THE YEAR OF COVID AND VOTE-BY-MAIL ELECTIONS
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New Jerseyans voted with a majority of the nation to unseat an incumbent (sometimes referred to as independents).

The number of Democrats now exceeds the number of unaffiliated voters. Jersey had more than 1 million more Democrats than Republicans, and there were two other historic events in 2020: for the first time, New Jersey had more than 1 million more Democrats than Republicans, and they did so in record numbers: 4,635,580 votes were cast in the November 3 general election that was conducted largely through vote-by-mail ballots as the state sought to reduce the spread of Covid.

Turnout numbers showed that vote-by-mail might have worked better for Republicans than they want to admit. Suburban voters in heavily Republican counties embraced mail-in ballots, but not as much by urban voters from communities of color in Democratic strongholds. Turnout numbers showed that.

New Jersey now has three data sets for vote-by-mail elections. A consolidated non-partisan election for local offices in 33 municipalities sparked a clear increase in voter participation in races that traditionally attract few voters. Democrats and Republicans cast 1,466,366 votes in a primary election that witnessed the second-highest turnout in state history.

There were two other historic events in 2020: for the first time, New Jersey had more than 1 million more Democrats than Republicans, and the number of Democrats now exceeds the number of unaffiliated voters (sometimes referred to as independents).

New Jerseyans voted with a majority of the nation to unseat an incumbent president who spent four years with upside-down approval ratings in the Garden State. Joe Biden carried New Jersey by 725,061 votes, a margin of sixteen points. It’s what was supposed to happen in a state that hasn’t cast its electoral votes for a Republican presidential candidate in 32 years. Biden won Morris County, the first Democrat to do so since Lyndon Johnson in 1964 – and before that, Woodrow Wilson in 1912.

Politically, Donald Trump was an omnipresent figure in five New Jersey elections between 2016 and 2020. For better or worse, depending upon how one views the world, Trump affected campaigns for every level of government. That’s likely to continue, at least into the 2021 gubernatorial election. Privately only, New Jersey Democrats acknowledge that they will miss him.

Voters re-elected Cory Booker to the United States Senate, continuing a 17-0 Democratic winning streak. Republicans haven’t won a U.S. Senate election in New Jersey since 1972; every state but Hawaii has elected a Republican senator since the last time New Jersey did so.

New Jersey also returned all twelve members of the U.S. House of Representative, including party-switcher Rep. Jefferson Van Drew. Republicans held State Senate and Assembly seats in a 25th district special election. Just one constitutional officer, Republican Somerset County Surrogate Frank Bruno, lost re-election. Three incumbent freeholders, a Democrat in Salem and two Republicans in Somerset, were defeated in 2020.

The state approved the legalization of marijuana for adult recreational use by a 2-1 margin. Voters also backed a constitutional amendment that will push off legislative redistricting until 2023, unless the U.S. Census certifies numbers by February 15, 2021 – or if Republicans test the issue in federal court and win.

Personally, I am humbled by the success of the New Jersey Globe since our launch on January 4, 2018. I’m still not sure whether the exponential growth of readers for a start-up political news organization comes despite a clear decline in the influence of old media, or because they have chosen to ignore local news and political campaigns. Either way, we are grateful.

The New Jersey Globe has been at the forefront, breaking some of the most significant political and governmental news stories in the state. We make no apologies for our bravado or for working hard, and are proud that a small reporting staff of two consistently outperforms the old media. We are thankful for our loyal readership that visits the New Jersey Globe every day.

In 2020, the New Jersey Globe sponsored six debates – five more than any other news organization. The only U.S. Senate debate of the cycle was hosted by the Globe and broadcast by My9 in North Jersey and Fox29 in South Jersey.

We were pleased to welcome Kevin J. O’Toole as a weekly columnist. His insights provide a valuable resource for our readers.

In September, we launched the New Jersey Globe Power Hour on 77 WABC. It airs every Saturday from 5-6 PM. The most prominent political leaders in the state from both parties regularly join the show. If you haven’t listened yet, we hope that you will.

On behalf of the entire New Jersey Globe team, I’m hopeful that everyone will find good health and safety in the new year.

David Wildstein
Editor, New Jersey Globe

Special thanks to Nikita Biryukov, Kevin Sanders, Kevin O’Toole, Harrison Lavelle, Ben Kestenbaum, Ken Kurson and Melody Kurson at Sea of Reeds, and the staff at 77 WABC, My9 and Fox29.
JUST ONE YEAR AGO, the governor of New Jersey was an unlikely candidate to be the state’s top politician. That’s largely because most insiders don’t view of Phil Murphy as overtly political – he sometimes appears a bit detached from the rough-and-tumble of Jersey politics – and he’s seen as more of a fortunate independent who figured out a path to secure the Democratic nomination in 2017.

During his first two years, Murphy struggled to find his footing and connect with New Jerseyans who really didn’t know much about him. He benefitted from people seemingly happy to just see a new face after eight years of Chris Christie, but found himself battling Democratic legislative leaders and fending off a challenge to his own position as titular head of his party. In 2020, Murphy’s third year in office has been defined by his handling of the coronavirus pandemic that has effectively made him a wartime governor. His leadership skills and those of his entire Administration are tested every day.
The global health crisis has put Murphy directly in the public eye, and while there is little doubt that he would have preferred a different path, the reality is that New Jersey now knows who he is. Independent polling has showed Murphy with massive job approval ratings, largely based on his handling of the pandemic.

The key to Murphy’s approvals has been his direct-to-consumer approach. He didn’t allow newspapers to filter his words; instead, he became a constant presence on network and cable television and on the radio. His press briefings allowed huge numbers of New Jerseyans to see and hear him in person.

Fame has not come without detractors. Now that more people know him, there’s a greater number of people out there who don’t like him. During a health crisis, he’s governed largely through the considerable power of his executive orders – a record number of them. Not everyone is alright with that.

Dependent upon the White House for assistance, especially during the earliest stages of COVID-19, Murphy cautiously and adeptly developed a relationship with a President he personally despised. As a result, Donald Trump treated New Jersey more kindly than he did Andrew Cuomo and New York. Instead, Mitch McConnell became his partisan punching bag.

Murphy has been largely successful in enacting most of his policy initiatives: an increase in the minimum wage, equal pay for women, expanded gun safety laws, protection of reproductive rights, the legalization of marijuana, and a millionaire’s tax. He’s improved his relationship with legislative leaders, especially Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin. These days, he is even talking to George Norcross.

He made his first new nomination to the New Jersey Supreme Court: a 39-year-old black woman, Fabiana Pierre-Louis. She was confirmed unanimously by the State Senate and could potentially serve 31 years on the state’s top court. That’s a legacy that could long survive Murphy’s governorship.

Murphy presented two budgets to the legislature: one before the pandemic, and another in response to the disastrous economic effects of Covid. The legislature approved it, as well as a massive borrowing plan to plug budget holes that was permitted despite an appeal by Republicans to the state Supreme Court.

The governor also survived a personal health crisis in 2020. He underwent surgery on March 4 to remove a cancerous tumor from his kidney. New Jersey announced its first likely case of COVID-19 just hours after the surgery. Murphy returned to work more quickly that his doctors would have liked. He says his health is good.

Headed into his re-election year, Murphy is in the strongest political condition of an incumbent Democratic governor since Richard J. Hughes in 1965. New Jersey, one of the bluest states in the nation, has not re-elected a Democratic governor since 1977. Since then, three Republicans have won second terms.

There hasn’t been talk of a serious Democratic primary challenge to Murphy for a long time, and even Democratic leaders who privately complain about him are publicly supporting him for re-election.

Murphy’s electoral success or failure depends on what happens next: how efficiently the distribution of vaccines go; how quickly New Jersey’s small businesses re-open and if the economy bounces back; whether commuters who return to work find New Jersey Transit improved from where they left it in March; the ability of the Motor Vehicle Commission to solve its problems; if the fledgling Joe Biden administration gives the governor a pre-election groundbreaking on a cross-Hudson tunnel; and if Biden’s first year has the kind of effect Barack Obama had on Jon Corzine twelve years ago.

The bottom line is that Murphy is about as strong as he could be under the circumstances as he goes before New Jersey voters as a candidate for re-election. Next year, he’ll either be a Winner of the Year or a Loser of the Year, depending on how things work out.

