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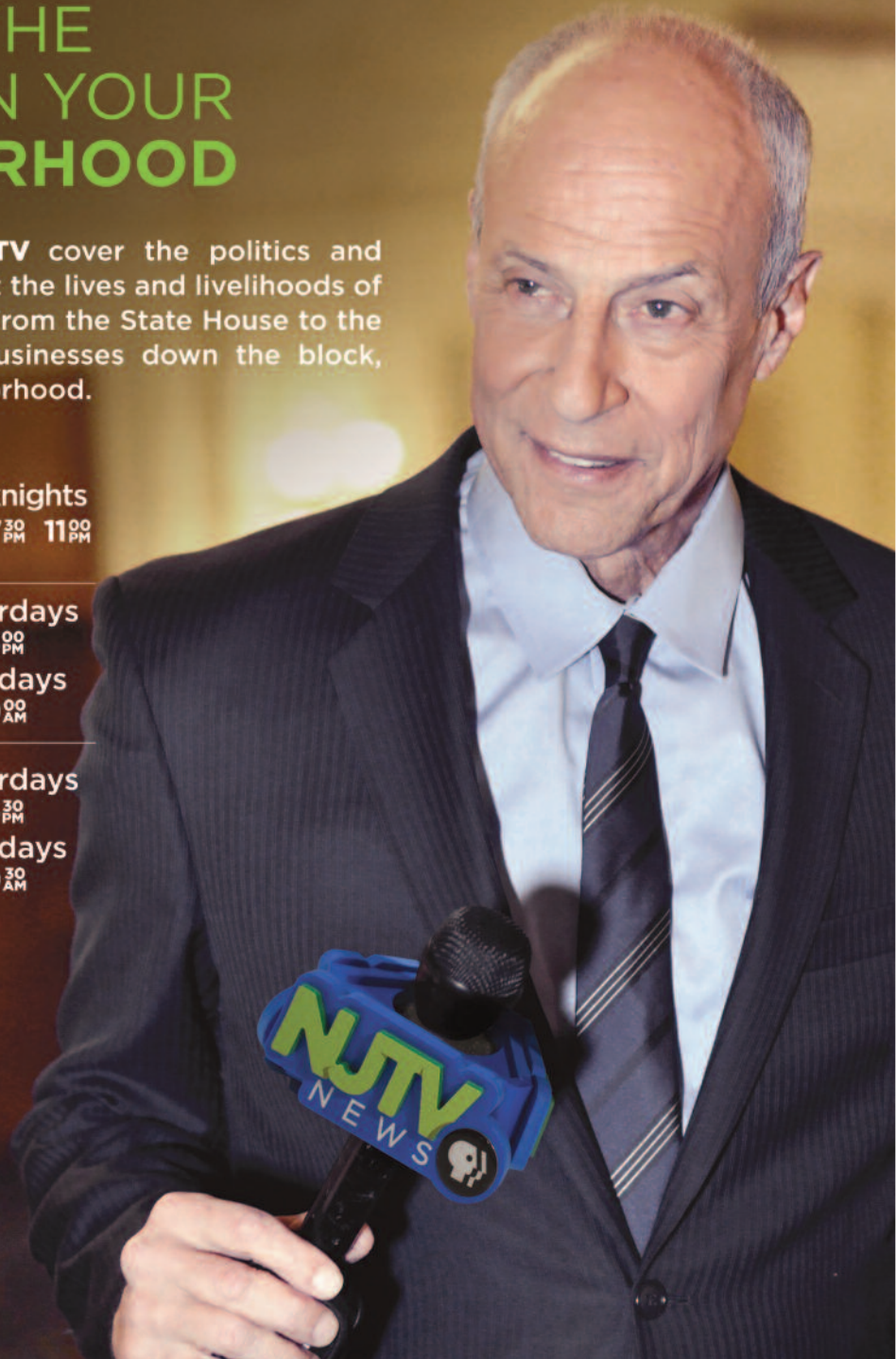
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# PROGNOSIS: WORSE;

## AN INSIDERNJ EXAMINATION OF THE YEAR AHEAD IN NEW JERSEY POLITICS

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**Just how Politically Dysfunctional** will it become here before the public gets the message? Probably not too much worse than it is now; it's almost hard to imagine it worse than now, as New Jersey leads the nation in outward migration. But it's possible, even likely that in strictly political terms, the situation will worsen.

