



Newsletter - June 2018

Welcome to the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy newsletter, my first as the interim executive director. The spring semester has been a busy one for the center, as you can see from the list of events and projects described in this issue:



- The latest poll results from the Hughes Center's Polling Institute
- An inside look at Ambassador Hughes' meeting with visiting Panamanian teachers
- Key takeaways from Stockton Professor Deborah Figart's recently released report on a state-owned bank
- Highlights from the 2018 annual Paul Shane Policy Symposium on Social Work
- The U.S. Supreme Court's newest member addresses Stockton University
- The Hughes Center comes to the rescue when a Russian plane makes an emergency landing at Atlantic City International Airport.

I am excited to welcome Tom Cirignano, president of Cirignano Contracting, Inc., to our Steering Committee. A detailed profile on Tom and his work appears below.

We also wish a fond farewell and sincere thanks to two departing members of our Steering Committee: Vincent Maione, who retired in March after 33 years with Atlantic City Electric; and Ronald Johnson, president and CEO of Shore Medical Center.

We will be working through the spring and summer on events for this fall. Please visit www.stockton.edu/hughescenter to stay up to date about the Hughes Center's activities, polls, and publications.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael W. Klein, Interim Executive Director

Welcome to New Steering Committee Member Tom Cirignano

The Hughes Center welcomes Tom Cirignano, president of Cirignano Contracting, Inc. in Absecon, as the newest member of our Steering Committee.

Tom has been involved in the contracting industry for over 40 years, starting in 1978 as an apprentice paperhanger at Bally's Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City, NJ.

In 1990, after moving up through the ranks, he opened Cirignano Contracting, a local painting company. Over the last 28 years, the company has grown, with offices in Absecon, NJ and Philadelphia, PA. Cirignano Contracting does work throughout New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania and employs over 175 men and women.



Tom has been the President of the Garden State Council of the Painting and Decorating Contractors of America (PDCA) for the past 15 years. This group represents all the union painting contractors in the State of New Jersey and works with other union organizations. In addition, Tom sits on various boards of the Painters District Council 711. They include Health and Welfare, Joint Trade Board, Vacation Stars and Finishing Trades Institute.

Over the years Tom has been involved with numerous organizations including churches, schools, local sports and the scouts. Currently, he is active as a trustee on The Grace Project, which is a group that has built and maintained a school in the Republic of Kenya for underprivileged kids.

Tom lives in Sweetwater, NJ with his wife Pam and two daughters Rose and Anna.



[Latest Poll Results](#)

Learn about the latest findings from the Polling Institute.



[Panamanians Visit Stockton](#)

Teachers from Panama meet with Ambassador Hughes.



[Hughes Center Research](#)

Read about the recent report by Professor Deborah Figart.



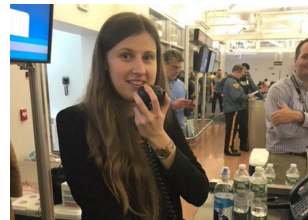
[2018 Shane Policy Symposium](#)

The Hughes Center supported the event focused on child welfare and immigration.



[Justice Gorsuch Visit](#)

A sitting Supreme Court Justice speaks at Stockton University.



[Emergency Landing at ACY](#)

South Jersey comes together in an unexpected situation.

Latest results from the Polling Institute

The Stockton Polling Institute recently conducted multiple polls of more than 700 New Jersey adults about various issues of interest to state residents. According to the findings, only 1 percent of New Jerseyans rate the state economy as excellent, and 21 percent consider it good. About half of the respondents rate the New Jersey economy as fair, with 27 percent calling it poor.



Watch videos with Dr. Klein highlighting the latest polls on our [YouTube channel](#)

At the national level, 49 percent rated the overall U.S. economy as either excellent (7 percent) or good (42 percent). A roughly equal cumulative response of 50 percent rated the U.S. economy as fair (36 percent) or poor (14 percent). Reflecting the current partisan environment, a majority of Republicans gave positive ratings to the national economy under President Donald Trump, while a majority of Democrats gave it a negative evaluation.

On another issue of national importance, half of New Jersey residents would support a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced federal budget even if it required "major spending cuts," although there was considerable disagreement about which programs are most dispensable. About half of the pollees who back the amendment support cuts to welfare and Medicaid, 40 percent are in favor of cuts to the military budget, while 24 percent think that the cuts should target social security and Medicare.

