

■ Superintendent not consulted on teaching hires

■ Vacant positions seldom advertised

■ Board members voted teaching jobs to relatives

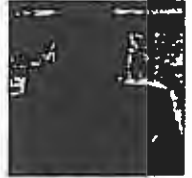
■ Closed-door hiring system ignores qualified candidates

## A SYSTEM PADDED WITH PATRONAGE

Waterbury politics plays premier role in hiring teachers, administrators



*Craig Ambrosio/Bryant-Herald*  
The Waterbury school department, headquartered on the third floor of the Chase municipal office building, employs 1,100 teachers and hires about 70 new ones a year.



Supt. Roger Demerott

"The superintendent has pathetically little to do with hiring. But that is not anything new in Waterbury."



Mayor Philip Giordano

"I feel pretty comfortable with the hiring process. I can't help if people have a perceived connection."



Acting Asst. Supt. Frank Lombardo  
"Applications are coming in all the time so we never need to advertise for teaching jobs."



Michael Andolina, school board president  
"I'm proud of what I did. I'm proud of the job that she does."

— on vying to hire his fiancée

# Waterbury politics plays premier role in hiring teachers, administrators

*Part one of a series.*

**By Sean Patrick Lyons**  
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Mayor Philip A. Giordano and members of the Board of Education operate a closed-door hiring system that has allowed them to dole out dozens of teaching jobs during the last three years to a network of relatives, friends and campaign contributors.

The practice, experts say, threatens to corrupt the education of generations of students — most of whom are poor and minorities.

A Sunday Republican investigation into the school department's hiring practices has uncovered a system where the superintendent is seldom consulted on approximately 70 teaching hires made every year. Instead, Mayor Giordano has installed Frank Lombardo, a longtime Republican party loyalist, to serve as the gatekeeper to teaching jobs.

One of those let through the gates during Giordano's tenure was his own sister, who was hired just weeks after he had taken office in January 1996 — despite not holding a teaching certificate at the time. Several months later, her boyfriend was promoted to a principal's job under a process the city's civil service director calls "a sham."

"The superintendent's chair is entirely out of the hiring loop," said Roger A. Damerow, superintendent of schools. "The superintendent has pathetically little to do with hiring. But that is not anything new in Waterbury. Do I wish educators made the decisions? Sure. But that's not the culture here."

Unlike practically every other school district in the state, Waterbury does not advertise its openings or make any other attempts to recruit candidates for teaching jobs despite its own policies requiring such steps.

That has helped perpetuate a word-of-mouth hiring system in which those with ties to City Hall get the heads-up to teaching jobs that average close to \$60,000 a year — among the highest-paying in the nation.

The closed hiring system, virtually a tradition within Waterbury's archaic political culture, continues even as student test scores lag. In 1997, for example, only 10 percent of high school sophomores met the state standard for proficiency in math, compared with a statewide average of nearly 44 percent.

A number of teachers hired during the last three years are the sons, wives and daughters of other educators already in the system.

Please turn to 4A, PATRONAGE

# PATRONAGE: Hiring system is word-of-mouth

Continued from Page One

Others, such as Henry L. Rowland, who is the brother of Gov. John G. Rowland, a city native, won teaching slots even before they had filled out an application.

Board of Education members sometimes do not look beyond their families for candidates. Three Republican Board of Education members voted to hire or promote some of their closest relatives during the past three years, records show.

Michael A. Andolina, president of the board, not only hand-picked his fiancée's interviewers when she was interviewed for an assistant principal's job, he pressured the superintendent to recommend her.

Teaching candidates who often have more experience and education than those with connections are effectively shut out from the hiring process — unable to even land an interview.

A \$50,000 management study published in 1996 urged widespread changes to the district's closed-door hiring and recruitment system, but school board members have largely ignored those recommendations.

The Sunday Republican's findings come as the school board firms up its carefully-crafted reputation as one of the most innovative in the state. Its establishment of programs such as Saturday classes and its ending of students' social promotions have won praise from editorial boards and state educators.

While Waterbury's patronage system is not illegal, experts say hiring practices such as Waterbury's hearken back to when ward politics ruled and reflect a school system whose leaders place employment before education; politics ahead of student performance.

"The last thing you want to do as a school board member is engage in any type of patronage," said Robert I. Sperber, a professor of educational administration at Boston University. "My God, it goes against all the ethics of being a board member. Most communities long ago abandoned allowing patronage in schools because people understood it can only guarantee a corrupt, immoral school system. If the board is mucking around with that stuff, you can guarantee the district is going to have very inept people, and believe me, they are out there."

Waterbury's school department operates on a budget close to \$100 million. Its 25 schools hold roughly 15,000 students and about 1,100 teachers. The department is governed by the city's Board of Education, whose 10 elected members serve four-year terms. Half of the board is alternately elected on a party ticket every two years.

The board's 11th and top member, by virtue of the city charter, is the mayor, who has the power to cast tie-breaking votes and veto any votes of the board.

Historically, whichever party wins the mayor's seat also has won a majority on the school board, allowing those in power to reward their supporters.

"Nobody minds because that's the way it's always been," said Mary White, a Democratic board member and retired teacher's aide.

In spite of this closed-system, there are many hard-working teachers within Waterbury schools. But Waterbury's elected officials have never taken any serious steps to ensure that the teachers they hired are the absolute best they could find.

## Andolina guided fiancée's promotion

Since becoming school board president in 1996, Andolina has worked tirelessly to build a name for himself as a reformer. Behind the scenes, he also has been responsible for selecting which board members will sit in on interviews for administrators' openings. He did so even on the day his fiancée, Robyn Apicella, was interviewed for an assistant principal's post the year he became president.

Interviews are typically held on weekday afternoons and past board presidents usually attempted to rotate the interview duty among all board members.

"I always asked for volunteers at meetings so there would not even be the appearance that I was trying to influence anything," said Robert C. Urso, a Democratic board member and former school board president. "Mike calls people on the phone at home. And he only calls the ones he wants. He has never called me. I don't even know when they've held interviews."

For Apicella's interview, Andolina selected board members Mary White and Deborah Schatzle-Baker, his closest ally on the board. Both gave Apicella 25 points — a perfect score, city records show. Damerow, however, gave Apicella 21 points, tied for second among the other dozen candidates.

Several weeks later, Damerow said, Andolina showed up in his office.

At its next meeting, the school board would vote on whom to hire for the position. While Apicella was ranked first with the help of her perfect scores, the board could select any of the top three candidates. In such situations, it usually went along with the recommendation of the superintendent.

Andolina sought Damerow's nod for Apicella.

"Michael came in here and spoke favorably on her as an applicant," Damerow said. "He expressed several times that that person was a good candidate. I was aware of his relationship with her. He's my boss."

Apicella got Damerow's recommendation and the vote of the school board — including Andolina's. She now earns \$81,647 a year as an assistant principal at North End Middle School.

Andolina said he does "not recall" ever meeting with Damerow about his fiancée's promotion.

"I talk to Roger about a lot of different things about a lot of different people," Andolina said. "Even if I did say something to him about Robyn, so what? If he had a problem with it, he should have spoken up."

Andolina also defended his vote for his fiancée. "I'd do the same thing again 100 times over. I'm proud of what I did. I'm proud of the job that she does."

But the closed system, in which politicians are able to maneuver their relatives into jobs, does have some limits.

## The mayor tries to get brother-in-law a job

Shortly after the resignation last fall of Foster Crawford, the assistant superintendent of special education, Damerow began searching for a temporary replacement. He needed someone who could fill-in until the civil service office was able to test and hire a permanent candidate, a process that can take several months.

"It's an important job because there are a lot of technical aspects that require someone there every day," Damerow said.

But after he began informal interviews with several candidates within the district, Damerow said Giordano called him into his office. The mayor had learned Damerow was discussing the vacancy with several potential candidates.

Damerow said Giordano told him he would decide who would get the job, just as he had decided a year earlier that Frank Lombardo would fill the other "acting" assistant superintendent's post.

In an interview with the Sunday Republican last week, Andolina said Giordano wanted to appoint Frank Zillo, his brother-in-law, to the special education chief's job. Zillo is the principal at Chase Elementary. He got the job while courting the mayor's sister.

Andolina said he told the mayor that Zillo "is a good guy, but, hey, I don't think I feel comfortable about that," he said. "I mentioned it was probably not the right thing to do for perception."

Two days later, however, Andolina changed his story. "After talking to you, I talked to the mayor, and I really don't remember saying anything to him," Andolina said. When asked about his inconsistent comments, Andolina said, "We never knew we were going to get hammered on this stuff."

The mayor denies ever wanting to push his brother-in-law into the position.

"If I wanted Frank Zillo to be the assistant superintendent, he'd be the assistant superintendent," Giordano said.

Presumably, Zillo could have been kept in that position as long as civil service never received the job's specifications, a tactic that has kept Lombardo in place for more than two years. Without those specifications, civil service cannot develop a test for the position, or advertise it.