But for strengthening his own standing under the most difficult of circumstances, Governor Phil Murphy is the New Jersey Globe Politician of the Year.
IN SEPTEMBER, quietly and without warning, Senate President Steve Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin the second and third most powerful people in state government, respectively locked in public commitments of support from Democratic legislative caucuses to keep them in office until at least January 2024. They won a race that hadn’t really started. No legislator had stepped forward to run and no county chairman had called for a change in leadership, at least not publicly. Sweeney has brought the idea of separate but equal branches of government to an entirely new level. He decides which bills will get voted on, and which gubernatorial nominations see the light of day. Committee assignments and chairmanships and extra money to pay for staff is entirely his call.

His mastery of the State Senate as the longest serving legislative leader in New Jersey history is his greatest political strength. It’s also his ultimate weakness. Other senators look at Sweeney and they want to be him, but there is no real opportunity for advancement. The top four leadership positions in the Senate hasn’t changed in eleven years. There had been speculation that Sweeney could be in trouble, and it was no secret that Gov. Phil Murphy would have preferred a new Senate President.

Sweeney launched his re-election campaign by announcing the endorsement of three Bergen County Democratic senators whose votes would have been pivotal in a revolt. Middlesex signed on the next day, ending any prospect of Sweeney’s ouster. The agreement between Middlesex and South Jersey also extended the term of Coughlin, who has come into his own as a strong Assembly Speaker after ousting the incumbent in 2017. Coughlin has skillfully emerged as the deciding vote when Murphy and Sweeney disagree. At the end of 2023, he’ll tie Jack Collins as the longest serving Speaker in New Jersey history.

For Sweeney and Coughlin, this was a victory of mammoth proportions.
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SOMEDAY, SOMEONE will tell the story about the time four New Jersey Democrats went to Washington but just three came home.

The four Democrats – Jefferson Van Drew, Andy Kim, Tom Malinowski and Mikie Sherrill -- flipped longtime Republican House seats in 2018, redefining a 2012 map that had been drawn to elect six Democrats and six Republicans to represent New Jersey in Congress. Donald Trump’s mid-term election left Christopher Smith as the lone GOP congressman from New Jersey.

All four of the House freshmen were re-elected in 2020, but just three as Democrats.

In late 2019, Van Drew faced the loss of party support for a second term after refusing to vote for Trump’s impeachment. Instead, he switched parties. Sitting in the Oval Office, he pledged his “undying support” to the President. A month later, Trump came to Wildwood for a rally in support of the newest Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives. In New Jersey, the GOP cleared the field for Van Drew. Trump gave him a speaking role at the 2020 Republican National Convention.

Democrats had high hopes of beating Van Drew and he was pressed hard by former public school teacher Amy Kennedy, a mother of five and a member of one of America’s storied political families. Kennedy turned out to be a strong candidate, raising over $5 million, and at one point had a five-point lead in the highly respected Monmouth University poll.

But Van Drew, who had been winning elections for 30 years, proved to be a wily candidate and reminded voters – likely enough conservative Democrats – why they liked him in the first place. He raised more than $4.2 million (some of it spent at fancy Washington steakhouses) and won by 21,677 votes, 52%-46%.

Kim, a former Obama White House staffer, faced former Hill International CEO David Richter.

Richter had been the front-runner to challenge Van Drew before the party switch and perhaps could have won the seat, but Republicans muscled him out of the race and he switched from the 2nd district to the 3rd and prevailed in a bitter GOP primary.

Kim excelled at fundraising – he raised $7,325,715 as the Josh Gottheimer of the South -- and worked his district aggressively. Richter put $700,000 of his own money into his campaign but struggled to raise more despite having run one of the largest construction companies in the nation. He raised just $1,524,908 in total – not enough to compete.

Some thought the district was simply too Republican to hold the seat, but Kim won decisively; his margin was 33,513 votes over Richter, 53%-45%.

Like Richter, Rosemary Becchi began the cycle in another district. In January, she dropped her primary challenge to Tom Kean, Jr. in the 7th district and switched to the 11th after Republicans cleared the field for her to take on Sherrill.

A former U.S. Navy helicopter pilot and Assistant U.S. Attorney, Sherrill was the rock star of New Jersey Democrats in 2018. House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen, a 12-term incumbent, found Sherrill’s story and early fundraising prowess so threatening that he decided to retire. Sherrill won the seat with 57%.

In her re-election bid, Sherrill raised $6.45 million and seemed so unthreatened by Becchi that she banked $3.22 million for the next campaigns.

Becchi didn’t get the national GOP support she’d hoped for and raised less than $1.5 million -- $226,840 of it as a loan to her own campaign.

Sherrill beat Becchi by 29,159 votes, 53%-47%. Becchi curiously complained about unsubstantiated voting irregularities in Essex County and held off her concession until November 25, three days after the results were certified.
The closest House race in New Jersey was in the 7th district, where Malinowski faced Kean, the minority leader of the U.S. Senate and the son of a popular former governor.

Of the four seats Democrats flipped in 2018, the 7th was the only district where Hillary Clinton outpolled Trump.

It was also the race that everybody expected. Kean was identified as the most likely GOP challenger immediately after Malinowski ousted five-term incumbent Leonard Lance two years ago.

The race was nasty and expensive.
Congressional Leadership Fund, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee put nearly $4.7 million behind Malinowski’s bid. That money most often went to ads tying Kean, a relatively moderate Republican state senator, to Trump.

Kean raised almost $3.9 million in hard money for his campaign. Malinowski raised almost double that, over $7.4 million.

On election night, Malinowski was in front of Kean by 28,412 votes.

But in the days after the election, the race tightened dramatically. Each day, Malinowski saw his lead steadily evaporate until it eventually narrowed to 4,327.

That was where Malinowski bottomed out. His lead began to inch up and the New Jersey Globe called the race for Malinowski on November 17.

Malinowski’s final margin over Kean was 5,311, a narrow 50.6% to 49.4% margin.

The 7th district had been held by Republicans from 1956 until Malinowski ousted Lance two years ago by 16,200 votes, 51.7% to 46.7%.
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- Roger Crawford
In a year dominated by a global pandemic, it’s appropriate to recognize the extraordinary service of many individuals to the State of New Jersey, especially first responders, front line health care workers, election worker at the offices of the County Clerk and the Board of Elections in all 21 counties, and the New Jersey National Guard. These groups of New Jerseyans have stepped up under the most difficult of times and their service is greatly appreciated.
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THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC that put the state on a virtual lockdown for months included a closure of New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission offices for three months.

When MVC offices finally reopened on June 15, the result was nightmarish long lines in the sweltering heat of the summer. Some New Jerseyans desperate for agency’s services showed up in the middle of the night to stand on line and wait until the 8 AM opening and then wait in line for hours more.

The chief administrator of the MVC, Sue Fulton, couldn’t control the staggering backlog of expired registrations, licenses and other necessary documents. She wasn’t at fault for the constant closing of MVC offices after employees tested positive for Covid.

But what earns Fulton the designation of Loser of the Year is her approach to the failures of the agency she runs.

When she speaks publicly, Fulton displays absolutely no empathy for the problems that have enraged New Jerseyans. The former U.S. Army Colonel – she was in the first class of women cadets at West Point – has instead emerged as the poster child for what regular people dislike about government bureaucrats. She often paints such a rosy picture of the inferno at the MVC that she appears completely out of touch on a good day.

Fulton’s leadership has become a political issue that could cost Murphy votes when he seeks re-election. Republican Jack Ciattarelli spent most of the summer bashing the MVC and calling for Fulton’s resignation. So did Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick and State Sen. Anthony M. Bucco.

When Fulton took a week off at the end of the summer, Ciattrelli said “it’s A-OK by us” if Murphy extended her vacation permanently.

As a cabinet member, Fulton could be the greatest liability to a governor seeking re-election since the Cahill administration.
RUNNER-UP LOSER OF THE YEAR

REPUBLICAN FRANK PALLOTTA doesn’t earn a Loser of the Year designation just because he lost a race for the U.S. House of Representatives. So did eleven other congressional candidates. He’s on the list because of the sharp turn his campaign took at the end that left him looking like a sort of Jon Lovitz version of Michael Dukakis, an angry man who couldn’t understand why he wasn’t winning.

