THE YEAR OF CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING, THE BATTLE OF THE TOMS, AND 14 ELECTION DAYS.
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Congratulations
To Everyone on the 2022 Year in Review!
Welcome to New Jersey, where the much-heralded Red Wave never arrived and where the geography of congressional redistricting turned out to be more impactful than Joe Biden or Donald Trump.

This was my 49th year watching politics in New Jersey, going back to 1973 when I was an extraordinarily young aide to a state senator. Jersey politics is complex, as is often the case, and this year was no different. Throughout the state, it was Election Day in New Jersey fourteen times, frequently with hardly anyone showing up. Frankly, more political insiders were interested in the 2025 gubernatorial campaign than what was on the plate in front of us over the last twelve months.

We learned some valuable lessons: Amy DeGise shouldn’t get behind the wheel, Hirsh Singh shouldn’t be on the ballot, and Sam Wang should stick to neuroscience. We also learned in many races up and down the state that it’s entirely possible for both parties to nominate good candidates for the same office and allow voters to follow their own beliefs.

Eighty-five men and women ran for Congress in 2022, not including a bunch of contenders who dropped out and a handful of hopefuls who couldn’t get enough valid signatures to earn a place on the ballot. The 24 major party candidates who made it to the general election spent over $57 million in an election that resulted in ten incumbents winning re-election— all by double-digit margins— and with just one seat flipping from Democratic to Republican.

In New Jersey’s 7th district, Tom Kean defeated Tom Malinowski by three percentage points under a map drawn by his own party that appears to have met the intended goal of sacrificing one House seat in order to protect nine others. Inflation and abortion made the race interesting, but in the end, it was mostly about the map.

Phil Murphy became the first Democratic governor in 44 years to take office for a second term, and Nicholas Scutari became the first new Senate President in twelve years. Republicans, who expanded their footprints both houses of the legislature in 2021, suddenly became more aggressive this year. Rob Menendez easily won the Hudson-based House seat held by his father, U.S. Senator Bob Menendez, from 1993 to 2006.

Legislative redistricting was finished in February, providing the longest runway for new Senate and Assembly districts in state history. This was a deal map and provides both parties with a path to majorities in the New Jersey Legislature. Some races are already decided—Assembly Judiciary Committee Chairman Raj Mukerji is a sure-thing for a Senate seat— and there are already apportionment casualties; Nicholas Sacco, Angelica Jimenez, Annette Chaparro, and Pedro Mejia.

Ronald Rice retired from the legislature on December 31 for health reasons. He had served in the Senate for more than 35 years and is the longest-serving Black legislator in state history. Assemblyman Ronald Dancer died in office on July 23, and former Gov. Jim Florio passed away on September 25 at age 85.

Republicans took control of the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners, but Democrats held their ground other counties where the GOP had been optimistic: Gloucester, Passaic, Bergen, Somerset and Burlington. Salem, which had a Democratic majority in 2018, is now all-Republican.

The State Senate lost its most conservative Republican, Michael Doherty, who was elected Warren County Surrogate. His replacement is Doug Steinhardt, a former GOP state chairman and onetime gubernatorial candidate.

Trenton will get a new city council, albeit not for another month, but there is light at the end of the tunnel that an unfortunate era of racism, homophobia and anti-Semitism that led to the most dysfunctional city council in the state is now coming to an end.

New Jersey also got a new U.S. Attorney, Philip Sellinger, and six new U.S. District Court Judges, the first to be nominated and confirmed in more than four years. Two new associate justices joined the New Jersey Supreme Court in October, with Rachel Wainer Apter confirmed after 19 months and Douglas Fasciale sailing through the Senate at warp
speed. One more seat on the Supreme Court has been vacant since July and probably will remain so for the foreseeable future. The number of vacancies on the Superior Court remains dire.

New Jerseyans are increasingly becoming more accepting of voting in advance, with substantial increases in vote-by-mail and early in-person voting. In reality, some people adapt more quickly than others; if it were up to Brian Stack, early voting would open up filing day with a polling location on every block.

But Democrats have an urban turnout problem and it’s becoming quite noticeable. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka was re-elected with 83% of the vote in May – that’s appropriately called a landslide – but turnout was less than 10% and 92% of all registered voters in Newark didn’t vote for the man who will lead their city for the next few years. It may be appropriate to wonder if that’s democracy.

So in New Jersey, Democrats remain the majority party, but elections are increasingly being carried by suburban voters, especially in train station towns. In 2022, Maplewood, Millburn and South Orange produced nearly as many votes as Newark, which is five times the size of the three municipalities combined. As a result, the balance of power in New Jersey shifts to towns like Ridgewood, Summit, Westfield, Moorestown and Mount Laurel, which were solidly Republican less than a generation ago.

The New Jersey Globe launched on January 5, 2018 and has now completed five election cycles. Knock on wood, we continue to thrive in an industry full of economic failures. I worry about the future of local news and I’m not certain how long some of these once grand newspapers will be able to survive. Some may view that as arrogant, but the losses of subscribers and advertisers is clear to all of us. It’s not clear whether the owners of these failing newspapers have the ability to rebound. And while their failures benefit new businesses like the New Jersey Globe, it saddens me that so many of the people to blame for the journalism malaise of the past two decades now complain about it without taking responsibility for their own role in the demise of their newspapers.

We make no apologies for breaking countless New Jersey news stories, or for the hard work that goes into them. We co-hosted two Republican congressional debates with Matt Rooney and Save Jersey during the primary. In the general election, we held congressional debates in the 3rd, 7th and 11th districts. Thank you to C-SPAN for airing some of them.

One of the reasons the New Jersey Globe continues to flourish is our ability to spot raw talent. Joey Fox, now just 23-years-old, may be too young to run for Congress, but he’s already a veteran of two general election cycles and an amazing talent. His future is without limit, and it continues to be an honor to work with him.

It was a pleasure to work with a summer intern, George Christopher, who learned from Joey and covered the state fearlessly and tirelessly.

As always, I’m grateful for our constant partnership with Micah Rasmussen, the director of the Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics at Rider University. His sharp analysis and his participation in some of our livestream events to cover breaking news helped make the New Jersey Globe better.

Every week, Kevin O’Toole provides insights and life lessons that are invaluable to our readers. We appreciate the very smart, high-minded columns from Donald Scarinci. Our newest addition, Stomping Grounds with Dan Bryan and Alex Wilkes, offers perspectives of a Democrat and Republican who are in the room where key decisions regarding New Jersey politics are made.

And I treasure the role played by our man behind the curtain, Kevin Sanders. He makes the trains run on time every day, mostly without complaining.

Thank you, New Jersey, for another great year. I’m excited to see what comes next.

David Wildstein
Editor, New Jersey Globe
POLITICIANS OF THE YEAR
AL BARLAS AND LEROY JONES

Al Barlas & Leroy Jones
(Photo: Kevin Sanders for the New Jersey Globe).

Just once a decade (or so), a group of high-level political insiders from both parties meet behind closed doors to draw a new map of 40 legislative districts that potentially determines which party will control the New Jersey Legislature for the next decade, more or less. Jockeying for seats on the panel begins a few years before the U.S. Census, will only the most adept of the power elite getting the coveted posts of co-chairs.

There’s a decennial debate over which restricting commission is more significant: congressional or legislative. That’s a personal choice each individual must make on their own. But objectively, there is no doubt that drawing legislative districts is monumentally more difficult. Almost anyone can assemble a twelve-piece puzzle, especially when you’re allowed to do things like lop off one side of a street in Mendham just to make the pieces fit together evenly. Legislative maps are infinitely tougher: it’s 40 pieces, only Newark and Jersey City can be split, and the population deviations must remain close.

The unpaid job held by for a year and a half by Al Barlas and LeRoy Jones wasn’t easy. It required training in New Jersey cartography, balancing big egos, enormous demands that were frequently unrealistic and sometimes ridiculous, delicate negotiating skills, mastering internal constituencies that habitually dislike each other, and a preposterous amount of mathematical possibilities and impossibilities.

For more than a year, both chairs spent hundreds of hours reviewing a seemingly infinite number of iterations of a legislative map, including serious and nonsensical ones, in a process that began long before the municipal population numbers were released and certified. They held more public hearings and permitted more public involvement in state history.
Barlas, the Essex County GOP Chairman, and Jones, who is both the Essex County Democratic Chairman and the New Jersey Democratic State Chairman, spent a huge amount of hours negotiating with their own sides, and then with each other. Barlas assembled a solid block of five Republican votes; with the help of a Superior Court Judge, Jones did the same by tossing former Senate President Steve Sweeney from the panel.

For Barlas, circumstances changed in November 2021 when Sweeney lost his Senate seat, Republicans held the 8th and flipped Assembly seats in the 2nd, 3rd, and 11th districts. That created an obligation on his part to protect the newly-gained incumbents. Jones was then pressed to fix South Jersey, perhaps at the expense of the rest of the state.

Both were under enormous pressure: Jones was expected to extend a map that offered tremendous advantages to Democrats into a third decade; some Republicans wanted Barlas to perform the impossible by producing a gerrymandered map that would assure his party of taking control of the legislature (that was never going to happen).

Barlas and Jones received a blessing of sorts from Chief Justice Stuart Rabner with the selection of Philip Carchman, a retired appellate court judge as the tie-breaker.

So, instead of posturing and proselytizing, Barlas, Jones and Carchman opted for a deal map that took a lot of work, an exorbitant amount of trust and diplomacy, and one that was entirely defendable to their individual bases.

The result of the 2023-2031 legislative map gives Democrats a chance to hold their majorities (and maybe even expand them), while similarly offering Republicans a path, albeit a narrow one, to win control of the Senate and Assembly in 2023. Al Barlas and LeRoy Jones produced one of the fairest maps in New Jersey history.

That doesn’t mean there won’ be unintended consequences. Joe Biden and Phil Murphy can conversely help or hurt Democratic legislative candidates in 2023; the same can be said of Donald Trump, whose own bid to reclaim the presidency will be played out on the same timeline of New Jersey Republicans seeking majorities in Trenton.

For Jones and Barlas, the new map offers each of them a high-yield commission for their efforts.

Jones will probably be able to increase the total number of state senators within his own inner orbit from zero to two: he has already seen a top ally, Renee Burgess easily win a State Senate seat in the 28th district after 12-term incumbent Ronald Rice (D-Newark) resigned for health reasons over the summer. One of his top protégés, Assemblywoman Britnee Timberlake (D-East Orange), seems like a sure bet for the 34th district Senate seat after seven-term incumbent Nia Gill was redistricted into the same district as former Gov. Richard Codey, a senator since 1981 (and an assemblyman since 1973).

Barlas drew a map that substantially increased the size of Essex County’s portion of the reliably Republican 40th district from just Cedar Grove to nearly all of West Essex – about one-third of the district. That led to a sort of Velvet Revolution where Kevin Rooney sheepishly announced his retirement (under the new map, Bergen County doesn’t have the population to sustain two Assembly seats for Wyckoff), paving the way for Barlas to become an assemblyman.

The collaboration of a deal map between Jones and Barlas offers huge potential opportunities to both parties for the remainder of the decade, and their stewardship earns them New Jersey Globe Politician of the Year honors for 2022 – and maybe even beyond.
There is no family in American politics that has had the endurance of the Keans, starting with the election of John Kean, who was elected to the Continental Congress in 1785 after serving as George Washington’s choice to audit the books of the Revolutionary Army and being held captive by the British during part of the War of Independence.