"I felt like I was getting a little old for all of this," Damerow said. "I find myself in an ethically conflicted position in Waterbury more often than I ever have, absolutely."

The school board has since appointed Thomas Melesky, a supervisor within the special education division, to the temporary assistant superintendent's job. He has no known political ties. Civil service will be testing for a permanent replacement in the coming weeks.

### Relatives, contributors given jobs

City records show that in addition to Andolina, two other Republican school board members quietly voted to hire their relatives to education jobs during the past three years — jobs for which the board never publicly sought applicants.

Rodney Parker, vice-chairman of the board, voted to hire his wife, Ressie, and his brother, Darryl, as teachers. Both now earn roughly \$40,000 a year.

Board member Jack Alseph voted on separate occasions to give teaching jobs to his sister, Kathleen Howard (\$40,614 a year), and his daughter, Stacy Butkus (\$32,429).

When asked whether he should have abstained from the votes that gave his relatives their jobs, Alseph said, "I resent that question being asked. I recruited my daughter for that position. It might have been that I abstained from those votes, but that did not get picked up in the minutes."

A subsequent check of board minutes by the Sunday Republican, however, shows that Alseph not only voted to approve those meetings' minutes, he moved the motions' approval.

Ronald Brodeur, president of the city's ethics board, said the board members' votes, of which his committee was not previously aware, were troubling.

"If any board member is using their influence to further an employee who is their relative, it goes against the ethical concepts of the charter," said Brodeur, a Republican. "The charter says even voting on measures that affect your relatives, friends or associates is a conflict of interest."

A fourth board member, Paul D'Angelo, voted to hire his neighbor, Kristen D'Angelo (\$40,614), as a teacher. Paul D'Angelo said they are not related. Kristen D'Angelo could not be reached for comment.

Another hiring pattern that also has emerged during Giordano's administration is that a number of campaign contributors, or their relatives, have won teaching jobs. While all at least possess the minimum qualifications required by the state, none were hired to jobs

for which the school board ever publicly sought applicants.

For example, records show Antonio Musto of Middlebury, became a middle school science teacher after he and his wife, Lynn, both donated hundreds to the Republicans and Giordano during the 1995 and 1997 elections. Musto's salary is \$38,614.

Then, only a few weeks after his hire in August 1997, Antonio Musto contributed \$250 more to the Republican Town Committee. The couple would not comment for this story.

Another hire was Maryann M. Darling, who began teaching in September, 1997. Several weeks later, she donated \$250 to Giordano's campaign, records show. A few weeks after her contribution, Darling's daughter, Ellen, was hired as a teacher.

## SOME OF THOSE HIRED AND THEIR CONNECTIONS

NAME	TITLE	CONNECTION
John Anchini	teacher	listed Giordano, Rowland as references
Gina Antonios	teacher	wife of Giordano business associate
Robyn Apicella	asst. principal	fiancee of school board president
Pamela Ariola	teacher	cousin to city budget director
Roxanne Augelli	supervisor	wife of Board of Alderman president
Butch Azzara	principal	friend of two Giordano allies
Judith Bonaldi	teacher	daughter of Planning Board member
Elisa Bozzuto	teacher	daughter of Retirement Board member
Louis Brown	grant writer	former asst. corporation counsel
Stacey Butkus	teacher	daughter of Board of Education member
Deborah Calo	teacher	daughter of former mayoral aide
Dana Carozza	teacher	daughter of firefighter's union chief
Dana Conner	teacher	daughter of Rowland campaign operative
Kristen D'Angelo	teacher	neighbor of Board of Education member
Ellen Darling	teacher	daughter of Giordano contributor
Mary Ann Darling	teacher	Giordano campaign contributor
Debbie DeMiral	teacher	Giordano campaign contributor
Christine Dumaine	teacher	former secretary to Giordano
Maria Giordano-Zillo	teacher	sister of Mayor Giordano
Kathleen Howard	teacher	sister of Jack Alseph
Kasey Keating	teacher	daughter of civil service commissioner
Diane Lombardo	teacher	daughter of Frank Lombardo
Frank Lombardo	asst. supt.	longtime active city Republican
Joseph P. Macary	teacher	contributor, Democrats aligned with mayor
Stacey Mancinone	teacher	daughter of Giordano supporter
David Mangini	adult ed. teacher	son of Pat Mangini, city comptroller
Linda Miceli	teacher	sister, Budget Advisory Council member
Antonio Musto	teacher	Giordano campaign contributor
Darryl Parker	teacher	brother of Board of Ed. vice president
David Petro-Roy	teacher	Giordano campaign contributor
Lori Rigg	teacher	lists GOP Alderman Pizzuto as reference
Henry Rowland	teacher	brother of governor
Wendy Santarsiero	psychologist	niece of Rowland campaign operative
Alex Sinclair	teacher	nephew of former civ. serv. commissioner
Marci Testa	teacher	neighbor of Frank Lombardo
Michelle Testa	teacher	neighbor of Frank Lombardo
Frank Zillo	principal	at time, dating Giordano's sister
Steven Zipoli	teacher	parents contributed to Giordano campaign

Ten days later, on Dec. 12, Ellen herself gave \$150 to the Republican Town Committee. Ellen Darling said the contributions were her and her mother's "own private business," and declined further comment.

Several weeks before Steven Zipoli's parents donated a combined \$1,500 to Giordano's 1997 campaign, Zipoli was hired as a middle school math teacher. The Zipoli family declined to comment.

And about nine months after David Petro-Roy contributed \$400 to the Republican Town Committee in 1997 — the year of Giordano's first re-election bid — he was hired as a full-time math teacher in the adult and continuing education programs. The board never publicly sought applicants for the job.

In 1988, Petro-Roy resigned as a middle school music teacher in the neighboring Region 16 school district after several students reportedly charged he had inappropriately touched them.

According to a letter sent out to parents by the school district, Petro-Roy admitted "bad judgment in his relations with students," but nothing more. He agreed to undergo counseling, but no criminal charges were filed and his teaching certification was never pulled or even suspended as a result of the allegations.

Damerow said Waterbury school officials were aware of incident, but that they determined "it was not at all conclusive and he is not perceived as a risk. His work is with older students and adults." Damerow added that he was "unaware" of Petro-Roy's political contributions.

Petro-Roy said he didn't expect a job in return for his donation. "That's not to say I did not support Giordano and his platform, but that's the extent of it," he said.

Giordano said, "there was no quid pro quo and there were no strings attached with any of these donations. Even though the perception looks horrible, what do I do? Tell them not to apply if they contributed or they are friends?"

There are a number of others with connections to the Giordano administration who have won jobs.

They include: Pamela Ariola (\$40,614), the first cousin of budget director Thomas Ariola; Dana Conner (\$39,367), and Wendy Santarsiero (\$43,590), a school psychologist, who are daughter and niece, respectively, of Vito Santarsiero, a campaign operative for Gov. Rowland; and Kacey Keating (\$36,104), daughter of Gary Keating, a civil service commissioner.

Just three weeks after Giordano took office, his sister, Maria, won a bilingual teaching post — despite not holding a teaching certificate. Connecticut does not require certificates for bilingual teachers because of a shortage those teachers.

Board members, even Urso, a frequent critic of his Republican counterparts on the board, justify the hiring, saying that bilingual teachers are hard to find and Maria Giordano's certification application, while pending before the state at the time of her hire, was eventually approved.

"For four years the Democrats hired whoever the hell they wanted to and I wasn't going to stop the Republicans from doing it," Urso said. "It was only fair. It's the mayor's sister, she had the qualifications, what are you going to do? Slap the mayor in the face?"

Giordano said he was not involved in his sister's hiring.

"She was hired as a substitute a month before the election by my predecessor," he said. "She even submitted a letter to the board to withdraw her name on the night they were going to vote on it, because there had been so much controversy. She didn't want me to have to take the heat."

After a debate about the hiring in an impromptu executive session, the board refused to accept Maria Giordano's withdrawal offer and voted to hire her.

### Mayor broke pledge to halt patronage

Giordano won election in November, 1995, on a platform that included pledges to "eliminate the patronage that has plagued our city," and to "open up government in terms of deterring the old boy network and seeking out the best people in their fields."

After a year in office, however, Giordano tapped Lombardo, a retired vice-principal and English teacher, to become "acting" assistant superintendent of personnel. That job opened after the previous assistant superintendent retired. Lombardo's chief duty is to oversee all hiring within the school department.

"I'm the mayor and I have the power to fill acting positions," Giordano said. "But I didn't even know who Frank was before I interviewed him."

Lombardo's family has long been active within the local Republican Party; he also was Andolina's Latin teacher in high school.

"I needed someone up there (in the school department) who I could trust," Giordano said. "Frank does 80 percent of the work up there. There have been some instances where the best candidates have been presented to me and they (Lombardo or Andolina) ask me if I would recommend someone, or provide a reference. I don't view that as a problem."