Democrats just two years ago promised deliverance from the stone age rule of Chris Christie, and promptly settled into their comfort zone of cannibalizing one another. That establishment foundation of the party otherwise known as legislative leadership and its concomitants turned on Governor Phil Murphy as soon as it became apparent that their fellow party mentor in the executive branch seemed more eager to be kind than punishing, and more broadly visionary than bent on discovering which legislator might next make for the best cavity search.

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*Message from the Editor Continued*

Of course, it wasn't quite that simple.

Those legislators eager to find common ground with Murphy found themselves – to their horror – caught between Murphy COS Peter Cammarano and South Jersey; or between the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) and Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3), all the old fractures of the party newly rekindled in the aftermath of Christie's strongman era.

What it finally resulted in was not much big getting done, as the year dwindled down, lawmakers shelved the Murphy 2018 agenda of a minimum wage hike and recreational marijuana legalization and the Governor went on an African safari. So seemingly ill-suited was Murphy to the big game hunt of Trenton, one might imagine his Serengeti getaway proving the inverse of Hemingway's *Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*. If so, and Macomber was successful in New York, and incompetent on safari, then Murphy, unsuccessful in Trenton, must have a lion head on his wall in Middletown.

In any case, that mount doesn't look anything like Sweeney.

What follows is a rough advance of some of the main political stories developing this year, in addition to the leftover legislative agenda from 2018, the state's ongoing fiscal crisis, structural deficit, and chronic revenue shortfall, and the unresolved Katie Brennan-Al Alvarez scandal – all cut against the enduring backdrop of intensified ill-will within the Democratic Party, as the state twists.

Max Pizarro

*Max Pizarro*

Editor, InsiderNJ

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## WILL THERE BE A NEW JERSEY REPUBLICAN PARTY OF ANY CONSEQUENCE IN 2019?



When Robert E. Lee told General Pickett to collect his regiment after the Gettysburg massacre, the Confederate cavalry officer said, “General Lee, I have no regiment.” In strictly political terms, U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (R-4) could have uttered the same words to President Donald J. Trump, hardly a serviceable stand-in for the stately Lee, but – woefully for the GOP – a useful metaphor.

So now, in the bloody aftermath of 2018, which followed the bloody Chris Christie at 16% aftermath of 2017, the GOP must

attempt to right itself amid wreckage, with basically the same tuckered-out cast of characters left to paste together the semblance of a party from carnage.

It’s baby step time here, and as such Republicans know they have to shake the equivalent of a Stanley Kubrick horror movie otherwise known as Trump’s Stanley Kowalski presidency if they are to ever again re-oxygenate. So, in the lead up to state mid-term elections, they’ve gently up-swung an old habit of referring to their rivals as “Trenton Democrats,” knowing

any evocation of the state capital must surely rankle property tax-saddled New Jerseyans. A gentile and benignly progressive Frank Pallone is one thing. But *Trenton* Democrats? It’s worked before, it can work again.

Charged-up Democrats have other plans, of course, and see – maybe most obviously – the opportunity for pickups in Somerset County and the environs of Central Jersey, seizing on advantages secured by the successful 2018 congressional candidacy of Tom Malinowski,

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**WILL THERE BE A NEW JERSEY REPUBLICAN PARTY OF ANY CONSEQUENCE IN 2019? *CONTINUED***

and an historic Westfield win in 2017 by Mayor Shelley Brindle. There are other counties that offer the potential for movement, including Morris (scene of Mikie Sherrill's victory over Jay Webber). But Somerset entices, because of its potential to follow Burlington (3-2 Democrat after last year) as another long-standing Republican stronghold that could turn blue.

Last year, Democrats Shanel Robinson and Sara Sooy picked up two seats on the five-member board, which means one more countywide win by Democrats in

2019 would give the Peg Schaffer-led party a freeholder majority. In a larger context, Democrats see a chance to further marginalize the GOP by going after Assembly Republican Leader Jon Bramnick and his running mate, Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz, in the 21st District, ground zero of Malinowski's winning 2018 effort. Bramnick and Munoz won by an uncomfortably slender margin in 2017, and have felt the political tremors all around them in the Trump era. Conscious of Democrats' eagerness to continue branding them as mere occupants of Trump's political party, the Bram-

nick-Munoz team will spend significant money to retain their seats in the NJGOP column. They trust in progressive Governor Phil Murphy frightening moderate homeowners in the district and, trusting in those cannibalizing forces within the rival party, intend to remind voters of the perils of one-party rule in the state capital.