Poll respondents are divided on the success of state efforts to control property taxes through a local spending cap enacted in 2011. Forty-five percent say the cap has failed to control property taxes, but a third of pollees feel it has slowed increases to a reasonable level, and 9 percent say the cap has been very effective. Nine percent are unsure and 4 percent offered no opinion. Regarding new state initiatives, 61 percent support the increase to the state sales tax proposed by Governor Murphy to help fund schools and free community college to students from families with an income below \$45,000.

In a different poll, 29 percent of 728 respondents say Trump is doing a good or excellent job as president, while 70 percent give him negative ratings, including 51 percent who rate his job performance as poor. Thirty-one percent have a somewhat or very favorable impression of the president, while 63 percent hold somewhat or very unfavorable views of him. More than six in ten respondents feel the country is on the wrong track, while just a little more than a quarter feel it is headed in the right direction.

Regarding another important national issue, seventy-five percent of poll respondents would allow "Dreamers" brought to this country as children to remain in the United States and apply to become citizens. Twenty percent oppose that idea, with 5 percent unsure. Regarding legal immigration, 46 percent indicated they would maintain current immigration levels, while 17 percent say more immigrants should be allowed to enter the country. Twenty-seven percent say fewer immigrants should be allowed in, and 10 percent are unsure.

On the topic of recreational marijuana use, 25 percent of the 728 pollees say they would try it if it were legal, and 49 percent support legalizing marijuana for recreational purposes. Forty-four percent are against legalization, with 5 percent unsure, and only 1 percent saying that they would decriminalize marijuana. Of the pollees in favor of legalization, twenty-four percent say tax revenues are the primary consideration, while a combined 22 percent say marijuana is safer than alcohol or tobacco (11 percent) or other illegal drugs (11 percent). More than half of those opposed to legalization cited health problems or addiction as the reason they are against the proposal, with 24 percent saying it could be a gateway to other drugs, 20 percent saying marijuana is harmful to health, and 11 percent citing its addictive properties. Ten percent cite difficulties in government regulation of the drug.

To learn more about the poll results, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/polling-results-2018>. Watch videos about the polls on our [YouTube channel](#).

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Ambassador Hughes meets with visiting teachers from Panama



Ambassador William J. Hughes and Dr. Michael W. Klein with Panamanian Teachers at Stockton University

Former United States Congressman and Ambassador to Panama William J. Hughes met with teaching ambassadors from Panama at Stockton University at a reception on February 26.

Stockton hosted twenty-one teachers from Panama for eight weeks as part of the Panamanian government's Panama Bilingue Initiative to train 10,000 teachers in English and the newest teaching methods.

Interim Executive Director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy, Michael Klein, and staff teamed up with India Karavackas, director of from Stockton's Office of Global Engagement to organize the meeting between Ambassador Hughes - who served in Panama from 1995 to 1998 - and the teachers along with Stockton's General Counsel Brian Kowalski, who coordinated the Panama Bilingue agreement, and Provost Lori Vermeulen.

It was a trip down memory lane for Hughes, who apologized in Spanish for his rusty command of the language, and then switched to English with Stockton student advisor Yibin Feng translating when necessary.

Ambassador Hughes recalled that when he first arrived in Panama, he was surprised that the media who met him at the airport had no questions for him.

"My son, Bill, said it was probably because they didn't understand a word I said," he commented.

As ambassador, Hughes oversaw the transition of the Panama Canal back to Panama. He reminisced about touring the country and visiting various towns where his wife, Nancy, enjoyed shopping and he loved to eat, adding that his favorite dish was ceviche, a marinated raw seafood dish.

"I traveled quite a bit," Hughes said. "It was a wonderful experience. It's a magnificent country. What I liked most was the friends I developed and still communicate with."

Hughes spent time at Stockton with small groups of teachers, asking them about their hometowns and what they had been doing in class. The trip to New York City was a popular adventure, and the teachers said they feel like royalty while staying at Seaview. Their only complaint was the cold weather, although some of them enjoyed the change in the seasons.

"But I love the snow," said teacher Alena Cruz. "When it was on the ground and in the trees without the leaves, it was beautiful."

See more photos of the event on [Flickr](#).

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Latest Hughes Center Research

In April 2018 the Hughes Center released a report by Deborah M. Figart, Distinguished Professor of Economics at Stockton University, titled "Exploring a Public Bank for New Jersey: Economic Impact and Implementation Issues." The publication finds that a state public bank for New Jersey would have a large positive effect on jobs and state earnings. The report was prepared in response to Governor Phil Murphy's support for the idea.