Lombardo's appointment was to last only until civil service was able to test and fill the position. Two years later, however, Lombardo is still earning \$62,400 a year for his services. School officials have never sent the specifications for Lombardo's job to civil service.

"I have asked the school department repeatedly to give them to us because we need them to test for the position," said Edmund Jayaraj, the city's personnel director who administers civil service rules. "They keep telling me they will get to it. That's baloney. He's a political appointee, everyone knows that. What can I do? I must choose my battles."

Damerow said he believed he signed off on the specifications. "Whatever happened to them afterward I do not know," he said.

Damerow said he is aware, however, that Lombardo "routinely goes down to the mayor's office to discuss a variety of issues. It is my understanding that includes discussions of who is to be hired. Normally, someone with (Lombardo's) credentials would not be qualified to hold the position he has."

Lombardo acknowledges Giordano often gives him resumes, but denies the mayor tells him which candidate to recommend to the board.

"Everybody gives me resumes," Lombardo said. "It's the absolute worst part of this job. If I thought we were doing a disservice, I would have no part of it. I get more pressure from my

## Resumes

**Judith M. Bonaldi**

**Education**  
Bachelor of Science, General Studies,  
Teikyo Post College  
Associate of Science, Secretarial Sciences,  
Post Junior College

**Experience**  
Substitute Teacher, Waterbury, 1996-1997  
English language conversation teacher,  
six weeks, 1993

**Awards**  
Teikyo University, Hachioji, Tokyo, Japan  
Summer study scholarship/interimship 1993

**Miscellaneous**  
Worked as an office manager for over  
20 years

**Connection**  
Father is Frank Bonaldi, a Republican on  
the city's planning commission.

**Joseph Macary**

**Education**  
Master of Arts Teaching, Quinnipiac College  
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science,  
University of Connecticut  
History Certification, Quinnipiac College

**Experience**  
Substitute teacher and coach, Waterbury,  
1994-1995, 1997-1998

**Awards/Honors**  
None listed

**Miscellaneous**  
Owned painting company for about two years

**Connection**  
Among first group of teachers hired after  
1997 election. During the election, Macary  
donated \$1,000 to faction of Democrats aligned  
with Mayor Giordano. Records show Macary's  
mother and father also donated hundreds of dollars.

**Matthew Magda**

**Education**  
A-B-B- (all but dissertation); University of  
Connecticut  
Master of Art, American History, University of  
Connecticut  
Bachelor of Science, History, Secondary  
Education, Southern Connecticut State  
University (Cum laude)

**Experience**  
Adjunct faculty, History, Sacred Heart  
University, 1987-present  
Adjunct faculty, History, Southern Connecticut  
State University, 1988  
Teacher, Waterbury Adult Education (part-time)  
1991-present  
Deputy Chief Historian/Consultant, Division of  
History, Pennsylvania  
Historical & Museum Commission, 1978-1986

**Awards/Honors**  
Teacher of the Year, Connecticut Association  
for Adult and Continuing Education  
Research and teaching fellowship, History  
Department, University of Connecticut  
Five certificates of study, Yale University  
Research grant recipient, Eleanor Roosevelt  
Foundation

**Miscellaneous**  
Author of two books on Pennsylvania history,  
numerous journal articles and several book  
reviews

**Connection**  
NONE

neighbor about hiring people than the mayor."

That may be true. City records show that a month after his appointment, Lombardo's neighbor, Michelle Testa, won a teaching job for which the school department never publicly sought candidates. Her sister Marci was tapped a year before. They earn roughly \$37,000 a year.

Seven months before his appointment, Lombardo's daughter, Diane (\$40,614), also was hired as an elementary teacher.

### Hiring open in other districts

Experts say school districts intent on gathering the strongest pool of teaching candidates essentially employ three methods: advertise openings, regularly attend job fairs and develop strong networks with teacher-education departments at quality universities.

"Most districts who take steps like those have a very real sense of (their benefits) and invest quite a lot in them," said Richard Elmore, a Harvard University professor who has studied public schools' staff quality.

Bridgeport, for instance, paid \$80,000 in advertising fees last year; Hartford officials travel across the Western Hemisphere on recruiting forays — as far away as South America for minority teachers; and four of Connecticut's other largest districts reported working relationships with institutions of higher education.

But during the Giordano administration, Waterbury has advertised only once while more than 200 teaching jobs have become available. Officials say the last job fair they attended was four years ago — in Waterbury, at Naugatuck Valley Community Technical College.

And although there are roughly a dozen colleges within a 60-minute drive of the city, Waterbury officials have failed to develop any solid relationship with any university.

"Why advertise?" Giordano asked. "We have 800 applications coming in every year."

One reason might be that it's the city's policy. A 20-year old affirmative action plan — which each department is expected to follow — requires recruitment steps such as advertising when vacancies occur, an effort to bring minorities onto the payroll.

Within the plan's latest revision, completed in February of last year, Giordano wrote that it "has my whole-hearted support."

But Giordano's administration has never worked to ensure that departments follow those rules for filling jobs, including teachers. "It's just expected they would," said Rebecca DeLeon, the city's affirmative action officer.

John F. Cronan, president of the 1,100-member Waterbury Teachers Association, said the administration's actions are nothing new.

"It's always been that way, whether the Democrats are in control or the Republicans are in control," Cronan said. "Once they (teachers) come into the union, we don't care how politically-wired they are, they've got to follow the contract."

But Waterbury's 15,000 students — two-thirds of whom are minorities and roughly the same number are considered poor — continue to be taught by teachers who officials did little to ensure were the best taxpayers' money could buy.

"Making the greatest number of people aware of openings helps ensure the strongest talent pool committed to students' success," said David Haselkorn, president of Recruiting New Teachers Inc., which assists districts in developing teacher-recruitment strategies. "If a school district is not taking steps to do that, they cannot say they are doing everything they can to get the best teachers for the students."

Lombardo argues that "applications are coming in all the time, so we never need to advertise for teaching jobs. So many people come through our doors. The kids that come in here out of school are all really sharp. There are people who walk in and say 'hello,' and you know they are fantastic. They really are all on the same par."

A 1996 management study for Waterbury schools by Deloitte & Touche, a nationally-recognized management firm, found just the opposite. It charged that teacher "recruitment efforts do not systematically identify and consider high performing student-teachers in the hiring process."

Consequently, the report reads, highly-qualified candidates "are lost to other school districts." The company also found the lack of a "centralized human resources operation with (qualified) staff."

The firm completed the study at the request of Republicans on the board, shortly after their party assumed majority control at the start of that year. The report even referenced Lombardo's appointment, noting "the department's organizational chart reflects a full-time human resources position, but to date the department has not submitted a formal request to the civil service commission to create the position with specific job responsibilities."

Damerow termed the findings as serious, but said "it is hard to change things when the culture does not permit it. It's a little odd we never followed it. Waterbury is deficient in its professional procedures, and it's led by powerful people who do what they want to do."

David Gilmore, a local community activist, said that "a lot of Waterbury politics has always been about jobs."

The report recommended the district "establish an annual hiring plan" to "prevent the department from losing qualified candidates to other school districts." In addition, the hiring process should include principals, the report said, to "prevent inappropriate placements."

None of the report's recommendations with regard to hiring was ever followed, and Waterbury schools continue to lose out on highly qualified candidates.

One of those was Matthew Magda, an adjunct instructor at Sacred Heart University and, for the past eight years, has been a part-time continuing education teacher to Waterbury dropouts working toward their equivalency degree.

Dubbed "Teacher of the Year" last year by the state association of adult and continuing education programs, Magda helped write parts of the Encyclopedia Britannica in the late 1980s.

It took four months of telephone calls before he was able to get Lombardo to meet with him. The meeting in November of 1997 lasted 15 minutes. Magda was told there were no openings and never heard from anyone in the department's personnel office again.

Since he applied, however, the board has hired two history teachers.

One was Judith Bonaldi (\$36,104), hired two months after Magda applied. Records show she holds a bachelor's degree in "general studies" and had about one year of experience as a substitute when she was hired. She is also the daughter of Frank Bonaldi, a Republican member of the city's planning board and a contritor to Giordano's two mayoral campaigns.

The other history teacher hired was Joseph Macary (\$34,888). Records show he held a master's degree in teaching and had about two years of substitute teaching experience in Waterbury before he was hired full-time.

Macary was among the first group of teachers hired the summer after Giordano won reelection in 1997. During that election, records show Macary gave \$1,000 to a faction of city Democrats aligned with Giordano. His mother and father also contributed several hundred dollars to that group, records show.

"I paid my dues," Macary said. "I don't think politics had anything to do with it."

But Magda says it has been his experience in Waterbury that "you run into this wall of connections. It becomes clear that the system for choosing who gets hired is not designed to operate solely on merit."

Similar examples include applicants such as Larry Mordarski. Mordarski holds a master's degree and spent a decade as a math and science teacher at Fordham Prep, a prestigious parochial high school in New York City.