Pallotta started out his campaign in 2019 as a decent enough guy, with the prospect of raising enough money to take on Democratic Rep. Josh Gottheimer, The Human Fundraising Machine. The former Wall Street investment banker put $1,435,000 into his campaign to unseat Gottheimer in New Jersey’s 5th district and spent almost $3 million overall.

During the primary, he seemed to rub some Republicans the wrong way. He didn’t like the way Bergen County Republicans treated him – a perfectly valid complaint for someone who sought the organization line and didn’t get it – but the GOP primary got nasty very quickly.

Pallotta won by an impressive 19-point margin against John McCann, the 2018 GOP House candidate.

When Gottheimer criticized Pallotta for failing to repudiate a group the state Department of Homeland Security called a domestic terror group, the Republican doubled down on his support for the Oath Keepers. That seemed to dominate the last two weeks of Pallotta’s campaign.

Gottheimer beat Pallotta by 31,842 votes, 53%-46%. Pallotta conceded 27 days later after spending nearly $3 million on his campaign.

Now Pallotta is thinking about a challenge to a Republican legislator in the 39th district next year.
DANIEL FLEISS was the best campaign manager of one of the best campaigns of the cycle, Tom Malinowski’s re-election bid in New Jersey’s 7th district. It was also the closest House race in the state, with Malinowski defeating Republican Tom Kean Jr. by just 1.2% of the vote.

Fleiss is smart, data-driven, methodical and can come across as easy-going because sometimes he is. But he can also be forceful, in a good way, and not afraid to get in someone’s face to get his job done. He’s old-school in the sense that he works all the time – one of those people who thinks you can sleep after election day, but not necessarily before it.

Two years ago, when Colston Reid signed on to manage Malinowski’s campaign against Leonard Lance, she had other offers for easier races. She wanted to flip a district. And she trained Fleiss, who was the field director on that campaign. Like Reid, Fleiss is an operative who ran the toughest possible race and won. That gets him the extra points to be the best of the 2020.
RUNNER-UP CAMPAIGN MANAGER OF THE YEAR

IN BLUE JERSEY, Kasey Dearden is 4-0 over the last two years as a Republican political operative.

He worked on the 8th district campaigns of Ryan Peters and Jean Stanfield in 2019 and managed the special election victories of State Sen. Anthony M. Bucco and Assemblywoman Aura Dunn in the 25th district.

This wasn’t an easy race. Democrats fielded strong candidates, Rupande Mehta for Senate and Darcy Draeger for Assembly, and both looked to be in strong shape in an early poll and after Democrats were significantly outpacing Republicans in early vote-by-mail ballots cast.

Both won solidly despite early leads by Democrats in slow-counting Morris County. In the end, both his candidates set records.

Bucco received the most total votes received by a candidate for the New Jersey Legislature ever, under the current system of 40 legislative districts. Dunn is in second place, and now holds the record for the most votes for a State Assembly candidate.
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BEST CAMPAIGNS OF 2020

LISTED IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

- Cory Booker for U.S. Senate (Democratic)
- Anthony M. Bucco for State Senate, 25th District (Republican)
- Helmin Caba for Mayor of Perth Amboy (Non-Partisan)
- Fanny Cedeno for Hudson County Freeholder (Democratic)
- Karen Cohen, Nikitas Moustakas and Fozia Janjua for Mount Laurel Council (Democratic)
- Aura Dunn for State Assembly, 25th District (Republican)
- Paul Drake and Doug Singleterry for Somerset County Freeholder (Democratic)
- Caren Fitzpatrick for Atlantic County Freeholder (Democratic)
- Josh Gottheimer for Congress, 5th District (Democratic)
- Tina Jalloh for Somerset County Surrogate (Democratic)
- Tom Kean for Congress, 7th District (Republican)
- Amy Kennedy for Congress, 2nd District (Republican)
- Andy Kim for Congress, 3rd District (Democratic)
- Tom Malinowski for Congress, 7th District (Democratic)
- Donna Pearson for Cumberland County Freeholder (Democratic)
- Marty Small for Mayor of Atlantic City (Democratic)
- Yousef Saleh for Jersey City Council (Non-Partisan)
- Christopher Smith for Congress, 4th District (Republican)
- Sean Spiller for Mayor of Montclair (Non-Partisan)
- Jefferson Van Drew for Congress, 2nd District (Republican)
- Tean Vauss for Irvington Council (Non-Partisan)
THE YOGI OF STATE ASSEMBLY campaigns spent part of 2020 as the New Jersey State Director of Michael Bloomberg’s presidential campaign. While Bloomberg himself was unsuccessful, the opposite can be said of Muller. He secured an impressive list of major New Jersey endorsements, and with little notice came within 4 votes of pulling off a grassroots upset at the first-in-the-state Hunterdon Democratic Convention. Muller also pulled off taking control of the Mount Laurel Township Council, where he has won five seats in two years. He’s responsible for training a generation of young political operatives where he has an extensive statewide thought partnership that allows him to unpack ideas before they are blue skyed to the public.
**CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR**

**THE DOMINANT DEMOCRATIC** consultant and strategist in Bergen County managed Cory Booker’s landslide re-election campaign for the United States Senate. 2020 was not a typical campaign, with no in-person campaign headquarters and no traditional field operation.

Silverstein kept the campaign overhead low – he used the garage at his home as a warehouse for lawn signs. Since Booker began his campaign account at zero after ending his bid for the presidency early this year, Silverstein made sure that Booker regenerated his war chest. He finished the campaign with the most votes ever cast for a statewide candidate in New Jersey, and $6 million in the bank.

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**ADAM SILVERSTEIN**
Brad Lawrence and Steve DeMicco have been the powerhouse Democratic consultants in New Jersey for parts of four decades, working for every successful statewide campaign in New Jersey for the last 20 years. In 2020, they again helped elect Tom Malinowski to Congress in New Jersey’s 7th district, as well as on other Democratic races across the U.S.
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HARRISON NEELY IS A TOP NEW JERSEY REPUBLICAN strategist who works for Tom Kean, Jr. and Doug Steinhardt. Kean nearly won a close congressional race in New Jersey’s 7th district, and Steinhardt has launched a campaign for the GOP nomination for governor. Neely plays a role in State Senate races and helped Michael Lavery win a carefully plotted victory in a December special election to succeed Steinhardt as Republican State Chairman against former U.S. Senate candidate Bob Hugin.
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**WORST CANDIDATE OF THE YEAR**

**Stephanie Schmid** wasn’t just the worst candidate of 2020, she might be the least genuine of any of the 21 different Democrats Rep. Christopher Smith has defeated in New Jersey’s 4th district since 1980. As a teenager 23 years ago, Schmid spent 15 days as an intern in Smith’s congressional office, where she was placed as part of the Washington Workshops Foundation program.

The idea that a onetime intern was running against the congressman she worked for because -- as she put it, “even though I was only 16 at the time, I knew then that his values were extreme.” -- would be an interesting narrative, if her story was authentic. That was quickly debunked when Smith’s chief of staff, Mary Noonan, released handwritten fan letters she wrote after completing her brief stay. But Schmid’s credibility gets worse. She’s turned out to be a weak candidate who has a sometime uncomfortable relationship with the truth.

She made a big deal over how much money she was raising. She loaned $100,000 of her own money to her campaign to boost her fundraising numbers. Then one day after filing her pre-election campaign finance report, 18 days before Election Day, Schmid began paying herself back. She paid back the entire $100,000 loan to herself. She did it quietly. No announcement. No public disclosure. No transparency until a month after the election. Either Stephanie Schmid knew her campaign for Congress was doomed --- or her personal $100,000 investment was just a head fake.

Either way, this was just a big con job – mostly on her fellow Democrats. But even though she pulled her own money out, Stephanie kept raising money. She kept asking other people to write her checks – when all the time, she knew she had already pulled $100 grand out to pay herself back. Schmid finished her campaign with $62,000 in the bank. Between that and the loan, she walked away with $162,00 that she simply chose not to spend. She sat on a pot of money that might have brought her some extra votes – and might have helped down-ballot Democrats running for local office. The Federal Election Commission threatened legal action for not reporting campaign contributions, and for possibly taking contributions that either weren’t legal or beyond the legal limit. She didn’t even report her own contribution on time and wound up refunding a series of improper donations. Schmid has repeatedly cited a May 2017 House vote, claiming that Smith voted in favor of ending protections for pre-existing conditions under the Affordable Care Act when official records show that he voted against the measure. She acknowledged the citation on her mailer was wrong but wouldn’t discuss it unless a reporter asking her about it made an appointment.

