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# INSIDER NJ

*Message from the Editor*

## INSIDER 100 POWER



*Democratic Somerset Freeholder-elect  
Shanel Robinson*

**ATLANTIC CITY** – On the heels of an historic New Jersey election, welcome to the Insider NJ Power 100, where we sort out the year’s main players, bosses, activists and influencers, across a broad range of political disciplines.

While we don’t include elected officials on the list (with one exception, see below), we do rely on campaigns and elections as a significant starting point to assess power. Gratefully, we had a highway jammed with broken heroes, with apologies to the Boss, including the usual local collisions in Paterson, Newark, Bayonne and Long Branch.

Of course, we also chronicled an extraordinary year of primary and general elections, characterized by the rise of new mid-term voters outraged by the presidency of Donald J. Trump, honed in a final fatal outcome for New Jersey Republicans: the reelection of U.S. Senator Bob Menendez, but more significantly – the election of four new Democratic congresspeople to create an 11-1 congressional imbalance between Democrats and Republicans. Those victories contributed to Democrats nationally retaking the U.S. House of Representatives.

On the day after the Nov. 6th election, Governor Phil Murphy exulted in Newark with Mayor Ras Baraka, but did so in a humble tone, well-received by the members of the Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church, as he quoted his hero Bobby Kennedy, himself quoting the Greek playwright Aeschylus: “God, whose law it is that he who learns must suffer... and even in our sleep, pain that cannot forget, falls drop by drop upon the heart, where in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom, by the awful grace of God.”

While you will find here new names and faces that emerged on the greens and marts of the public domain in a year when New Jersey voters decided to exercise their franchise, we have also continued to consider – and simultaneously prioritize – those inside game players in Trenton, who operate in the shadows and half shadows of government.

Given the Governor’s challenges within his own party – particularly during the budget season – but also the ease with which the Irish-American could express the views of the typical outraged anti-Trump voter, whether urban or suburban, Murphy straddled the often contradictory worlds of New Jersey in a way – after all the backroom wars – that only the general election could resolve.

We tried to keep that balance in mind as we composed this annual list for your enjoyment, and for your continued consideration of those ever-shifting currents of New Jersey political power.

On a personal note, InsiderNJ thanks you for your support, as we posted our best numbers throughout the year and our best showing of all time on Election Day 2018, making us the undisputed number one stand-alone political news website in New Jersey.

As we gear up for the next cycle, we’ll see you in the halls of power, on the streets – and in the leafy greenery that is the enduring legacy of a mangled but still-great place called New Jersey.

Max Pizarro  
*Max Pizarro*  
Editor, InsiderNJ

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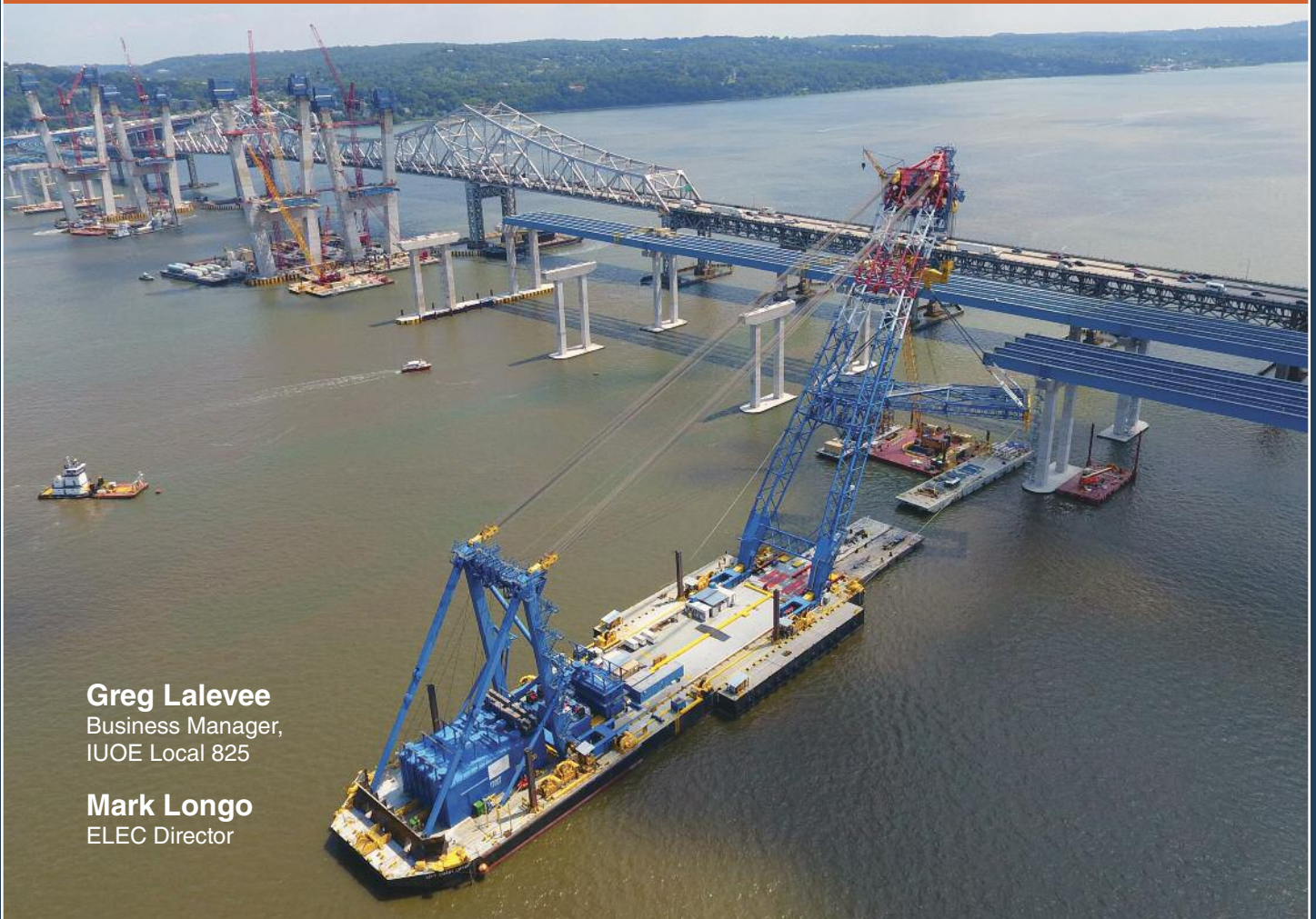




**MIKIE SHERRILL***Moses Of The Women's Movement*

It's hard to overstate the revulsion and remorse of women in the era of President Donald J. Trump. Defeated in 2016, their ranks in the Democratic Party sought reanimation and organization to recoup what an Access Hollywood president took from them. They started out with bullhorns and signs. They assessed targets – those enablers of the president and his agenda and their privileged fortifications. In CD11, they coalesced around Sherrill, who stood out from the beginning. The most important leaders transcend the self to become the vanguard of a movement. That's what Sherrill did in 2018. The troops needed a leader in this state and Sherrill – who happens to be a retired Navy helicopter pilot, former prosecutor and mom – stepped up, becoming a #me2 movement Moses of this moment. Democrats weren't supposed to win in Rodney Frelinghuysen's backyard. But when the Trump era unhorsed the longtime incumbent, Sherrill trampled his successor, movement conservative Jay Webber (56.1-46.8% districtwide; 76.8K to 64.3K in Webber's [and Frelinghuysen's] home county of Morris), to install herself as this season's most important and captivating political presence. Trump had tweeted his own personal endorsement of Webber. He even personally fundraised for Webber and sent his envoy, Kellyanne Conway, in to raise money for him in Morris County. But Sherrill had too much power at her back, and now, not only is she the 11th District congresswoman-elect in a year when 100 women won congressional seats nationwide – but a routinely discussed statewide option for North Jersey Democrats, who throughout the year faced the prospect of reevaluating their own political priorities in Trump World and acknowledging their own weaknesses. Sherrill looked bigger than the establishment (her win in the 11th crystallized a statewide trend, where all 12 congressional district Democrats unofficially registered 1,637,280 votes, compared to 1,500,555 for the top of the ticket, a 136,726 drop-off), as she led her team to triumph and beat not only Webber – but Trump.

# CONGRATULATIONS TO GREG LALEEVE AND ALL OF THOSE ON THE 2018 POWERLIST



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**GEORGE NORCROSS**

*Dealmaker*

The South Jersey Democratic power player demonstrated a continued strong hand at work this year. He still controls the legislature, his influence expressed through the dual leadership arms of the Senate Presidency and Speakership, and his irritability over the Phil Murphy governorship evident through the budget fight and the party establishment's resistance to the Democratic State Committee under the leadership of Chairman John Currie. The mere mention of his name come bill consideration time still creates shark fin seal floundering in the halls of Trenton. It's real. Never have so many had to squeeze themselves through such a small aperture as in the era of Norcross, where the more populous regions of Essex, Bergen, Union and Middlesex still pay dutiful obeisance to the insurance broker from Camden County. When he mentioned in the budget aftermath that Murphy would have to change up his staff to get better results next time, the chattering classes figured Norcross had boxed Murphy in again. Now the unbossed governor wouldn't be able to even quietly get rid of anyone without looking like he was serving the white-haired kingpin. The boss' allies performed at the ballot box, too. Unable to produce Northern pluralities, Camden nonetheless showed out (thanks for the term, Mayor Baraka) for Menendez (85K-plus), Democrats outdueled the GOP in Atlantic, and – motivated by U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew and U.S. Rep.-elect Andy Kim, the surrounding South Jersey counties did not go to sleep on the top of the ticket. Plus, South Jersey Dems picked up two congresspeople to add to Norcross' brother U.S. Rep. Donald Norcross (D-1).

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3

## JOHN CURRIE

*Filling Ballrooms,  
not just Backrooms*

The Democratic State Party Chairman doesn't program legislators or control conveyor belt-loads of elected officials. He purports to command a party with some significant divisions, as Norcross and Senate President Steve Sweeney continue their statewide pushing and shoving match with Murphy. But people who know Currie and came up with Currie know him to be an old school Democrat, who isn't so jaded that he can't simultaneously groove with the #me2 movement, convincingly beam Murphy and Booker love, while also backroom operating in Paterson. That's why when the Norcross crowd – and that's a connected crowd, with far and wide insider tentacles – opted out of his party in Atlantic City soiree earlier this year, Currie still pulled off a successful shindig. It was one of the best-attended Democratic conferences ever, highlighted not only by the grinning Don Rickles-Frank Sinatra duo of Murphy and Booker, but a people-power army enhanced by Newark Mayor Ras Baraka. The ever-uncontrollable Baraka stood tall with Currie, as did the trending congressional candidates committed to staring down the president. Even as the old, dank corridors teem with the names you've seen for 30 years, who each season grow more indolent and complacent in the seats the establishment sat them in, Currie in Atlantic City at the head of a packed Harrah's ballroom – with Baraka in particular at his side – demonstrated his capacity to reveal another avenue of political persuasion beyond the cocoon of titles and their half-feathered aging hatchlings and underlings: namely real rank and file people. The election results proved as much, with Senator Bob Menendez winning statewide 53.2%-43.6%, and four congressional districts turning from red to blue. Whatever happens going forward, Currie goes down as the party chairman who presided when New Jersey went 11-1 in congressional contests. Also, consider this: Currie played a critical leadership role (with Leroy Jones, see below) in helping to clear the field for Mikie Sherrill, pitched in to land the mayoralty in Paterson for Andrew Sayegh, and nailed a clerk's seat in his home county of Passaic. It was a backroom-turbulent year for the chairman, given South Jersey's opposition as they attempt to better their footing for redistricting, but ultimately a grand winning year for Currie.



