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## EDITORIALS

### LoBiondo's farewell tour

Congressman Frank A. LoBiondo (R-2nd) stopped by the offices of *The Gazette* on August 15 for an interview session with *Gazette* Staff Writer Stephen Pistone [See page 1]. It marked his final extended interview with *The Gazette*, an annual tradition that extends back many years.

In the mid-1990s, *Gazette* owner and publisher Gabriel Donio was an intern and later, a congressional aide for LoBiondo. Donio worked for LoBiondo in his congressional offices on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. and in Mays Landing. After leaving LoBiondo's employment, Donio began his business interests in Hammonton, including *The Gazette*. Donio's father, Frank Donio, and his cousin, Dennis Donio, were among the many people in Hammonton who strongly supported LoBiondo when he first ran for Congress in 1994. The ties between the Donios and LoBiondo have always been strong.

"I learned a lot about government and politics when I worked with Frank, but most importantly, I learned how to deal with people. He was a great teacher when it came to serving his constituents—the people in his congressional district—extremely well," Gabriel Donio said.

Serving those constituents has remained the top priority for LoBiondo, who is now on a "farewell tour" of sorts as his long tenure in Congress—the longest of any congressman in the history of New Jersey's Second Congressional District—comes to a close at the end of December.

During his interview with *The Gazette*, LoBiondo reflected on a career that included many highlights and challenges for the district and the nation. Whether it was the ups and downs of the casino industry during the last 24 years, the booms and busts of the national economy, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 or all the requests from constituents that flowed into his DC and district offices during the more than two decades of his service, LoBiondo has been a steady constant.

*The Gazette* went down to a bill signing in the East Room of the White House in 1998, when LoBiondo was a co-sponsor of the Vest-a-Cop Bill that secured funds for body armor for law enforcement personnel. LoBiondo was there with President Bill Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, Attorney General Janet Reno and a number of other national dignitaries. It had all the pomp and circumstance a major event at the White House has, including the Marine Corps Band and a full contingent of press corps.

It was a high point early in his career, and while it was critically important to him, it says a lot about LoBiondo that he derived just as much, if not more, satisfaction from his job by using the power of his office to make a difference in the lives of the people who called in on a daily basis.

He will be missed, certainly at *The Gazette*, but also by the people of the district, the state and the nation he served so well.