Instead, the board hired math teachers such as Petro Roy, the former Region 16 music teacher, and Elisa Bozzuto (\$34,888), the daughter of David Bozzuto, a Giordano campaign contributor and member of the city's retirement board. Records show Elisa Bozzuto holds a master's degree in education, but had only about six months experience as a substitute when she was hired.

Mordarski got snapped up by North Haven, a toney suburban town whose students' last SAT scores averaged a combined 200 points higher than Waterbury's. Magda, meanwhile, continues his part-time work at Sacred Heart University and the Waterbury adult education program.

He said he has not moved onto other districts because "I've come to understand what kids in Waterbury face, and feel I can make more of an impact here."

### Promotion process dubious

Since the late 1980s, positions such as principals and supervisors have been exempt from civil service tests, which had required comprehensive written and oral examinations. Instead, the city created an interview committee consisting of two school board members and the superintendent.

Both the School Administrators of Waterbury union and school board found the civil service process, too slow, leaving many positions vacant for months, said John Phelan, a lawyer for the city at the time.

Jayaraj, the personnel director, contended there was another reason.

"Many of the longtime members of administrator's union (who were vying for promotions) were not doing so well on the tests," he said. "So, they made it so they didn't have to take the tests."

Job postings are only required in-house and there are no other outside recruitment efforts made for candidates.

The interviews consist of committee members asking candidates five questions. Each interviewer subjectively assigns one to five points for each answer, then the scores are tallied. The top three scorers are presented to the entire school board, with one finalist receiving the superintendent's recommendation.

Normally, that candidate wins the job, just as Andolina's fiancée and Giordano's brother-in-law did.

Others winning promotions under this process during Giordano's administration include Roxanne Augelli, the wife of Nicholas Augelli, president of the Board of Aldermen who works as an information management supervisor for the school department. Roxanne now earns \$68,321 as a special education supervisor. (Nicholas Augelli earns about \$86,000.)

In addition, Henry "Butch" Azzara was named principal of Kennedy High School in 1996. He earns \$94,617, records show. Azzara is a friend of Thomas Gahan and Gary O'Connor, the former a Giordano ally, the latter a Giordano friend.

All of those hired held proper certification and had at least the minimum required experience at the time of their promotions.

Azzara, who was previously a vice-principal for more than a dozen years at another city high school, said he understands why some may question appointments such as his.

"That's always going to happen," Azzara said. "It makes me unhappy, but people can say that civil service is not the best either. I would hope when you're hiring someone to run a building, the board of education would have more sense than that. I would hope they choose the person who is the best."

The promotion process involving the school committee may have eliminated some of the bureaucracy of civil service, but it also has removed any merit-based system of selecting who should hold some of the city's highest paying — and most important — jobs, Jayaraj said.

"What objective measurement of performance is there in that process?" he asked. "The people who administered the civil service tests were not politicians, they were professionals from outside. There is not one person in the school department trained in recruitment and selection of personnel. The school department's process is a sham."

Experts agree the process is dubious.

"You need a hard-nosed evaluation of their actual work for people like your principals," said Elmore, the Harvard professor. "You need to observe their actual work, try to simulate what they will be doing. But in districts that don't do that, what frequently ends up happening is that the people who can put together their resume and have their political ducks lined up get the job, not the ones who can best manage schools."

Although other districts employ a selection method more similar to civil service, Andolina defends Waterbury's process. "We've hired some good people," he said. "I'm proud of the administrators we put into place."

The mayor just as vigorously defends his administration's hiring practices — including the two most recent teacher hires.

In January, school board members hired two Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps teachers to jobs no other taxpayers knew were available.

One was Henry Rowland, the governor's brother, and a former recruiter for the U.S. Army and Connecticut National Guard. Rowland's job was apparently a sure bet from the start: He did not even submit an application until two weeks after the board approved his hire, records show.

The other was Christine Dumaine, who filled-in as the mayor's secretary while his regular secretary was on maternity leave. Dumaine landed that job after working in the Guard under the mayor's chief of staff, William Cugno, who is second-in-command of the Guard.

Neither Dumaine nor Rowland has a teaching certificate, and Rowland does not hold a college degree. The state's education department does not require such credentials for JROTC teachers. Each will be earning roughly \$35,000 a year.

"I feel pretty comfortable with the hiring process," Giordano said. "I can't help if people have a perceived connection. (Dumaine) was going to be hired for that even before she worked as my secretary. Gen. Cugno knew of her through the National Guard. And can you think of a better candidate than Hank Rowland?"

Experts say Waterbury's politicians will continue to operate this closed-door system and seldom seek the most qualified candidates if they are not held accountable — and if the school department's hiring methods are not closely monitored.

"What has been absent in Connecticut is the capacity for the state to exercise oversight in the way districts make these decisions," said Elmore, the Harvard professor. "The state is the custodian of quality, and when they don't push hard on the local districts, more objective processes breakdown and the politics surrounding them take over. The one measure of a district's performance will depend on the quality of who is in the classroom. You've got to get the school board to do the right thing. There needs to be a realization that students deserve better."

*Contributing editor Leslie Seifert, staff reporter Randal Edgar, news assistant Linda Lee DeMeir and contributing research assistant C.L. Murphy assisted with this report.*

**TOMORROW:** *How the hiring process in the Waterbury school system affects minority students.*



*Students and faculty gather in the gymnasium of East Farms School in Waterbury to listen to a presentation. On any given*

*Tom Kabele Republican-American  
day in the Waterbury schools, this is what an assembly will look like.*

# IN THE MINORITY

CIES

(see next page)

## Officials fail to follow recruitment policies

*Second of a two-part series.*

**By Sean Patrick Lyons**  
©1999 *Republican-American*

A Board of Education hiring system which allows patronage to unduly influence who should hold some of the highest-paying teaching jobs in the nation is blamed by many local minorities for leaving Waterbury with the lowest rate of minority teachers out of Connecticut's five largest districts.

While minorities make up about 65 percent of the Waterbury public schools' student body, and roughly one-third of the city population, nine out of 10 teachers are white, state records show.

By contrast, minorities make up 37 percent of the teaching staff in Hartford, 35 percent in New Haven and 26 percent in Bridgeport.

"I think few would argue with having a teaching staff that fairly represents the community," said James Griffin, president of the Waterbury chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. "But



### Patronage in Waterbury schools

it's about fairness, too, an equal chance for jobs. How can you have that within a system that does not even tell people when there's vacancies? Who would feel welcome in even thinking about becoming a part of a system that's so clearly closed?"

All of the state's other large, urban districts have detailed strategies to recruit minority teachers — Hartford travels across the Western Hemisphere seeking candidates — but Waterbury, the fourth largest district, has failed to take any such steps.

Meanwhile, city school officials have filed inaccurate and misleading reports with the Connecticut Department of Education detailing their minority hiring efforts.

**Please turn to 4A, SCHOOLS**

# SCHOOLS: Hiring rarely follows recruitment policies

Continued from Page One

For instance, last year they submitted an affirmative action plan — which details steps they presumably take to recruit minorities — as part of a grant application that netted the district an estimated \$6 million in state and federal money.

School officials now concede the department does not follow that plan.

Despite Republican Mayor Philip A. Giordano's claims of hiring more minority teachers than the previous Democratic administration, roughly the same rate of minority teachers have been hired during his tenure, about 13 percent, city records show.

Five city elementary schools — East Farms, Gilmartin, Regan, Sprague and Tinker — have no minority teachers at all, despite having minority student populations as high as 75 percent, state records show.

A committee of local activists and business owners that once successfully worked with the board to recruit minority teachers has crumbled. In the latest wave of teacher hires last fall, only five of the 62 new teachers were minorities, or about 8 percent.

"It's clear that jobs are being given out, and that minorities aren't getting them," said Nathaniel Grant, the only black principal within the city's 19 elementary schools. "The educational system should represent the community, and if you're the leader of it, you should

## IF YOU GO

The Waterbury Board of Education will be holding a workshop meeting tonight at 5:30 p.m. in the library at Kennedy High School, 422 Highland Ave. The meeting is open to the public.

be representing everyone in the city. Everybody needs to work, but you have to be fair."

As far back as 1982, a Connecticut NAACP executive report found that Waterbury schools' minority recruitment efforts were shoddy. The group urged city leaders to implement an "ongoing and systematic

(plan) for recruitment, hiring and promotion" of minorities.

They still haven't put one into place.

Education experts, however, say the issue is not only skin deep; not only a question of minority representation. Ethnically and racially-mixed teaching staffs are believed to provide more rounded educational experience and help students of all races learn more effectively.

"But then it seemed everyone got complacent, we had had some success (in hiring minority teachers). And everything just sort of fell apart."



— Gary Post, former co-chair of  
*A Community Vision for Waterbury*

"Having people of mixed ethnicities helps provide role models to children of similar backgrounds," said Susan Moore Johnson, a dean at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. "They can see people who have similar backgrounds being successful. It can play an important role in children's self-esteem."