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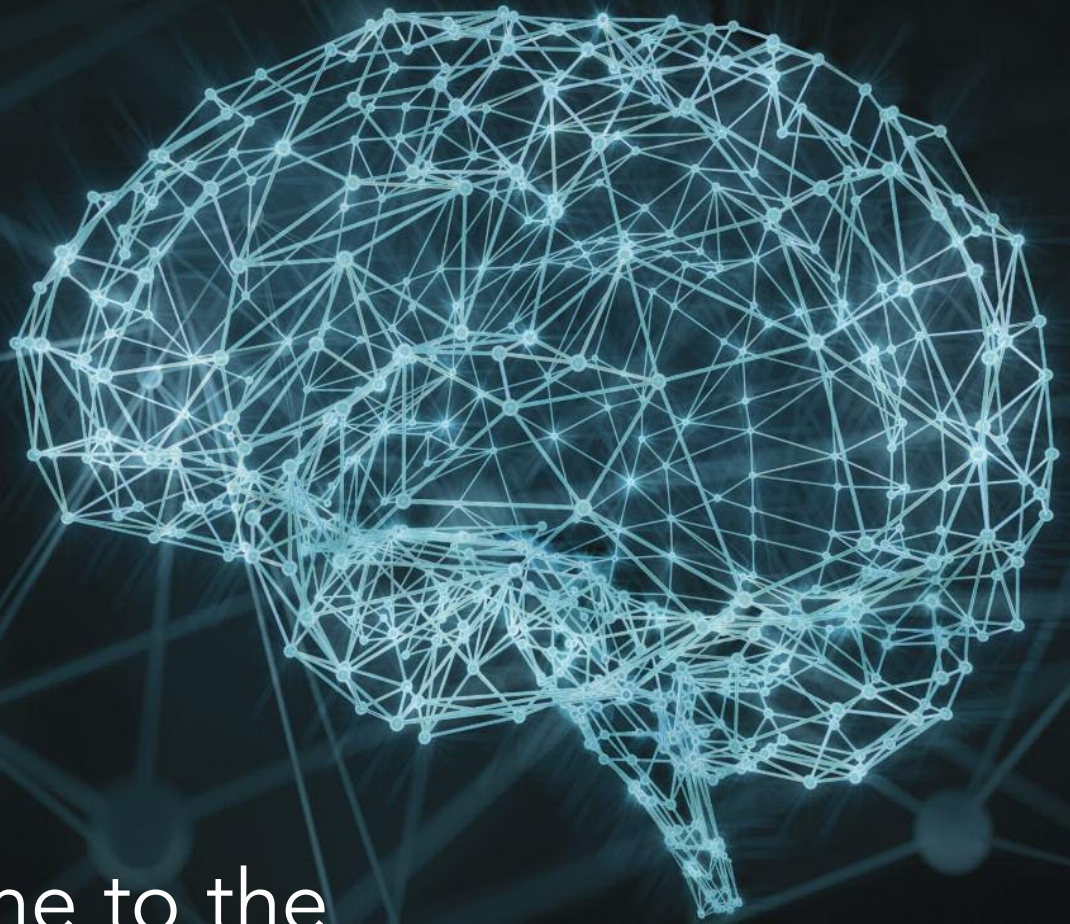




**LOU STELLATO**

*More than a Boss*

No one pushes around the Bergen County Democratic Committee chairman. But the leadership of the former Lyndhurst mayor goes so much deeper than just that, proved this year by how Stellato managed a political crisis. What Stellato lacks in the way of legislative ring polishers and statewide heft, he makes up for in the way he runs his own county. He took back the Bergen executive's office in 2014 and held it this year as Jim Tedesco stamped out his Republican challenger with little fanfare and U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-5) bucked his challenger 55.2%-43.5% in what was once a Tea Party district. Sure, his state senators like to give him fits and he endured a kick in the teeth when Sheriff Mike Saudino melted down in racist remarks publicized by WNYC. But his recovery from that debacle demonstrated Stellato's wise use of power. The Bergen Democratic Party answered Saudino's demise by turning to the local president of the NAACP, Anthony Cureton, to restore the public's expectation of justice in a pluralistic society. Different circumstances and times, but it was, in its own way, as judicious and responsive a political move as when the late Ray Durkin backed the late Donald Payne for Congress. Stellato also won four legislative contests. Significantly, Bergen unofficially marked 163,037 votes for Menendez, the most of any county (although the plurality wasn't stellar compared to Essex [33.4K]). "This was a group of people who had such disdain for Trump, it was uncanny," said Stellato, who reaped the benefits, the foundation he put in place beginning in 2011 yielding a much-enhanced and undisputed North Jersey independent power base.



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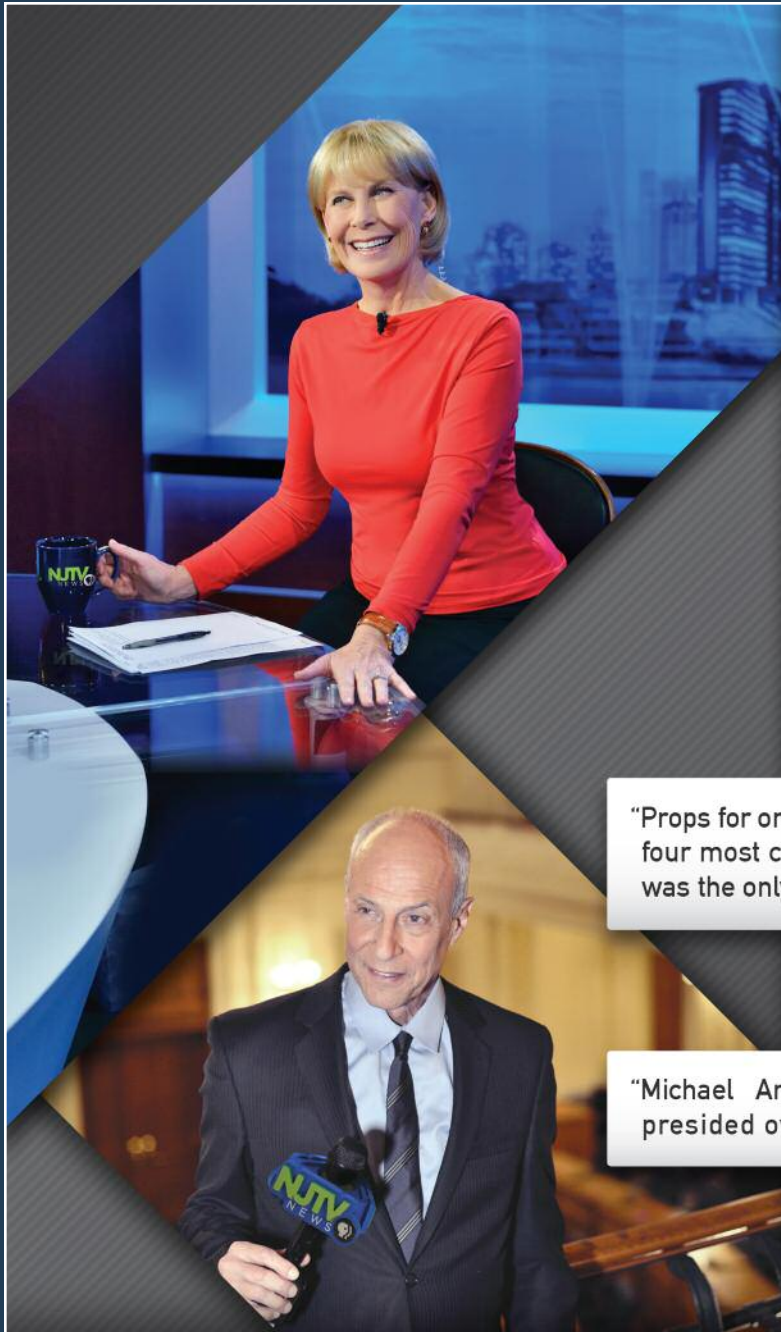


**LEROY JONES**

*Power by Numbers*

It comes down to the numbers. The Essex Democratic Committee Chairman commands the county which houses the most registered Democrats, and that was particularly important in 2018. Statewide reps fall into three categories in New Jersey: the self-funder, the transcendent figure with immediate presidential aspirations, and the machine politician. With an embattled U.S. Senator Bob Menendez on the ballot, this was the year of the machine pol who would lean heavily on the party machines to secure reelection. From purely a mechanical standpoint, that burden fell on Jones, state Senator Brian P. Stack, Hudson County Democratic Chair Amy DeGise and the HCDO. Unlike some other chairs who don't have any power except what the rest of the organization parcels out to them, Jones – like Stack and state Senator Nick Sacco – remains the most powerful man on his home turf of East Orange, a critical part of the Essex power game. Then he has the power supplement of the whole county, the Democrats' most important statewide power piece, which ultimately delivered for Menendez when it counted – 156,805 votes, unofficially the second highest after the Bergen, but critically the biggest Democratic plurality (113.4K) of all New Jersey's counties. Jones deserves credit, too, for juggling the egos of Essex, never an easy task but one that he pulls off with a touch of class. And he has power player allies in key positions: East Orange's Sheila Oliver as lieutenant governor and head of the Department of Community Affairs, and Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin as Budget Chair and joint chair of the select committee on investigations.





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## KEVIN MCCABE

### *Lifeline to the Speakership*

Speaker Craig Coughlin is where he is right now – on the throne of the General Assembly – because

Middlesex was organized and didn't indulge in the kind of off-the-reservation egocentrism visible in other counties. Pros like Senators Bob Smith, Joe Vitale and Pat Diegan (and Woodbridge Mayor John McCormac) stuck together in 2017 rather than cultivate cults of irritable individuated personality. McCabe was – and is – the leader who holds it together, a political condition strengthened by the positive reviews Coughlin continues to receive a year into his tenure as speaker. The speaker in a way is not unlike the rest of Middlesex under the sitting chair's leadership: low drama and eager to unify a potentially disparate group. It's a mindset etched out of those coffee urn encounters at the Pines. McCabe has the additional power perch of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey – and his county performed on Election Day – 122,000 votes for Menendez compared to 82,518 for Hugin in a county Chris Christie won in 2009. Keep an eye on McCabe when the Norcross-footed establishment tries to take a run at Currie ahead of redistricting. Word is the sitting state chair's successor is either Jones or McCabe. But if Coughlin's select committee on investigations actions prove anything early, it's that Middlesex is just autonomous enough to keep things politically interesting.