Dr. Deborah M. Figart, Distinguished Professor of Economics, Stockton University

Figart estimates that every \$10 million in new credit or lending by a state bank would yield between \$15 million and \$21 million in gross state output, and between \$3.5 million and \$5.2 million in state earnings. Between 60 and 93 new jobs would be created.

"In analyzing the economic impact of a public bank, the question is: 'How much new output and new earnings are created for every dollar of new lending in an economy?' Figart explained. "Any new lending from the public bank would have a multiplier effect."

For her report, Figart modeled feasibility studies completed for proposed public banks in Vermont and in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

State Senators Nia H. Gill and Richard J. Codey have introduced the "State Bank of New Jersey Act" in the Legislature. Figart's report includes 23 implementation questions she suggests should be answered as the bill progresses.

Figart recommends that while the bill is under consideration, Murphy should employ a team of independent, expert consultants to conduct a feasibility study for the proposed bank, and that a business plan be drafted by the State Treasurer and the New Jersey Commissioner of Banking and Insurance.

"Having answers to the questions would help a State Bank of New Jersey open efficiently," Figart said.

"This report is perfectly timed, and in fact ahead of the curve, for the coming debate in New Jersey over a public bank," said Michael W. Klein, interim executive director of the Hughes Center. "With the important economic issues that a public bank could address for the residents of New Jersey - like student loans, infrastructure investment, and loans to small businesses - Dr. Figart's report offers the governor and other elected officials key financial estimates and a blueprint for moving forward."

To read the full report, visit: <https://stockton.edu/hughes-center/research-publications-and-presentations.html>

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The 2018 Paul Shane Annual Policy Symposium on Social Work

The 2018 Paul Shane Policy Symposium on Social Work was held at Stockton University on February 23. The annual symposium provides social workers and social work students the unique opportunity to learn more about shaping public policy and becoming a more active participant in government decision-making. The

annual Influencing Government Policy Symposium was started more than 20 years ago by Rutgers Professor Paul Shane. Sound public policies allow social workers to better meet human needs, be adequately compensated, and promote social equality. This year's symposium focused on child welfare and immigration. The Hughes Center for Public Policy was proud to support the event and provide a continental breakfast to the symposium participants.



Hughes Center Interim Executive Director Michael W. Klein and William Waldman, former NJ Commissioner of Human Services and keynote speaker for the Shane Policy Symposium on Social Work

After breakfast, opening remarks and greetings were provided by Dr. Robert Barney, associate professor of social work at Stockton University; Dr. Lori Vermeulen, provost of Stockton University; Dr. Phylis Peterman, Associate Professor and Chairperson, Department of Social Work, Rutgers-Newark; and Dr. Ana Marjanovic-Shane, Associate Professor of Education, Chestnut Hill College.

The keynote speaker this year was William Waldman, CSWM, former commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

The panel speakers, who concentrated their remarks on social workers and advocacy in child welfare and immigration, were Cinthia Osorio, BCWEP student and DACA recipient, Centenary University; Matthew Purinton, LCSW, a staff therapist at the Council for Relationships in Philadelphia; and AJ Sabath, BSW, president and CEO at Advocacy and Management Group and Commissioner of Labor and Workforce in New Jersey from 2005 - 2006. The panel discussion was moderated by Mary Jean Weston, LCSW, Interim Executive Director, National Association of Social Workers - New Jersey.

The panel discussion was followed by a poster presentation by Rachel Kirzner, PhD, Assistant Professor of Social Work, Stockton University.

After lunch and roundtable discussions, Phung Dao, Esq., Attorney Advisor, NY social security office spoke about child welfare and the legal system. Cinthia Osorio then led a call to action and a Q & A session. Closing remarks were provided by Tracie Barberi-Matthews, LCSW, Adjunct Instructor, Georgian Court University, President, NJBSWEA.

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U.S. Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch's visit to Stockton University



The Spring 2018 semester got off to a strong start with a visit by U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Neil M. Gorsuch, on January 23.

"The Founders gave us a republic," he told the crowd of 500. "It is up to each generation to keep it."

Justice Gorsuch spoke at Stockton at a special event arranged through the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. Gorsuch and William J. Hughes, Jr. attended school together in their teens in Washington, D.C., and have remained friends for almost 40 years, despite coming from politically different families.