David Haselkorn, whose Massachusetts-based company assists school districts in teacher recruitment strategies, agreed.

"You want a teaching pool that can bring perspective to a variety of areas of education," said Haselkorn, president of Recruiting New Teachers. "It brings different teaching approaches to a variety of subjects. When you have a diverse student population, the makeup of the teaching staff becomes a central issue. Not the only issue, but an important one."

A Republican-American investigation into the board's hiring practices during the past three years found a closed-door system where dozens of city officials' friends, relatives and campaign contributors have quietly been handed teaching jobs.

Some of the key findings, published Sunday, include:

- The school department's superintendent is seldom consulted on teaching hires.

- Waterbury advertises few vacancies and makes virtually no other attempts to recruit the best teachers taxpayers' money can buy — despite its own policies requiring such steps.

- Three Republican Board of Education members voted to hire or promote some of their relatives during the past three years.

Michael A. Andolina, the board president, concedes "we need to do more" to bring minorities on board. "For Waterbury to be racially diverse, we need a lot of other teachers," he said. "It's a complex issue. Sometimes people think it's so easy. Advertising and those things require money that we don't have."

The school department's proposed budget for next year now stands at close to \$102 million, about \$5 million more than this year's budget. About half of that money will go toward teacher pay hikes.

### Other districts aim efforts at minorities

Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport devote significant resources aimed at gathering a diverse teacher-applicant pool and keeping the process open.

Their personnel offices essentially follow the three steps most experts recommend — advertise and post openings, recruit at job fairs and develop strong networks with quality universities graduating minority students who are education majors.

Those efforts appear to have paid off: Each district has three to four times the rate of minority teachers that Waterbury has. (In Stamford, the fifth largest district, minority teachers make up 11 percent of the staff, but education officials, even in Waterbury, do not compare that city with the state's largest urban districts because of the community's lower rate of poor and minority students, higher test

score averages and its proximity to New York City.)

The districts also spend a combined average of more than \$50,000 each year advertising teaching jobs in publications read mostly by minorities. They include the Hispanic daily *El Diario* in New York City and the *San Juan Star of Puerto Rico*.

The districts also post positions and regularly send job announcements to community organizations such as the local NAACP chapter or the YMCA, helping to create a network for local minorities.

"Advertising is a vital part of the search process," said Maria B. Lyons, personnel director of the Bridgeport public schools. Last year, her office spent more than \$80,000 in job ads. "It's essential because we need to have a big pool to get better quality."

In addition, other cities regularly schedule recruiting forays to various black southern colleges and a number of minority job fairs. Hartford is planning to send a team to Mexico, Spain and South America this year.

"Part of the teams would be staff members who are originally from those areas to act as mentors and show new teachers considering coming here that it can be done, that they can be successful," said Robert Stacy, personnel director for Hartford schools. "We have to make sure we hit our target audience. It's not always an easy task, but we feel we owe it to the children."

Waterbury school officials, meanwhile, have only advertised for teachers once in the past three years — and that was in a state teachers' union newsletter. They posted only about one out of every 10 openings, and none was sent out to any community groups, such as the NAACP. They also have no working relationships with any colleges.

And although one of the nation's largest minority teacher fairs is held annually 90 minutes away in New York City, Waterbury officials have not attended any minority fairs or made any recruiting trips in over four years.

"The school department has to recruit heavily, go beyond Connecticut, to get minority teachers," said Douglas Dean, principal of Ancestors Memorial Charter High School and a former Waterbury teacher. "I really don't think this administration knows how to do it."

Meanwhile, five Waterbury elementary schools have no minority teachers at all.

John Theriault, principal at one of those schools, Gilmartin, where the student body is roughly 40 percent minority, said, "I would love to have a minority teacher. I think it's very healthy for the kids. It lets them know that accomplishments have nothing to do with the color of a person's skin. But principals don't have any say in the hiring process."

## Trouble with reports

Despite failing to actively recruit minorities, Waterbury school officials have filed reports with the state Department of Education that say otherwise.

Connecticut school districts are required to submit affirmative action plans along with various applications for grants submitted to the state's education department.

"We require them as part of an effort to reduce inequality," said Robert Babcock, the state education department's affirmative action supervisor. "We want to be sure districts are trying to work to that goal."

All Waterbury departments are covered by a plan, which was first instituted in 1978. It was designed to provide "equal employment opportunities ... for the people," according to its introduction, and includes a specific outline of the city's recruitment strategies and goals for hiring minorities.

"Each department that does its own hiring must follow the plan," said Rebecca DeLeon, the city's affirmative action officer. "It is for the whole city."

According to the plan's detailed, 11-step recruitment process, job announcements

should be sent to minority groups and colleges whose students are predominately women or minorities. "Regular contact for recruitment purposes shall be established" with those groups, the plan reads.

In addition, "advertising ... shall be placed in selected newspapers and in neighborhood centers which are frequented by minority groups." Those ads, the plan says, should "identify the city as an "Equal Opportunity Employer."

The Waterbury school department, however, takes none of those steps for jobs that pay an average of close to \$60,000 a year, one of

the highest in a state that ranks second in the nation for teacher salaries.

DeLeon said her office does not regularly check to ensure city departments are following the plan.

"Only if someone requests it," she said. "It's assumed they are."

The state Department of Education takes a similar tack with a district's minority hiring information.

For instance, Babcock said his office reviews only small portions of a school district's affirmative action plan when it is submitted with grant applications, such as the \$6 million request sent in by Waterbury last year.

And while the state also asks districts in separate minority hiring reports, if they "actively recruit minority teachers," or cooperate with "other districts regionally to recruit minority teachers," local school officials can simply check a box that they do, even if they

know that's not the case — just as they did in Waterbury last year.

"Waterbury has never come up on our radar screen for these type of issues," Babcock said. "But what the radar looks at right now doesn't cover that. We just mostly examine overall staffing levels. If they are saying

they are doing things that they don't, we should be looking into that, especially for the grant applications."

Roger A. Damerow, superintendent of schools, said he was aware the city had a "boiler plate plan, but we don't have money to change light bulbs, never mind buy ads. To some extent there's a choice of priorities made by the school board."

And although his signature is on the separate report that claimed an active minority recruitment process, Damerow said, "I sign a lot of papers everyday. I have no idea why we said that."

Damerow also had no idea why the department failed to file a minority hiring report, required by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission until the Republican-American requested a copy of it in February — four months after the report's filing deadline. The EEOC uses the report to monitor districts' hiring practices.

"We were never aware we had to be doing any of that," said Andolina, the board president. "I never even knew about the (affirmative action) plan. I'm not surprised it exists. If we should be doing these things and aren't, we need to examine that."

## Committee crumbled

Andolina acknowledged several months ago at a meeting of the local NAACP that when it comes to hiring minority teachers, "we've got to work harder, but it's not easy. It's something you've got to be willing to work on over the long-term. It's going to take years."

But when school officials put their mind to it, it can only take a few months.

In September of 1993, a newly-formed civic group called A Community Vision for Waterbury, made up of local activists and business leaders, created a committee to work with school board on the minority hiring issue.

One of the task force's chief objectives was to increase the number of minority teachers on the school department's payroll. At that time, minorities made up roughly 8 percent of the teaching force and 54 percent of the student body.

Over a nine-month period, the group organized seminars, attended job fairs and hired a consultant to travel to southern black colleges. A future teacher program was started in the high schools to encourage minority students to consider teaching as a career.

By May of 1994, the group had secured applications from 20 minority teaching candidates. Half of them accepted jobs.

"While it was not huge, that was probably the biggest group of minority teachers brought

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**It's clear that jobs are being given out, and that minorities aren't getting them."**

**Nathaniel Grant**

Waterbury's only black principal

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into Waterbury schools in a single year," said Gary Post, former co-chairman of the group. "But then it seemed everyone got complacent, we had had some success. And everything just sort of fell apart."

Andolina, who was a school board member at the time, said the committee's demise "is like a lot of these things. People get on committees and donate their time and people get busy. We (the school board) have different projects and some of them go into a softer period. We are doing a million different things."

But Griffin, the NAACP chapter president, says the committee's demise also reflects a lack of cohesive leadership within the minority community.

"Generally we're not organized with a common agenda with education issues," Griffin said. "We have not kept our elected officials' feet to the fire and these things happen when you don't. We have three minorities on the board who haven't done a lot with this issue. People are taking care of their own, not taking care of the city and the needs of the minority community."

Among those cited by Griffin is Rodney Parker, vice-president of the school board and one of its three minority members. During the last three years, Parker has voted to give both his wife and brother teaching jobs.

Parker defended both his votes and the board's hiring record, while acknowledging its overall efforts should be stronger.

"Both my wife and brother have the qualifications, and since the district has so few minority teachers, it made sense," he said. "I can't pull (applicants) out of the sky. There's not a lot of minorities applying. I know we do not do a good job publicizing ourselves like other districts, but it has to be a concerted effort, not just one or two people."