## One To Watch In 2019



Cory Booker

## THE MOST POWERFUL CONGRESSPEOPLE

(Or Congresspeople-elect) by the (Unofficial) Numbers:

**Chris Smith:** 156,457

**Mikie Sherrill:** 152,178

**Donald Payne, Jr.:** 149,016

**Andy Kim:** 148,580

**Josh Gottheimer:** 148,021

**Bonnie Watson Coleman:** 144,441

**Tom Malinowski:** 139,826

**Donald Norcross:** 136,540

**Jeff Van Drew:** 125,755

**Bill Pascrell:** 124,736

**Frank Pallone:** 121,502

**Albio Sires:** 104,417

*Editor's Note: Tallied on Election Day in the case of everyone but Kim, these are subject to change based on late vote tallies.*



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**AMY DEGISE***The Exception*

We don't put elected officials on this list, but we made an exception in the case of DeGise, a Jersey City School Board member who this year defeated state Senator Brian P. Stack to become chair of the Hudson County Democratic Organization (HCDO). DeGise made history as the first elected woman chair of the HCDO and presided over a county that racked up a respectable 118,478 mid-term election year votes for home county hero Menendez. A teacher by trade, DeGise shone early in her role, not an easy one in a county long ruled by overfed men in undersized suits. From the start, she displayed not only courage when she stepped up to run against the dangerous Stack, but also policy savvy, message discipline, and a willingness to stand in there for a sustained scrap. Her victory over the Union City leader proved helpful to key ally state Senator Nick Sacco (D-32), who held onto North Jersey power through the political alliance he has with Currie and Stellato, in effect preserving the insulation the Bergen, Passaic and Hudson power players crave to maintain hegemony from South Jersey. At young DeGise's side are HCDO executive director Susan Ragheb, policy director for Assemblyman Nick Chiaravalloti, and counsel Steve Kleinman, among others, including her enduring old school Jersey City Heights-educated father, Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise.



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**MIKE ARON**

*The Dean*

The state doesn't really deserve NJTV's chief political correspondent. But he's plied his trade here as the elder statesman of political reporting, eternally secure in the knowledge that the swamp will provide. Princeton brought him here but Trenton kept him here. It's been said that reporters – particularly those on the far side of 40 who crave old school references, who still have some dim memory of a more civilized time – require Aron for animal warmth – and example. It's true. Without him, the New Jersey Press Corps would sustain a gravitas gap that only Aron's blend of erudition, experience and humanity sustain. A born teacher who comes across as the opposite of school-marmish, Aron offers the state his own ongoing professorship of politics. The 2018 debate season proved an especially distinguished stretch for the dean and the entire NJTV team.

## THE TOP TEN COUNTIES BY THE NUMBERS:

**Bergen (Menendez):** 164,037

**Essex (Menendez):** 156,805

**Ocean (Hugin):** 139,683

**Monmouth (Hugin):** 135,619

**Bergen (Hugin):** 130,558

**Hudson (Menendez):** 118,478

**Middlesex (Menendez):** 121,798

**Monmouth (Menendez):** 107,207

**Morris (Hugin)** 101,683

**Union (Menendez):** 101,631





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**TAMMY MURPHY**

*The State Street Partner*

Murphy's enemies painted an early portrait of New Jersey's First Lady as a concerning combination of Lady MacBeth, Cleopatra and Nancy Reagan, with the Governor therefore assuming the uneasy supporting roles respectively of a weak king, unstable general, and unwitting presidential material. It all gets back to Tammy, ran the pre-budget narrative, her Potomac fever and undue State Street influence, but at a certain point the almost overwhelming buzz lessened. What remained, though, was the image of a partner not a subordinate, a player not a bystander, and maybe even a knife fighter more than a ribbon cutter. This much is true: with her Goldman Sachs husband installed as the state's chief executive, Tammy Murphy was not going to occupy the mild or muzzled side of public life. That was evident when her husband presented her to the crowd at a #me2 movement march in Morristown and she recounted her personal story of surviving a sexual assault in college. Her presence that day proved iconic and emblematic of real political leadership. Morristown proved a key torque point for Mikie Sherrill's victory.

## **MOST INFLUENTIAL POLITICAL BOSSES HISTORICAL**

Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague  
Atlantic County Sherriff Nucky Johnson  
South Jersey Democrat George Norcross III  
Newark North Ward Democratic Chairman Steve Adubato, Sr.



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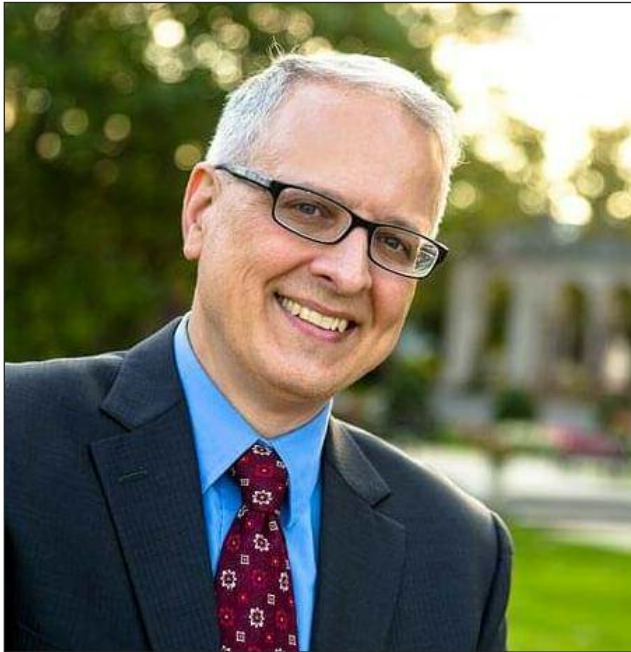


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**PATRICK MURRAY**

*Pollster*

The Nostradamus of New Jersey, Monmouth University pollster Murray carved out a national perch for himself, but remains our precious go-to resource to anticipate the outcomes of critical battleground collisions. This Garden State election, in fact, supplied him with the inspiration he needed to create his Picasso “Guernica,” as Murray’s polling foresaw the outcomes in all contests, from the U.S. Senate to the individual congressional races, and – with data – bigfooted the Trump-sized screams of “fake news.”

## TOP 2018 CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS OPERATIVES

**Mike Soliman:** Menendez for U.S. Senate

**Colston Reid:** Malinowski for Congress

**Mollie Binotto:** Sherrill for Congress

**Brendan Gill:** Sherrill for Congress

**Forrest Rilling:** Kim for Congress

**Mike Muller:** Van Drew for Congress

**Adam Silverstein:** Gottheimer for Congress

**Lacey Morrison:** Gottheimer for Congress

**Zach Carroll:** Kim for Congress

**Middy Baraka:** Baraka for Newark Mayor

**Phil Swibinski:** DeGise for HCDO Chair

**Tony Teixeira:** Scutari for UCDC Chair

**Nick Fixmer:** Scutari for UCDC Chair

**Mitch Seim:** Pallone for Long Branch Mayor

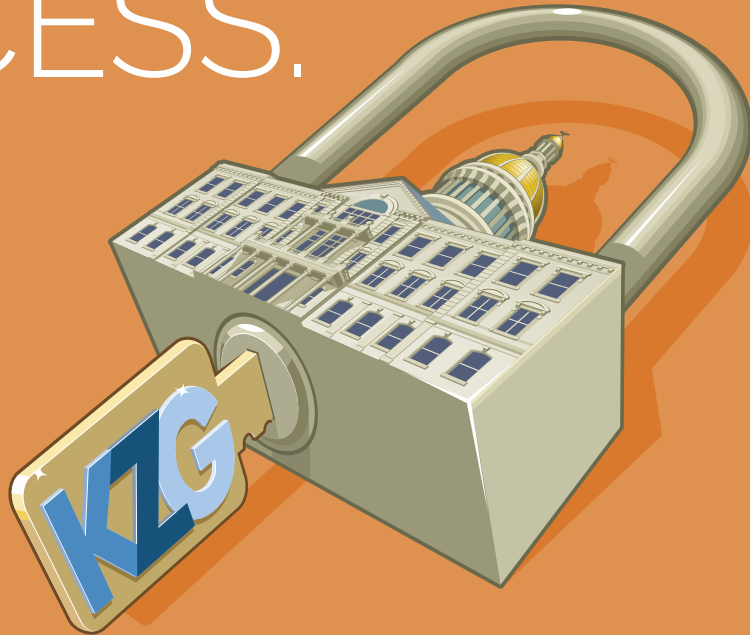
**Joe DeMarco:** Davis for Bayonne Mayor

**Henry de Koninck and Matt Krayton:**

Tara Prupis for Millburn Twp. Committee

**Phil Alagia:** DiVincenzo for Essex County Executive

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## 11 GURBIR GREWAL

*Lawman*



The Attorney General of New Jersey defined himself early as a key player in the Murphy Administration, fighting President Donald J. Trump wherever possible, including on the immigration and tax policy fronts. He also created a task force to investigate the Catholic Church scandal, which began serving subpoenas in October. The most visible cabinet member in the Murphy Administration managed to get it all done while simultaneously incurring the ire of 101.5 FM's Dennis and Judi, who received a suspension – and looked stupid and intolerant – for referring to the AG as “turban man.”



## 12 BILL MULLEN

*Building Trades Linchpin*



Making no secret of his irritation last year when the NJEA went after his pal Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3), and never bashful about criticizing Governor Murphy, the boss of the Building Trades augmented his role as the definitive voice of the organization. The national Carpenters' take down of John Ballantyne even further empowered Mullen. Remember, within the Building Trades it was Ballantyne who wanted private sector labor to get behind Murphy's pick of Tim Sullivan to head the Economic Development Authority. Mullen disagreed and said so publicly. When labor backed off following a telephone conference call among top brass and cleared the way for Sullivan to get the position, Ballantyne appeared to have exerted the stronger hand over Mullen. But not long after, Ballantyne lost his own job and his entire union dissolved right out from under him. It seemed a cruel price for him to pay for helping Sullivan gain employment. Mullen, meanwhile, was stronger than ever.





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## 13 DALE FLORIO

*Chairman of the Board*



The CEO of Princeton Public Affairs – a former Somerset County Republican Party chairman - has assembled an all-star team of West State Street firm professionals, juggling equal parts Democrat and Republican know-how to continue to dominate the halls of power. Uniquely in touch with the state, Florio straddles Hoboken, Trenton and Somerset to run one of the most potent political firms in the state.



## 14 PETER CAMMARANO AND MATT PLATKIN

*The Chiefs*



The Murphy Administration stumbled out of budget season with establishment insiders on Cammarano watch, convinced Senate President Sweeney’s veteran crew had sufficiently outfoxed a Murphy team headed by a chief-of-staff encumbered by too many young and self-important neophytes. But as long as he’s there, Cammarano commands – such as it is – the bridge. As for Platkin, the Chief Counsel for Governor Murphy could hardly call his maiden voyage in government a pleasure cruise. But then the same could be said for a significant chunk of Murphy’s staff. As Sweeney World tried to chip away at the veneer of power around Murphy by winning those little psychological warfare encounters with his staffers, Platkin’s youth – and importance to the Governor – often made him a favorite target. He weathered his share of headaches. But by cycle’s end he also had positioned himself within the administration as a key resource for those contacts that might have experienced turbulence in other quarters. And no one could deny the brightness of the Brookings Institute product. The trouble was that he and Cammarano were often at odds, and Cammarano engendered establishment respect.



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## 15 GEORGE HELMY

*The Wind Beneath Booker's Wings*



The intellectually stimulating State Director for U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) serves as the point man and lead dog organizer on all things Booker in the state of New Jersey. This is not your typical staffer, but a first-rate mind who doubles as a pure policy wonk. Even more will be expected of him now, on the other side of mid-term elections, as his boss prepares to run for president in 2020. Helmy also has the advantage of one of the state's top operatives, Tom Pietrykoski, at his side. Many tried to serve as communications director for the unflappably loquacious U.S. Senator Cory Booker, but only Pietrykoski has seemed to supply the right fit. And don't forget firefighter Matt Klapper, the other Booker inner sanctum player, who serves as the Senator's chief of staff, longtime adviser Elnardo Webster, and Mo Butler (see below).



