Rockland County district that flipped to Democrats in the last election.

Bonomolo is a 50-year-old political newcomer who works as a construction laborer and president of his Chestnut Ridge-based union, Laborers Local 754. He's seeking to represent in Albany a chunk of southern Rockland that takes in all of Orangetown except Nyack and part of the neighboring town of Ramapo, including the villages of Chestnut Ridge, Kaser and New Square and part of Spring Valley.

"I decided to run just to be a voice for the people of District 97," Bonomolo said in an interview about his campaign launch for the Nov. 3 election.

Bonomolo, a 1994 graduate of Pearl River High School, has served on Orangetown's Zoning Board of Appeals since 2019 and has been president of Pearl River Little League for five years.

What to know about Assembly District 97

Wieder, a former Rockland County legislator, claimed the 97th District seat in 2024 by beating John McGowan, the Republican who had won it two years earlier. Republican Rep. Mike Lawler held the seat for one term before then after his 2020 victory against Ellen Jaffee, the Democrat who represented the 97th District for 14 years.

Wieder, in a statement to the USA TODAY Network, confirmed he's seeking a second term and said he'll run on his record and the "accessible,

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