On January 3, 2023, John Kean’s great-great-great-grandson, Thomas H. Kean, Jr., will stand on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives to take the oath of office as the new congressman from New Jersey’s 7th district. He unseated two-term Democrat Tom Malinowski by 8,691 votes, 51%-48%, in one of the nation’s most closely-watched midterm congressional races.
Kean’s journey to Washington was not an easy one. A former legislative assistant to Rep. Bob Franks in the 1990s, Kean sought to succeed his ex-boss in 2000 but lost the Republican primary. He won a special election for the State Assembly after Alan Augustine died in 2001 – aspersions that he was appointed are inaccurate; he actually won a high-stakes stare-down with Scotch Plains Mayor Gabe Spera – and went to the Senate, where he became the longest-serving Republican legislative leader in New Jersey history. He lost a U.S. Senate bid in 2006 and came within one percentage point of ousting Malinowski in 2020.

Not by chance, Kean did well in congressional redistricting under a Democratic map that shed a number of towns that gave Malinowski big pluralities in 2020 and replaced them with Republican-leaning towns in Warren and Sussex counties.

One of Kean’s strongest attributes as a candidate was his extraordinary self-discipline; that drove Malinowski and Democrats crazy. Kean cautiously avoided controversy, made no severe gaffes, and struck a balance that kept more conservative Republicans on his side of the tally board. He won his primary without really breaking a sweat, attracted plenty of money, and stuck to his message on the ills of inflation without allowing Democrats to drag him into the national drama involving a former President of the United States who summers in NJ-7. For better or worse, he deftly avoided allowing the one issue that might have derailed his congressional ambitions, the U.S. Supreme Court’s Dobbs Decision that overturned Roe v. Wade, not allowing Malinowski to be his pied piper.

Malinowski made the race closer than many thought it would be.

By 2022, Kean had captured the essence of Bubble Politics. He figured out that those who trolled him on social media were mostly just speaking among themselves; their messaging wasn’t reaching rank-and-file voters. He got under Tom Moran’s skin by steadfastly refusing to engage the Star-Ledger editorial page editor who showed no interest in equitableness and found that declining interviews from those who made no effort at being fair-minded, may have helped him. The myth that Kean was somehow hiding from voters was not a fair criticism; he participated in three debates, a reasonable number.

Now Kean will be a congressman – the first Kean to win a House race since 1956 (his father lost a 1974 congressional primary) – and the first member of his family to unseat an incumbent in a general election since 1938. He begins his tenure in Congress with an immediate need to navigate an ideologically fractured Republican majority and a Democratic Party that accurately views him as one of the most vulnerable Republicans in the House.

The Kean family, which includes the Livingston, Fish, and Stuyvesant families, has had a front-row seat to American history. Col. John Kean (he was awarded the rank of colonel when he served as Gov. William Pennington’s chief of staff in the 1840s and used it for the rest of his life) was among the founders of the New Jersey Republican Party around 1856 and made a deal at the 1860 Republican National Convention in Chicago that helped deliver a third-ballot victory for Abraham Lincoln. Two of Col. Kean’s great-grandsons served in Congress – one in the House, both in the U.S. Senate – and his great-great-grandson, Robert Kean (R-Livingston) was a congressman for 20 years. Thomas Kean, Robert’s son and the congressman-elect’s father, served two terms as one of the most popular governors in New Jersey history.
Gerrymandered or not, the congressional map drawn by New Jersey Democrats and supported by court-elected tiebreaker John E. Wallace, Jr., did exactly what it was intended to do: the map sacrificed one Democratic congressman, Tom Malinowski, while buttressing nine Democratic House seats, including three incumbents who had been as potentially vulnerable: Andy Kim, Josh Gottheimer and Mikie Sherrill. Kim won by 12 points, Gottheimer by 10 points, and Sherrill by 19 points. That leaves Democrats with a lock on nine seats for the rest of the decade and with a good chance to regain the 7th district seat down the road.
Democrat Josh Gottheimer continues to emerge as a major political force on Capitol Hill, where his influence as a skilled negotiator is in a constant upward trajectory. As Co-Chairman of the influential Problem Solvers Caucus, Gottheimer was in the negotiating room for nearly every piece of important legislation passed over the last two years. In addition to his own massive war chest. He raised over $5 million for Democratic candidates in New Jersey and across the nation in 2022, on top of the nearly $8.2 million he raised for himself. Gottheimer will enter 118th Congress as a member of House Minority Leader-designate Hakeem Jeffries’ inner circle; there is no one in the New Jersey delegation closer to Jeffries. After running unopposed in the Democratic primary and skillfully investing money to get help a weak Republican challenger defeat the stronger general election candidate for the GOP nomination, Gottheimer won re-election to a fourth term by a double-digit margin.
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Legislative redistricting in February 2022 forced two powerful Hudson County state senators – and also mayors – into the same district. But the primary fight of the century between Brian P. Stack of Union City and Nicholas Sacco of North Bergen was over before it started. Within one week, Sacco announced his retirement from the Senate, where he’d served since ousting an incumbent in the 1993 Democratic primary and endorsing Stack. Even though he had no opponent in the May 2022 Union City municipal race, Stack ran a full campaign, naturally. In Trenton, he is at the pinnacle of his legislative career as the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.
Matthew J. Platkin has had a meteoric rise to the top since leaving a top New York law firm, Debevoise & Plimpton, in 2015 for a low-paying job on Phil Murphy’s campaign for governor at a time when Murphy was, at best, the number three candidate in the field. Now, at age 36, he’s New Jersey’s 56th Attorney General. Platkin served as Murphy’s chief counsel from 2018 to 2020 and as acting attorney general from February until the Senate confirmed him in September.
Following allegations that he manipulated data to match his personal agenda, there is little chance that New Jersey will allow Sam Wang, the controversial Princeton University neuroscience professor who became a redistricting activist, anywhere near the process in future decades.

Wang founded the Princeton Gerrymandering Project to influence congressional and legislative redistricting across the nation. Top funders included major donors to Democratic candidates and committees, including four New Jersey Democratic House members who were stakeholders in the redistricting process.

During congressional redistricting, while Wang was serving as an advisor to tiebreaker John E. Wallace, Jr., there were accusations that members of Wang’s staff quietly gave Democrats some valuable feedback that would ultimately play into their final map submission: that Republicans were doing a good job limiting the splitting of towns and municipalities and that Democrats needed to do better. Republicans said they received no similar intelligence. Princeton conducted internal reviews and said they cleared Wang but refused to release any details. Democrats, Republicans and Wallace all said nobody ever spoke to them.

But Wang refused to make an algorithm used to determine partisan fairness of New Jersey congressional districts public because he claimed it was proprietary. That came despite taxpayer monies being used to pay him for his work as a consultant to court-selected redistricting tiebreakers.

At one point in 2022, Princeton University human resources prohibited Wang from speaking directly with his staff after being accused of toxic workplace issues.
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LOSER OF THE YEAR RUNNER UP
PAUL KENNEDY

Ocean Gate Mayor Paul Kennedy was arrested in March on charges that he stole money from parking meters and sold township property on the Internet and pocketed the proceeds. He was removed from office in May after failing to show up at council meetings for the two months after he was charged. Among other things, Kennedy allegedly sold a 2008 Honda Pilot in an online auction and deposited the money in his personal checking account. He did not seek re-election and is awaiting trial.
The triumph of New Jersey Apportionment Commission tiebreaker Philip Carchman as an honest broker stood in stark contrast to another retired judge who cast the deciding vote on congressional redistricting, John E. Wallace, Jr. While Wallace essentially threw up on himself in 2021 by initially saying that he only voted for the Democratic map because the Republicans won the map ten years earlier, Carchman acted as a statesman, earning the respect and public praise of both parties for his fairness and diligence. He viewed his role as more of a mediator than a tiebreaker and worked to assemble a unanimous vote of the legislative redistricting panel to reach a consensus that avoided allegations of gerrymandering. There were no allegations of partisanship or demagoguery; instead, he walked away from the process as a hero.
Harrison Neely started working for Tom Kean, Jr. in 2006, when he was the campaign driver in the race for U.S. Senate. Now he’s Kean’s intensely loyal top political advisor and served as general consultant on the successful congressional race in New Jersey’s 7th district. Disciplined, steady, and uneasy to rattle, Neely carefully guided a campaign to unseat Tom Malinowski. New Jersey’s 7th district was one of five across the nation that ousted a Democratic incumbent in the 2022 general election. Neely served as the top Republican staffer 2022:

CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR
HARRISON NEELY

on congressional redistricting and had his hand in legislative redistricting, where Kean served as one of the commissioners. He also finished the year with another victory: his client, former Republican State Chairman Doug Steinhardt, ran unopposed in a December special election convention for State Senate after Neely helped develop a strategy for a smooth transition from Michael Doherty, now the Warren County Surrogate, to Steinhardt. He also worked on other races across the country where Republicans did better than they should have.
Adam Silverstein continues a six-year winning streak as the political consultant and strategist for Rep. Josh Gottheimer and the Bergen County Democratic Organization and it’s starting to look like he is unbeatable. Gottheimer was re-elected to his fourth term by more than ten percentage points, Bergen County Executive James Tedesco won his third term by more than eleven points, and three incumbent county commissioners were re-elected handily. Republicans haven’t won Bergen County since 2013, but Silverstein was concerned about a Republican wave that was forecasted earlier this year. He took the 2022 cycle seriously and ran as though his candidates were behind. Silverstein has an instinctive understanding of the 70 municipalities in Bergen County and has the trust and confidence of the Bergen County Democratic Chairman, Paul Juliano.
There isn’t another campaign manager in the state who does a better job acting like she’s twenty points down than Jackie Burns, who managed Mikie Sherrill’s 19-point victory this year. Burns doesn’t believe polls, rumors, or anything that resembles good news. Instead, armed with multiple clipboards, she keeps her foot pressed to the gas until the results are certified; she even chases cure letters after winning in a landslide. Burns joined Sherrill’s campaign staff in 2017, worked in the congresswoman’s Washington office until 2021, when she became deputy campaign manager for Gov. Phil Murphy. The dot every ‘I’ and cross every “t” Democratic operative will clearly be part of future statewide campaigns in New Jersey; she’s just not ready to acknowledge that it will be for Sherrill.
One way for Tom Kean, Jr. to get around his quiet, easygoing demeanor is to hire people who excel at body slamming. That’s what he gets with Dan Scharfenberger, Kean’s intrepid campaign manager. After just five campaign cycles – her started out as a young staffer on Bob Hugin’s 2018 campaign, Scharfenberger has emerged as one of the top Republican operatives in the state. He pays attention to details, is respected by his staff, and willing to stand in front of a truck if it means getting extra votes. After serving as Kean’s political director in 2020, Scharfenberger ran the day-to-day operations in 2022, and he’s fiercely loyal to Kean. He helped keep Kean on message, pushed back on reporters when he felt they were treating his candidate unfairly, and played a key role in navigating the treacherous waters of a Republican congressional primary and was the first Republican campaign manager to flip a New Jersey congressional district in a dozen years.
OPERATIVES OF THE YEAR

SCOTT ALTIERI Political Director, Mikie Sherrill for Congress

ALEX ARGIRIS Special Events Director, Mikie Sherrill for Congress

KATIE CASTELLANO Finance Director, Tom Kean for Congress

CHRISTOPHER D’ALOIA Press Secretary Josh Gottheimer for Congress

JJ CAHILL Executive Director, Hunterdon County Republican Committee

KASEY DEARDEN Deputy State Director, NJ Republican National Committee

MICHAEL DONAHER Finance Director, Andy Kim for Congress

RON FILAN Campaign Manager, Jeff Van Drew for Congress

KRISTEN FOCA Political Director, Andy Kim for Congress

LIZ GALLAGHER Campaign Manager, Andy Kim for Congress

NAREE KETUDAT Communications Director, Tom Malinowski for Congress
DAVID WASSERMAN

As the senior editor for The Cook Political Report, David Wasserman continues to shine as one of the top independent forecasters in the nation on races for the U.S. House of Representatives. In a year when the House flipped from a razor-thin Democratic majority to slim one for the Republicans, Wasserman’s vast institutional knowledge on key congressional races allowed him to shine. His mastery of politics comes as no surprise to the people in his home state of New Jersey; the Montgomery native was drawing congressional maps during redistricting 20 years ago for Politics NJ when he was still in high school.