## 16 PAT COLLIGAN

*The Brass*



The President of the New Jersey Police Benevolent Association (PBA) helped secure PFRS pensioners by getting management and control of the fund with the passage of S-5. The victory showed off Colligan's ability to navigate the often difficult relationship between the front office and the legislature.



## 17 BILL CASTNER

*A Tough Out*



When the summer soldier left Horizon and ran onto the field with a ball and glove in a Team Murphy uniform at the height of the budget debacle, insiders assumed he was preparing to permanently relieve a frayed Cammarano. It didn't happen. But his role now as Murphy senior adviser with a focus on gun safety still has the feel of a developing comeback by the perennial power player.

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**Steve Swetsky**  
Assistant Executive Director



**18** **MICHAEL CRITCHLEY AND JOE HAYDEN**  
*Consiglieres*

The Senate Majority Office appointed veteran defense counsel Critchley to serve as counsel for the select committee on investigation, an appointment matched by the Assembly Majority Office’s selection of veteran defense attorney Hayden for the same job. These are old school gentlemen lawyers, who have been through the wars, Critchley at the side of Bridgegate’s Bridget Kelly and Hayden with NBA star Jayson Williams.



**19** **MIKE KEMPNER**  
*Prez Season Upcoming*

Whenever the head of MWWPR has so much as a conversation with a rumored 2020 presidential contender, the world sits up and pays attention. Kempner proved a big dollar pooh-bah for Hillary Clinton in 2016 and early sized up the likes of U.S. Senator Kamala Harris of California. U.S. Senator Cory Booker’s (D-NJ) plan to run places Kempner at ground zero of the game. Ultimately, whoever he lines up behind in the end will have a financial leg up on the dance.



**20** **CRAIG CARPENITO**  
*The Badge*

The U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey has been silent on the political front since President Donald J. Trump appointed him at the beginning of the year. But he’s got 130 attorneys and 110 support personnel under his command. Having discarded Jeff Sessions at press time, President Trump was considering former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie for Attorney General.





## POWERFUL PEOPLE NOT ON THE LIST:

We don't include elected officials (with one exception, noted above), judges or former governors on the Insider 100: Power. Here is an itemizing of five influencers who fall into those categories who would otherwise be on the list proper:

**Nick Scutari:** In one of the political fights of the year, the Linden-based state senator from the 22nd District claimed the chairmanship of the Union County Democratic Committee, and retained power as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

**Brendan Gill:** The BGill Group alpha male serves as president of the Essex Freeholder Board and remains Governor Phil Murphy's go-to political operator.

**Chris Christie:** After the election, the former Republican Governor entered the conversation as a possible President Donald J. Trump alternative to ousted Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

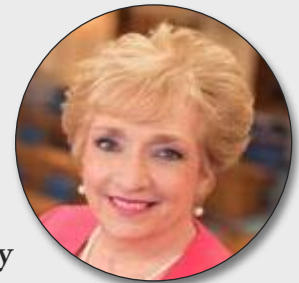
**Tom Kean, Sr.:** The former Governor (and former Speaker of the Assembly) did his best to pump life into the deflated political fortunes of U.S. Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7).

**Shaun Golden:** The Monmouth County Republican Chair can make the case that after Ocean County's George Gilmore he is the strongest Republican chairman in the state, barred from the main list by virtue of his serving as sheriff of his home county. Golden remains in the conversation as a potential 2021 candidate for governor.



## 21 MARIE BLISTAN

*Carrying on After Sweeney*



The political allies of the President of the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) couldn't toss Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3) out of office. Still, they showed they can't be messed around with and not raise hell in return. Sean Spiller, the teachers' union's political point guy, likewise proved a gnarly adversary for Sweeney – and pro-Blistan resistance leader.

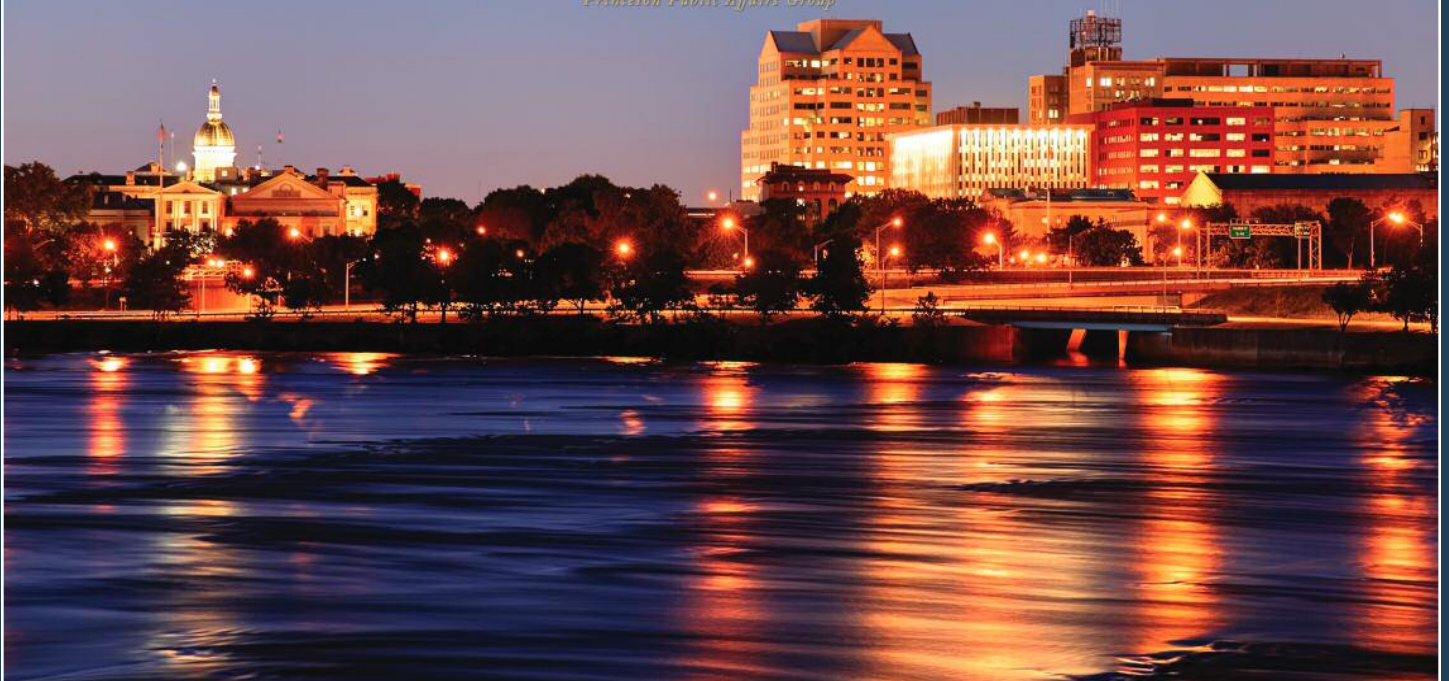
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# 22

**MICHELE SIEKERKA**

*NJBIA Chief*



The President of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association does not mind routinely throwing a sharp elbow in defense of her home state's small business owners. Look for the details-oriented Siekerka to continue to defiantly resist Democratic Party efforts to implement a \$15 minimum wage.

# 23

**MICHELLENE DAVIS**

*Fundraiser*



When Essex County and North Jersey Democrats seek a powerful fundraising presence, they turn to the Executive Vice President of Barnabas Health, a veteran of the medical care industry.

# 24

**TOM BRACKEN**

*The Business is Business*



There are few people in New Jersey politics (Dale Florio and Michael Aron come to mind) who radiate grounded gravitas like the President and CEO of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

# 25

**JEFF CARROLL**

*Pallone Protector*



The longtime Chief of Staff to U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone (D-6) and staff director for the Energy and Commerce Committee Democrats stands poised for the most powerful position of his career as the boss prepares to take over the chairmanship of the Energy and Commerce Committee in the new Democratic Majority of the U.S. House of Representatives.



**26 CHARLES WOWKANECH**  
*The Chieftain*

The longstanding president of the NJ AFL-CIO holds all the organizations together under one giant labor umbrella. He's not beyond roaming the halls of Trenton come budget time in search of pro-labor votes.



**27 MAGGIE MORAN**  
*Team Leader*

One of the best political tactical minds in the state, the Managing Partner at Public Affairs firm Kivvit and Tommy Giblin-trained insider helped propel New York Governor Andrew Cuomo to a concussive Democratic Primary victory. An adviser to the Laborers, her team includes the Trenton-wired Laura Matos (see below), Adam Steinberger and Chris Donnelly, all dogged pros in their own right.



**28 MICHAEL MULLER**  
*In it*

He usually has a great year, and this was no exception. The chief executive officer of the Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee (DACC) returned to that position after former Speaker Vincent Prieto left the Statehouse, reasserting himself on the throne ahead of the 2019 Legislative election cycle. The senior strategist at Totten Communications also helped power U.S. Rep.-elect Jeff Van Drew (D-2) to a convincing 52.2% to 45.9% victory and notched a history-making win in his hometown of Mount Laurel.





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## 29 HETTY ROSENSTEIN

*Worker Advocate*

After the Christie years, the State Director of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) has a real ally in the front office and played a key and aggressive role advocating for Governor Murphy's budget during the showdown with old Rosenstein foe Sweeney.



## 30 KEVIN DRENNAN

*Sweeney's Right Arm at the Statehouse*

The veteran mainstay of the Senate Majority Office served as Sweeney's top lieutenant during the budget debacle. Reminiscent of the Scott Glenn character in *The Hunt for Red October*, he proved at the 2018 sub-to-sub finale of the budget standoff to more than understand that "the hard part about playing chicken is knowing when to flinch."



## 31 DAVE PARANO

*Nuts and Bolts*

The Director of Murphy for Governor's Field Program goes back to Weinberg World as a ground-grooved campaigns operative. He was also one of the all-stars who got Bill Pascrell reelected in 2012. This year, he helped Andre Sayegh become mayor of Paterson, a big win in New Jersey's third most populous city, and notched wins in Long Branch (John Pallone) and Lambertville (Julia Fahl).





**32** **TOM MALINOWSKI**  
*Air Wars and Ground Wars*



Going to the House-ky, the congressman-elect in the 7th District combined air war contacts from the DCCC, real people power on the ground, and a convincing, ice-cold George F. Kennan-intellect to unseat U.S. Rep. Leonard Lance 50.9-47.5% (44.7K to 39.9K in battleground Somerset). Highly regarded campaign manager Colston Reid helped him, as did up-and-comers like Megan Warner and veterans like Clinton Town Mayor Janice Kovach, among many others.



**33** **KEVIN HAGAN**  
*Sweeney's Right Arm in the Vineyards*



The Dale Florio Princeton Public Affairs protégé who came up in McGreevey and later Sweeney World established himself as one of the more savvy and muscular political operatives in the state. In a larger, real time political context, as Sweeney goes, so goes Hagan, and the senate president had a strong year, relying on a team with utility guys like Drennan (see above) to outmaneuver the front office, particularly during the budget fight; and Hagan, who made statewide design territorial moves in the hinterlands.