Despite taking no steps to ensure minority teachers are actively recruited, Mayor Giordano said recently the number hired has "been more reflective of the community than the previous administration" of former Mayor Edward D. Bergin, Jr.

Bergin, a Democrat, was mayor for roughly 15 years before Giordano took office and is seen by many within the community as the archetypal ward politician. Mayors in Waterbury are effectively the head of the school board.

A Republican-American analysis of city payroll records, however, shows Giordano has made no real improvement in hiring minority teachers.

Only 28 of the nearly 215 teachers the school board had hired during the last three years were minorities, or about 13 percent. Bergin's administration, meanwhile, over a comparable period, hired about 130 teachers, and roughly 11 percent were minorities.

School officials, however, have long known their efforts fall short. In 1992, during Andolina's second term on the school board, the state NAACP's education committee conducted a review of the Waterbury system, in "an effort to assess the impact" the district's policies were having on minority students.

While it's unclear what sparked the review, the NAACP called upon the school department to "develop and implement a planned, ongoing and systematic (plan) for recruitment, hiring and promotion ... within the district."

But the school officials already had that plan in the affirmative action policy; they just choose to ignore it.

"We've done something between little and none on this issue," Damerow said. "When we've made attempts to advertise vacancies or other types of things we can't get them. Partly that's because of money, partly that's because of the culture in Waterbury."

For Waterbury to improve its minority hiring record, experts say it is ultimately that culture that will need to change.

"It's up to the school board to make minority hiring a priority," said Haselkorn, the educational personnel consultant. "And it's up to the community to make the school board recognize the importance of diversity within the schools, that the children really need this. If you keep doing what you've always done, you'll keep getting what you've always got." ...

*Contributing editor Leslie Seifert and staff reporters Randal Edgar and Robyn Adams assisted with this report.*

## Student/teacher breakdown

School	# of students	% minority students	# of teaching positions*	% minority teachers
<b>Elementary</b>				
Barnard	274	60.2	18	7.7
Bucks Hill	582	69.6	36	11.4
Bunker Hill	511	63.2	33	4.5
Carrington	490	58.8	30	25
Chase	683	57	43	22
Driggs	600	78	32	10.3
East Farms	534	53	35	0
Gilmartin	156	44.2	14	0
Hopeville	456	73.2	34	23.8
Kingsbury	500	68.2	27	3.1
Maloney Magnet	587	53.7	39	25.5
Regan	299	67.2	17	0
Rotella	376	47.3	23	3.6
Sprague	436	73.9	27	0
Tinker	514	40.7	32	0
Walsh	541	66	35	2.6
Washington	317	77.6	18	12.5
Wendell Cross	323	50.8	21	14.3
Wilson	242	91.3	N/A	N/A
<b>Total/average</b>	<b>8421</b>	<b>62.8</b>	<b>514*</b>	<b>11.4*</b>
<b>Middle</b>				
North End	1029	64	71	7.1
Wallace	1120	59	77	10.3
West Side	1151	63.5	76	12.8
<b>Total/average</b>	<b>3300</b>	<b>62.2</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>10.1</b>
<b>High</b>				
Crosby	1027	52.8	91	6.7
Kennedy	854	59	76	6.7
Wilby	918	70.5	84	11.5
<b>Total/average</b>	<b>2799</b>	<b>60.8</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>8.3</b>
<b>District</b>	<b>14520</b>	<b>61.9</b>	<b>989*</b>	<b>9.8*</b>

Numbers are based upon 1997-1998 school year.

\*not including Wilson

N/A not available

Kim Pruchnicki Republican-American

## How other districts recruit

Towns	Advertising budget	Participates in job fairs aimed at minorities	Developed networks with colleges graduating minorities	% of minority teachers
Hartford	\$50,000.	yes	yes	37%
New Haven	\$30,000.	yes	yes	35%
Bridgeport	\$80,000.	yes	yes	26%
Waterbury	\$0	no	no	9.8%

\*1997-1998 school year

Kim Pruchnicki *Republican-American*

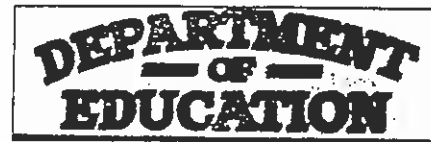
## School hiring system kills beneficial bill

By Sean Patrick Lyons  
and Maura Kelly  
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HARTFORD — The bill that would have allowed Waterbury to effectively become an autonomous school district free from state regulations died Wednesday because of Mayor Philip A. Giordano's closed-door teacher hiring system, state lawmakers said.

The final gavel pounded at midnight Wednesday without the legislation ever making it to the House floor, fulfilling a vow made in April by Sen. Thomas Gaffey, D-Meriden, co-chairman of the Legislature's Education Committee, that the bill would "never even see the light of day" because of the city's hiring practices.

"Put a fork in it," Gaffey said Wednesday afternoon. "The publicity that occurred



### Patronage in the Waterbury school system

around the whole situation in Waterbury proved to be the death knell."

Giordano sharply criticized lawmakers for the bill's failure and defended how his administration selects teachers.

An investigation by The Sunday Republican found that dozens of city officials' friends, relatives and campaign contribu-

Please turn to 11A, HIRING

# HIRING: System kills beneficial bill

Continued from Page One

tors have won teaching jobs that were never advertised during Giordano's three-year tenure.

"Every teacher we hired was certified by the state of Connecticut," he said. "It's kind of ironic they killed the bill because we've followed the criteria they set forth. How is this a closed-door system? Why should I put out a national ad when I have 1,000 resumes coming in for 20 openings?"

But key lawmakers said they were unwilling to sign off on a bill that would have given more power to officials who have voted to hire their own relatives.

"Waterbury's got to get its act together on its hiring practices before I would be willing to give them discretion," said Rep. Cameron Staples, D-New Haven, who is co-chairman with Gaffey of the education committee.

The city must begin to hire teachers "based on merit, not on political connections," Staples said.

Those sentiments were even echoed Wednesday by Rep. Joan Hartley, D-73rd District, who had become the bill's lead proponent, writing several revisions of the bill in recent weeks in an attempt to appease skeptical House members.

"Their hiring practices were completely unacceptable, as well as not yielding the results an urban school district demands in the '90s," said Hartley, a former Waterbury teacher and the third-highest ranking member of the House. "The true lifeblood for a school system is a teacher in the classroom. If we are not prepared to bring in the very best teachers as visionaries and role models, we cannot expect them to yield the best results."

Waterbury Board of Education president Michael Andolina could not be reached for comment.

Gov. John R. Rowland, a Waterbury native, first proposed the bill in February at the urging of local school board members.

"If this is done, it would be a tremendous boost to the city's education system," Andolina said at the time.

Known as the Education Flexibility Bill, the legislation would have exempted Waterbury from numerous state regulations, including those detailing how grant money is spent. That would have allowed Waterbury officials to pool the funds.

The legislation also would have permitted the city to do away with the superintendent's post and replace it with a CEO-type business manager, and a chief education director.

In addition, Waterbury would have been released from laws requiring racially-balanced schools, allowing officials to implement a comprehensive school choice plan that would have meant the re-institution of neighborhood schools.

In April, The Waterbury Republican-American revealed a school department hiring unduly influenced by patronage. In addition to the infrequent advertisements, five school board members voted to hire or promote their own relatives.

Meanwhile, Waterbury has the lowest number of minority teachers out of the state's five largest school districts. The district also filed inaccurate and misleading reports to the state Department of Education detailing their minority recruitment efforts.

After The Sunday Republican's findings were published, Giordano initially said he had "no plans at all" to change the system. The next day, Gaffey pledged his opposition to the bill.

Several days later, under mounting pressure from state education officials, Giordano established an ad hoc committee to examine the issue and make recommendations to the school board.

Last month, Giordano ordered Damerow to come up with the recommendations instead. That directive came as the ad hoc committee appeared poised to recommend a process that added several degrees of separation between the hiring process and political influences.

James Griffin, president of the Greater Waterbury branch of the NAACP, said the bill's death illustrated the "lack of trust throughout the state with Giordano's administration."

"I can't imagine the mayor questioning the need to advertise after all this," Griffin said. "It's just outrageous."

Local school officials said they hoped that was true.

"Unfortunately, it put the city in a bad light, so they (the Legislature) were more focused on what we need to fix before we go further," said Deborah Schatzle-Baker, a Republican school board member. "They wanted to see us get our house a little more in order and come back next session. I don't consider it dead. I consider it postponed temporarily."

But Robert C. Urso Sr., a Democratic school board member, said the setback should never have occurred.

"What can you say?" Urso said. "When you play with fire, you're going to get burned."

*Staff reporter Randal Edgar contributed to this report.*

# Teachers hired without politics

By Sean Patrick Lyons  
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WATERBURY — For perhaps the first time in this city's history, the Board of Education has hired teachers selected through a process virtually free from political influence.