THERESA WINEGAR

Over the last thirteen years, Lambertville resident Theresa Winegar has emerged as one of New Jersey’s most effective Republican operatives. She’s worked for Chris Christie, Mitt Romney and Rodney Frelinghuysen before becoming executive director of the New Jersey Republican State Committee; she was Tom Kean Jr.’s campaign manager in 2020, and briefly as Doug Steinhardt’s campaign manager in the 2021 gubernatorial race. She spent the 2022 cycle as a regional political director for the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC); on her watch, Republicans picked up five House seats in New Jersey and New York – all hugely competitive races.

CHRISTIE ROBERTS

Every president since Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934, Democratic and Republican, has watched at least one incumbent United States Senator from their party lose re-election in the midterm election cycle. That trend stopped in 2022 while Montgomery native Christie Roberts served as executive director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (the second woman to hold that post) for the 2022 midterm elections.

MARSHALL COHEN

The Bridgewater native, who began his political career working for James Carville, is the political director of the Democratic Governors Association, where he’s spent the last five election cycles. On his watch, Democrats flipped governorships in Arizona, Maryland, and Massachusetts (but lost narrowly in Nevada), and prevailed in competitive races in Kansas, Michigan, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. He played a key role in Gov. Phil Murphy’s 2021 re-election; Murphy served as DGA chairman in 2020 and will again take the helm in 2023.
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NORTH WARD CITY COUNCIL

MAYOR REED GUSCIORA
TRENTON FORWARD

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RAJ MUKHERJI
FOR SENATE

RENEE C. BURGESS
DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR SENATOR

ANNETTE ROMANO & COHEN
FOR MILLBURN TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE
DEMOCRATS COMMITTED TO FIGHTING FOR MILLBURN VALUES

MICHAEL SILVA
FOR NEWARK CITY COUNCIL
East Ward

DUPRE’ KELLY FOR THE WEST WARD 2022

JENNA FIGUEROA KETENBURG
FOR SOUTH WARD COUNCIL

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Trenton has been New Jersey’s most dysfunctional city council for the last four years, and while the 2022 election will likely result in better government, it will come late and with a whole lot of drama. Trenton changed its non-partisan municipal elections from May to November, extending the council terms by six months. Even that couldn’t run smoothly. Two of the four wards had December runoffs – one of them was a tie until December 28. A runoff for all three at-large council seats won’t be held until January 24. But Mayor Reed Gusciora scored a massive 71% of the vote against two hugely divisive and controversial councilwomen.
HALF CENTURY MAN

Richard J. Codey will begin his 50th year in the New Jersey Legislature on January 8, 2023. The Essex County Democrat was 26-years-old when he won a State Assembly seat in 1973 and moved up to the Senate in 1981. He spent four years as Senate Minority Leader, eight years as Senate President, and fourteen months as Governor of New Jersey from 2004 to 2006 when the state’s line of succession worked in his favor. If he wins re-election in 2023 – he’s the favorite after redistricting puts him in a primary with seven-term State Sen. Nia Gill – he will begin his 51st year in 2024. In total, Codey has won 18 consecutive elections so far.
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Zakiya Smith-Ellis departed as Chief Policy Officer to Gov. Phil Murphy and was replaced by Dennis Zeveloff. Mahen Gunaratna left as Director of Communications to join Everytown for Gun Safety, with Alex Altman serving as Acting Communications Director. Dan Bryan traded his post as Senior Advisor for Strategic Communications to form his own public affairs firm and run Murphy’s non-profit and PAC, with Jennifer Sciortino replacing him ten months later. After nearly five years as Murphy’s press secretary, Alyanna Alfaro is now at PSEG. Justin Braz left his post as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor to become Assistant Commissioner of Transportation. Kate McDonnell and Matthew Berns switched jobs, with McDonnell becoming chief counsel to the Attorney General and Berns as deputy chief counsel to the Governor. Deborah Cornavaca departed her post as Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor to join the New Jersey Education Association. Paulina Banasiak, who had served as acting deputy chief of staff, is now at a top Trenton lobbying firm, The Zita Group.

THE CABINET

Matt Platkin was named acting Attorney General in February, replacing Andrew Bruck; Bruck is now the Chief of Staff to the Deputy U.S. Attorney General and the Associate Deputy Attorney General. Deirdre Webster Cobb is retiring as chair and CEP of the Civil Service Commission, with Allison Chris Myers slated to replace her on January 1.

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE

Skip Cimino retired as Executive Director of the Assembly Majority Office in January and was replaced by Seth Hahn. Kevin Drennan departed as Executive Director of the Senate Majority Office in April and was replaced by Alison Accettola; when she left four months later, Timothy Lydon resigned his post as a Superior Court Judge and replaced her.

JUDICIARY

Three Associate Justices of the New Jersey Supreme Court retired in 2022: Jaynee LaVecchia, Faustino Fernandez-Vina, and Barry Albin. Two new Associate Justices joined the Court: Rachel Wainer Apter and Douglas Fasciale.
Budding journalism star George Christopher spent the summer of 2022 as reporting intern at the New Jersey Globe through the Park Center for Independent Media at Ithaca College. He spent time covering the New Jersey Legislature, providing a boost in coverage for New Jersey Globe readers during a busy June session before breaking for the summer. Christopher didn’t hesitate to ask tough questions of Gov. Phil Murphy, U.S. Senator Bob Menendez, and members of the U.S. House of Representatives. He’s now back at Ithaca, as news director for WICB 91.7 FM, and the New Jersey Globe was honored to have him as part of our team.
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MURDERER OF THE YEAR

Even in New Jersey, this doesn’t happen every day. Political consultant Sean Caddle appeared before a federal judge on January 25 and admitted to his role in a murder-for-hire scheme. He hired a hitman to kill Michael Galdieri, a small-time Jersey City political player whose late father once served in the New Jersey State Senate. Caddle acknowledged that Galdieri had been his friend. The hitman, a career criminal from Connecticut named George Bratsenis, pled guilty to the 2104 murder two months later. Bratsenis and his accomplice, Bomani Africa, stabbed Galdieri and then set his apartment on fire. The next day, he met Caddle outside an Elizabeth diner and accepted “thousands of dollars in cash.” Caddle, who used to work for ex-State Sen. Raymond Lesniak and ran several super PACs, has been under home detention at his Hardyston residence on a $1 million unsecured bond. It’s unusual for an admitted murderer to spend more than a year under house arrest, so that’s an indication that there is at least one big shoe to drop. His sentencing has been rescheduled twice and is now set for March 22, 2023.
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You’ve got to hand it to Phil Rizzo. Candidates spend decades promising lower property taxes without success, but Rizzo is among the few who has actually cut taxes, albeit just his own.

The Morris County Board of Taxation revoked the tax-exempt status of a defunct City Baptist Church, which owns the house where Rizzo resides. Rizzo was the pastor at North Bergen’s City Baptist Church until he took a leave of absence to run for governor in 2021. The church subsequently shut down, supposedly because of Hurricane Ida. Back in 2017, Rizzo had sold his Harding County home to City Baptist Church for $1.65 million, thereby exempting the house from property taxes, but continued to live there. Harding Township challenged the church’s tax-exempt status, arguing that a defunct house of worship shouldn’t be able to continue avoiding property taxes. They won.

Rizzo lost his second Republican primary in as many years in June when he won 23.6% of the vote in his bid for Congress in New Jersey’s 7th district. In his pursuit of the Morris County GOP organization line, Rizzo allegedly agreed to pay $1,500 for a campaign table inside the convention hall. The Republicans claim Rizzo campaign political director, James Laucik, Jr., dummied up a receipt that showed he had paid on line. After Rizzo stiffed the county party, they sued him in small claims court. Rizzo threatened to expose cracks in the party organization that could help Democrats and offered to settle the case if the GOP agreed to a non-disclosure agreement so that neither side could disparage the other. Republicans turned him down. Later, Rizzo attacked the judge, David Weaver, saying that he couldn’t get a fair trial because Republicans control the Morris County courthouse. Weaver is a Democrat from Sussex County. Rizzo also claimed that he had a constitutional right to an in-person trial, not a virtual one.
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Almost four years ago, George Gilmore was left for dead on the side of the road. The most powerful Republican party boss in the state, he ran the Ocean County Republican organization with an iron fist for 23 years, before a pair of felony convictions on tax-related charges in 2019 triggered his resignation. Despite that, Gilmore never went away. He continued to play in politics, albeit with some setbacks: his handpicked successor for county chairman lost; so did his candidate for mayor of Toms River. When the Ocean GOP went in one direction, he went in another and gradually picked up chits along the way. On his final day in the White House, Donald Trump resuscitated Gilmore by pardoning him.

After Frank Holman announced that he wasn’t running again, Gilmore launched a bid to regain his old job. For a while, he looked like a long-shot against Michael Mastronardy, the popular sheriff. But in a secret ballot vote, some high-profile Mastronardy supporters moved their votes to Gilmore. The result was a narrow seven-vote win. With that, Gilmore is most definitely back in the game.

Ocean County Republican Chairman George Gilmore. (Photo: Kevin Sanders for the New Jersey Globe)
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Citing health issues, Ronald Rice resigned from the New Jersey State Senate on August 31, ending a stint of nearly 36 years. He is the longest-serving Black legislator in New Jersey history, and the fourth longest serving overall. The 76-year Marine sergeant who served in Vietnam and was a Newark police officer wasn’t always a favorite of his caucus, or his colleagues during the 16 years he spent as a Newark City Councilman, but no one doubted the sincerity of his beliefs. There will undoubtedly be more Black lawmakers that follow in his footsteps, but when it comes to areas like race relations and social justice, the Richmond native may be the last New Jersey legislator to have grown up under Jim Crow laws in the South at a time when schools were segregated, where Blacks were forced to use separate bathrooms and water fountains, and where interracial marriage was banned. That’s a perspective that made him a unique force in New Jersey politics.
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Nine days after Ronald Rice resigned his Senate seat, Essex County Democrats in the 28th district met to unanimously affirm the choice of Irvington Council President Renee Burgess as his replacement. Burgess locked up support from Democrats in Irvington and Bloomfield and won key endorsements from Gov. Phil Murphy, Democratic State Chairman/Essex County Democratic Chairman LeRoy Jones Jr., Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, and Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz. Leading up to today’s convention, it was an open question whether Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker, who has represented the 28th legislative district since 2008, would try to challenge Burgess. Tucker has made it clear that she wants to serve in the Senate, and she had the backing of both Rice and Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, who wanted the seat to be held by a Newark politician. Burgess worked hard to nail down commitments from rank-and-file county committee members and Tucker didn’t run.

Jackson Councilman Alex Sauickie III won the August 11 special election convention to succeed the late Assemblyman Ron Dancer, defeating Plumsted Committeeman Dominick Cuozzo and former Jackson Councilman Scott Martin. Sauickie received 106 votes to Cuozzo’s 44, with Martin well behind at 3. Sauickie was generally aligned with the state Republican establishment and had the endorsement of Dancer’s widow, while Cuozzo – who is also the pastor of the Bible Baptist Church – was the choice of Ocean GOP Chairman George Gilmore and right-wing elements of the party.
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A ruling by Superior Court Judge Kathleen Sheedy in April was a head scratcher: she allowed three Republican candidates for Howell Township Council to retroactively combine the signatures on separate nominating petitions so that could reach the 50 each needed to get on the primary election ballot. Two of the candidates didn’t have enough signatures on their own. The ruling went against what campaign veterans had known for years – that for a petition to be valid, all the names had to be on it before it was signed. This would be reversed on appeal for sure, most political observers believed.