This line was amazing: “I don’t talk to journalists without an appointment. I would have spoken to you today if you made an appointment,” she told the New Jersey Globe. “We have policies and protocols. It’s my campaign and I’m running it the way I want to.”

Republicans called on her to drop out saying her campaign is a “train wreck” and it’s hard to disagree. Democratic leaders acknowledge that they made a mistake – they had two other choices in the primary, David Applefield -- who died suddenly the day after the primary, and Christine Conforti, a young rising star who used to work at the United Nations. A lot of Democrats say they picked the wrong horse, perhaps evidenced by Conforti winning a competitive race for the Neptune school board and successfully launching a political career.

And even after his death, Applefield appears to have more influence on New Jersey politics that Schmid did. His idea to tax stock market transactions grew legs and has affected the state’s relationship with Wall Street. Smith beat Schmid by 91,683 votes, 60%-38%, running five points ahead of President Donald Trump.
THE NICEST CANDIDATE OF THE YEAR

DR. JOHN FRANCIS III, a West Cape May Commissioner, received just 1.5% of the vote in his bid for the Democratic nomination for Congress in New Jersey’s 2nd district, finishing fourth in a field of five candidates as the only elected official in the race to take on Jefferson Van Drew. He conducted himself with dignity and kindness, criticizing no one.

He might also have been the most fascinating candidate of 2020. Francis spent nearly three decades as a planet walker, playing the banjo and “traveling the globe by foot with a message of environmental respect and responsibility.” He spent seventeen years without speaking His experiences led to some popularity through his TED Talks.
With a unique blend of public sector insight and private sector expertise, O'Toole Scrivo delivers effective and innovative solutions to its clients, especially when the stakes are highest.
THE WORST PERSON OF THE YEAR

PERENNIAL CANDIDATE Lisa McCormick got in the face of Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman this year after undertaking some shadowy impersonation tactics using the bonniewatsomcoleman.net domain, McCormick allegedly sent emails using the congresswoman’s campaign letter head to trick voters into believing that Watson Coleman, one of the most progressive member of the state’s House delegation, backed President Donald Trump. The congresswoman asked authorities to investigate the fake emails after one trafficked anti-Semitic tropes to smear the congresswoman. The congresswoman’s lawyer, the very formidable Raj Parikh, sent McCormick a notice to preserve all documents. McCormick lost the Democratic primary to Watson Coleman, receiving just 10.8% of the vote.
By immovable local tradition, the top vote-getter for Nutley’s five Board of Commissioners seats becomes mayor for four years, but that custom became more complicated after the May non-partisan election when Joseph Scarpelli and Mauro Tucci tied with 4,586 votes each. The two sometimes friends, sometimes not so much came to agreement: they will split the term, and each will get two years as mayor. “Mauro will go first,” Scarpelli said. “Then me.”
BUSINESS OBJECTIVES CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY COMBINING STRATEGIC AND AGGRESSIVE LEGAL ADVOCACY WITH GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS CAPABILITIES.

Florio Perrucci is a full service law firm with offices strategically located throughout New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York.

Our clients include private businesses and individuals, as well as public entities.

DOUGLAS J. STEINHARDT
dsteinhardt@floriolaw.com

FLORIO LAW.COM
WHETHER YOU AGREE with their political agenda or not, it’s impossible not to recognize the strong 2020 enjoyed by the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey. Under the leadership of executive director Amol Sinha, the 40,000-member organization played a leading role in the successful referendum to legalize marijuana – it passed by a massive 2-1 margin – and the group put more than $1 million behind the movement. They are at the table for discussions on decriminalization and legalization. The ACLUNJ was a major part of the Public Health Emergency Credit, which helped get an estimated 3,000 people out of prison during the coronavirus pandemic. No non-government organization in the state argues more cases before the New Jersey Supreme Court.

AMOL SINHA
ACLU of New Jersey Executive Director

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF NEW JERSEY

Your support makes all the difference.

autismspeaks.org/together
GOV. PHIL MURPHY NOMINATED the state’s first Black woman to serve as an Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court. Fabiana Pierre-Louis, a former federal prosecutor and the daughter of immigrants from Haiti, won unanimous confirmation by the State Senate. She replaced Justice Walter F. Timpone, who stepped down two months early so his successor could begin the court’s 2020-21 term on September 1. New Jersey went ten years without any Black justices after Gov. Chris Christie declined to nominate Justice John Wallace for a tenured term that would have last just two years. Pierre-Louis had served as Wallace’s law clerk and the retired Justice was in Trenton to Watch Murphy nominate her.
It happens every two years, when candidates like John Caramanna, Dennis Speed and Jeanne Martines emerge as self-proclaimed contenders for the U.S. House of Representatives in primaries against incumbents. Primary challengers seeking to oust incumbent members of Congress have secured at least 33% of the vote just 10 times over the last four decades. This year, just one qualified for that distinction – just barely. Just two of the 130 people taking on members of New Jersey’s House delegation in primaries have faced over the 92 primary challenges held since 1980 came within striking distance of a sitting congressperson.

None of them have won. Social media offers an amplifier to small voices and in some cases makes some people believe the noise. Sometimes a real challenge exists, but often, it’s just a very loud room that just leave everyone with a headache. In New Jersey in 2020, a United States Senator and eight Members of Congress who were never going to lose a still faced primary challenges.

Here’s the list, in order of their actual performance, best to worse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>CHALLENGER</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>SPENT</th>
<th>INCUMBENT</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Arati Kreibich</td>
<td>33.52%</td>
<td>$617,430</td>
<td>Josh Gottheimer</td>
<td>66.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hector Osequera</td>
<td>27.30%</td>
<td>$74,187</td>
<td>Albio Sires</td>
<td>70.33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Robert Patterson</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>$305,804</td>
<td>Jefferson Van Drew</td>
<td>82.35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Russ Cirincione</td>
<td>16.97%</td>
<td>$46,867</td>
<td>Frank Pallone</td>
<td>79.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Zina Spezakis</td>
<td>16.92%</td>
<td>$391,167</td>
<td>Bill Pascrell</td>
<td>80.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lawrence Hamm</td>
<td>12.42%</td>
<td>$99,566</td>
<td>Cory Booker</td>
<td>87.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lisa McCormick</td>
<td>10.81%</td>
<td>Didn’t File</td>
<td>Bonnie Watson Coleman</td>
<td>89.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Eugene Mazo</td>
<td>7.05%</td>
<td>$31,214</td>
<td>Donald Payne</td>
<td>88.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Alter Eliezer Richter</td>
<td>5.24%</td>
<td>Didn’t File</td>
<td>Christopher Smith</td>
<td>94.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>John Flora</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
<td>$14,897</td>
<td>Donald Payne</td>
<td>88.46%</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Amani Al-Khatahtbeh</td>
<td>3.83%</td>
<td>Didn’t File</td>
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<td>79.20%</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Alp Basaran</td>
<td>2.45%</td>
<td>$80,452</td>
<td>Bill Pascrell</td>
<td>80.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Will Sheehan</td>
<td>2.37%</td>
<td>$17,833</td>
<td>Albio Sires</td>
<td>70.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MATT PLATKIN LEFT HIS POSITION as Chief Counsel to Gov. Phil Murphy in October after nearly three years in the top post and was replaced by deputy chief counsel Parimal Garg. Kate McDonnell was promoted to senior deputy counsel and McKenzie Wilson became deputy chief counsel.

The governor’s chief policy advisor, Kathleen Francione left the administration and was replaced by Zakiya Smith-Ellis, the Secretary of Higher Education. Dr. Brian Bridges replaced her as the interim secretary.

Commissioner of Education Lamont Repollet resigned to become the new president of Kean University. Murphy has nominated Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan to succeed him and she is now serving on an acting basis awaiting Senate confirmation.