But – spoiler alert – Bramnick faces fractious troubles within his own party, the consequence of his ongoing spat with Republican

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## WILL THERE BE A NEW JERSEY REPUBLICAN PARTY OF ANY CONSEQUENCE IN 2019? *CONTINUED*

State Party Chairman Doug Steinhardt, a derivation of fraction personified in the White House. The pair of New Jersey Republican leaders have butted heads publicly over how the party should respond to the Trump presidency. Bramnick detests Trump. Steinhardt supports him. Even as Bramnick and Munoz prepare for the reelection battle of their lives, they may find themselves confronted by a fire-breathing Trump and Steinhardt-backing primary challenger. If Democrats – drunk with their own power – look poised to tear one another to pieces, might the GOP, rather than seize on that advantage, follow suit and similarly implode?

They needed break-out stars big enough to deflect the infuriating glare of the White House.

Certainly, former Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli (R-16) looked like an early stand-out, as did Bramnick, if he could win reelection, and, as always, state Senator Tom Kean, Jr. (R-21), already poised to challenge Malinowski in 2020.

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**BOOKER V. SHARPE JAMES PART II: 2002 AND 2020**

The junior Senator from New Jersey must feel like it's 2002 all over again as he paws at the turf and prepares to take a 2020 run against President Donald J. Trump. Booker has experience opposing circus showman father figures doubling as dastardly overlords. That is, in fact, how he came into political being, as the Newark Central Ward Councilman who 17 years ago had the swashbuckling chutzpah to run

against longtime incumbent Mayor Sharpe James.

In the first of his three citywide races, Booker laid the groundwork for victory four years later against a late substitute (Senator Ronald L. Rice) for the evacuating James, who would end up doing prison time on a corruption conviction. As part of that 2002 political christening, the Yale-educated Rhodes Scholar learned strategies

for contesting a megalomaniacal incumbent who wields lowest common denominator nativism as his chief method for political survival.

In other words, James v. Booker was the perfect test drive for Booker v. James II, otherwise known as Booker v. Trump.

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**BOOKER V. SHARPE JAMES PART II: 2002 AND 2020  
*CONTINUED***

On the surface, Booker couldn't strike a more different posture than his rivals.

In his bid to secure a fifth term as mayor of Newark, James used the race card to stave off Booker's whippersnapper candidacy, a Black version precursor to Trump's own Asa Earl Carter-lite galvanizing. But if Booker didn't immediately succeed in wrestling the torch of black urban leader-

ship away from James (he lost 47-53%), he gained more than James did in the win. The latter got packed off to prison and Booker ultimately picked off a U.S. Senate seat.

Alongside the young senator from New Jersey, Trump looks like another power-addled old executive, James-like in his paranoia, crankily past his prime, and always eager to nuzzle his favorite

twin security blankets of egotism and ignorance. Booker hopes to sport a transcendent nice guy X-factor, progressive enough to appeal to millennials and sufficiently corporate to land on the national scene with an abundance of cash.

For all their differences, Booker and James were both non-Newark natives who arrived in

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## BOOKER V. SHARPE JAMES PART II: 2002 AND 2020 *CONTINUED*

politics as out-of-towners and fastened themselves to the bowels of New Jersey's signature parochial city in their separate bids to demonstrate urban intestinal fortitude. Finally, they also both proved engaging and theatrical, perfect foils in the now cult classic documentary movie about the campaign, *Street Fight*.

In the case of his coming match-up with the sitting Republican President, Booker once again enters the fray with the more polished and prepared profile. But he also offers a sense of showmanship honed from his earliest days as James' up-and-coming tormentor, for Booker needed to become as animated a public presence as his elder interlocutor in order to chase him off the stage. As other Democrats line up to run in the primary, Booker and his allies can make the case that he is arguably that individual best prepared to go toe-to-toe with the similarly social media-crazed Trump on Twitter. The veteran of his own critically well-received TV show, *Brick City*, Booker also possesses a telegenic gift that other party rivals lack, which will no doubt prove useful as he tries to gain traction against the former *Apprentice* star, whose long-gone game show gleam bears dark and deepening legal embroilments reminiscent of James.