The next part, well, you can’t make this up, even in New Jersey.

Appellate Court Judge Hany Mawla quickly stayed Sheedy’s ruling, but then inexplicably backed off. To determine whether candidates could be on the June ballot, Mawla set a briefing schedule that ended in August and the three-judge appellate panel didn’t get around to hearing the case until September 12, 143 days after the appeal was filed. Four days later, they ruled to uphold Sheedy’s decision – sort of. The judges essentially said Sheedy got it wrong but pounded a round peg onto a square hole by saying that all of the signatories had signed at least one of the petitions. The matter was moot at that point since they had long passed the date when a do-over primary could be run.
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President Joe Biden has enjoyed much success at confirming federal judges, but with the U.S. Senate tied at 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, that’s not an easy task. Previous commitments and COVID sometimes made the working Democratic majority iffy; the White House would not depend on GOP senators to confirm judges, if there weren’t enough senators available, votes would be postponed. So when the U.S. Senate decided to confirm Georgette Castner as a U.S. District Court Judge on March 31, Bob Menendez, who initially proposed Castner to Biden, wasn’t taking any chances. Once the Senate roll call vote on Castner opened, Menendez stood in the well of the chamber and in an old school moment that would have made Lyndon Johnson proud, he watched a clerk keep the tally. After all, Castner was his responsibility. The Senate confirmed her, 52-47, with all 50 Democrats voting yes.
Tricia Flanagan evinces the theory that some people reside within a social media bubble that doesn’t translate into votes. She has over 70,000 Twitter followers – it’s not clear how many of them are real – but when she ran for Congress in 2022, she received just 15 votes on Election Day. After losing two U.S. Senate bids (in 2018 as an independent and 2020 in a Republican primary), Flanagan ran in two congressional races in 2022. When initially entered the 3rd district contest against Andy Kim with a dog whistle video that claimed the state’s first and only Asian American congressman was “not one of us.” Then she switched to a primary challenge against Chris Smith in the 4th district, but a judge threw her off the ballot after she couldn’t get 200 signatures on her petitions. She reportedly raised $10,303 and spent $6,857 of it on a fundraiser at Trump National Golf Club; she didn’t report any production cost on her video. Flanagan, who had a national campaign coordinator, remained in the race as a write-in candidate that cost her $687-per-vote.
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Checkmate Strategies is incredibly proud of our dear friend and co-founder on his historic upset victory this November AND of our proven track record as one of the top firms in the country when it comes to flipping the toughest of blue seats red.
On January 26, about two weeks after he left office as the longest-serving Senate President in state history, Steve Sweeney was removed from his seat on the bipartisan apportionment commission that was redrawing the state’s 40 legislative districts. Democratic State Chairman LeRoy Jones, Jr. replaced Sweeney one month after infighting between two South Jersey Democrats appointed by Sweeney threatened to derail the congressional redistricting process. With a March 1 deadline to complete the new legislative map, Democrats had become increasingly concerned that Sweeney could become a free agent and cut his own deal with Republicans. In a bid to keep his seat, Sweeney took Jones to court, claiming he didn’t have the authority to remove him at will, and that the commission was flouting a requirement that all geographic areas of the state be represented. But a judge upheld Jones’ right to replace Sweeney, leaving him outside the room as the new map was drawn.

KNEECAPPING OF THE YEAR

Former Senate President Steve Sweeney. (Photo: Kevin Sanders for the New Jersey Globe)
For part of 2022, three of the seven seats on the New Jersey Supreme Court were vacant as Gov. Phil Murphy sought to confirm his March 2021 nomination of Rachel Wainer Apter as an associate justice. Holly Schepisi, a Republican state senator from Bergen County, had used senatorial courtesy to block Wainer Apter’s nomination.

Wainer Apter had been picked following the March 2021 announcement that Justice Jaynee LaVecchia would retire early. As Murphy sought to break the logjam over her confirmation, subsequent retirements by Faustino Fernandez-Vina in February 2022 and Barry Albin in July 2022 led to the 43% vacancy rate on the state’s highest court. Murphy would not nominate anyone else until Wainer Apter was on the court.

The fight ended in September when Schepisi, who had sought assurances that the partisan balance of the Supreme Court would continue, agreed to sign off on Wainer Apter concurrent with Murphy’s agreement to back a Republican recommended by Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Appellate Court Judge Douglas Fasciale, for the Fernandez-Vina seat. The two new justices were confirmed in tandem.

Schepisi will have input into the process to pick a replacement for Albin, whose seat has not been filled.
Six-term Camden County Commissioner Carmen Rodriguez resigned on May 31 to take a state job, but the county left her name on their website and never announced that she had quit. Four days later, she won a contested primary without ever telling voters she had no intention of remaining in the race. It wasn’t until two weeks later when Camden Democrats filed a notice that they were going to fill her seat with a hand-picked successor, that news of her departure broke. In the end, it was no harm, no foul since the county Democratic organization was going to win the primary and general with whomever they wanted anyway. New Jersey has no law that requires the resignation of a public official to be announced publicly.
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INSIGHT | INTEGRITY | INFLUENCE
Livingston native Megan Coyne, one of the architects of New Jersey’s hugely successful Twitter account with an attitude -- “Who let New Jersey have a Twitter? You’re Mom” -- departed state government in August as Gov. Murphy’s social media director to join the Biden administration. She’s the Deputy Director of Platforms in the White House Office of Digital Strategy, managing a combined 30 million social media followers. Within a few weeks, Coyne guided the White House Twitter into an entirely new stratosphere, Coyne called out conservative Republican lawmakers who slammed Biden’s student loan forgiveness plan while benefitting from government loan forgiveness themselves. Her thread has received millions of impressions and left some powerful New Jerseyans privately admitting that they’ll all be working for Coyne someday. Forbes named her to their “30 Under 30” Media list.

Coyne is the first Livingston High School graduate to take the Statehouse route to the White House since Robert H. Grady, who served as Gov. Thomas Kean’s communications director, became the Associate Director of the Office of Management and Budget under President George H.W. Bush in 1989 after a brief stop as a speechwriter and policy advisor for Bush’s 1988 presidential campaign. In 2016, another Livingston native, Chris Christie, sought the Republican nomination for president, but withdrew after a dismal 7% showing in New Hampshire.
Hirsh Singh has come an interesting footnote in the annals of New Jersey politics as an entitled 37-year-old petulant manchild with aspirations of high political office. Singh first came upon the political scene when he ran for Governor in 2017—a quirk in the state’s election law allowed his wealthy father to pump more than $1 million into his campaign because he was still living at home. He briefly ran for U.S. Senate in 2018 before switching to a congressional run in New Jersey’s 2nd district; he lost the GOP primary. Singh lost primaries for U.S. Senate in 2020 and Governor in 2021.

After being told that he was shooting too high, Singh finally lowered his aspirations in 2022 and sought a seat on the condo board of a 745-union prestigious building in Atlantic City. He ran a costly and ferocious campaign—he compared the incumbents to the Gestapo—but lost in a landslide, finishing fifth in a race for three seats.

That leaves Singh with a 0-6 record as a candidate with a little more than three years to go until he turns 40.
Burlington County Democrats missed a statutory deadline to fill a vacancy on the Board of County Commissioners by more than two months, but Superior Court Judge John Harrington said that nobody suffered as a result of the lateness and allowed the appointment of Allison Eckel to stand. Republicans had protested the election and seating of Eckel to fill a vacant seat, pointing to a statute that said vacancies must be filled by a vote of the party who previously won the seat within 35 days of the vacancy. Democrats maintained that voters would be disenfranchised if the seat remained vacant. In the end, it didn’t matter: Burlington has become blue and Eckel won the general election by thirteen percentage points.
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FAILER UPPER OF THE YEAR

Sue Fulton served as chief administrator of the New Jersey Motor Vehicles Commission for more than four years, most of it a tumultuous tenure where her performance became a political liability for her political benefactor, Gov. Phil Murphy. She took heat from Democrats and Republicans for massive lines at motor vehicle agencies after the coronavirus pandemic closed them down for months. Later, she faced additional problems as New Jerseyans found themselves waiting up until midnight to book a MVC agency appointment 60 days out, only to find the time slots gone within minutes. The governor’s office had to walk back her blaming of the backlog on 400,000 undocumented immigrants now entitled to a driver’s license under a new law Democrats passed.

President Joe Biden tried to help out Murphy in April 2021 when he nominated her to serve as Assistant U.S. Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. At the time, Republican Assemblyman Brian Bergen, a West Point graduate and former Army helicopter pilot, said her appointment didn’t frighten him because the Pentagon was big enough that the people around Fulton would buttress her shortcomings; Bergen thought Fulton was actually a greater danger to the public heading what some still call the DMV.

But the U.S. Senate apparently didn’t see it that way and refused to confirm her nomination. So in July 2022, Biden withdrew her nomination and instead sent her to Veterans Affairs in a less prestigious job in the office of public and governmental affairs that was not at the level of positions that required Senate confirmation.
THE GANNETT CRISIS

It’s been another tough year for America’s largest newspaper chain, which owns 9 dailies in New Jersey. With print newspapers going the way of the fax machine, Gannett reported losses of $107.9 million between April 1 and September 30. The severity of their financial problems led to about 400 layoffs (including multiple reporter jobs in South Jersey and the entire Atlantic Digital Optimization Team) and another 400 vacant positions, including the editor of the Asbury Park Press, that will remain unfilled. They imposed a one-week furlough for employees in December and halted contributions to their 401(k) retirement plan. The value of Gannett stock is down over 80% since 2019 and nearly 60% in the last year. Some New Jersey newspapers, already thin, stopped publishing Saturday editions in 2022. Newly-formed unions can’t get a contract. And on November 4, just four days before a national election, Gannett employees staged a one-day strike to protest the company’s budget cuts. The worst thing of all about the strike is nobody seemed to notice.

The find of the year may be an obscure 1971 state law that imposes a three-year residence requirement on county sheriffs. After a federal judge upheld the law in April, the Republican candidate in Passaic and the Democratic candidate in Monmouth — both caught off guard — were forced to drop out of the race. With the exception of governor, which carries a constitutional seven-year residency requirement, every other public office in New Jersey is one-year.
When Republicans have won two do-over local elections in New Jersey this year in towns that Joe Biden carried in 2020, some thought that could be a harbinger of where the state is headed during the 2022 mid-term elections. The GOP flipped a seat on the all-Democratic Maywood Borough Council on February 15 in a do-over of a November 2021 election that ended in tie and won a rerun of a November 2020 council race in South Toms River on Tuesday that had also ended in a tie. By November, Maywood was back to electing Democrats – as it turns out, all politics is local, and the contest was more about the personal appeal of the GOP councilwoman, Danyel Cicarelli. Republicans won locally in South Toms River, but they usually do.
THE HINDENBURG ELECTION

The disaster that was Election Day in Mercer County began when the polls opened at 6 AM and election officials quickly realized that the high-speed optical scanners that read the ballots had failed every polling location in the county. Election officials quickly shifted to Plan B, which was to have all ballots picked up and brought to the Board of Elections, where they were to be counted at a central location.