General Jamal Beale, the Adjutant General and Commissioner of Military and Veterans Affairs, departed the Murphy administration following a shakeup that include the firings of two state-run veterans’ homes directors. Col. Lisa Hou, M.D., is serving on an interim basis.

Murphy has nominated Kevin Walsh for state comptroller. The former executive director of the Fair Share Housing Center was named for a six-year term and is serving on an acting basis until he is confirmed by the Senate. Walsh replaced Philip Degnan, who was nominated for a Superior Court judgeship.

Commissioner of Environmental Protection Catherine McCabe has announced her departure. No replacement has been named.

Assemblywoman Nancy Pinkin (D-East Brunswick) will resign her seat on January 1 to take office as the newly elected Middlesex County Clerk. Democrats will hold a special election convention that month to fill the vacancy. The 25-year incumbent, Elaine Flynn, is retiring.

Middlesex County Surrogate Kevin Hoagland is retiring after 28 years. No announcement has been made regarding his successor.

Laura Marie Ali, who became acting Morris County GOP Chair late last year when Ron DeFilippo stepped down for health and person reasons, won a full term in July without opposition.

Hunterdon County Republican Chairman Patrick Torpey stepped down. His replacement is Alexandria Mayor Gable Plumer.

Sussex County Democratic Chair Katie Rotondi lost her bid for re-election to Dawn Rowe.

Michael Donohue left his post as a Superior Court Judge and returned to his old job as Cape May County GOP Chairman. Donohue was strong enough to push the incumbent, Marcus Karavan, into retirement.
New Jerseyans should keep an eye on two political operatives managing campaigns for Republican gubernatorial candidates in 2020.

Theresa Winegar will run Doug Steinhardt’s race for governor. She’s a former executive director of the Republican State Committee and managed Tom Kean’s campaign for Congress this year. She worked in Iowa for Mitt Romney and managed congressional races for Rodney Frelinghuysen and Tom MacArthur.

Jack Ciattarelli’s campaign manager is Eric Arpert, a former Republican National committee field staffer who worked for Rep. Jon Runyan and for Sean Kean when he was in the State Senate.
A BID BY KANYE WEST to run as an independent presidential candidate in New Jersey ran afoul of Scott Salmon. An election lawyer representing himself, Salmon filed a formal challenge to West’s petitions. He alleged that just seven of the fourteen electors he filed appear to be registered to vote, voter registration records show. He also sought to disqualify 640 of the 1,327 signatures on nominating petitions West filed in April in a bid to get on the New Jersey ballot. State law required the signatures of 800 qualified voters. Once Salmon got a judge to hear the case, West dropped out.
EVEN THE UNOPPOSED DESERVE A SHOUT OUT

CHRISTIAN BOLLWAGE was re-elected to an 8th term as the mayor of Elizabeth, New Jersey’s fourth-largest city. When he takes the oath of office in January, he’ll set the record as the longest-serving mayor in the city’s history. The record he’s breaking will be that of Thomas G. Dunn, who served seven terms before Bollwage unseated him in 1992. When you add Steven Bercik, Elizabeth has had just three mayors since Dwight Eisenhower’s second term. During the same time period, Newark has had seven mayors and Jersey City has had 17.
“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.”
-Winston Churchill
NEW JERSEY’S FIRST State Constitution was written in 1776 and declared that county representatives would be called freeholders, signifying that men holding the post would have to own their land free and clear. As part of New Jersey’s move to confront issues dealing with systemic racism, each of the 21 Boards of Chosen Freeholders will be replaced by County Commissioners on January 1. “As our nation tears down symbols of injustice, we must also tear down words we use in New Jersey that were born from racism,” Gov. Phil Murphy, Senate President Steve Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin said in a joint statement.
HISTORY HIT THE RESET button on Woodrow Wilson in 2020. Ninety-six years after his death, the 13th president of Princeton University, 34th Governor of New Jersey and 28th President of the United States faced a reckoning with what New Jersey's 56th Governor, Phil Murphy, called an “uneven history as it relates to race.”

Wilson’s handling of race issues — U.S. Postal Service offices, the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Treasury were segregated shortly after he took federal office in 1913 — spurred Princeton University to drop the name of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and Wilson College; Monmouth University dropped Wilson’s name from one of their buildings.

Murphy acknowledged the irony of fighting systemic racism in the United States from behind Wilson’s desk; in June, he stopped using it.
Cory Booker ended his bid for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination on January 13. That leaves Woodrow Wilson as the last New Jerseyan to win the presidency. Since Wilson did it in 1912, Robert Meyner (1960), Steve Forbes (1996 and 2000), Bill Bradley (2000), and Chris Christie (2016) have lost. So did former U.S. Senator Jonathan Dayton sought the Republican presidential nomination in 1860 against Abraham Lincoln. At the national convention in Chicago, Dayton received 14 votes on the first ballot – all from New Jersey. He lost four New Jersey delegates to Lincoln on the second ballot. On the third ballot, New Jersey gave Lincoln eight votes, with five going to William Seward and just one holding for Dayton. Lincoln won the nomination on the third ballot.
River Crossing Strategy Group welcomes our new partner, Kevin McCabe, and wishes everyone a happy, safe and prosperous 2021.
SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK – for a good part of the year it was every day – Gov. Phil Murphy holds a coronavirus briefing. At his side is Commissioner of Health Judy Persichilli, or as the governor calls her, “the woman who needs no introduction. That isn’t completely true; Persichilli probably doesn’t have universal name recognition in New Jersey. But when she was nominated for the post in June 2019, she likely never imagined what 2020 might be like for her. The nurse-turned-hospital administrator is the New Jersey equivalent of Henry Stimson.
SERIOUSLY, PATerson, ARE YOU FREAKING KIDDING?

A GUY WHO WAS charged with voter fraud and forced to run in a new election for the same seat he is accused of stealing won the do-over election by a handful of votes.

Last May, Alex Mendez won a Paterson City Council seat by 240 votes against a longtime incumbent. Just before Election Day, the post office reported that they had found about 900 ballots, most of them rubber-banded together, in a handful of mailboxes. They said it looked suspicious.

A few weeks later the attorney general of New Jersey announced voter fraud charges against Mendez. The race attracted national attention and President Trump cited it more than once as an example of the pitfalls to an all vote-by-mail election. A Superior Court Judge invalidated the election. He said it was impossible to determine the true winner – so he ordered the election to be re-run on November 3. And he refused to allow Mendez to be sworn into the seat.

Menendez’s indictment did not seem to sway a lot of 3rd Ward voters. He won the repeat election, this time by 9 votes. And guess what? There are allegations of voter fraud.
AS THE ADEVENT of the coronavirus pandemic triggered social distancing, Gov. Phil Murphy began using the word “Knucklehead” to describe those who wouldn’t obey safety guidelines and did so in a rather boorish manner. New Jersey’s orginal Knucklehead was George Falcone, a 50-year-old Freehold man who was charged with making terroristic threats at a Manalapan supermarket after coughing on a woman and telling her he had Covid. He allegedly did so after being asked to step away from an open display of prepared foods. Falcone initially refused to cooperate with police and declined to give them his name for more than 40 minutes.

THE WORD OF THE YEAR IS KNUCKLEHEAD
CHRISTOPHER SMITH will set a record on January 3, 2021 as the longest-serving Congressman in New Jersey history. He won election to a landslide re-election in 2020 to become the state’s first 21-term Member of Congress. The previous record was held by Peter W. Rodino, Jr., who served from 1949 until his retirement in 1989. Smith, who was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1980, at age 27, will tie Rodino’s record for 40 years in Congress on January 3 and then pass it later in the day when he takes the oath of office. Rodino, who ran with Harry Truman in 1948, served with Smith in Congress for eight years.
WITH 2,541,178 VOTES, U.S. Senator Cory Booker set a record for the greatest number of votes ever received by a statement candidate. The record was held by Democrat Bob Menendez, who received 1,987,680 votes in his 2012 re-election campaign. But Booker was not the only Senate candidate to set a record in 2020: while Republican Rik Mehta lost his challenge to Booker by 16 points, New Jersey’s massive voter turnout allowed Mehta, with 1,817,052 votes, to set the record of the most votes ever received by a Republican statewide candidate in New Jersey. The old record was set by Clifford Case, who won 1,743,854 votes when he won his fourth term in the U.S. Senate in 1972.
Thank you,

GOVERNOR MURPHY, SENATE PRESIDENT SWEENEY, ASSEMBLY SPEAKER COUGHLIN and ALL NJ LAWMAKERS AND LEGISLATIVE STAFF

for supporting responsible policies to keep hotel workers and guests safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely, the members of the Hotel Trades Council.
IF ONLY THERE WAS A LITTLE BLUE PILL TO INCREASE THE POTENCY OF THE STAR-LEDGER

TOM MORAN
STAR-LEDGER EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

THERE WAS A TIME when the Star-Ledger had the power to keep politicians honest. The fear of a bad editorial affected government action. In the old days, editorial page editors developed credibility and trust with their readers, so endorsements mattered.