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## THE EMPOWERED RE-EMERGENCE OF JACK CIATTARELLI



When he announced his intentions last year to pursue the Republican nomination for governor in 2021, former Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli (R-16) rekindled the hopes of his faithful backers who wanted him to run again after his failed – but promising – 2017 bid.

But his declaration also met skepticism among that cynical part of the New Jersey political intelligentsia awaiting the next self-funder who can crush a moderately

successful but less than Corzine-money heeled hopeful like Ciattarelli and simply override his preparation by blandly buying the office, maybe without even having to re-invoke the Larry Weitzner Guadagno Campaign attack line, “Jack it up.”

Everyone loves Jack, ran the conventional wisdom coming off his first foray into gubernatorial politics, but he can’t compete with the likes of Bob Hugin or Tom MacArthur.

Too much of a monetary disadvantage.

Poor Jack “it up.”

Then 2018 happened.

The Republican nominee for the U.S. Senate, retired Celgene executive Hugin waded into a fistfight with damaged incumbent U.S. Senator Bob Menendez, dragging his own considerable baggage,

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## THE EMPOWERED RE-EMERGENCE OF JACK CIATTARELLI *CONTINUED*

which \$40 million of his own money couldn't unencumber in the era of Donald J. Trump. He could always blame Trump (and should, given the President's post-election animosity toward him, to spare himself the small discomfort of having to part with that kind of money), but having taken a less than impressive 53.1-43.8% tattooing from even the corruption trial-deflated Menendez, Hugin left few – if no one – screaming for his return to the arena.

Then there was MacArthur.

The Burlington and Ocean-based congressman was supposed to be the future of the New Jersey Republican Party. Indeed, as he left office in 2017, Chris Christie informally knighted MacArthur as the state's Republican rising star. The retired chairman of York Risk Services Group, MacArthur gave promise as a transcendent political figure, capable with hearty, regular guy problem-solving vibes, of out-leaping tired party divisions.

But his penchant for trying to work with people rather than running away from them got him in trouble with Trump as president. The Republican congressman



showed guts when he went to Willingboro to face an unhappy, largely Democratic crowd of constituents critical of his decision to back reform of the Affordable Care Act, and yet his willingness to support Trump on key issues also alienated moderate voters in the Burlington portion of the 3rd District.

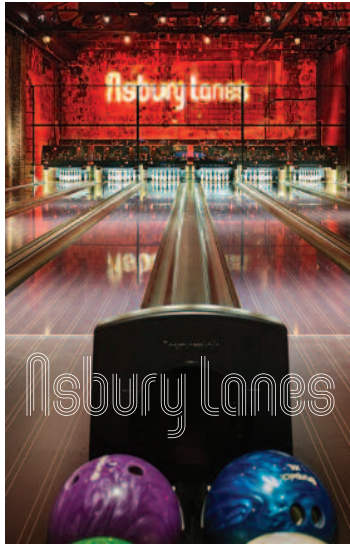
They bounced him, electing newcomer Andy Kim to 3rd Congressional seat by a 50-49% margin – the closest of all the 2018 congressional contests.

That must have been painful enough for MacArthur, but it had to be maybe even more heart-breaking for him to consider a terribly complicated future. If MacArthur had been the GOP's slowly developing secret weapon – a self-funder who was also solid on details, pro-military but socially moderate and a people person – what kind of future could he have statewide, having been budged rightward to help Trump and lost his own conservative-leaning district in the process?

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## THE EMPOWERED RE-EMERGENCE OF JACK CIATTARELLI *CONTINUED*

So MacArthur had to be seen as damaged now.

Losing his own Republican-strong district was worse than... well, it was worse than Ciattarelli running a noble failure of a 2017 Republican Primary campaign for Governor.

That meant, but for Bramnick, or someone challenging on the right to complicate matters in a Republican Primary, Ciattarelli looked strong heading toward 2021. It didn't hurt to have Kean committed to running for congress in 2020 against incumbent Malinowski (see above), a deal that gave Kean the 7th Congressional District line in Ciattarelli's home county of Somerset, in exchange for the Somerset-based Ciattarelli locking the line in Kean's Union a year thereafter.