Completed ballots strewn across the floor at a polling facility in Mercer County on November 8, 2022.
(Photo: Obtained by the New Jersey Globe)

Election results were slow, but the good news was that no voters were turned away and that every ballot was counted. Some missing votes were found inside the Board of Election office, and the Mercer County Prosecutor found no evidence of tampering. Dominion Voting Systems denied any responsibility for the glitch.
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Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for a Happy and Healthy New Year!

CORY BOOKER U.S. SENATE
Ana Camilo, a campaign staffer working with Perth Amboy City Council candidate Jeanette Rios, was arrested two weeks before Election Day for offering gift cards to voters in exchange for votes. Camilo allegedly offered voters $20 ShopRite gift cards if they allowed her to fill out their absentee ballots for her preferred candidates. The Middlesex County Prosecutor’s Office received word of Camilo’s actions on October 17 and sent an undercover officer to investigate; rather than sit back and wait for the election to be stolen, Prosecutor Yolanda Ciccone immediately charged Camilo. Rios, who was not charged, made it to the runoff before she finally lost.

There is still no official explanation how a three-year-old Golden Retriever named K9 Ember died, even though the Gloucester County Prosecutor has been investigating the case since August. The dog, trained as an arson investigator and assigned to the county’s fire marshal, Shawn Layton, appears to have died after being left in a hot county-owned vehicle during a hot summer night. It took the county three days to report the dog’s demise; instead, Ember was buried in a marked grave in the backyard of Layton, a Mantua township committeeman, with dozens of police officers and first responders present. While the story captivated political insiders, the dead dog didn’t resonate with voters enough to stop Democrats in Gloucester County from retaining control of the Board of County Commissioners.
Buoyed by Jack Ciattarelli’s 47% showing in Bergen County in last year’s gubernatorial race and a widely anticipated red wave, Todd Caliguire thought he could resuscitate a political career that perished years ago by taking on Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco.

An ambitious Princeton graduate who served as an assistant chief counsel to Gov. Tom Kean in the early 1980s and later Kean’s top policy advisor, was once viewed as a rising star in Bergen County Republican politics. He sought party support to run for Congress in 1984 and for county executive in 1986 and ran an aggressive but losing race against incumbent Dennis McNerney. Caliguire was elected Bergen County Freeholder in 1992, but his successful bid for a second term in 1995 turned out to be the last time he was to win a general election.

When Rep. Marge Roukema retired in 2002, Caliguire was unable to put together enough party support to get the seat. He made a rather absurd run for governor in 2005, receiving just nine votes out of 835 at the Bergen County GOP convention, and finished seventh out of seven candidates in the primary with just 7,463 statewide vote – a little less than 2.5%.

In 2006, Caliguire won the Bergen GOP organization line for county executive and won a 577-vote victory against off-the-line rival Kathleen Donovan in the primary. Despite the endorsement of The (Bergen) Record, he received just 39% of the vote against incumbent Dennis McNerney.

But it was his 2007 bid for State Senate that probably haunts him the most. The incumbent, Hank McNamara, was retiring and Caliguire faced off in the 40th district GOP primary against Assemblyman Kevin O’Toole. Caliguire sent out a mailer that ran side-by-side photos of O’Toole, who was the state’s first Asian American legislator, and Rev. Al Sharpton, alleging that O’Toole was “the Republican Al Sharpton.” A Caliguire robocall told voters that O’Toole was Korean, not Irish; O’Toole’s parents met when his father was a U.S. Army soldier serving in the Korean War. Party leaders slammed Caliguire for race baiting, and O’Toole won the primary by 13 points.

Even a longtime friendship with Gov. Chris Christie couldn’t boost his political career because O’Toole held senatorial courtesy over him. He served on the SCI and then as executive director of the North Jersey District Water Supply Commission. That gave him a pension after the family-owned stationary and craft supply business Caliguire ran filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy.

Tedesco clobbered Caliguire, winning by more than 32,000 votes and 11 points.
Imani Oakley convinced donors to give her $462,671 to challenge Donald Payne in the 10th district Democratic primary but couldn’t persuade her three past employers to support her candidacy. She told contributors that she had polling that showed the race as winnable and promised endorsements she was never going to get. Despite a lot of bluster and noise, and a poorly-run, frequently conspiratorial campaign that mischaracterized her opponent’s record, Oakley lost by an 83%-11% margin. The magnitude of her loss leaves her with no real path to a political career.

Jacob Mercer-Pontier hasn’t lived in Lambertville since he graduated high school fifteen years ago, The 33-year-old publishing company executive has lived in London for the last eight years, but he can keep voting out of his parents’ house for as long as he considers that to be his real home. Olivia Peluso has lived in California for six years, but she still votes from her mother’s Lambertville address. Superior Court Judge Michael O’Neill partly recognized that they identified as Lambertville residents because they participated in the Greater Lambertville Chamber of Commerce Turkey Trot in November 2021, when they turned out to be the deciding votes in a $33.4 million South Hunterdon Regional School bond referendum vote that passed by a two-vote margin.

Congratulations to the New Jersey Globe on another great year!

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MOTORIST OF THE YEAR

Jersey City Councilwoman Amy DeGise’s July hit-and-run led for calls for her resignation. Video footage shows an SUV driven by DeGise colliding with a bicyclist, Uber Eats delivery driver Andrew Black, who ran a red light and collided with her, but she just kept going. DeGise was issued summonses for leaving the scene of an accident and failing to report an accident. She still hasn’t had her day in court and while it’s not clear if her political career will survive the latest in a series of traffic and court mishaps, DeGise has said she’s not going anywhere.

THE ARLEN SPECTER AWARD

The Democratic mayor of Monroe Township, Richard DiLucia switched parties in March, along with two Democratic councilmembers, Katherine Falcone and Steven McKinney. The move was supposed to help the GOP flip control of the municipality of 37,117 people, but DiLucia and Falcone never got past the GOP primary. DiLucia said he had become disillusioned with the Democratic party, but it seems a big reason for his switch was a plan by local Democrats to throw him off the organization line and replace him with Council President Gregory Wolfe. DiLucia lost the Republican primary by 44 percentage points to Samuel Miles, who lost the general election to Wolfe by 10 points in a town Jack Ciattarelli carried by 9.
THANKSGIVING MUST HAVE BEEN LOADS OF FUN

Jimmy Davis won a third term as mayor of Bayonne in May, narrowly avoiding a runoff, against a campaign run by his nephew and former chief of staff, Andrew Casais. Casais’ partner in running the campaign to unseat Davis was Raine Cuseglio, whose father, Vincent, is the Bayonne GOP municipal chairman and a Davis supporter.

Thomas V. Pollando, the Sayreville Democratic municipal chairman and a former councilman, was arrested in September on bribery charges connected to a probe of XXXV Gentlemen’s Club (Club 35). After the strip club was charged with money laundering and promoting prostitution in June, investigators learned that Pollando had offered to exert influence on how that case might go in exchange for a cash payment. While conducting surveillance, detectives observed Pollando accept several thousands of dollars in cash, and state that he would attempt to use his political clout to influence an ongoing criminal case. The Middlesex County Prosecutor’s Office said Pollando was found in possession of the cash payment when they arrested him. He has resigned as municipal chairman and as a member of Middlesex County Planning Board and the Sayreville Economic and Redevelopment Agency. He also lost his $70,955-per-year state job at the New Jersey Turnpike Authority.
JUNKETER OF THE YEAR

Nancy Pinkin traded her State Assembly seat for the Middlesex County Clerk post in 2020, but when her former legislative colleagues decided to take trip to Ireland in April, Pinkin was quick to invite herself along. The problem was that she was out of the country during the week nominating petitions were due for the June primary. She thought her absence could be hidden by simply cancelling the public ballot draw, but her cover was blown when one of the candidates went to court and convinced a judge to order a drawing. The judge also ordered the county to pay the legal fees.

YADDA YADDA YADDA

WNYC reporter Nancy Solomon’s true crime podcast, Dead End: A New Jersey Political Murder Mystery, was a huge hit. The story of the still-unsolved 2014 murder of former Commissioner of Transportation John Sheridan and his wife, Joyce, captivated people well beyond New Jersey, and it was indeed entertaining. But in the end, there were a lot of sensationalized assumptions that weren’t followed by any evidence; sort of like this: we know Nancy Solomon was six years old on November 22, 1963, and we know John F. Kennedy was assassinated that day. Some think there was a second shooter on the grassy knoll in Dallas that day, but we still don’t know who it was. And we haven’t been able to validate Solomon’s alibi.
HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

CWA proudly stands with those elected officials and Allies who fight for working families and share our union values!

At all levels, New Jersey needs more leaders who support collective bargaining, safe workplaces and affordable healthcare.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
New Jersey makes and the world takes, at least when it comes to raising candidates and then exporting them to other states.

This year in Pennsylvania, two Republican statewide candidates were Jersey Boys: Dr. Mehmet Oz grew up in New Jersey and despite moving to run for the U.S. Senate last year, remains a registered voter at his family home in Cliffside Park; and gubernatorial nominee Doug Mastriano grew up in Hightstown – his mother and grandmother both held local public office – and he voted in New Jersey through 2010 and remained on the state’s voter rolls until 2021. They both lost.

Democratic U.S. Senator Mark Kelly, the retired astronaut who won re-election in Arizona, grew up in West Orange. Herschel Walker, the unsuccessful GOP U.S. Senate candidate in Georgia, lived in Verona in the 1980s and 1990s while playing professional football. The losing Democratic U.S. Senate candidate in North Carolina, former state Supreme Court Justice Cheri Beasley, lived in New Brunswick for four years while attending Rutgers University in the 1980s.
The governor of Montana, Republican Greg Gianforte, grew up in Pennsylvania – about 20 miles from New Jersey – and then moved to New Jersey to attend college in 1979. He married a New Jersey woman and lived in Monmouth County until his move to Montana in 1995. Gianforte’s parents were both from New Jersey: his father grew up in Newark and his mother in Pittstown. The Montana governor’s brother, Michael, is a Brielle councilman and the executive director of the Two Rivers Water Reclamation Authority.

The new governor of Pennsylvania, Josh Shapiro, served as an aide to a United States Senator from New Jersey, Bob Torricelli, in the 1990s.

New Jerseyan Matt Mowers, who grew up in East Brunswick and worked for Gov. Chris Christie, moved to New Hampshire to become executive director of the state GOP and then state director of Christie’s 2016 presidential campaign there. After Christie lost — he won just 7% of the vote — Mowers moved home to New Jersey and voted in a second primary that year. He returned to New Hampshire to take on Pappas in 2020, lost, and this week lost a bid for a rematch in the Republican primary.

Six House members from other states grew up in New Jersey. All were re-elected in 2022.

Jamaal Bowman, a Bronx Democrat who ousted a longtime incumbent in a primary two years ago, played football for Sayreville War Memorial High School. Seven-term Connecticut Democrat Jim Himes grew up in Pennington and graduated from Hopewell Valley Central High School. Darren Soto, who won a Florida congressional seat in 2018, is from Ringwood and attended Lakeland Regional High School.

Scott Peters, a California Democrat who has been in Congress for ten years, is a graduate of Westfield High School. North Carolina Democrat Alma Adams, a congresswoman since 2014, graduated from West Side High School in Newark. Abigail Spanberger, a two-term Democrat from Virginia, spent part of her childhood in Red Bank.

In Florida, State Sen. Annette Taddeo is a Jersey Girl by blood. Her father, Anthony, was born and raised in Orange and served in World War II and Korea. He later moved to Columbia, where his daughter was born. Taddeo’s aunt was the school secretary in Mark Kelly’s West Orange school. Taddeo lost her bid to unseat freshman Republican Maria Elvira Salazar, who ousted Donna Shalala for the Miami-based seat in 2020.