**THE BIGGEST ELECTION DAY PLURALITIES  
BY THE NUMBERS**

- Essex (Menendez): 113,206**
- Hudson (Menendez): 85,875**
- Ocean (Hugin): 64,996**
- Union (Menendez): 49,499**

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**34 KEVIN BROWN**  
*For the Cause*

The original unreconstructed rebel, Brown – State Director of 32BJ SEIU – landed the biggest win of his professional year in 2018 with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey’s passage of a \$19 minimum wage for airport workers – Brown’s signature issue.



**35 MIKE DUHAIME, MIKE SOLIMAN AND MO BUTLER**  
*The Cerberus of NJ Politics*



Among the three of them, Soliman had the stand-out year. The Mercury Partner (and key U.S. Senator Bob Menendez confidant) could rest easy in the aftermath of Menendez’s convincing general election win. Next to the always very hands-on Menendez, Soliman was the main political strategist responsible for the senior senator’s rough weather reelection victory. As for Butler, Cory Booker’s former chief of staff – now Mercury partner - plays a vital role as the boss prepares for a 2020 presidential run. DuHaime remains the company founder and alpha male linchpin.



**YOUNG OPERATIVE OF THE YEAR:**

**Colston Reid:** Malinowski for Congress



**36**

**SAMANTHA MALTZMAN SCHEPPS**

*Financial Heft*



The veteran Democratic Party fundraising power broker headed up the financial arm for Menendez for Senate and will play a critical role in a similar capacity as U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) undertakes a 2020 presidential run.



**37**

**SKIP CIMINO**

*Back in the Statehouse Saddle*



The former Assemblyman from Hamilton proved his veteran prowess early and often for Speaker Craig Coughlin (D-18) as the executive director of the Assembly Majority Office. Caucus members give Coughlin outstanding early marks as speaker, in part because he has the temperament and listening skills to lead a disparate group, but also because he has a sharp, trains-on-time staff commanded by Cimino.



**38**

**LIZETTE DELGADO-POLANCO**

*Landing on her Feet*



Discharged from the Carpenters in the great labor shakeup of 2018, the vice chair of the Democratic State Committee went to the Murphy Administration, where she serves as chief of the Schools Development Authority. The deep labor reservoir-tested Delgado-Polanco has political friendships statewide and – obviously, given her post-Carpenters’ landing – key ties within Murphy World.



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**39 MIDDY BARAKA**  
*Brother's Keeper*



No one in the inner sanctum commands Mayor Ras Baraka's inner ear like his chief of staff brother, whose political acumen helped steer Baraka toward a commanding 22,094-6,510 reelection victory in Newark this year. Brick City also turned out in the rain for Menendez, in part the time-tested handiwork of the North Ward Center, but also increasingly the product of the Barakas. When the Governor of New Jersey did a post-game press conference last Wednesday morning, he went to Newark – and gave Middy a shout-out from the podium.



**40 ALLISON MURPHY**  
*Top Operative*



After ten years in the halls of the state senate, Jeff Van Drew's heads-up chief-of-staff heads to Washington in part on the strength of her campaigns and elections work for the U.S. Rep.-elect from the 2nd District. Her boss turned the 2nd district blue following the retirement of U.S. Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen – even though Van Drew doesn't plan to back Nancy Pelosi for speaker.



**41 GEORGE GILMORE**  
*Steppenwolf*



President Donald J. Trump makes many New Jerseyans' skin crawl, but he's popular among key Republicans in Ocean County (139.5K votes for Bob Hugin, a 65.5K plurality). Though Gilmore's Ocean-based congressman – U.S. Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-3) lost, the red county chair maintained an iron grip on the freeholder board. His county still incorporates part of the district of U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (R-4), (seven towns – seven towns to begin anew) who in 2019 will be New Jersey's last surviving sitting Republican Congressman.



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**42 HARRY HURLEY**  
*News Breaker*

The conservative WPG Talk Radio Show Host loves politics and outshines most hosts with his uncanny ability to break news himself – not just opine on what other reporters write about first. He remains very influential in South Jersey political circles and is at the top of his game.



**43 JEFF TITTEL**  
*Stormwater Stormtrooper*

Equally critical of the administrations of Christie and Murphy, the veteran director of the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club never shies away from standing up to power. On the environment, he's been Murphy's toughest critic.



**44 ANGELO GENOVA**  
*The Business is Business*

The Attorney for New Jersey's political stars (including U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell and Essex County Executive DiVincenzo), the Genova Burns heavyweight is the last guy you want to come face to face with across an imitation wood paneled docket on Judgment Day. Young team ally Raj Parikh gives the firm that much more power.



# 45

## DOUG STEINHARDT

*A Leader in Difficult Times*



The future chairman of the New Jersey Republican Party could hardly call it an auspicious start when then-GOP gubernatorial nominee Kim Guadagno in 2017 pulled her support from him in the 11th hour, delaying the statewide ascent of the veteran Warren County GOP chairman and former Lopatcong Mayor. After Guadagno lost, Republicans reconvened and this time closed ranks around Steinhardt. Those familiar with the long-acknowledged player – once a short-list candidate for U.S. Attorney – knew he was never going to be a second coming of the largely invisible Sam Raia. But what no one quite expected was the degree to which Steinhardt unsparingly threw himself into the work. He had an admittedly tough job. Many Republicans were mortified by President Donald J. Trump and wanted the party to condemn him as Democrats seized advantage of Trump’s unpopularity to gain even more power statewide. Steinhardt also occupied a party organization that had suffered years of neglect when Christie was governor, and the challenge of reworking an operation fashioned as a Christie presidential delivery system. Steinhardt proved hands-on, detail-oriented, sharp-elbowed but dignified, lawyerly and never petty, and eager to use the opportunity of Bob Hugin’s challenge of incumbent U.S. Senator Bob Menendez as a beginning point to rebuild a functioning New Jersey Republican Party. He made mistakes. The emergence of the untested – and doomed – Hirsh Singh as the Republicans’ CD2 candidate bore the tired trappings of older era underlings still intent on influence. But overall, as of the Monday prior to Election Day, if Steinhardt’s entry point had been rocky, his first full year on the job as chairman was strong, even auspicious – until the results poured in and handed him a crushing 1-11 loss in congressional races – in addition to the Bob Hugin debacle against a wounded Menendez.



## FUNDRAISING STAR OF THE YEAR:

**Hilary Badger:** Sherrill for Congress





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## 46 MICKEY QUINN

*Legislative Ninja*

The Assembly Majority Office's Deputy Executive Director played a critical role as adviser to Speaker Craig Coughlin during the budget debacle, calmly juggling the myriad egos from the legislature, Guv's Office and Norcross Word. A real pro.



## 47 EDDIE DONNELLY

*Fire with Fire*

The President of the 5,000-strong New Jersey State Firefighters Mutual Benevolent Association (NJFMBA) swapped labor know-how with a visit to Ireland this year and a drop-in on the Cork Fire Brigade. As with Colligan, Donnelly's always a coveted endorsement come election time.



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## 48 RAY GREAVES

*Bayonne Tough*



The Amalgamated Transit Union chief worked with Murphy and the legislature to get an infusion of revenues for a New Jersey Transit system long teetering on the brink, and helped secure a hold-off on another fare increase for riders.

## 49 DAVID CRUZ

*News Hound*



If this were a list based strictly on irreverence, the NJTV political reporter would rank number one. This human battering ram simply does not give a damn. There are very few people in the political world who have a cellphone crammed with as many as ready numbers as Cruz who relishes loud, combative public conversation the way some people crave long quiet walks in the park.



**Congratulations to All Latinos on the Power List who Worked Hard to Mobilize our Community to Vote. We Also Congratulate All the Latina Candidates who Ran for Office and Helped us Energize Women to Show up at the Polls. We Were Part of the Pink Wave and We Did it Together.**  
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**50 TONY TEIXEIRA**  
*Dock Front Fistfighter*

Chief of staff to newsmaker Senator Nick Scutari and chair of the Elizabeth Democratic Committee, Teixeira learned his trade from the master: retired state Senator Ray Lesniak (D-20). He played a critical role this year in scoring the chair for Scutari in the Union County tilt with Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr. In addition, Union County was #3 this year out of all counties in plurality for Menendez. “Sometimes,” Scutari said, “hard work pays off.”

**51 ED FARMER**  
*The Good Soldier*

A former Chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-9), the CEO and President of Millennium Strategies has a deeply grounded government knowledge base that puts him and his team in both Trenton and D.C. Farmer had a good year this year based in no small part on the local victory of Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh, a key ally. His team includes the always lethal South Bergen-based Bernadette McPherson, a former freeholder.

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**52 ADAM SILVERSTEIN**  
*Bergen Improviser*



The Silver Strategies shark from Bergen County has close ties to Stellato and Bergen County Executive Jim Tedesco, who won reelection to a second term on the strength of smart and energetic campaigning. He also advises U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-5), who was supposed to be in a reelection dogfight this year and hit cruise control in Bergen against an underfunded and hopelessly outgunned opponent. Silverstein proved his value, too, with the meltdown of former Bergen County Sheriff Mike Saudino, when he helped recruit NAACP local chapter Prez Anthony Cureton as Saudino’s replacement.



**53 KEVIN O’TOOLE**  
*Mr. Agility*



The politically agile former Republican Senator from the 40th District now chairs the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and serves as managing partner of the powerful O’Toole Scrivo Fernandez Weiner Van Lieu Law Firm. He continues to take an avid interest in the legislature, with strong ties to Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3), Senator Kristin Corrado (R-40), and Senator Joe Lagana (D-38), among others. He is also politically connected to his protégé Essex County Republican Chairman Al Barlas, and Passaic County Republican Chairman Peter Murphy, the politically hyperkinetic Totowa-based tavern owner, who regained the chairmanship in 2018 after years in the wilderness.



**54 LAURA MATOS AND SEAN DARCY**  
*Seaside Power Couple*



The dynamic duo from Monmouth County are respectively the New Jersey General Manager of powerhouse company Kivvit and the founder/CEO of Round World Consulting.

**10 MOST POWERFUL MUNICIPAL CHAIRS**

**Brian P. Stack:** Union City Democratic Committee

**Nick Scutari:** Linden Democratic Committee

**Leroy Jones:** East Orange Democratic Committee

**Joe Cryan:** Union Twp. Democratic Committee

**Brendan Gill:** Montclair Democratic Committee

**Carmen F. Amato, Jr.:** Berkeley Twp. Republican Committee

**Sammy Gonzalez:** The Newark North Ward Democratic Committee

**Jimmy Davis:** Bayonne Democratic Committee

**Gerry Calabrese:** Cliffside Park Democratic Committee

**Peter Carton:** Middletown Twp. Republican Committee



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## 55 JULIA FAHL AND KARI OSMOND

*Waterfront Power Couple*



This power couple covers the waterfront in western Jersey, Fahl as the mayor-elect of Lambertville and Osmond as district director for U.S. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12). After taking out a 28-year incumbent in the June Primary, Fahl posted record numbers in Lambertville's general election.

## 56 CHRISTIAN FUSCARINO

*Equality Leader*



The newly married Executive Director of Garden State Equality has proved a steady advocate, fundraising juggernaut and constant purveyor of political relevance in the best tradition of pioneering founder Steven Goldstein. Smart and effective.