By a 6-2 vote Wednesday night, with board members John Alseph and Robert Urso voting nay, the committee hired roughly 50 new teachers. They include two former college professors and a veteran educator from a prestigious private prep school.

Many of those hired this year applied to Waterbury after reading advertisements placed by the district in

■ Profiles of the  
teachers approved.  
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Please turn to 13A, HIRED

# HIRED: New teachers mark new era in city

Continued from Page One

several national publications, including The New York Times and Education Week. Until just several weeks ago, the city seldom advertised any of its teaching vacancies.

The ads were part of a recently revamped hiring process where candidates are interviewed and selected by principals and an outside consultant, who was brought in to oversee the personnel office.

That process, a permanent version of which has yet to be offered by Mayor Philip A. Giordano, was created in the weeks following a Republican-American investigation that found a city school system riddled with patronage. Dozens of teaching jobs during Giordano's three-year tenure, the newspaper reported, have gone to political cronies and relatives of various city officials.

Among those hired Wednesday night were 18 former long-term substitutes, whom the board was required to hire because of a recent arbitration ruling. That ruling found that because of a loophole in the teachers' contract, a group of substitute teachers who had worked in classrooms for more than 40 consecutive days were entitled to full-time positions.

The city closed that hole during contract negotiations with the Waterbury Teachers Association earlier this year, a city lawyer said Wednesday, and such substitutes will no longer be guaranteed positions.

While that group skewed the overall percentage of minorities approved Wednesday night, officials said roughly half of the remaining 27 teachers hired under the new process were African-American, Hispanic or Asian.

There are still dozens more posi-

tions remaining to be filled, but that minority hiring rate is roughly four times the previous average during Giordano's administration, which began in 1996.

Six of the group of 27 are Waterbury residents, and roughly half

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**"I thought that these were real quality people. ... These types of candidates give you some things you just don't get with someone with a bachelor's degree and no experience. They improve the quality of your district."**

**Howard Rosenstein**

consultant hired to oversee the Waterbury Board of Education's personnel office

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worked as substitutes within the system at some point in their careers.

Some of those hired include Roopa Goswami, a social studies teacher who worked most recently as an instructor at Naugatuck Valley Community-Technical College in Waterbury. She also served as an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Singapore.

Also hired was Susan Unrad, a guidance counselor from Lauralton Hall High School, a select all-girls secondary school in Milford.

Records show the relative of one teacher hired under the new process, Frank Purcaro, once contributed several hundred dollars to Giordano's campaign. Purcaro also worked as a manager at Frankie's, a local restaurant owned by a staunch Giordano supporter.

Purcaro's resume shows he holds a master's degree in education from the University of Bridgeport, graduating magna cum laude with a grade point average of 3.9. He previously worked as a substitute at Kennedy High School, which is where he will begin as a social studies teacher in September.

The only voice of dissent during the meeting was Urso's, a Democrat. Urso voted against the measure because several candidates, who had previous experience or advanced degrees, were offered salaries higher than entry-level teachers receive.

"We just gave people a plan to retire early because of budget considerations," Urso said. "And here we're adding to those costs."

Aleph, who also rejected the hires, offered no explanation of his vote.

Howard Rosenstein, the consultant overseeing the personnel office, countered Urso, saying those candidates were a select few and well worth the extra costs.

"I thought that these were real quality people," Rosenstein said. "I realize there are budget concerns, but these types of candidates give you some things you just don't get with someone with a bachelor's degree and no experience. They improve the quality of your district."

School officials said the next group of hires — which will likely include roughly one dozen principals — should come before the board within the next several weeks.



Patronage in the  
Waterbury school system

# Ethics report released

## Mayor cleared, while school officials rebuked

By Sean Patrick Lyons  
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**WATERBURY** — In a preliminary report of its inquiry into the school department's hiring practices, the city's Board of Ethics rebukes several school board members for voting to hire their relatives but exonerates Mayor Philip A. Giordano of any impropriety.

■ School officials iron out details of an upcoming meeting with state commission. **B Section.**

According to the 15-page report, submitted to the City Clerk's Office late Wednesday, ethics mem-

bers also found the school board failed to create a hiring system "whereby effective checks and balances could be enforced to diminish the improper influence into the hiring process by political pressure or other forces, from time to time."

Please turn to 11A, ETHICS

# ETHICS: Closed hirings blamed on politics, policy

Continued from Page One

This system, the ethics board concluded, "has contributed to an overall public impression that teachers are hired and promoted on the basis of who you know, as opposed to basic qualifications."

The board's failure to advertise vacancies, the report reads, did "not guarantee the best qualified available candidate was sought and considered."

In addition, Michael Andolina, school board president, was cited in the report for "poor judgment" in voting to promote Robyn Apicella to an assistant principal's job.

Andolina confirmed in an April interview with The Waterbury Republican-American that he was engaged to Apicella at the time of the vote, but he refused to say so during his testimony in front of the Board of Ethics.

The city's charter bars casting votes that would benefit close relatives, friends or business associates.

While ethics members suggested Andolina "think twice" of conflicts of interest in the future, they declined to recommend any action be considered against Andolina, a Republican.

Ethics members, however, criticized the school department's promotion process, once governed by civil service rules but now closely controlled by the school board.

The ethics report found the process had been "degraded by the collective bargaining process," which in turn has left "the potential for abuse."

The ethics board also found that the city's Affirmative Action Plan "did not receive focused attention by this process so that minorities of various origins were not sought, nor encouraged to apply."

Among the report's recommendations is that a screening committee be established to evaluate teaching candidates and that a "responsible authority that has significant teeth" oversee the implementation of the city's affirmative action policies.

In May, Giordano reassigned the city's affirmative action officer to other duties, and handed those responsibilities in the interim to Edmund Jayaraj, the city's personnel director. No permanent replacement has been named.

The inquiry by the ethics board, which was conducted in public hearings over several weeks in June, was



Giordano  
exonerated

Andolina  
'poor judgment'

Damerow  
'hands off' style

touched off by reports in The Waterbury Republican-American in April that found a school system riddled with patronage. Dozens of city officials' friends, relatives and campaign contributors won jobs and promotions that were never advertised during Giordano's administration.

Much of the board's inquiry focused on the votes taken by five of the 10 Board of Education members to hire their relatives as teachers.

The report found no violations of the city's conflict of interest rules by school board members Mary White and Paul D'Angelo, who voted to hire a cousin and neighbor, respectively.

White testified she was not aware of the relationship when she voted several years ago, and the ethics board found "no direct relationship involved" between D'Angelo and his neighbor, who shares his last name.

But ethics board members have withheld a recommendation on what course of action to take, if any, against board members Larry Pisapio, Rodney Parker and John Alseph, until a public hearing is held on the report.

The ethics board could levy penalties against officials who've violated the charter's conflict of interest rules, from censure to removal from office. Officials accused of impropriety can dispute the findings during the hearing. A date has yet to be scheduled.

Parker voted to hire his wife and brother, Alseph his daughter and sister and Pisapio a cousin whose father works as his lawyer.

The report found that the school department's closed hiring practices were borne out of a combination of two elements: The "strong political atmosphere that has always existed" in Waterbury and — in a somewhat sur-

prising determination — the "hands off" management style of Superintendent Roger Damerow.

The ethics board found that Damerow's delegating of "responsibilities that should have been more closely controlled by himself," helped create "a hiring procedure that did not provide for a fair and methodical process of Equal Opportunity for all."

Damerow has said he has been left "out of the loop" by the school board and mayor in hiring decisions. He said Thursday he "would be disappointed" by the finding, but declined further comment until reading the report.

As for the mayor, the report reads "allegations of improper influence in the hiring of are not substantiated by corroborative evidence."

The report notes Giordano "testified that any political contributions received directly or indirectly for his campaign, from relatives of a recommended hire ... were returned, so as not to reflect Quid Pro Quo."

But Giordano testified that he returned those contributions where the donor explicitly requested a job in return, not every contribution of anyone who became employed. Patrick Hayes, on the ethics board, said such a discrepancy was immaterial, since "we really didn't go into that because we couldn't verify it either way."

Giordano could not be reached for comment Thursday night.

Ethics board members are appointed by the mayor, serve five-year terms. Republicans hold a 3-2 advantage on the committee. Current members are Thomas Polzio, a Republican, and Gary Roosa and Patrick Hayes, both Democrats. Hayes, a Democratic candidate for school board, does not plan to participate in the discussion.

# State to monitor city

Panel's vote  
aims to open  
hiring system

By Sean Patrick Lyons  
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DEPARTMENT  
OF  
EDUCATION

Patronage in the  
Waterbury school system



At left, Cleo B. Booker Jr. of the Waterbury NAACP, expresses his feelings about Waterbury's hiring practices in the school system during a meeting of the state's Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities on Thursday in Hartford.

Craig Ambrosio/Republican-American



Waterbury school board member James Murray, left, pleads for the state to take a strong role in the city's hiring.