Stefan Pryor, who served as deputy mayor under Cory Booker from 2006 to 2011, lost the Democratic primary for Rhode Island State Treasurer. Pryor spent four years as Connecticut Commissioner of Education before becoming Rhode Island Secretary of Commerce in 2015.

Three other U.S. Senators also have New Jersey ties: Ted Cruz (Texas) and Jeff Merkley (Oregon) attended Princeton University, and Elizabeth Warren (Massachusetts) is a Rutgers Law School graduate.

First Lady Jill Biden was born in Hammonton, and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff grew up in Old Bridge and attended Hebrew school at Temple Shalom in Matawan. Two men who were born in Trenton, Antonin Scalia and Samuel Alito, Jr., served together on the U.S. Supreme Court for a decade.

Two of New Jersey’s last three governors were Garden State immigrants: Jon Corzine grew up in Illinois, and Phil Murphy in Massachusetts. (Murphy and Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker were classmates at Needham High School.)

Bill Bradley grew up in Missouri and moved to New Jersey to attend Princeton University. He lived in Denville while playing for the New York Knicks and stayed in the state to run for the U.S. Senate in 1978. Clifford Case, whose bid for a fifth term was cut short in 1978 when he lost the Republican primary, grew up in Poughkeepsie, New York.
IN MEMORIAM

In Memory of New Jerseyans who passed away in 2022.
James J. Florio, a respected former Governor of New Jersey and an eight-term congressman who courageously tackled tough issues, sometimes to his political detriment, died on September 25 at the age of 85. As a congressman and as governor, Florio became known as an ardent protector of the environment — he championed the cleanup of toxic waste sites in New Jersey and across the U.S., and fought for stricter gun control laws, including the banning of assault weapons.

Born in Brooklyn, Florio was an amateur boxer and U.S. Navy veteran who came to New Jersey to attend college and law school. He started his political career as an assistant Camden City Solicitor — that’s what municipal attorneys are called in South Jersey — under Mayor Joseph Nardi, Jr. He also served as borough solicitor for Runnemede, Somerdale and Woodlynne.

The 32-year-old Florio ran for the State Assembly in 1969, two years after Republicans won three State Senate seats and five of six Assembly seats. He ran in Camden County’s District 3-D, a fishhook-looking district that included the City of Camden, Audubon, Audubon Park and Haddon Township. In the general election, Florio defeated Republican John Mohrfeld, an Assistant U.S. Attorney during the Eisenhower administration who worked as a legislative assistant to Rep. William T. Cahill and as district director for Rep. John E. Hunt, by just 381 votes.
Florio was offered a chance to run for State Senate in 1971 against Republican incumbent Frank Italiano. He declined and Italiano beat a lesser-known Democrat by 697 votes. He made his next big move in 1972, when he announced that he would run for Congress against Hunt, a three-term incumbent who represented a Camden-Gloucester district. Nixon carried the 1st by 20 points over George McGovern and Hunt defeated Florio by 10,158 votes, 52.5%-47%.

Sensing a Watergate-inspired national Democratic wave, Florio sought a rematch with Hunt and won by 26,699 votes, 57.5%-38.5%.

He spent fifteen years in Washington, but the statehouse was where Florio really wanted to be. With a February 1977 Rutgers-Eagleton poll put Gov. Brendan Byrne’s job approvals at an upside-down 22%-71%. He was one of ten Democrats who challenged Byrne in the Democratic gubernatorial primary; Byrne won with 30% and Florio, who received 15%, finished fourth.

Florio ran again in 1981 and with a strong plurality out of South Jersey, he captured the Democratic nomination by 65,519 votes, 26%-16% against Rep. Bob Roe. Newark Mayor Kenneth Gibson (15%), Senate President Joseph Merlino (11%) and former Attorney General John Degnan (10%) were the only candidates who finished with double digits in a field of thirteen candidates.

The 1981 gubernatorial race was the closest in New Jersey history. After an extended recount that didn’t produce a winner until December, Republican Tom Kean beat Florio by 1,797 votes statewide, 49.46%-49.38%. Florio refused to stand down.

By October 1990, Florio a Star-Ledger/Eagleton-Rutgers poll had Florio’s job approval ratings at an upside-down 18%-78%. Republicans rode an anti-Florio wave to take control of both houses of the New Jersey Legislature in 1991. The GOP picked up 10 Senate seats and 21 Assembly seats, knocking off Democratic incumbent in several solidly-Democratic districts.

Republicans nominated Christine Todd Whitman, a former Somerset County Freeholder and Board of Public Utilities president who nearly ousted popular U.S. Senator Bill Bradley in 1990.

By 1993, Florio’s began to rebound and came within 26,093 votes of winning a second term. Whitman won by just one percentage point, 49%-48%.

Florio spent the next seven years in the private sector, practicing law and building some businesses.

After Lautenberg announced that he would not seek re-election in 2000, Florio mounted a comeback as a candidate for the Democratic U.S. Senate nomination. But former Goldman Sachs co-chairman Corzine spent $35 million to win the Democratic U.S. Senate nomination, and defeated Florio by 69,004 votes, 58%-42%.

Over the last 20 years, Florio had retained a steady presence in New Jersey politics. He’d been a regular at State of the State and budget addresses delivered by his successors and enjoyed his role as one of the state’s elder statesmen.
David Friedland was the Rascal King of New Jersey politics, orchestrating a deal to deliver Democratic vote to elect a Republican Assembly Speaker and then later faking his own death to avoid going to prison.

He grew up in a political family. His father, Jacob, was a labor lawyer who represented Jersey City in the State Assembly from 1939 to 1952. Friedland was elected assemblyman in 1965 and was re-elected three times. After the 1969 election, the 32-year-old Friedland was elected Assembly Minority Leader by just one vote against John Horn, a Camden County Democrat.

When Democrats captured a razor-thin 40-39 majority in 1971 — independent Anthony Imperiale of Newark also won — Rev. S. Howard Woodson, a Mercer County Democrat and former minority leader, emerged as the Democratic candidate for Speaker. Horn was to be Majority Leader on Woodson’s ticket.

But Woodson’s campaign for speaker ended when Friedland and three other Democrats – Michael Esposito and David Wallace of Hudson and Joseph Higgins of Union – made a deal that mad Republican Tom Kean the new Speaker. Friedland became chairman of the new Assembly Conference Committee, which influenced which bills would make
it to the floor, and he controlled all the Assembly patronage jobs on the Democratic side. Friedland also negotiated committee chairmanships for some Democrats of his choosing.

“Jesus had Judas and we have David Friedland,” South Jersey Democrat Kenneth Gewirtz said at the time.

While serving as minority leader, and while negotiating the Assembly deal, Friedland faced disbarment after he sought to get prosecutors to drop loan-sharking charges against an organized crime figure, Joseph Zicarelli, the reputed Hudson County crime boss; he wound up with a six-month suspension of his law license. Assistant Attorney General William Brennan III, the son of the U.S. Supreme Court Justice, alleged that Friedland was “entirely too comfortable” with alleged mob bosses.

The allegations didn’t hurt Friedland electorally: he was unopposed for his at-large Assembly seat in the Democratic primary and won the general election by a 47%-31% margin against an independent, with the GOP candidate finishing third.

Friedland didn’t seek re-election in 1973 – reformer Paul Jordan had been elected mayor of Jersey City – but he was able to return to the public office four years later when he backed the winner of the May 1977 Jersey City mayoral race, Thomas F.X. Smith. In the June primary for State Senate, Friedland defeated incumbent Joseph W. Tumulty, the scion of an old and influential Jersey City political family, with 77% of the vote.

He was only a state senator for a short time became the target of a federal corruption probe. He and his father were indicted in October 1979 in charges that they took kickbacks from a $4 million loan made by the Teamsters Local 701. He was convicted on that charge, and on tax evasion and witness tampering charges. He left the Senate in 1980 and was succeeded, briefly, by James Galdieri, whose son would later be murdered by a hitman hired by political operative Sean Caddle.

Later, Friedland agreed to cooperate with the U.S. Attorney’s office as an informant in multiple other investigations. But while in a witness protection program, he became the target of yet another probe connected to the same Teamsters Union. Prosecutors later alleged that he tried to defraud the Local 701 pension fund of another $20 million in a mortgage investment scheme that went belly up.

About three weeks before he was due to appear in court for sentencing in 1985, Friedland disappeared while scuba diving in the Bahamas. He was not dead, but instead he used the fake passport traveled through Europe and Asia, sending U.S. Marshal Arthur Borinsky on a worldwide hunt before his arrest 26 months later in the Maldives Islands where he was working as a diving instructor.

Friedland sought asylum in Libya from Muammar Gaddafi and helped the U.S. government recover stinger missiles from Afghanistan involving a drugs-for-weapons scheme.

He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison and was released after about nine.
Barbara Curran was the first woman to serve in all three branches of state government, serving as an assemblywoman, president of the Board of Public Utilities, and as a judge of the Superior Court.

She became involved in politics working on Richard Nixon’s 1968 presidential campaign and managed former Senate President Frank McDermott’s 1969 campaign for the Republican nomination for governor. Curran served as an assistant to Republican State Chairman Nelson Gross during William Cahill’s successful bid for governor in 1969. Before that, she worked as an editor of the Rahway News Record and the Clark Patriot.

In 1971, at age 30, GOP State Chairman John Dimon named Curran as the executive director of the New Jersey Republican State Committee. She was the first woman to hold that post. In 1972, she became the executive director of the New Jersey Committee to Re-elect the President.

Curran overcame the 1973 Democratic Watergate landslide to win a State Assembly seat in a new district that started in her hometown of Summit in Union County and went through Parsippany and parts of Morris into part of Passaic. A Democratic incumbent from Pompton Lakes, won his second term, and Curran edged out Democrat Charles Kennedy, the Parsippany tax collector, by just 203 votes. She became one of just fourteen Republicans statewide to survive the 1973 Democratic wave.

She attended law school while serving in the legislature and was re-elected in 1975, 1977 and 1979. She resigned in 1980 after Gov. Brendan Byrne nominated her to the BPU; after Tom Kean was elected governor in 1981, he picked his ex-Assembly colleague to serve in his cabinet as BPU president. Gov. Jim Florio, with whom she also served in the Assembly, nominated her as a Superior Court Judge in 1992. She served on the bench until her retirement in 2009.
Republicans and Democrats in Trenton all liked Ronald Dancer, a thoughtful and effective assemblyman from Ocean County who spent nearly 20 years in the legislature. After a long illness that sometimes forced him to sit in his car in the statehouse parking garage so that he could cast his vote on bills, Dancer died in July at age 73.

Dancer won a special election to the State Assembly on his third try in 2002 following the death of Melvin Cottrell. A U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam era, Dancer was well-known in Ocean County as a horse breeder. His late father, Stanley F. Dancer, was an internationally acclaimed harness racing driver and horse trainer who won three horse racing Triple Crowns. He spent 22 years as a professional horse trainer and driver with the Stanley Dancer Horse Racing Stables.

He became involved in Ocean County Republican politics in the 1980s. He served as chairman of the Plumsted Planning Board – he’s held a seat on that board since 1983 — and on the Ocean County Planning Board, Agricultural Development Board, and Board of Social Services.

He ran in a special election convention for State Assembly in the old 9th district after Assemblyman John Hendrickson (R-Eagleswood) resigned to take a job at the Department of Community Affairs. Seven candidates initially sought the Assembly seat, including Cottrell, the mayor of Jackson, and John P. Kelly, an Eaglewood township committeeman and now an Ocean County commissioner.