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## 57 GREG LALEVEE

*Labor Leader*

The Chairman of the Engineers Labor-Employee Cooperative started out as a crane operator and Local 825's first organizer, building himself into one of the most respected labor leaders in the state, and vice president of the powerful New Jersey Building Trades.



## 58 ANTHONY CURETON

*Taking up the Mantle*

When Bergen County Sheriff Mike Saudino cracked up, the retired detective sergeant from Englewood and NAACP Bergen Chapter Prez stepped into the void. Now he's the sheriff-elect for New Jersey's most politically complex county.



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## 59 ANDY KIM

*Going the Distance*



Formerly of the Obama Administration, the CD3 Democratic candidate kept it close enough in Ocean (46.6K to 76.8K) and robust in Burlington (87.4K to 59.5K) to defeat U.S. Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-3) and rearrange the political landscape in Burlington and Ocean counties. In 2019, he will become New Jersey's third Rhodes Scholar (after Senator Booker and former Senator Bradley) sworn into federal office – not bad for a state that gave the world Goodfellas.

## 60 DIANE GUTIERREZ-SCACCETTI

*The Commish*



Gov. Murphy's commissioner of the Department of Transportation has the herculean task of trying to put New Jersey Transit together again after the Christie years. She receives good marks early.

Congratulations to  
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on another successful year!



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Essex County Executive*

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## 61 PHIL ALAGIA

*Been There, Done That*



Chief of Staff to Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, Alagia remains one of the most wired-in operatives in the state, going back to that historic 2002 county executive's race, and the 2006 election of Newark North Ward Councilman Anibal Ramos, Jr. Close to state Senator M. Teresa Ruiz and North Ward Democratic Chair Sammy Gonzalez. His boss easily won reelection this year, as Alagia simultaneously handled business in Roseland.

## 62 TRISH ZITA AND JEANNINE FRISBY LARUE

*The Brokers*



Two members of that dynamic public affairs team otherwise known as Kaufman Zita, Zita and LaRue have more experience between the two of them the rest of Trenton combined.

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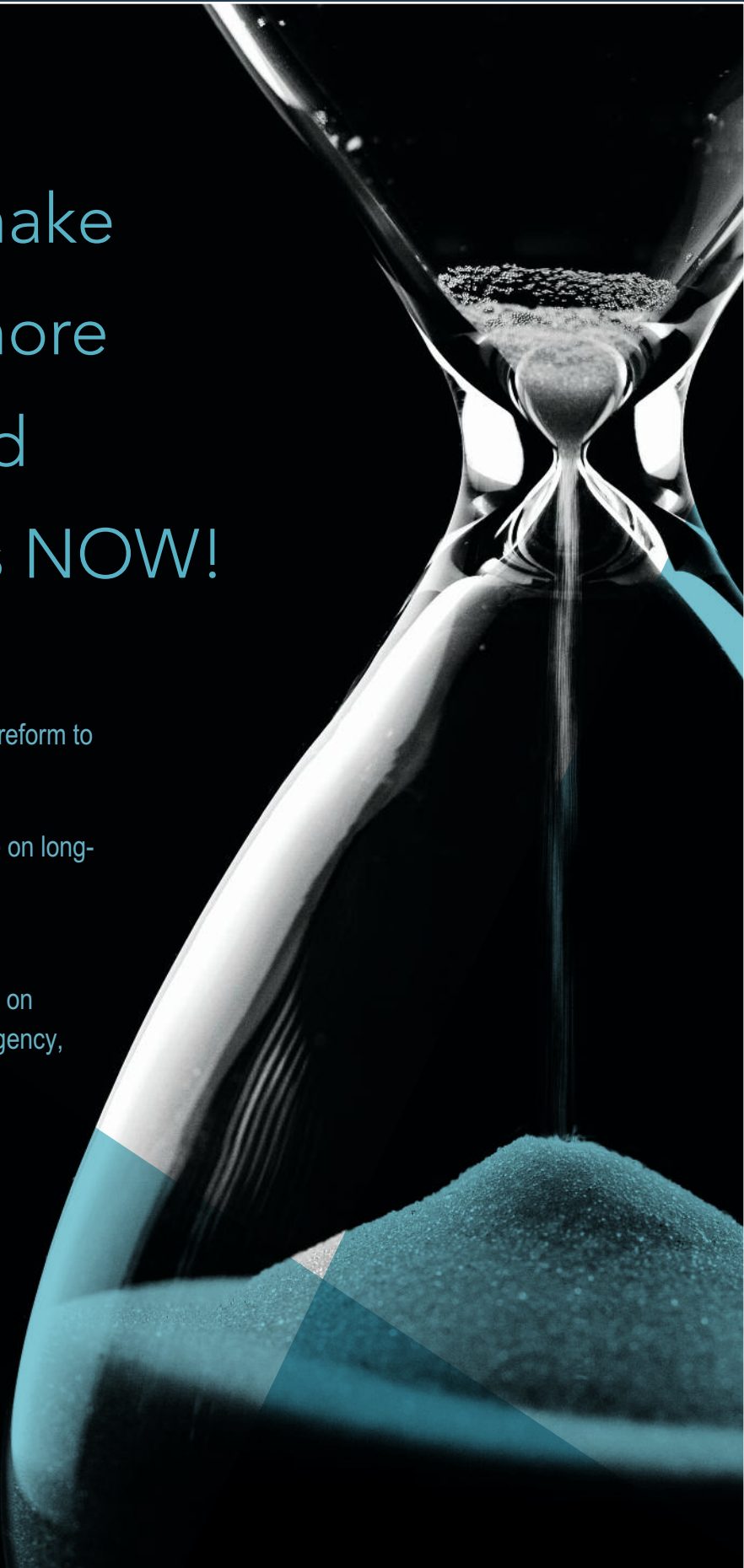
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## 63 AL GABURO

*Battleground Chair*



The Chairman of the Somerset County Republican Committee (and Princeton Public Affairs member) could not hold off the blue wave in his home county, as he lost two freeholder seats. He still maintains 3-2 control of Somerset, but after state Senator Kip Bateman barely survived in 2017, he has to look hard at the terrain at the heart of the NJ battleground. Losing U.S. Rep. Leonard Lance (R-7) was not as dire as it may appear. Lance hails from Hunterdon, and the Somerset GOP probably figures if they back Senator Tom Kean, Jr. for Congress against Tom Malinowski in 2020, they can gain 2021 support for former Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli (R-16) for governor.



## 64 PEG SCHAFFER

*Battleground Chair on the March*



A year after snagging the clerkship, the Somerset County Democratic Chair (a veteran attorney from Shain and Schaffer) had the best year of her decade-long career with two freeholder wins and the high performance of Somerset for Congressman-elect Malinowski. Menendez beat Hugin (58k-52k) in Somerset, home to former Gov. Christie Todd Whiteman. Schaffer even implemented with the Hudson-trained Joe DeMarco, who had helped secure an earlier -in-the-year win for Bayonne Mayor Jimmy Davis.



## 65 JEFF BRINDLE

*Gravitas in Government*



The last, lone literate, singularly intelligent and mature and adult man in New Jersey (well, there are a handful of others, including Aron and Bracken) continues to serve as Executive Director of the state Elections Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC).

**66**

**GENE MULROY AND GERRY GIBBS**

*Pros*

The tag team at Capital Impact Group specializes in developing government relations and grassroots advocacy programs in New Jersey and Washington, D.C.



**67**

**REV. DR. ALLEN STEPHEN POTTS**

*God's Work*

Mayor Ras Baraka and Gov. Murphy chose the Greater Abyssinian Baptist Church in Newark for post-game prayers, with Baraka making sure to acknowledge the church's work on Election Day – and beyond.



**TEN MOST POWERFUL COUNTY CHAIRS**

- Bergen County Democratic Committee Chairman Lou Stellato
- Essex County Democratic Committee Chairman Leroy Jones
- Hudson County Democratic Committee Chairwoman Amy DeGise
- Ocean County Republican Chairman George Gilmore
- Middlesex County Democratic Committee Chairman Kevin McCabe
- Passaic County Democratic Committee Chairman Nick Scutari
- Monmouth County Republican Committee Chairman Shaun Golden
- Atlantic County Republican Committee Chairman Keith Davis
- Mercer County Democratic Committee Chairwoman Janice Mironov
- Somerset County Republican Committee Chairman Al Gaburo



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nichole@njaa.com



## 68 BILL PASCRELL III AND DAVID PASCRELL

*All in the Family*

Wired into Florio-Hagan-Gaburo World at Princeton Public Affairs, “Billy the Third” (son of the Congressman) commands one of the deepest and most respected knowledge bases in the areas of gaming and casino gambling. He bounced upward this year with ally Mayor Andre Sayegh’s win in Paterson – not to mention the legalization of sports betting. Younger brother David also had a good year. The twin son of U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell heads up government affairs for the powerful Gibbons Law Firm, and is very close friends with the ever-influential Brendan Gill.



## 69 KATIE BRENNAN

*Speaking Out*

Chief of staff of the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency, the former Phil Murphy campaign volunteer became leader of a movement in New Jersey when she charged a former colleague with sexual assault and revealed a system stacked against the victim.



## 70 IDIDA RODRIGUEZ

*Paterson Roots*

The Paterson native remains the godmother of the young Latina powerhouses, some of whom also occupy this list. Close to Senator Nellie Pou (D-35) and the business partner of Essex County Democratic Chairman Jones at 1868 Public Affairs.





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# 71

## DEBBIE WHITE

*Heir to the Ultimate Organizer*

President of Health Professionals and Allied Employees (HPAE), White worked as a registered nurse at Virtua Memorial Hospital for 27 years, became a Union Rep around 1996 and sat on every negotiating committee for her Local from 1999 through 2018. The torchbearer of a proud organizing legacy, White succeeds HPAE founding president Ann Twomey.



# 72

## MICHAEL MURPHY

*Mr. New Jersey*

The step son of the late Governor Richard Hughes (and brother of Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes), the very politically connected Murphy heads up Impact NJ. A former candidate for governor (1997), Murph has an easy-going charm, erudition, and almost southern gentility that set him apart from the usual grift that populates the political world.



## TOP ACADEMICS/POLLSTERS:

**Patrick Murray** – Monmouth University

**Matt Hale** – Seton Hall University

**Brigid Harrison** – Montclair University

**Krista Jenkins** – Fairleigh Dickinson University

**Peter Wooley** – Fairleigh Dickinson University

**Ben Dworkin** – Rowan University

**Micah Rasmussen** – Rider University

**John Froonjian** – Stockton University

**Junius Williams** – Rutgers University

**Debbie Walsh, Director** – Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers Eagleton

**Ruth B. Mandel** – Director of Eagleton Institute, Rutgers

## 73 TAI COOPER

*Always Substantive*

There are few people in New Jersey politics better equipped for all facets of the game than the director of Policy for the Murphy Administration, who worked for the late U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg and Newark Mayor Ras Baraka.



## 74 BILL MAER AND KELLY STEWART MAER

*The Halls of Power*

A true power couple, Bill Maer works as a partner at Public Strategies Impact with Republican player Roger Bodman; while Stewart Maer runs government affairs for Capital Health Systems.



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## 75 SAILY AVELENDA *“Ringleader”*

The West Caldwell activist helped bounce U.S. Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-11) into retirement after he infamously tried to muscle her professionally, a year-long narrative ending on a sustained triumphant high note for Avelenda when Mikie Sherrill won the 11th District Congressional seat.