It’s difficult to argue that the Star-Ledger has any real influence over government and politics anymore. Their editorial page editor, Tom Moran, cannot get a one-on-one interview with a governor who is easily accessible to the media. In March, the Star-Ledger endorsed a candidate for Congress in New Jersey’s 2nd district because, as Moran said, “we wanted to have influence on the Atlantic County convention.” But they only interviewed one candidate and she lost the convention by a 2-1 margin.

In the general election, Moran waged a vitriolic war against Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean, Jr., who was the Republican candidate for Congress in the 7th district. In column after column, Moran hurled caustic attacks at Kean, who then refused to appear before the Star-Ledger editorial board. Kean came within 1% of winning his race, something that would never have happened in the old Star-Ledger days.

So this much is clear: the Star-Ledger editorial board no longer has any real influence over actual voters. That might be a harbinger of more candidates passing on interrogations by Moran, especially when the outcome is predetermined.
THE STORY THAT WENT AWAY

THE ELIMINATION OF a religious exemption for vaccines emerged as a big issue in early 2020, until the coronavirus pandemic pushed it out of the news. Opposition to the proposal was led by Assemblyman Jamel Holley, a Union County Democrat who became the public face of the anti-vaxx movement in New Jersey as thousands of protesters swarmed the statehouse. Holley promoted a carveout for private schools and daycare centers and brought in Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., a prominent opponent of vaccines, into his district to raise money. The vaccine bill passed the Assembly but stalled in the Senate – but not before there was some collateral damage.

Senate President Steve Sweeney stripped State Sen. Joseph Lagana from his seats on the Senate Judiciary and Health Committees after he refused to support the Senate leadership on the religious exemption plan. Almost a year later, Lagana is back in Sweeney’s good graces, especially after backing the Senate President for re-election.
ATLANTIC COUNTY CLERK Ed McGettigan didn’t send the right ballots to 544 voters in Hamilton Township, denying them the chance to vote in the District 3 freeholder election. The difference between the winner and loser in this race was just 286 votes. Now Republicans are going to court in pursuit of a new election that would give all eligible voters a chance to cast their ballot.
THERE ARE PLENTY of New Jersey Democrats who spent 2020 bashing Donald Trump, but few have gone after the outgoing president with the passion of Rep. Bill Pascrell. As the new chairman of the House Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee – a job he got this year following the death of John Lewis -- Pascrell has continued his push to force Trump to release his income tax returns. He filed legal complaints seeking to disbar Rudy Giuliani and 23 other Trump lawyers for challenging the results of the presidential election, and then he asked the House Leadership to stop 126 Republican Members of Congress from taking their oath of office in January. Pascrell says that the Fourteenth Amendment of U.S. Constitution disqualifies any Member of Congress who seek to attack American democracy.
Lost in the space of NJ policy and politics?
Then look towards the light of IMPACT NJ to guide you!

Michael Murphy
Guy Gregg
Cullen McAuliffe
Jason Orlando

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Trenton, NJ 08608
(609) 394-2000

POSTAL WORKER OF THE YEAR

NICHOLAS BEAUCHENE, 26-year-old U.S. Postal Service letter carrier from Kearny, faces up to 5 ½ years in prison after allegedly dumping nearly 1,900 pieces of mail he was supposed to be delivering to West Orange into a North Arlington dumpster.

About 100 vote-by-mail ballots and over 250 campaign mailers were recovered and redelivered. West Orange residents weren’t told that some of their mail had been in a dumpster just hours earlier.
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AND WISHES EVERYONE
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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Sean M. Darcy, President
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ROBIN VAUGHN
in happier times with Mayor Reed Gusciora.

HOMOPHOBES OF THE YEAR

CONTROVERSIAL TRENTON CITY Councilwoman Robin Vaughn, who got into trouble in 2019 for making anti-Semitic statements about “jewing somebody down, upped her allegedly racist game in 2020 in a homophobic diatribe aimed at the city’s first openly gay mayor, Reed Gusciora. After Vaughn and Gusciora began arguing over non-profits receiving city funds, the councilwoman spent about a half an hour throwing out profanities and slur-laced tirades. “You’re nothing but an old pedophile running around with little boys,” Vaughn told Gusciora.

“We don’t have bitch ass men in my family. We don’t have bitch-ass men like you and Reed Gusciora in my family. We got real men in my family, bitch asses. Nothing but a bunch of women, that’s all you are. Bitches,” Vaughn said. “That’s right, running around here with young men, and Reed ain’t nothing but an old pedophile. Bitch-ass mother-fucking mayor.”

Vaughn faced condemnation and calls to resign from the state’s highest-ranking politicians. U.S. Senator Cory Booker said that Vaughn “has shown a pattern of intolerance that has no place on the Trenton City Council” and said she should resign.

Vaughn remains in office and plans to run for re-election in 2022.
Best wishes to everyone for a happy, healthy and safe New Year!
WORST TIP OF THE YEAR

A STAR-LEDGER SPORTSWRITER who covers college basketball ventured into politics in November when the thought he had a tip on a big news story. Adam Zagoria tweeted that, according to his source, Gov. Phil Murphy was going to close New Jersey high schools for two months starting around Thanksgiving. Murphy’s staff quickly said Zagoria’s report was false and called it irresponsible journalism. “Please don’t spread rumors like this – it benefits no one,” a Murphy aide told Zagoria. Zagoria deleted his tweet, but not before a little damage was done. In the old days, a sports reporter like Zagoria, playing way out of his league, would have passed his tip onto his editor and a statehouse reporter would have inquired about it.
So who's the guy with the tape recorder?

In addition to a global pandemic, New Jersey Commissioner of Health Judy Persichilli dealt with a still unidentified senior official – widely believed to be part of her inner circle – who was secretly recording her private conversations and leaking them to the media. The recordings detailed some friction between the Office of the Governor and the Department of Health. It’s still not clear who the recording Persichilli.
“Our state has never faced a more difficult challenge than the COVID-19 crisis, and when we needed him the most, Governor Phil Murphy rose to the occasion. By putting our health and safety ahead of all other concerns, listening to science and following data, Governor Murphy has saved lives and helped us weather this unprecedented storm. **Now, he’s leading New Jersey forward, stronger and fairer than ever.**” – Chairman John Currie

**The New Jersey Democratic State Committee thanks Governor Murphy for his extraordinary leadership during the COVID-19 crisis.**

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New Jersey State Democratic Committee
@NJDSC
njdem.org
response@njdem.org

John Currie, Chairman
Peg Schaffer, Vice Chair
Saily Avelenda, Executive Director
TWO UNION COUNTY DEMOCRATIC state senators who have not always gotten along, Nicholas Scutari and Joseph Cryan, have agreed to support each other for re-election in next year’s Democratic primary. Cryan will also nominate Scutari for another term as the Union County Democratic Chairman. The détente between Cryan and Scutari also paves the way for Gov. Phil Murphy to run on the Union County Democratic organization line with both senators. Scutari and Cryan both oppose the elimination of organization lines; Murphy spent 2020 successfully ducking the issue.
New Jersey Firefighters Mutual Benevolent Association

PROUDLY ANSWERING THE CALL FOR ALL NEW JERSEY’S RESIDENTS!

Ed Donnelly, President
Wayne Wolk, Vice President
Troy Powell, Treasurer
Rick Myers, Secretary
The poster child for a guy most people never heard of who seemed to pop up everywhere is Matt O’Donnell, the managing partner of a now-shuttered North Jersey law firm that handled tax appeals for local and county governments. O’Donnell is the state’s cooperating witness in a sting operation that – at least so far – has netted some of the smallest fish imaginable. He still has not been charged, but most of his firm’s public clients bailed on him and his law partner was charged as part of a bribery plot.