By the night of the election, the race was down to Dancer and Lacey Mayor Christopher Connors, the son of 9th district State Sen. Leonard Connors (R-Surf City). Connors, now a state senator, won by 18 votes, 98-80, a 50.6% to 49.4% margin. Four months later, Dancer found himself as the new mayor of Plumsted. His second chance at a State Assembly came in 1991 after legislative redistricting eliminated the Essex-based 30th district and moved it to South Jersey to create a new Ocean-Burlington-Monmouth seat. Several Ocean County candidates emerged to run for the seats, including former Assemblyman and Lakewood Mayor Bob Singer, former Jackson Township Committeeman, Peter Carlson, Cottrell and Dancer.

Ocean County GOP Chairman Joseph Buckalew and Burlington County GOP Chairman Glenn Paulsen cut a deal – it was uneasy at first — for the Senate seat to go to 75-year-old John E. Dimon, a 75-year-old former Burlington County Republican Chairman who served as GOP State Chairman from 1970 to 1973. Ocean got the two Assembly seats, and the party picked Singer and Cottrell over Dancer.

Dimon died in 1993 and Republicans picked Singer to replace him. Bordentown Mayor Joseph Malone ran for Singer’s Assembly seat, keeping one of the 30th district seats in Burlington. (Malone became a longtime friend of Dancer and as recently as last month sat in his chair and cast Assembly votes while Dancer, too sick to go the floor, sat in his car in the statehouse garage.)

Cottrell was elected six times and died in office on October 9, 2002, of complications following surgery. Republican county committee members from Ocean, Burlington and Monmouth held a special election convention on November 12 to fill Cottrell’s seat. Dancer faced 33-year-old Joseph DiBella, a former Sayreville councilman who had just won election to the Howell Township Council one week earlier. Dancer defeated DiBella by 34 votes, 106-72, a margin of 20 percentage points.

Dancer won nine more times, all by impressive margins. In 2021, he won by almost 23,000 votes.
ASSEMBLYMAN
THOMAS PANKOK

July 9, 1931-January 31, 2022

Photo: Delaware River and Bay Authority.

Thomas A. Pankok was a humble, community-minded Korean War veteran who served two terms in New Jersey State Assembly before he was swept out of office in Gov. Thomas Kean’s 1985 landslide re-election. He launched his political career in 1958 as a 27-year-old candidate for Salem City Council and was re-elected in 1960. Pankok was elected to the Salem County Board of Freeholders in 1965 during a time when most municipalities had their own freeholder. He won again in 1966, winning a two-year term for a reconstituted, smaller freeholder board, but lost his seat in 1968. He was elected mayor of Salem in 1969 and returned to the freeholder board in 1970. He was elected to the State Assembly in 1981 and re-elected in 1983, but he lost to Jack Collins and Gary Stuhltrager in the 1988 Kean wave. Pankok won another term as freeholder in 1987 but lost an Assembly comeback bid two years later. Pankok had one final act in New Jersey politics, serving as the Salem County Democratic Chairman from 1998 until his retirement in 2004.

ASSEMBLYMAN
DAVID C. SCHWARTZ

February 27, 1939-June 10, 2022

Photo: New Jersey Legislature.

David C. Schwartz was a smart, fiery former assemblyman from Middlesex County who spent fourteen years in Trenton fighting to solve New Jersey’s housing crisis. He could be abrasive, but few legislators worked harder and were better prepared on a session day. A Rutgers University political science professor, Schwartz scored an off-the-line Democratic primary victory in 1979 after party leaders had dumped him from the ticket as he sought a second term in the legislature.

Schwartz was serving as a Highland Park councilman in 1977 when the legendary John A. Lynch, a former Senate President and New Brunswick mayor who was battling cancer, announced his retirement after 22 years in the Senate.

Assembly Speaker William Hamilton ran for the Senate – he edged out Piscataway Mayor Ted Light for party support — and Middlesex Democrats backed Schwartz over Light, former Piscataway Councilman Paul Comiskey, and New Brunswick Council President George Hendricks to fill the open Assembly seat.
When the 17th was drawn in 1973, it included New Brunswick, Piscataway, Dunellen, Highland Park, Middlesex Borough, South Plainfield in Middlesex County and Franklin and Manville in Somerset.

In the general election, Schwartz and incumbent Joseph Patero defeated attorney Jeffrey Brindle, now the executive director of the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission.

Light was anxious to go to the legislature and launched a bid to take one of the two 17th district Assembly seats. He persuaded the county chairman, Nicholas Venezia, partly by threatening to run off the line himself. Venezia chose to drop Schwartz and not Patero, honoring a deal he made with Somerset County Democrats to get one of the Assembly seats in a district that included Manville and Franklin Township.

That deal went badly for Middlesex after Somerset Democrats voted to back Schwartz on the line with Patero. After Venezia had a little chat with Patero, it was agreed that the incumbent would eschew the line and run with Light in Somerset.

In order to secure a better ballot position, Schwartz recruited three of his friends from Highland Park to for Middlesex County freeholder on a line her formed. One of the freeholder candidates was Ross K. Baker, a Rutgers political science professor of national prominence.

Schwartz turned out to be a vociferous campaigner. He said that his constituents ought not be deprived of effective representation just because a few political bosses wanted someone else. He secured the endorsement of the New Jersey AFL-CIO, much to Venezia’s chagrin.

The race between Schwartz and Patero got especially bitter during the final days of the campaign. Schwartz filed a libel suit against Patero after a campaign leaflet with his former running mate’s disclaimer alleged that he backed legislation to lower the legal age of sexual consent.

Both had voted for a bill that changed the consent age from 16 to 13 as part of sweeping changes to the criminal code, and many legislators claimed ignorance to that particular section of the legislation. Both Schwartz and Patero voted to raise the age back to 16. Light said he approved the flyer and the printer made a mistake.

Steve DeMicco, the executive director of the New Jersey Public Interest Group (PIRG), also sought the Democratic nomination for State Assembly.

Primary Day was a romp for Schwartz, who won 5,494 votes. Patero finished second with 3,786 votes, just 196 votes ahead of Light. DeMicco finished fourth with 2,720. Schwartz beat Light in Middlesex by 1,204 and in Somerset by 700 votes, a near 2-1 margin.

Schwartz sought an open congressional seat in the Middlesex-based 15th district in 1980 after nine-term incumbent, Edward Patten, retired. The Middlesex Democratic organization backed Senate Majority Leader Bernard Dwyer (D-Edison), a popular former Edison mayor, for the congressional seat. Schwartz, George Spadoro and Richard Pucci ran off-the-line. Dwyer defeated Schwartz by 3,528 votes, 32%-25%, followed by Spadoro (23%), Pucci (15%), and Doris Sipos (3.5%)

Schwartz retired from the Assembly in 1991 and Democrats replaced him with Union County freeholder Jerry Green, the Plainfield Democratic municipal chairman.
Democrat Harold J. Curry, served as an assemblyman from Warren County from 1964 to 1968. He was the Democratic candidate for Warren County Freeholder in 1962, running in President John F. Kennedy’s mid-term election, but lost to two-term incumbent John A. Pfeffer, Jr. by eight percentage points. Democrats had a 2-1 majority on the Board of Freeholders and Republicans fought to protect the tradition of a bi-partisan county government.

In 1963, at age 31, Curry sought the open State Assembly seat of Democrat Robert Frederick who had resigned from the Assembly at the end of 1962 to become Warren County Prosecutor. In those days, Warren had one Assembly seat and the county was politically competitive.

Curry faced Herbert Watkins, a politically active businessman from Washington. He won the seat by 660 votes, 51%-49%, in Gov. Richard J. Hughes’ mid-term election. Democrats lost their majority in the Assembly in 1963 and Curry went to Trenton as part of a 27-member Democratic minority in the 60-member lower house.

He faced a tough fight to win a second term in 1965. The Republican state senator from Warren County, Wayne Dumont, was on the ballot as the Republican nominee for governor against Hughes. He faced Republican Benjamin Dall, an attorney from Belvidere.

Dumont, who lost statewide by 363,572 votes and 16 percentage points, carried Warren by 4,446, 58%-40%. Curry overcame Dumont’s coattails and won re-election by 1,385 votes, 53%-47%. Democrats won control of the Assembly in 1965 and Curry became the chairman of the Agriculture, Conservation and Economic Development Committee.

With President Lyndon Johnson struggling in Washington and Hughes, in his second mid-term, facing some fatigue in New Jersey, Curry could not withstand the Republican wave in the 1967 general election.

Dumont returned to the State Senate, winning 69% of the vote in the new Sussex-Warren-Hunterdon district. Gimson and Littell swamped by about 14,000 votes.

Curry’s passing leaves Gregory J. Castano, a former Superior Court Judge and longtime Harrison town attorney, as the last living delegate to the 1966 New Jersey Constitutional Convention.
Anthony M. Villane, Jr. was a fierce advocate for protecting New Jersey’s beaches during his seven terms as an assemblyman from Monmouth County in the 1970s and 1980s and the Commissioner of Community Affairs under Gov. Thomas H. Kean.

Villane, known as Doc, was a dentist from Eatontown who became active in local politics and later became one of the most influential lawmakers of his era. After Republicans took control of the State Assembly in 1985, Villane became chairman of the Joint Appropriations Committee before leaving to join the Kean cabinet. He later served in George H.W. Bush’s administration.

As a legislator, Villane was the sponsor of the Fair Beaches Act which placed some limits on how much some municipalities could charge. He fought illegal dumping along the Jersey shore — and advocated the use of blimps as a cleaner way to watch polluters from the air — and pushed a bond referendum to provide funding for coastal communities through the legislature.

Born and raised in Newark, he was a college wrestler at Rutgers and spent three years as a U.S. Air Force captain following is graduation from Temple University Dental School. He was a practicing dentist for over 50 years with an office in Eatontown.

He was elected Long Branch Republican municipal chairman in 1972, lost a screening committee fight for the State Assembly in 1973, and was appointed to the Long Branch Board of Education 1975.

One month later, Villane became a candidate for the 10th district Assembly, which was mostly Monmouth County and included a small part of Ocean. One of the Democrats elected in 1973, Gertrude Berman was seeking re-election. The other seat was tragically left vacant in March 1975 when 34-year-old Assemblyman William P. Fitzpatrick was killed in an automobile accident. Villane and Brian Kennedy, a former assemblyman who lost in 1973, easily won the general election; Villane defeated Berman by 2,077 votes. He was re-elected five times and nearly ran for Congress against another Long Branch resident, Frank Pallone, Jr., in 1988.

Kean nominated Villane to serve as Commissioner of Community Affairs in July 1988 after Leonard S. Coleman left the cabinet. He remained in that post through the end of the Kean administration in January 1990.

In 1990, Villane joined the Bush administration as the regional administrator of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development during the time Jack Kemp was the HUD secretary. He left after Bill Clinton became president.
Maureen Ogden was a staunch conservationist and supporter of the arts who served in the New Jersey State Assembly for 14 years. As a lawmaker, Ogden authored several Green Acres bond issues aimed at preserving open space, and major legislation to protect freshwater wetlands. She also wrote the law that gave adoptees the chance to obtain their original birth certificates.

The Millburn Republican represented parts of Essex and Union counties in the legislature from 1982 to 1996. She was the first woman to serve as mayor of Millburn. Ogden made her first bid for public office in 1975 as a candidate for the Millburn Township Committee in an era when Millburn was a Republican stronghold.

Redistricting in 1981 eliminated the mostly West Essex 25th district that went from Millburn to Wayne and instead placed several of the West Essex municipalities in the 22nd district that now went from Clark to Essex Fells.