## 76 PATRICIA CAMPOS-MEDINA *Latina Strong*

A policy expert armed with a PhD, BS, and MS, she’s an expert on issues at the forefront of the state today, including voting rights, labor and unions, and immigration. She remains the head of the influential LUPE PAC, which has numerous political power players among its leadership and members.



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# 77

**JUSTIN BRAZ**

*A Millennial Veteran*

Murphy's Deputy Chief of Staff for Legislative Affairs has real contacts and credentials, both as the former chief of staff to Assemblyman Gary Schaer and as a political veteran of the Union County wars.



# 78

**BILL CARUSO**

*Mr. Reach*

The savvy Archer Greiner lobbyist has the Statehouse street cred to fall back on in rough political weather, in addition to that useful connection to LG in-waiting Sheila Oliver (he once served as executive director for the Assembly Majority Office when Oliver was speaker). He's also unpredictable – in the best sense. Just when you think he can't get any more South Jersey, he surfaces at some seemingly small-bore Bergen function and turns the event from bore-snore to scintillating conversation piece.



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**[www.komjathykean.com](http://www.komjathykean.com)**

**(609) 695-5840**



## 79 ANALILIA MEJIA

*On the Left...*

The Executive Director of Working Families is one of the most precision policy-minded people in the State of New Jersey, and proved a key progressive family ally of Governor Murphy's during the budget season.



## 80 CHARLES FLORIO

*Urban Developer*

The North Jersey developer defined himself this year as the Norcross of Paterson, moving aggressively forward on projects with the support of new Mayor Andre Sayegh.



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## 81 GAIL AND BOB GORDON

*Bergen Power Couple*



They have emerged behind Phil and Tammy Murphy as the most visible political power couple, Gail as a Republican attorney with Florio and Perruci and Bob as a former policy wonked-out senator now serving as the Chief of the Board of Public Utilities (BPU).

## 82 RAY FERRAIOLI

*In Touch*



The veteran North Jersey operative – chief fundraiser for the Essex Democrats – is keyed into the landscape with a vengeance.

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# 83

## RUDY GARCIA

*The Hudson-Trenton Connector*

A behind-the-scenes player, the former Assemblyman and Mayor of Union City took over MBI GluckShaw, rebranded now as MBI, and has begun to strengthen the firm's already-venerated standing – including bringing in respected power players Michele Jaker and Chris James.



# 84

## JACK CIATTARELLI

*"The Outsider"*

The former assemblyman looks like a constantly energized candidate as he angles within the GOP to take on Governor Murphy in 2021. Two of his rivals for the nomination – Bob Hugin and Tom MacArthur – had a bad year, with the former proving too gutter ball-prone with \$36 million, and the latter limiting his statewide possibilities, first by correcting too hard toward Trump in an attempt to appeal to his district, and then losing his districtwide reelection bid.



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## 85 ALIXON COLLAZOS GILL

*Veteran*



The Montclair-grounded LUPE Fund board member has deep contacts around the state, including – significantly – the front office and First Lady Tammy Murphy. Close to Perth Amboy Mayor Wilda Diaz and DOBI Commish Marlene Caride, she’s also the wife of Murphy minder Brendan Gill.



## 86 PAUL AND PHIL SWIBINSKI

*It Started in Hudson*



The father/son team of Vision Media scored numerous victories this year, chief among them the Hudson County Democratic Organization chairmanship for Amy DeGise and the reelection campaign of Bayonne Mayor Jimmy Davis. Phil Swibinski – who notched an impressive local win in Englewood with the return of Mayor-elect Michael Wildes - has really come on in the last few years, impressing insiders as a graceful pressure player.



## 87 DAN BRYAN

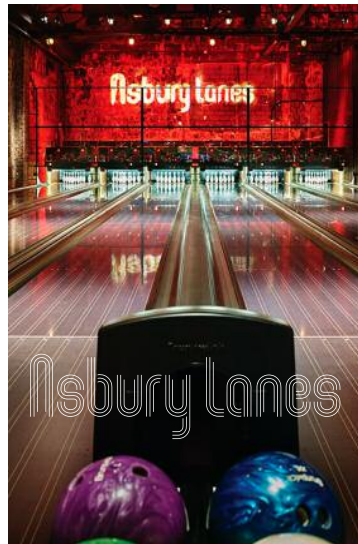
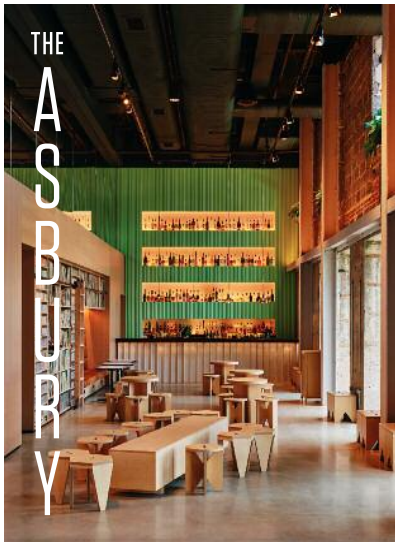
*Voice of the Front Office*



The Press Secretary and Deputy Communications Director for Murphy continues to prove a strong spokesman for the Governor in his first year on the job. At ground zero of a state experiencing a constant nervous breakdown, the Clark Kent lookalike embodies Hemingway’s virtue of grace under pressure.

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## STILL SHARPE:

### FORMER ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO REMAIN IN TOP FORM AS EITHER ADVISERS OR PARTY POOHBAHS:

**Ray Lesniak:** The former 20th District State Senator remains engaged with the Lesniak Institute for American Leadership.

**Bill Bradley:** The former Democratic U.S. Senator slam-dunked into the 3rd District to campaign for a successful U.S. Rep.-elect Andy Kim.

**Diane Allen:** The former 7th District Republican Senator maintained an active schedule on behalf of U.S. Senate candidate Bob Hugin.

**Scott Rudder:** The former Assemblyman is at the forefront of the cannabis legalization effort and is a chief expert on the issue as head of the NJ CannaBusiness Association.

**Jack Ciattarelli:** The once and future Republican gubernatorial candidate, a former Assemblyman from the 16th District, stayed busy for Hugin, and appeared on NJTV as part of correspondent David Cruz's "The Outsiders" series.

**John Wisniewski:** The former joint-chairman of the Legislature's Select Committee on Investigations stayed busy with joint appearances with Ciattarelli on "The Outsiders."

**Maria Rodriguez-Gregg:** The former Republican lawmaker from Burlington continues to make appearances.

**Tom Kean:** The former Republican Governor (and former Speaker) did a robocall for U.S. Rep. Leonard Lance and tried to prop up the GOP brand here as he went down like Davey Crockett at the Alamo.

**Chris Christie:** The former Republican Governor generated some terror among partying Democrats (and ridicule from the North Korean News service) when his name surfaced as a possible Trump pick for attorney general.

**Jim Florio:** The Florio Perrucci alpha male and former Governor published the highly regarded Standing on Principle: Lessons Learned in Public Life.

**Jim McGreevey:** The former Governor's model New Jersey Reentry Corporation expanded into New New Brunswick.

**Carmelo Garcia:** The former LD33 Assemblyman is the Deputy Mayor For Economic Development in Newark in Mayor Ras Baraka's administration.

**Rudy Garcia:** The former Union City mayor and Assemblyman is now the head of the re-branded MBI lobbying firm, formerly MBI GluckShaw.

## 88 CHRIS RUSSELL

*Never Letting Go*



The principal at Checkmate Strategies made the Democratic Party sweat all year with the assistance he lent to the financially well-connected campaign of Republican Bob Hugin and to the ultimately unsuccessful reelection of U.S. Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-3). Russell also has close ties to former Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli (R-16), a declared 2021 candidate for Governor, whose power is actually arguably enhanced – at least in the backrooms - by a Lance loss. He also helped bring up one of the state’s top GOP operatives: Frank Luna.

## 89 ERICA DAUGHTREY

*100 Votes, Locked*



When the Hudson County Democratic Organization (HCDO) needed 100 votes out of Bayonne, they turned to Bayonne Democratic Committee Vice Chair Daughtrey and her allies, who delivered, to help propel DeGise to victory.

## 90 CRAIG GUY

*DeGise Loyalist*



Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise’s chief of staff played a critical role during the HCDO war, as the veteran operative ensured victory for the boss’ daughter.

## 91 GINA LAPLACA

*Implacable at the Board of Elections*



The Executive Director of Verizon is one of the most precision policy-minded people in the State of New Jersey, and proved a key progressive family ally of Governor Murphy’s during the budget season. Married to diehard BurlCo-based firefighter/operative Jason Carty.

## 92 TOM BARRETT

*The Mechanic*



The Democratic committeeman from Milburn – on the editorial board at InsiderNJ – remains one of the most original political thinkers in New Jersey politics. He had a good year again in the East Ward of Newark, where he – and old pal Joe Parlavecchio (a key ally of Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin) – helped Councilman Augie Amador regain his seat.

## 93 CHRISTINA ZUK

*Bayonne Tough, Part II*



The peninsular city-reared Princeton Public Affairs operative headed the transition team of then Mayor-elect John Pallone, and raised money for the congressional candidacy of Mikie Sherrill.

## JAY LASSITER'S TOP LGBT MOMENTS OF 2018

**A New Governor:** When Phil Murphy became NJ Governor on January 16, 2018, it signaled a new day for LGBT liberty and prosperity.

**Trans Rights:** The Babs Siperstein Law was signed into law, which makes it easier for transgender men and women to amend their birth certificate. And, the Transgender Equality Task Force was established.

**Mayor Gusciora's Election:** The openly-gay Gusciora narrowly squeaked into the runoff, where he also notched a win.

**Insider NJ's Out 100:** The first-of-its kind-tribute to influential LGBTs in New Jersey politics. Judging from the traffic and the feedback, most of y'all really loved it.

**Sherrill Defeats Webber:** CD11's Mikie Sherrill, a garden State Equality-endorsed candidate trounced opponent Jay Webber on Election Day by over 13 percentage points.

**Fahl Forward:** One of the most exciting LGBT Election Day results came when voters in Lambertville chose Julia Fahl to be their next mayor.



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## 94 RAHAMAN MUHAMMAD

*City Hall Stanchion*

A former services workers union leader, Newark's Deputy Mayor is a key Baraka ally, and ran the campaign this year of Surrogate-elect Alturrick Kenney, which helped pop the Baraka anti-Trump vote for Menendez in the South Ward



## 95 MARCIA MARLEY

*The Force Under the Wave*

Based on Montclair, the Blue Wave icon represented that core part of the progressive movement that helped deliver victory to U.S. Rep.-elect Mikie Sherrill. She's also close to local Democratic Committee Chairman Gill.



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## 96 MITCH SEIM

*Seaside Operator*

Seim had his early campaigns and elections successes in Brick, getting behind what would become the successful mayoral candidacy of John Ducey. He notched arguably the biggest win of his career in 2017 as the engine room operator of the Vin Gopal for Senate campaign, then enjoyed tremendous local success in 2018 when John Pallone dethroned 28-year incumbent Mayor Adam Schneider in Long Branch.