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## MURPHY'S STEVE FULOP SURVIVAL GUIDE



Preparing to run for Governor in 2017, Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop knew he had Hudson, and figured on Bergen (which was more fractured than he expected), and Passaic, and then the backing of some fellow urban leaders, starting with Newark Mayor Ras Baraka. In addition, as the mayor of one of New Jersey's hippest municipalities, he figured he could appeal better than anyone else to anti-establishment progressive voters and millennials.

That would be the Fulop statewide playbook, mysteriously short-cir-

cuted on the day a grinning Phil Murphy collected the mayor's endorsement of governor outside City Hall in Fulop's hometown.

If the coalition sounds familiar, it's because it's Murphy's transposed strategy to survive politically now that the Democratic Party establishment with its brain stem in South Jersey wants him weakened, presumably so he would sooner run and hide rather than run for reelection in 2021.

Once the proud owner of the support of all 21 county party organi-

zations, Murphy, in order to stay governor, is now what Fulop would have had to be in order to be governor.

Not assured the backing of Essex, Union, Middlesex and South Jersey, Murphy has to hold together and augment Hudson, Bergen and Passaic, in addition to Newark and progressive support, to offset the gains a rival might make in a Democratic Primary with the support of those other key counties (and still others leaning in the direction of South Jersey, starting with Monmouth).

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## MURPHY'S STEVE FULOP SURVIVAL GUIDE *CONTINUED*



For all the gains made by the Essex Democratic Party establishment to fold in Baraka, his declaration of support for Murphy's state party chair, John Currie, over the alternative candidacy of the chairman in Baraka's home county of Essex, Leroy Jones, revealed the Newark Mayor's lingering predilection to zigzag off the reservation. And his devotion, it could be argued, to the powers associated with the governor's office, even one at less than full strength, as is the case with the Murphy Administration.

Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo had a strong, longstanding relationship with former Governor Chris Christie, which convinced the mayors they might as well go through the county executive to get to the governor. But Baraka figures he can go straight to the governor. Of course, DiVincenzo and his allies can get a new governor, if their coalition holds together.

And yet – and here's the Fulop playbook reexamined – the governor can command the lines of three im-

portant counties, maybe snag a few more, perform well in Newark on the strength of his positions on urban issues and his relationship with Baraka, and then play hard for the progressive vote: significantly women, millennials, and anti-machine Democrats who came out in droves in last year's federal mid-term elections.

Now, the legislative leadership is, of course, laboring hard to separate

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**MURPHY'S STEVE FULOP SURVIVAL GUIDE  
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Murphy from his base. The ongoing hearings into the hiring practices of his administration presumably can – over time, and if Katie Brennan emerges empowered by the end of them – open a rift between Murphy and progressive women voters. His rivals' goal is to get that same wing of the Democratic Party – and independents – who opposed Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court, to stick a fork in Murphy, or at least crowbar him away from that other portion of his base.

But if Booker does indeed run, Moreover, if Murphy has another

year or two in which he can't move his agenda, if marijuana legalization and minimum wage and key components of his economic stimulus plan languish, might Baraka and another enduring Murphy ally, Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh, find it increasingly difficult to make the case for his reelection?

The South Jersey Brain Trust's goal is to ensure that John Currie, stripped of the state party chairmanship, all but politically toothless and morose, will be the last man at Murphy's side.

The potency of the onslaught, the

naked disregard for the governor's power, very nearly reminiscent of the Chilean presidency of Salvador Allende in its waning days, surely must weigh on Murphy's choice of a 2020 presidential candidate. Indeed, the political situation in the New Jersey Democratic Party is so horrendous, that despite his proclamations of disinterest in his own presidential candidacy, a Cory Booker bow-out, coupled with a Joe Biden prez pass, would almost require Murphy to double back on that Woodrow Wilson option.

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**MURPHY'S STEVE FULOP SURVIVAL GUIDE  
CONTINUED**

There are days when his rivals' rancorous political moves against him suggest that even something as supposedly personal and national in scope as Booker's presidential aspiration is little more than smoke and mirrors to keep Murphy bottled up until it's too late for him to execute his own White House run.

But if Booker does indeed run, Murphy will be with Booker, and –

as strong as the case will be from Murphy's political enemies to deny him a warm chair in a Booker Cabinet if Booker wins – Murphy must go all in on securing a seat at that table and evacuate New Jersey prior to 2021, or risk reenacting the 2009 gubernatorial campaign of the man he least likes to be compared to: Jon Corzine. Booker could Corzine Murphy too, though, if the junior senator loses the Democratic Pri-

mary for the presidency and thereby puts Murphy in the back of the line for a spot in the administration of the nominee who does beat Trump.