The 22nd had been represented by three Republicans – State Sen. Donald DiFrancesco and Assemblymen William Maguire (R-Clark) and Bob Franks (R-New Providence). Because they now comprised a large chunk of the new district, Essex Republicans demanded one of the Assembly seats.

While Maguire, a three-term legislator and former Union County freeholder, had more seniority, the one-term Franks had an advantage because he had managed Essex GOP Chairman John Renna’s campaign 1977 campaign. Maguire was dumped for Essex to get the seat.

Ogden easily won re-election bids in 1983, 1985, 1987 and 1989. She served as Assistant Minority Whip of the Assembly from 1982 to 1985. After Republicans won control of the State Assembly in 1985, Speaker Chuck Hardwick named her as chair of the Assembly Conservation, Energy and Natural Resources Committee. She later chaired the Assembly Arts, Tourism and Cultural Affairs Committee and the Assembly Environment Committee.

Redistricting gave Ogden an entirely new district in 1991 that stretched from Roselle Park to Cedar Grove. Instead of running with DiFrancesco and Franks, she was now in a district represented by State Sen. C. Louis Bassano, a Democrat, and Assemblyman Neil Cohen, a Republican.

Republicans put Monroe Lustbader, by then a four-term freeholder, on the Assembly ticket with Ogden. They defeated Cohen by over 13,000 votes, with Verona Councilman Frank Covello running about 5,000 votes behind Cohen.

She was re-elected in 1993 by a margin of more than 19,000 votes.

Following Republican Christine Todd Whitman’s election as governor in 1993, Ogden expressed interest in joining the cabinet as Commissioner of Environmental Protection, but the post went to another environmental activist in the legislature, Assemblyman Robert Shinn.

In 1995, at age 67, Ogden decided to retire from the legislature. But Ogden was not able to transfer the seat to her handpicked successor, Cynthia Fuller. Fuller had been Ogden’s chief of staff and was a Millburn Township Committee woman. Instead, the Republican nomination went to 31-year-old Cedar Grove Mayor Kevin O’Toole.
Ogden served as the first chair of the Garden State Preservation trust, as a member of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, and as a trustee of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. She chaired the Conservation Committee of the New Jersey Garden Clubs and served on the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. The 228-acre former Drakestown Preserve in Long Valley was renamed in Ogden’s honor.

Former First Lady Lucinda Florio, a former public school teacher who worked alongside her late husband, Jim Florio, with grace and dignity and scored her own victories as an advocate of improving literacy in New Jersey, died just 52 days after the death her husband. She married Jim Florio, then a seven-term congressman preparing to make his third bid for governor, on Valentine’s Day 1988, and helped soften her husband’s image for what turned out to be landslide victories in the primary and general elections. She was a constant presence on the campaign trail, where the once shy educator became extraordinarily popular with Democratic party leader and then with voters.

As first lady, Florio also played a key role in renovations at Drumthwacket, the governor’s mansion in Princeton. The Florio’s were the first to live there. Lucinda Florio dropped out of school to get married before her senior year of high school but started community college when her son was five. She spent six years pursuing a degree at Glassboro State College (now Rowan University) as a part-time student, and then got a job as an elementary school teacher.

Divorced for four years, she met Jim Florio in 1984 after they became neighbors at the same apartment complex in Camden County.
Jack McGreevey, a hugely likeable U.S. Marine Corps combat veteran and drill instructor who spent decades as an indefatigable and effective advocate for veterans and their families in New Jersey, was the father of former Gov. James E. McGreevey. McGreevey was still working as a legislative aide to State Sen. Joseph Vitale (D-Woodbridge), Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, and Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez (D-Perth Amboy) at the time of his death at age 93.

Born in Jersey City to Irish immigrant parents – his father, Michael McGreevey, was a Jersey City police officer – McGreevey served in the Marines from 1945 to 1948 and again from 1950 to 1951. His military service included the World War II and Korean War eras and he served as a machine gun unit leader during assignments in Japan, China and Guam. He was a drill instructor at the Camp Lejeune in San Diego.

Active in the VFW, American Legion and the China Marine Association, McGreevey was the deputy chief of staff to the New Jersey VFW. For more than 20 years, McGreevey has organized the Marine Corps Birthday event at Drumthwacket. He supported annual rallies to show support for U.S. troops in Woodbridge, and brought the Marine Corps Band to Woodbridge High School for a performance.

He planned annual ceremonies for the 19th district legislators to present medals for veterans who never received proper recognition for their service. He would share war stories with new generations of veterans. During the COVID-19 pandemic, McGreevey served as the veterans liaison between Vitale, Coughlin and Lopez and the state veterans home in Menlo Park. When he found the facility lacking hot water last month, he went directly to state officials to quickly rectify the problem. He spent part of the pandemic helping home-bond veterans apply for benefits.
Joseph Albright, a fabled New Jersey journalist respected by generations of political leaders and readers in Hudson County and across the state, was known as “Saint Joseph” and “Uncle Joe,” Albright dominated political journalism in New Jersey for parts of seven decades. After leaving the Navy, Albright spent six years as a Philadelphia Daily News sportswriter before losing his job under a shakeup by a new owner. He spent a year as a reporter in upstate New York before taking a new position that would change his life.

In 1965, Albright became a statehouse reporter for the Jersey Journal, covering Trenton for the Hudson County daily newspaper. His service began during Gov. Richard Hughes’ first term and extended into Gov. Phil Murphy’s second term.

He covered some of the most colorful personalities in New Jersey, people like David Friedland, William Vincent Musto, and Christopher Jackman. His final column appeared in the Jersey Journal on the day of his passing at age 93.

Andrew Weber was part of Jim Florio’s South Jersey inner circle and began his decade-long stint as Gloucester County Counsel at age 32. After Florio was elected governor in 1989, he served in the cabinet as Commissioner of Personnel, and then as Chief Counsel to the Governor from 1990 to 1992. Weber later served as chairman of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority and as Mount Laurel Democratic municipal chairman.
Bob Mulcahy became one of the most powerful political insiders of his generation as the chief of staff to Gov. Brendan Byrne and later as the president and CEO of the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority for 19 years and as the Rutgers University Athletics Director for a decade. In his later years, Mulcahy was the chairman of the New Jersey Casino Reinvestment Development Authority. Mulcahy was top gubernatorial aide to use the title of chief of staff when he assumed the post at the start of Byrne’s second term in 1978. Before that, the job title was typically executive secretary to the governor.

At age 27, Mulcahy became the Democratic candidate for the Mendham Borough Council in 1963 and won. He later became mayor.

In early 1974, he joined the fledgling administration of Gov. Brendan Byrne as deputy commissioner of New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies, now known as Human Services. Byrne later assigned Mulcahy to take an active leadership role at the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) as the governor began to increasingly rely on him as a troubleshooter for his administration. After the creation of a new state Department of Corrections to run the prison system – the role had formerly been part of Institutions and Agencies, Mulcahy was nominated as the first commissioner. At age 40, he became the youngest member of the cabinet.

Just before Christmas 1977, Byrne, the surprise winner of tough primary and general re-election campaigns announced that Mulcahy would be chief of staff. He left to take over the Sports Authority in 1979 and became Rutgers Athletic Director in 1988. He played a major role in the revitalization of the Rutgers football program and the hiring of head football coach Greg Schiano.
IN MEMORY OF NEW JERSEYANS WHO PASSED AWAY IN 2022.

- Larry Adams
- Anthony Amalfe
- John Alston
- Robert Arcario
- Andrew August
- Jeanne Augustine
- Mar Avagliano
- James Balph
- Edward Barr
- Robert Bowser
- Adam Browner
- Bailey Brower
- Jack Buchanan
- George Callas
- Richard Capan
- Kathy Caputo
- Carole Cardinale
- Carl Cathers
- Marie Christiansen
- Roseann Cimino
- Pat Colavita
- Rudy Coleman
- Daniel Colombi
- Rev. Fernando L. Colon, Jr.
- Michelangelo Conte
- Carmen “Spider” Corona
- Willie Mae Crawford
- Anthony Cruz
- Kimberly Cummings
- Laurelle Cummings
- Robert Dammingner
- Gary Daniels
- James DeBosh
- MaryAnne DeFuccio
- Leonard Desiderio
- Samuel DeVico
- Marcienne Doerrmann
- Timothy Donnelly
- Jean DuBois
- Douglas Dial
- Terrance Matthew Duffy
- Peggy Fahy
- Thomas Ference
- Jack Fitzpatrick
- William Filore, Sr.
- Mary Fontoura
- David Frost
- Eleonor Gallagher
- Patricia Ann Gannon
- Annabella Marie Giacobbe
- Nathaniel Glinbizzi
- LeRoy Goldblatt
- Joyce Goldman
- Arene Gordon
- Erma Gormley
- James Grogan
- Brenda Hall
- Lydia Hart
- Joseph Hartmann
- Greg Handshy
- Jerald Harvey
- Ollie Hawkins
- Eileen Heinz
- Daniel Hennes
- Dorothy Hentges
- Richard Hodson
- Harry Hoffman
- Lisa Honecker
- Emily Hornaday
- Gail Houlihan
- Sean Hughes
- Susan Ingargiola
- Camilla Jeter
- Nick Juliano
- Skip Kelley
- Aga Khan
- Jack Kraft
- Frank Kramer, Jr.
- Tillie Kratsas
- Henry Kuhl
- Phyllis Ladota
- David Landau
- Kevin Lavan
- Thelma Leonard
- Orvis “Leo” Leopardi
- Ray Liotta
- Robert Lloyd
- Bill Loufik
- Alan Loveland
- Paul and Helen Mallon
- Mary Manzo
- James Marano
- Phil Matalucci
- Virginia McKenney
- Bill McPhail
- William Meisner
- John Mitchell, Sr.
- Joyce Lawson Moore
- Robert Muir
- Philip Munafo
- Henry Nardelli
- Benedict Nicosia
- Vincent Nuzzi, Jr.
- Kevin O’Neill
- Robert O’Hare, Sr.
- Robert Pallotta, Sr.
- Joe Parisi
- Frank Pedulla, Jr.
- Norman Peer
- John Polhemus
- Ralph Porter
- Karl Posselt
- Dorothy Power
- Kenneth Prescott, Sr.
- Paul Reilly, Sr.
- Cynthia Margetts Robinson
- James Rafferty
- Essie May Rice
- Robert Rizas
- Edith Hodes Rose
- Donald Rosser
- Tim Rudolph
- Anna Russo
- Mary Ellen Rustum
- Weese Sandman
- Anthony Sartor
- Frank Sciro
- Joseph Seliga
- Thomas Shebell
- Gerald Silliphant
- Henry Skirbst
- Harold Smick, Jr.
- Joseph Soporkowski, Jr.
- Michael Stenger
- Robert Switzer, Jr.
- Harold Teltser
- Gerald Thaxton
- Anne Moreau Thomas
- Honey Thomas
- Sue Tisiker
- Tom Torok
- Joseph Vill
- Kibby Walsh
- Doris Weisberg
- Dick Williams
- Jennie Williams
- Butch Wilson
- Robert Wilson III
- George Woody
- Barry Wright
- Robert Yostembski
- Susan Zellman
- Pence Ziegler
"....Nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

14TH AMENDMENT
UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION
RATIFIED JULY 28, 1868
“NEW JERSEY DEMOCRATS,

Thank You

FOR FIGHTING WITH US DURING A CRITICAL ELECTION YEAR.”

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY
CHAIRMAN LEROY JONES

For more information on early voting and voting by mail, head over to: njdoms.org/voter-resources

CHAIRMAN LEROY J. JONES, JR.
VICE CHAIR PEG SCHAFFER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SALLY AVELENDA

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Senator Vin Gopal

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