## 97 NICK FIXMER

*The Fixer*

He's a little like the Tom Kean, Jr. of the Democratic Party. Did he choose his career, or did his name choose it for him? Fixmer. It fits. Just like Kean, in New Jersey, is tailor made for a lawn sign. When the late Union County Democratic Committee Chairman Jerry Green retired his chairmanship, Fixmer helped win the countywide war against Joe Cryan and Colleen Mahr, then transitioned seamlessly to the new era of sitting Chairman (and Senator) Nick Scutari. Generally regarded as a first rate, war-footing-if-necessary operative.



## TOP TEN ELECTED GOP OFFICIALS

1. U.S. Rep. Chris Smith
2. Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean, Jr.
3. Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick
4. Senator Gerald Cardinale
5. Senator Bob Singer
6. Senator Tony Bucco
7. Senator Joe Pennacchio
8. Assemblywoman Holly Shepisi
9. Monmouth County Sherriff Shaun Golden
10. Hamilton Mayor Kelly Yaede



## THE POLITICAL VOICE OF NEW JERSEY WOMEN



The Women's Political Caucus of New Jersey (WPCNJ), founded in 1972, is a chapter of the National Women's Political Caucus and is the authoritative voice for women in New Jersey politics. WPCNJ is a *multi-partisan* organization dedicated to increasing the number of women in elected and appointed positions in government, protecting reproductive freedom, and promoting equal rights for women.

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Senator Booker congratulates Mo Butler, George Helmy and all those recognized in the 2018 InsiderNJ Power List

*"For Democracy is never a thing done. Democracy is always something that a nation must be doing."*

- Archibald MacLeish



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U.S. SENATE

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## 98 SARAH MCMAHON AND PATRICIA TEFFENHART

*Survivor Advocates*



The Director of the Rutgers Center of Violence Against Women and Children and Executive Director NJ Coalition Against Sexual Assault respectively played significant public roles in New Jersey this year, particularly in their expression of dismay over the Supreme Court nomination of Brett Kavanaugh.



## 99 ANDREW BOBBITT

*Capital City Aide*



Candidates and mayors have come and gone in Trenton, but Bobbitt has survived it all, a meticulous and elegant presence: the helpmate of former Mayor Eric Jackson and now faithfully at the side of sitting Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora.



## TOP TEN ELECTED DEMOCRAT OFFICIALS

1. Gov. Phil Murphy
2. Senate President Steve Sweeney
3. Speaker Craig Coughlin
4. U.S. Senator Bob Menendez
5. U.S. Senator Cory Booker
6. U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone
7. U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell
8. U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer
9. U.S. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman
10. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka

## 100 NOREEN GIBLIN



Chief Legal Counsel for NJ's Board of Public Utilities (BPU). Accomplished, widely respected and a relentless, trusted advocate for causes she commits to, no one is better prepared for a next generation leadership role in state government. Daughter of Assemblyman and labor leader Tom Giblin and formerly with the Gibbons law firm, Noreen is schooled in the art of law, politics and public policy going back to her time as State Director for U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg and roles in the McGreevey and Corzine Administrations.



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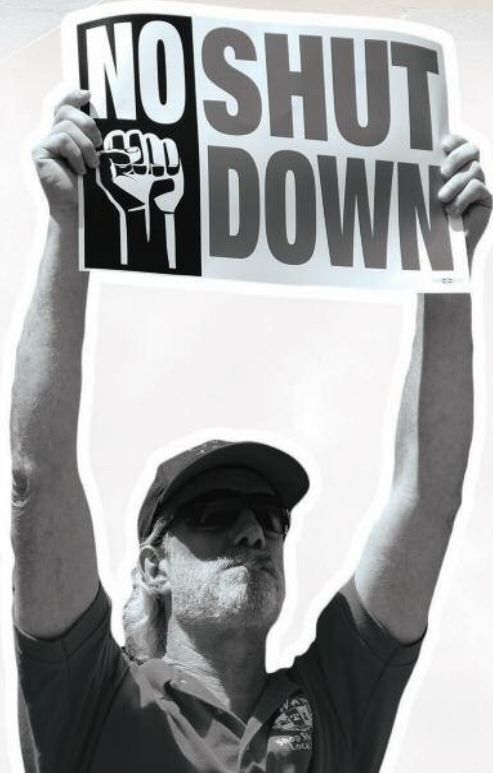
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## **JAY LASSITER'S POWER COUPLES**

**TAMMY + PHIL MURPHY** – She's NJ's First Lady and he's our Governor. As First Lady, Tammy Murphy is policy-driven focusing on things like reducing childhood mortality rates. Phil has his hands full leading the most densely populated state in the land, fixing NJ Transit, and legalizing weed. No biggie.

**MARY PAT + CHRIS CHRISTIE** – She's a brilliant and successful investment banker and the primary breadwinner in a household that includes NJ's ex-Gov. He's on the shortlist to become the next Attorney General of the United States. So hide your bong.

**M. TERESA RUIZ + SAMUEL GONZALEZ** – She represents Newark in the NJ Senate and he chairs Newark's North Ward Democratic Committee. As chairperson of the Education Committee, Senator Ruiz exerts tremendous influence on education policy in New Jersey. For his part, Samuel is keeping the powerhouse machine that Steve Audubato Sr built running smoothly. And not for nothing, this power couple is almost always runway ready.

**JOE DEIORIO + THOS SHIPLEY** – This Republican duo occupy two seats on Roselle Park (population 13,500) borough council. Thos reps the 5th ward and Joe's an at-large councilman who also did a long stint as Roselle Park's mayor. The NYTimes video'd the pair after their wedding back in 2013 and you need to watch. It's something sweet and lovely in a world increasing devoid of sweet and lovely things.

**CAROL MURPHY + MICHAEL MULLER** – Carol is the new-ish Assemblywoman from Burlington County and one of the nicest, most normal people you'll ever meet in Trenton. Fresh off leading Congressman-elect Jeff Van Drew to victory, Michael's reputation as one of NJ's toughest, winningest campaign managers endures.

**YVONNE LOPEZ + SAM DELGADO** – She's a freshman assemblywoman representing Perth Amboy and the rest of NJ's 19th Legislative District. Sam's VP of external affairs for Verizon in NJ and served on Governor Murphy's Commission on Puerto Rican Relief. The commutate power couple. Don't believe me? Ask the Perth Amboy slate that got pummeled by Lopez/Delgado – aligned candidates this past Election Day.

**NATASHA ALAGARASAN + RAJ MUKHURJI** – She's communications director for the New Jersey Department of Human Services and he represents Jersey City in the state legislature. This sartorially gifted Hudson County duo challenge Ruiz/Gonzalez for fashion supremacy on this list.

**SARAH + CORT ADELMAN** – He's Assistant VP for Government Relations at Virtua Health and she's Deputy Commissioner at NJ Department of Human Services. They're two of the most influential and respected voices on health care in the Garden State.



**CONGRATULATIONS  
TO THE  
2018  
INSIDER NJ 100 POWERLIST  
AND TO  
INSIDER NJ ON A  
SUCCESSFUL YEAR!**

**Jonathan Bombardieri  
William F. Layton  
Karen Kominsky  
Jonathan Boguchwal**

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Trenton, NJ 08608  
Office: (609) 392-2332  
@CLBnj.com**



## **JAY LASSITER'S POWER COUPLES**

### **CONTINUED**

**AMBER MARGENTINA + AXEL OWEN** – She leads Planned Parenthood's field operations and he's the political dictator for the NJ Democrat State Committee. Their greatest collaboration is Oliver, born last fall when Mom gave birth while Dad was managing Vin Gopal's successful campaign for NJ Senate. Amber and Axel haven't tied the knot yet, but she has an amazing ring and they already made a beautiful baby so what's honestly, what's the rush?!

**ANN VARDEMAN + SETH HAHN** – Seth's a union labor stalwart who serves as legislative and political director for CWA's Trenton district while Ann directs programming at New Jersey Citizen Action. She also played a critical roll helping Andy Kim flip NJ's 3rd Congressional district, one of the most dramatic election day results in recent memory.

**CARRIE + RAJ RARIKH** – She's Chief Operating Officer/Chief Data and Privacy Officer at NJ's Office of Information technology and he's one of NJ's top election lawyers. Carrie and Raj are this year's peoples choice winners, garnering more nominations for this list than any other pair.

**TONY HOWLEY + CHRISTOPHER STARK** – Tony directs field operations for the conservative advocacy group Americans for Prosperity of NJ and Christopher's VP at the Insurance Council of New Jersey. Both Tony and Christopher have deep roots in the NJGOP stretching back to their days as Young Republicans

**ROBIN KAMPF + LUANNE PETERPAUL** – Garden State Equality has passed nearly 250 pro-LGBT laws and Luanne Peterpaul's fingerprints are on every single one of them. Her wife Robin continues a long and venerable tradition of using art to influence politics and culture. Robin's latest award-winning documentary "Love Wins," about a lesbian couple in a 50-year-long relationship, did the festival circuit last year to much acclaim.

**CATHLEEN LEWIS + PAUL PENNA** – The Mercer duo met while working for Congressman Rush Holt. She's now a Councilwoman in Lawrence and went inside MVC earlier this year. He opened his own shop after stints at Department of Banking and Insurance and as Chief of Staff and Executive Director of the NJ democrats.

**JENNIFER MANCUSO + NICK FIXMER** – He's a longtime Union County operative who scored big in neighboring Somerset on election day where he helped flip 2 freeholder seats and sent Tom Malinowski to Congress. She's currently the executive director of the Fair Share Hospitals Collaborative. She's also PAC Chair for Women's Political Caucus of New Jersey.

**HILARY BECKETT + JON CHERBA** – He's senior director, Federal Affairs at New Jersey Hospital Association and she's one of Governor Murphy's most trusted lieutenants.

# A THANK YOU TO OUR PUBLISHER!

We would like to personally thank our venerable publisher, John Francis Xavier Graham. His leadership, vision, enduring goodwill and heart continue to inspire us as InsiderNJ goes forward.



## SITE STATISTICS\*

**2017 Users: 526,873**

**2017 Pageviews: 2,717,786**

**2018 Users: 837,781**

**2018 Pageviews: 4,235,025**

**Total Users: 1,329,719**

**Total Pageviews: 6,952,804**

**Articles: 4,883**

**Press Releases: 9,769**

**Publications\*\*\*: 9**

**Publication Views: 60,552**

**2017 Ad Impressions: 16,220,495**

**2017 Ad Clicks: 7,367**

**2018 Ad Impressions: 24,616,702**

**2018 Ad Clicks: 22,892**

**Total Ad Impressions: 40,837,409**

**Total Ad Clicks: 30,259**

**Alexa US Ranking\*\*: 41,249**

**Alexa Global Ranking\*\*: 284,787**

**Morning Intelligence Briefing**

**Email Subscribers: 5,500+**

**Top Locations By User: New York, Jersey City, Newark, Parsippany-Troy Hills, DC, Philadelphia, Mount Laurel, Trenton, Paterson, Cherry Hill, Edison, Hamilton, Bayonne, Paramus, Hackensack, Wayne, Montclair, Woodbridge, Bridgewater, Union, Middletown, Linden, Egg Harbor, Franklin, Lawrence, Wall, Clifton, W. Orange, Brick, Westfield, Elizabeth, Summit, Piscataway, Boston, Flemington, Toms River, East Brunswick, Chicago, Bloomfield, Hoboken, Long Branch, Atlantic City, Morristown**

**\*Google Analytics 11/12/2018 \*\*Alexa.com 11/12/2018 \*\*\*Not including 2018 Insider 100: Power**