"We have known each other since we were 14," Hughes said in introducing Gorsuch. "His sense of duty to our country and Constitution is second to none."

Hughes Center Interim Executive Director Michael Klein welcomed the students, guests and Justice Gorsuch on behalf of the center that carries on the traditions and example of service set by Ambassador Hughes.

Stockton President Harvey Kesselman said the University encourages the exchange of different points of view and aims to be a leader in civil discourse. He cited Bill Hughes, Jr. and Justice Gorsuch as examples of how two people can be close friends despite having differing political backgrounds.

Gorsuch stressed that keeping a republic is not just about passing along knowledge, and cited Ambassador Hughes as a model to follow.

"If you don't tackle the issues facing the country today, somebody else will. To preserve civil liberties we have to work on being civil to one another," he said.

A self-proclaimed "resolute optimist," Gorsuch said Americans live in the longest standing republic in the history of the world, and there are people in other parts of the world who consider America to be a wonder of the world.

He urged students to get involved in public service, saying they would never regret it.

"Get involved in a way you can be proud of, with respect for those around you, especially those you disagree with," he said. "It is possible to disagree without being disagreeable."

Following the talk Gorsuch answered questions from Bill Hughes, Jr. that addressed his personal life and his career as a judge. Gorsuch said judges make mistakes, and do disagree, but they can still sit down and have dinner afterwards because they all share a love for America.

Gorsuch said he became a lawyer because he wanted to help people, and while it is challenging, it has also been fun. His second career choices were fly-fishing guide and ski bum, the Colorado native joked.

He said he does not believe justices should replace laws with their own opinions.

"A judge's role is to apply the law as it is," he said. He emphasized that the Founders deliberately made it difficult to make laws, and there are often compromises in making them.

"All of us have ideas of how laws should be," he said. "But the bad guy has rights, too. Sometimes the bad guy wins, but sometimes you want them to win, so you can, too."

Bill Hughes, Jr. asked what issues will pose the greatest challenge to the Constitution in the next 10 years. Gorsuch cited the challenge of applying an old document, the Constitution, to new technology, citing privacy issues and cell phones as an example.

During his visit Gorsuch also had lunch with pre-law students and Professors Linda Wharton and Claire Abernathy, during which they asked his advice and talked about his career and role as a judge.

Emergency Landing of Russian Plane at Atlantic City International Airport

South Jersey recently had an opportunity to demonstrate its hospitality and kindness when a Russian airliner carrying more than 300 people from Moscow to Cuba was diverted by a mechanical problem to Atlantic City International Airport on January 31. Almost immediately upon the plane's arrival, the local community began to coordinate efforts to organize arrangements for the comfort and accommodation of the passengers and crew.



Darya Hrybava of the Hughes Center looks through thank-you notes written in Russian by passengers whose flight from Moscow to Cuba was forced to land at Atlantic City International Airport on Jan. 31

Stockton University received a request for translators, and Darya Hrybava, the Events and Communications Specialist at the Hughes

Center for Public Policy, answered the call to assist with the communications between the airport staff and the passengers, to make announcements, and to make the passengers feel at home by allowing them to converse with an American in their native language. Hrybava hails from Minsk, Belarus, where Russian is one of the official languages.

"The passengers were very excited to sample American pizza, as most of them had only heard of it or seen it in movies", Hrybava said, and proudly reported on the additional welcoming gestures the airport extended towards the passengers: "A special area was designated for the smokers among the group, and the airport team provided everybody with food, drinks, cots, and even toys and coloring books for the kids". Hrybava was referring to the fresh, hot pizza, provided by the airport. The American Red Cross pitched in by providing cots and extra water to the passengers.

Having heard much about the famed seaside resort, the passengers also inquired about the possibility of visiting Atlantic City, but they were confined to a secure section of the airport for the duration of their stay. The pilots and crew were paroled into the country without visas in order to allow them to rest at a local hotel before resuming the journey to Cuba.

The passengers were overwhelmed by the generosity and hospitality showered upon them by the airport and the local community. One Russian traveler asked for permission to speak on the airport's public-address system, and then expressed his thanks in Russian and English. Many passengers expressed their heartfelt gratitude by "writing many pages of thank you notes expressing their appreciation," said Hrybava, who translated the notes, and which were shared with the airport staff.

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