An anonymous whistleblower contacted law enforcement in June 2017 about allegations that O’Donnell used straw donors to funnel money to local candidates he was pitching for tax appeal work. The whistle-blower told state and federal authorities that O’Donnell moved substantial amounts of money through relatives, employees and friends who have made large campaign contributions.
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CWA NJ AREA DIRECTOR
Earning red victories in blue states is what we do.

Congrats to NY Assemblyman-elect Mike Lawler! Checkmate’s co-founder overcame a 2-to-1 Democratic registration advantage to earn the only Assembly GOP pickup in New York State!

Welcome to Amanda Woloshen Glass! Checkmate is proud to announce she is joining the firm as our new Senior Vice-President.

Thank you to our clients in NJ and across the country! We’re looking forward to great things in 2021.

Superior Court Judge Marcia Silva, who said she was unconvinced that a 12-year-old sexual assault victim suffered physical, mental or emotional injuries — other than the loss of her virginity — was not renominated and will be forced to leave the bench on January 17, 2021 when her current seven-year term ends. Silva was one of three judges dumped by Gov. Phil Murphy in 2020: Linda Mallozzi was not being asked back and Carlia Brady’s term lapsed in April. Brady faced fire for not reporting her live-in boyfriend to police after being told he was wanted for robbing a pharmacy.

Another Superior Court Judge, John F. Russo, Jr., was removed from the bench by the New Jersey Supreme Court after asking an alleged rape victim if she attempted to close her legs to fend off the assault. It took the state about a year to get rid of Russo, with the top court rejecting a recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Judicial Conduct that Russo be suspended for just three months.
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State Sen. Anthony M. Bucco set a record in a 2020 special election after receiving the greatest number of votes of any candidate for the New Jersey Legislature under the current plan of 40 districts. Bucco received 67,142 votes. The previous record was set by Assemblywoman Gabriela Mosquera, who won 55,027 votes in a 2012 special election. The modern Senate record was set by Patrick Diegnan, who won 50,537 votes in a 2016 special election in the 18th district. Before 1973, when New Jersey shifted to 40 individual legislative districts that combine multiple counties, state senators were elected at-large in countywide elections. Assembly members were the same until 1967.

The record under those circumstances is held by Fairleigh Dickinson, Jr., who received 191,260 votes in his 1967 bid for State Senate in Bergen County. That total came in an off-year election where the top Democratic candidate received 116,609 votes. Bucco’s running mate, Assemblywoman Aura Dunn, received 64,649 votes and holds the record for the most votes ever received by a State Assembly candidate.

To get an idea of just how many votes were cast in 2020: Dunn’s Democratic opponent, Darcy Draeger, is next in line with 58,446, followed by Rupande Mehta, who ran against Bucco. Mehta received 57,192.
CONGRATULATIONS TO
THE NEW JERSEY GLOBE
ON A SUCCESSFUL 2020

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WHEN BERGEN COUNTY EXECUTIVE Jim Tedesco briefs the press, as he did in the earliest days of the coronavirus pandemic when he wasn’t exactly on the same page as the governor regarding the closing of business, he did so with a Brobdingnagian podium that looks just a little too big. The podium was built in house by Bergen County employees and is one-of-a-kind, so its not available in stores.
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HorizonBlue.com/Coronavirus
HUNTERDON COUNTY DEMOCRATS held the first-in-the-state open convention on February 9, allowing all 187 members of the county committee to endorse a candidate to run on the organization line in the Democratic presidential primary. Eight of the Democratic presidential candidates were nominated: Joe Biden, Michael Bloomberg, Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar, Deval Patrick, Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Andrew Yang.

Warren led Bloomberg, 37-33 on the first ballot, followed by Klobuchar (23 votes), Buttigieg (20 votes), Biden (19 votes) and Sanders (19 votes). Warren and Bloomberg advanced after becoming the only candidates to meet the 20% threshold after the second ballot. Bloomberg had led Warren, 40-39; Klobuchar received 22 votes, followed by Buttigieg (19), Sanders (17) and Joe Biden (12). Warren won the line on the third ballot, defeating Bloomberg by four votes, 74-70, a 51%-49% victory.

By the filing deadline, everyone but Biden and Sanders were out of the race and Biden got the line.
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NEW JERSEYAN OF THE YEAR

THE BREAKOUT STAR of the 2020 campaign was MSNBC national political correspondent Steve Kornacki, whose enthusiasm for political analysis and every imaginable bit of election data made him a national superstar. People Magazine named him one of the “sexiest men of 2020,” the Gap reported a spike in Khaki sales because of his TV attire, and this month he began analyzing playoff scenarios on NBC’s Sunday night football pre-game show. #KornackiThirst emerged as a real internet phenomenon.

For those who watched him in his first job out of college, covering New Jersey politics from 2002 to 2006, his success comes as no surprise. It didn’t take him long to figure out organization lines – that’s not always easy for someone not from here – but once that happens, you’re officially a Jersey guy.

Kornacki’s first day as a reporter was on the last Sunday in August 2002 and he spent it at the Tick Tock Diner in Clifton with Republican U.S. Senate candidate Doug Forrester and got to learn a little about the incumbent senator, Bob Torricelli. A week later, he landed the first interview Torricelli gave after he was admonished by the Senate Ethics Committee.

Like Kamala Harris says about her in-laws, Steve Kornacki might not be in New Jersey anymore, but New Jersey is very much in him. And since no New Jerseyan had a greater impact on the national election than he did, Kornacki is the clear choice to be the 2020 New Jerseyan of the Year.
JOSH GOTTHEIMER, recently re-elected to his third term in the U.S. House of Representatives, is by all accounts a Human Fundraising Machine. He raised a gargantuan $7.7 million between New Year’s Day and Thanksgiving and has a behemoth $8.4 million in his campaign war chest. Since becoming a candidate for Congress in 2015, Gottheimer has raised a mammoth $19.5 million, not including hundreds of thousands he’s raised for other Democrats in New Jersey and nationally. While raising that kind of money, Gottheimer still had to fend off a progressive primary challenger who had fundraising support from Bernie Sanders, and a Republican general election opponent who put $1.4 million of his own money in the race. With a narrow Democratic majority, this former Clinton White House staffer, herculean fundraiser and co-chairman of the increasingly influential bi-partisan Problem Solvers Caucus heads back to Washington next year with increased clout and substantial connections in the Biden White House.
Congratulations to the New Jersey Globe on the 2020 Year in Review

Best wishes to all for a happy, healthy 2021!

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Jon Bombardieri
Bill Layton
Karen Kominsky
Jon Boguchwal
David Glass
Nicole Howarth
Kyle England
New Jersey has no shortage of outstanding talent: Nabila Baptiste, who left her job as deputy executive director of the Democratic State Committee to serve as Joe Biden’s New Jersey State Director; Iris Delgado, the executive director of the Middlesex County Democrats; Bryan D’Andrea and Brooke Zindulka, who raised a lot of money as Tom Malinowski’s finance team, and Om Savargaonkar, the deputy field director for Malinowski; Storm Wyche, who worked for Cory Booker and then the number two at the Democratic Coordinated Campaign; Booker digital director Harrison Morgan; Andrew Mamo, a former Buttigieg campaign staffer who ran communications for Andy Kim; Elizabeth Davis, who ran Mikie Sherrill’s re-election; Mike Ambler, who had run races in California and Maine and came to New Jersey to direct Josh Gottheimer’s bid for a third term; James Garrity, the executive director of the Somerset County Democratic Committee that ousted GOP incumbents for Surrogate and freeholder; and Emily Laskar, who was Kim’s campaign manager.

