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The Daily Record News Briefs: March 25, 2009

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Tax on domestic oil production opposed

Four Upstate business groups planned to gather in Albany this morning to lobby against a proposed tax on oil and natural gas production.

The Independent Oil & Gas Association of New York, Unshackle Upstate, the New York Farm Bureau and the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce are opposing a proposal by the state Legislature to place another tax on oil and natural gas production in New York State.

The groups claim the tax would put thousands of low-volume producing wells statewide out of business, and that the tax is poorly timed. Further taxation could inhibit future natural gas exploration, as New York is poised to allow increased exploration in the Marcellus Shale formation; would adversely and exclusively affect communities Upstate and will discourage exploration to the point that it will compound the current slow-down in natural gas production worldwide, the groups argue in a press release announcing their Albany visit.

Pittsford's Del Monte Lodge upgraded

The E.J. Del Monte Corp. recently completed renovations to The Del Monte Lodge, A Renaissance Hotel and Spa, in Pittsford.

The \$1 million project began last summer.

The renovations include new 42-inch flat panel television sets, updated decor and carpets and access to complimentary wireless Internet and remote printing, as well as a new fitness facility.

The lodge consistently ranks as one of the top five Renaissance- brand hotels throughout North America by Marriott International and is located along the Erie Canal.

Yogen Fruz expands in Syracuse

Yogen Fruz, an international chain purveyor of frozen yogurt with probiotics, announced Tuesday that its master franchisee, YF of Upstate New York Inc., plans to open eight new stores in the Syracuse market.

The first retail store is scheduled to open in early May at Great Northern Mall in Clay, and the second at Shoppingtown Mall in Dewitt in early June. The two new locations are expected to bring 24 new full-time and part-time direct jobs.

George Traikos brought Yogen Fruz to Upstate New York when he opened the company's first store at Eastview Mall in Victor in November. Traikos owns the Yogen Fruz master franchising rights Upstate, including the Syracuse territory, and plans to bring 100 Yogen Fruz stores to 53 counties across the region within the next five years.

The company is headquartered in Davie, Fla., and has offices in Rochester.

Albany bar: Restore legal services funds

The Albany County Bar Association announced the adoption of a resolution supporting the restoration of state funding for civil legal services.

The association provides assistance to the underprivileged through its pro bono divorce clinic, its Law Day Run fundraiser for victims of domestic violence and a new program for homeowners facing foreclosure, which it provides in conjunction with the Legal Aid Society and the Legal Project in the Capital Region.

The resolution was adopted March 10 by the Albany County Bar Association's board of directors and calls for the restoration of \$11.48 million from the state general fund for civil legal services. Restoring those funds still would result in a 28 percent reduction from the 2007-2008 funding level.

According to the Legal Services Corporation, at least 80 percent of the civil legal needs of low-income people are not met due to lack of resources, the Albany Bar resolution states.

David Miranda, of Heslin Rothenberg Far-ley & Mesiti PC, is president of the Albany County Bar Association. The Monroe County Bar Association held a summit last month as a call to action for help in lobbying for the restoration previous funding levels.

First Latino to head First Department

Gov. David A. Paterson appointed Justice Luis A. Gonzalez to serve as Presiding Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department.

Justice Gonzalez is the first Latino ever appointed to the position.

Justice Gonzalez has been an associate justice on the Appellate Division, First Department for the last seven years. He has held a variety of civil, criminal and administrative judicial posts. He previously was the administrative judge of the Bronx Supreme Court, and served as an

acting justice on that bench, as a judge of the Civil Court of the City of New York and as a housing court judge.

Before becoming a judge, he was a hearing officer with the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal, general counsel of the South Bronx Community Housing and Development Corp., general counsel to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico as legal counsel to the national director and an investigator with the New York City Department of Investigation.

He graduated from Eastern Mennonite University and from Columbia University School of Law.

The governor's appointment is not subject to Senate confirmation. The annual salary for the presiding justice is \$147,600.

Justice Gonzalez succeeds former Presiding Justice Jonathan Lippman, who is now the chief judge of New York.

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