(see next page)

# Panel's vote aims to open hiring system

By Sean Patrick Lyons  
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HARTFORD — In a move that could permanently force open the Waterbury Board of Education's hiring system and dramatically alter the city's archaic political culture, the state Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities voted Thursday to begin monitoring the school department's hiring practices.

The 8-0 vote, with one abstention, makes the Waterbury school department the only municipal or state agency in Connecticut to have its practices scrutinized by CHRO, officials said.

"There are significant issues that the city has to address," said Richard Robinson, chairman of the commission, after his board's monthly meeting. "A monitoring process will help ensure the city remains committed to long-term goals."

The CHRO's vote comes five months after a Waterbury Republican-American investigation found a school department hiring system rife with patronage. Mayor Philip A. Giordano's administration doled out dozens of teaching jobs, which were seldom advertised, to a network of friends, relatives and campaign contributors.

The newspaper also found that officials ignored the city's affirmative action plans, leaving Waterbury schools with the lowest rate of minority teachers out of the state's five largest school districts. Nine out of 10 teachers are white; two out of three students are minorities.

Since the stories ran, the city began advertising teaching and administrative va-

Please turn to 4A, **HIRING**

# HIRING: State looks on

Continued from Page One

cancies and hired two outside consultants to oversee the school department's personnel office until the end of this fall. Under them, more than 20 percent of the 127 teachers hired for this year were minorities, double the rate hired annually in the previous three years.

"Waterbury is going to continue to pursue its own initiatives and keep the commission informed of our efforts," said Miguel Escalera, a lawyer hired by the city to handle the CHRO's investigation, after the meeting. "The city is committed to ensuring a diverse workplace."

Both Giordano and school board President Michael Andolina refused comment Thursday.

James Griffin, president of the Greater Waterbury branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who has advocated state involvement with the city's hiring process, said after the meeting that he was "very pleased with the outcome."

"We got what we came for," Griffin said. "I wish we could trust the city to always do the right thing, but it's hard for us to accept that would happen without some sort of state oversight."

Details of precisely how the CHRO will keep watch over the city were unclear Thursday, but one agency official who will be involved in the monitoring process said hiring practices city-wide — not just those within the school department — could be part of the plan.

Much of the monitoring will be based upon a program the CHRO employs with private contractors who bid for state work, officials said.

Those contractors must provide the state with a detailed description of their workforce and outline permanent recruitment practices, which have yet to be established in Waterbury.

The CHRO then conducts on-site audits to ensure that contractors employ the numbers of minorities they report.

In addition, contractors are asked to provide copies of advertisements, and proof of other recruitment efforts, such as attendance at minority job fairs.

Ron Fletcher, a supervisor for CHRO, said additional oversight measures could include setting specific goals for the city in the numbers of minorities it employs, and having the city develop retention efforts aimed at minorities.

"You need to ensure that after you hire minority teachers that they stay with you," Fletcher said.

Contractors in the program who fail to comply with the monitoring plan can face a host of administrative actions, including being made ineligible for state contracts, Fletcher said.

"But we rarely do that," he said. "We try to work with them."

Fletcher said he plans to develop a specific plan for Waterbury "very shortly."

The CHRO serves as the state's civil rights enforcement agency.

Thursday's vote at the CHRO's headquarters came after a roughly 30-minute presentation by Escalera, the city's lawyer, who stressed the recent improvements to the school department's hiring practices.

"Our object is to continue these improvements," Escalera said. "We're working on it. We're working hard on it."

Escalera asked that the CHRO not take any formal measures to monitor the city, offering instead to come back in a year to detail the progress.

But some commissioners noted that the changes came only after the Republican-American's reports, and mounting pressure from community activists, and that none of the steps are permanent.

The consultants' contracts expire in the coming months, noted Roger Vann, a commissioner. What has the city budgeted for them to continue, or for recruitment and advertising next year? he asked.

"Budgets are difficult to predict," Escalera said. "With school budgets sometimes you don't have money for erasers."

Earlier, Robinson, the chairman, asked Escalera what new policies the city has established to ensure the process remains open.

"It's somewhat difficult to answer that question with elected officials" frequently turning over, Escalera said. "Waterbury is in the process of developing a more detailed affirmative action plan ..."

Then Robinson interrupted: "But from what I've read in the newspaper articles, Waterbury ignored its (previous) affirmative action plan in the past."

Escalera: "The proof is in what a community

does."

Robinson: "That's my point."

Moments after the commission's vote, Escalera continued to press his case with the commission.

"When a board of education does what this board has done in recent months, it should be recognized," he said.

To that, Robinson responded, "You get a big 'attaboy' for that."

Escalera's request that the CHRO not formally monitor the city was somewhat sullied when a school board member he brought to testify, James Murray, asked the commission members to play a strong role in the city's hiring practices.

"This whole issue may not be a racial issue, but it may be a political issue," Murray said. "It's always a matter of the person holding the power."

Murray was accompanied by fellow board member Mary White and Superintendent Roger Damerow, who both made only brief comments.

Notably absent was the mayor, who the CHRO had asked to attend the meeting. Escalera said he did not want the mayor to attend because he didn't want to "overpoliticize" the issue. Giordano continually has questioned the need to advertise openings and steadfastly has maintained his administration's hiring practices were proper.

Awarding loyalists and friends with jobs has long been a form of political thank-you within the Brass City, but its influence has been eroded during the past 20 years as many jobs came under the control of civil service rules.

Teaching jobs — averaging close to \$60,000 a year in Waterbury, among the highest in the nation — are exempt from civil service rules, and stood as one of the last vestiges of patronage.

Griffin, the local NAACP president, said Thursday's vote could have ramifications on how city politics are played for years to come.

# Controversy with city hiring prompts state law proposal

**DEPARTMENT  
OF  
EDUCATION**

**PATRONAGE IN THE  
WATERBURY  
SCHOOL SYSTEM**

**By Sean Patrick Lyons**  
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The state's civil rights chief is proposing a change to state law that would effectively allow her agency to monitor the hiring practices of every state municipality.

Cynthia Watts Elder, director of the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, said the proposal became a priority after revelations that Waterbury school officials doled out dozens of teaching jobs to their cronies, while ignoring the city's minority recruitment and hiring policies.

"It made us realize that these types of problems

may well indeed exist in other places," Elder said. "We became aware of the importance in having a more comprehensive method of ensuring fair employment practices and equal opportunity on all levels."

The proposal, submitted earlier this week to the state's budget and policy office, allows the CHRO to require affirmative action plans of any business or agency that receives a state contract or grant in excess of \$50,000 and employs more than 50 workers.

The commission would have the authority to monitor the plans and ensure the contractor "is

doing what they claim to be doing in the plan," said Ron Fletcher, the CHRO's contract compliance supervisor.

Most affirmative action plans detail an agency's minority recruitment and hiring policies and goals.

Connecticut law allows the CHRO to require affirmative action plans only of contractors who receive state money for construction projects. The federal government also requires similar plans of some municipalities that receive housing funds.

**Please turn to 4A, HIRING**

# HIRING: Civil rights chief proposes new Connecticut law

Continued from Page One

"It's mirroring those federal laws in some ways," Fletcher said. "We're broadening our scope. There really shouldn't be any difference whether it's a public works contract or some other type. Either way, the contractor, or grant recipient, is getting state money."

Cicero B. Booker Jr., a vice president with the Greater Waterbury Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, applauded the CHRO's proposal.

His group advocated for the CHRO's investigation into Waterbury's hiring practices after the Waterbury Republican-American uncovered a school system riddled with patronage.

Last month, the CHRO voted to implement an oversight plan — the first in the state — for Waterbury's school department. While the plan has not been finalized, officials said it could include on-site audits of the school department and forcing the department to develop specific goals in the number of minorities it employs.

"There are literally millions and millions of dollars involved here across the state," Booker said. "We know Waterbury isn't the only place where these types of things go on. There needs to be some system of ensuring that those entities that are

receiving our tax dollars are providing equal opportunities. This should have happened years ago."

CHRO officials said a similar proposal was sent up for state approval several years ago, but it failed to pass muster, likely because the commission sought to hire additional staff to monitor the new plans.

The revised proposal does not call for any new hires, but Elder said that remains a possibility.

Reached at a fund-raiser for Waterbury Mayor Philip A. Giordano last night, Gov. John G. Rowland, a city native, declined to comment on the proposal, saying he wanted to examine it "more thoroughly."

State agencies submit legislative proposals every year to the state's Office of Policy and Management, which reviews the plans and decides whether the agencies can present them to state lawmakers. Approved proposals are sent to the appropriate legislative committee. Bills that fail to pass through OPM can be sponsored by a legislator.

If enacted, the CHRO's proposal would become effective starting July 1, 2000, the beginning of the fiscal year, Elder said.

"It's still all preliminary at this point," she said. "There are a lot of channels it has to go through, and a lot of things can happen. But we're confident this is the right thing to do."