It’s not at all infrequent for talented operates to work on campaigns that ultimately fall short, through no fault of theirs. There are almost certainly bright futures ahead for people like Joshua Roesch, who managed Amy Kennedy’s House campaign, and Yoli Navas, her press secretary. Kinn Badger, the campaign manager for Rupande Mehta for State Senate in the 25th district, is an emerging superstar. So is Emily McGrath, who worked on Will Cunningham’s campaign for Congress against Kennedy in the 2nd district Democratic primary. The 3rd district Republican team -- Tom Bonfonti, a seasoned Ocean GOP operative who ran David Richter’s race, and Angelo Lamberto, who led the Kate Gibbs campaign and then went to work for Richter – were strong and will undoubtedly be back. Dan Scharfenberger, the political director of Tom Kean’s congressional bid in the 7th, was incredibly strong; he’ll be back in 2021 as the head of the Senate GOP campaign committee.
THE DEAN

AFTER NEARLY FORTY YEARS of covering the state’s most powerful politicians, the dean of the Statehouse press corps is stepping back.

Michael Aron said in July he would step back from his responsibilities as the public television station’s chief political correspondent after nearly four decades of reporting on New Jersey politics. Since then, New Jersey has seen that Aron is simply irreplaceable.

Aron, who started out a Rolling Stone, continues to enjoy a storied career in journalism. He has covered every New Jersey governor since Brendan Byrne and every Supreme Court chief justice and legislative leader since 1982.
Former Hackettstown Mayor Mike Lavery was elected to a six-month unexpired term as New Jersey Republican State Chairman after ex-U.S. Senate candidate Bob Hugin launched a bid to challenge him the day before the vote. Lavery won, 24 to 18, allowing him to return to the post he held for five months in 2017. Hugin, who spent $36 million of his own money to run for U.S. Senate two years ago, began making calls in search of state committee votes on Sunday and entered the race early Monday morning. Lavery had already lined up commitments to secure the seat in a vote that was scheduled for Tuesday evening. While Lavery has pledged a neutral state party during the gubernatorial primary, organizationally this showed an edge for the political team of Doug Steinhardt, Lavery’s best friend who resigned as state chairman to run for governor.
Best Wishes

Senator Vin Gopal
Majority Conference Leader

Chairman, Senate Military & Veterans Affairs Committee
Vice Chairman, Senate Higher Education Committee
11th Legislative District
BEST KEPT DEAL OF 2020

An agreement to end a vicious fight for Democratic State Chairman at the tail end of 2019 turned out to be a great deal for LeRoy Jones, the Essex County Democratic Chairman. Jones agreed to forestall his challenge to the incumbent, John Currie, who wanted to attend the Democratic National Convention as the state chairman. Instead, Jones will become state chairman in June 2021 and will also chair the Legislative Apportionment Commission that will draw new Senate and Assembly districts after the latest census numbers are certified. In search of a conclusion to the fight, Currie gave away the other four seats on the mighty commission to the South Jersey, Middlesex, Hudson and Bergen. In the end, Currie didn’t get to go to Milwaukee, but at least he got to stay in a hotel in Asbury Park.
IN A YEAR MARKED BY SADNESS and tragedy, one of the worst moments was the murder of Daniel Anderl, the 20-year-old son of U.S. District Court Judge Esther Salas. He was shot and killed in his home on the evening of July 19; Mark Anderl, the judge’s husband, was shot and critically wounded. The killer was an anti-feminist lawyer who had a case pending before Judge Salas and found her home address on the internet.

The senseless murder has sparked a national movement led by Judge Salas and New Jersey officials to safeguard the privacy of judges and law enforcement officials. Laws passed in New Jersey and pending in the U.S. Congress, are named in honor of Daniel Anderl.
IN MEMORIAM

DEBBY KEAN
(1943-2020)
Former First Lady of New Jersey

STEPHEN N. ADUBATO, SR.
(1943-2020)
Political Leader and Humanitarian
IN MEMORIAM

NICHOLAS ACOCELLA
(1943-2020)
Journalist, Baseball fan and Chef

DAVID APPLEFIELD
(1956-2020)
Journalist and congressional candidate
IN MEMORIAM

RUTH B. MANDEL
(1938-2020)
Political Scientist

RUTH BADER GINSBURG
(1933-2020)
U.S. Supreme Court Justice and Rutgers Law Professor
C. ROBERT SARCOME
(1926-2020)
State Senator, Assembly Minority Leader, and gubernatorial candidate

FRANCIS J. MCMANIMON
(1926-2020)
State Senator and Assemblyman

JEREMIAH F. O’CONNOR
(1933-2020)
State Senator, Bergen County Freeholder, and Board of Public Utilities Commissioner

LEWIS B. KADEN
(1942-2020)
Chief Counsel to the Governor and congressional candidate
IN MEMORIAM


John Lewis
(1940 - 2020)
Civil Rights Leader, Congressman, friend of New Jersey

Nick Accocella
Stephen Adubato, Sr.
Daniel Anderl
Albert Angrisani
David Applefield
Lawrence Arcioni
Derek Armato
Maria Barlow
John Patrick Barnes
Doris Beck
Scott Becker
Bill Bisson
Robert Bourne
James Brady
Carmine Capone
Peter Cartmell
Margaret Cerria
Phil Cerria
David Chadwick
Kenneth Chmielewski
Henry Cioffi
Valerie Collins Fletcher
Eileen Fuzer
Thomas Cooke
Nicholas Corbiscello
Ed Cotten
James Cotton
Robert Davis
Theodore Davis
Jude DeLone
Joseph DeMarino
John Derites
David Dinkins
Bob Downing
Jonathan Dunleavy
Dick Edgar
Dorothy Fekety
Alan Finder
Pete Flipse
George Floyd
Martin Fox
Frank Fuza
Arthur Gallagher
Joseph Galluzzi
Geoffrey Gaulkin
Louis Gill
Ruth Bader Ginsburg
Robert Gladstone
Andre Gruber
Margaret Hahn
Gregory Hall
Ken Heinis
Elton Hill
George Hoard
Mary Ann Hutchinson
John Inginamort
James Isherwood
Dale Jacobs
Lewis Kaden
Deborah Kean
Ray Kenny
Robert Klein
Norma Kohn
Paul Kramer
Gary Kroessig
Delores Krysztyfik
Colette Lamothe-Galette
Bob Leavitt
John Lewis
Philip Liloia
Joseph Lobosco
Peter Loos
Ranjana
Madhusudhan
Ruth Mandel
Dominick Marino
Joseph Martin
Nicholas Mascaro
Vernetta McCray
Paul McCurie
Sam McGhee
Jim Messina
Theresa Myer
Clifford Minor
Bill Murray
Cliff Nolan
Ed Nolan
Jeremiah O’Connor
Maria Magda
O’Keefe
Ralph Passante
Joseph Patero
Elsa Perez-Cinciarelli
Sal Paladino
Sal Paladino
Michael Piarulli
Joseph Pelliccio
Paul Porreca
Vito Puleio
Stella Rabner
Bobby Raeine
Marvin Reed
Shirley Rice
Viola Richardson
Mortimer Rogers
John Rocco
Perry Rosenstein
Richard Roth
C. Robert Sarcone
Patrick Scanlon
Richard Schaub
Georgia Scott
Charlotte McClave
Shelley
Joseph Seneca
William Shuler
Mike Siano
Gary Simmons
Andy Simpson
Paul J. Smith
Clem Sommers
John Thomas
Barbara Tomlinson
Tommy Toscano
William Tremayne
Clifford Vander Have
Evalena Vidal
Bob Waller
Jim Webber
Jim Welsh
Martha Wilson
Joseph Yeninas
Michael Yun
New Jersey Globe Power Hour

New Jersey Globe, the undisputed leader in political news coverage in the Garden State, has launched the New Jersey Globe Power Hour, a 60-minute weekly radio show on WABC 770. Hosted by the Globe’s editor in chief, David Wildstein, the New Jersey Globe Power Hour will cover the state's political players with the same unmatched nose for news, scoops, and intrigue that has made the site the go-to first read for elected officials, lobbyists, political junkies and anyone who needs to know what's happening from Trenton to Washington.

Every week's Power Hour will feature interviews with power players and discussion of the week that was and the week that's coming.

DETAILS:
New Jersey Globe Power Hour airs every Saturday from 5-6 pm on WABC and WLIR.

Facts about WABC/WLIR reach/audience:
- Listeners Per Week - 309,000
- Weekly Time Spent Listening - 3:30
- Median Age - 59

The New Jersey Globe Power Hour will be simulcast on WLIR, broadening reach of the show and hitting weekly listeners.