Remember, it was Corzine, handcuffed to Hillary Clinton, with his nose pressed up to the window of the developing Obama Administration, where they let him freeze.

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MURPHY'S STEVE FULOP SURVIVAL GUIDE  
*CONTINUED*

Certainly, Murphy and his handlers would blithely argue, as they have from the beginning when they first unveiled the ex-Goldman Sachs guy with an effervescent personality in place of Corzine's colorless bedside manner (for what is New Jersey but a terminal patient), that *Murphy isn't Corzine*, right down to him assuredly avoiding the latter's reelection debacle.

But if that's so, Murphy will somehow, in the face of all the efforts to tear him from it piece by humiliating piece, have to hold together that playbook initially designed by Fulop, and not yet executed.

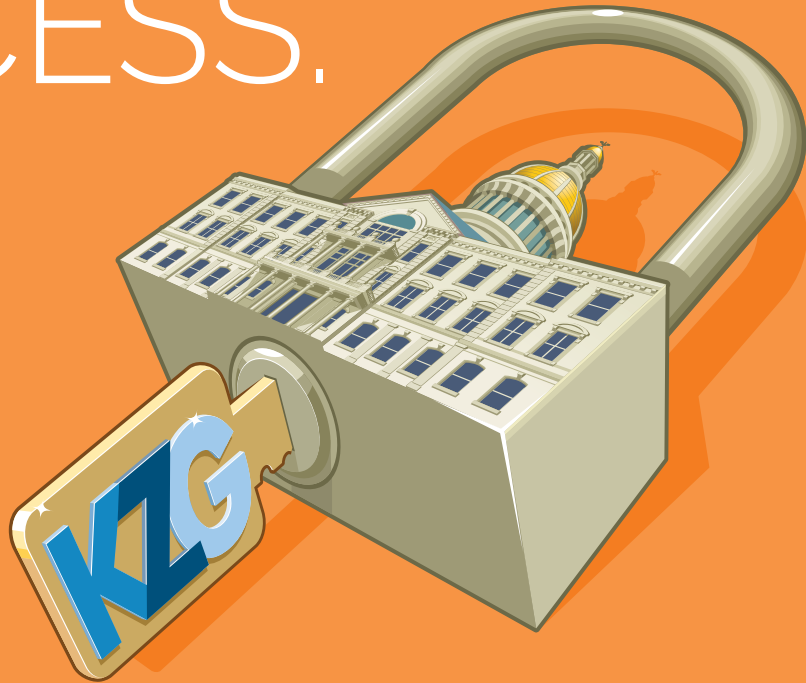
And again, Baraka – once Fulop's closest ally – is key, for the function of most people in New Jersey politics is to reinforce the machinery

that hatched them, a job usually accomplished by protecting the atmospheric conditions of their own incubation to the exclusion of the public.

Occasionally, someone sneaks in to defy that dynamic.

*Continued on Page 34*

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## MURPHY'S STEVE FULOP SURVIVAL GUIDE *CONTINUED*

In 2017, Murphy campaigned as such a person, a former U.S. Ambassador to Germany with global connections, un-owned by the parochial, Paulie Cicero boss system of New Jersey. But Murphy's Wall Street narrative left little doubt that he fulfills less a Dionysian than Apollonian design for power. A more accurate man against the system portrait emerges in the character of the Newark Mayor, whose grounded vitality incidentally proves exactly the right fit for Murphy, turtling right now on the high wire act he put himself on when he landed the governorship.

A neophyte with few connections, Murphy ran with the backing of all 21 party organizations, including those in South Jersey, whose network now opposes him, largely owing to a longstanding rift within labor that predates the sitting governor. A grassroots South Ward councilman with his own deep river ties in the black and artistic communities, Baraka, for his part, won the mayoralty in 2014 against that same party establishment, most accurately defined as an Essex County-South Jersey nexus.

Baraka landed in the chair of power owing nothing to the structure that gave birth politically to most sweaty occupants of so-called power, making him – as the leader of New Jersey's biggest municipal puzzle piece – a lethal gubernatorial ally.



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## WHERE THE ELECTIONS ARE IN 2019, THE PLAYERS, AND WHAT THEY MEAN



Democrats pray the momentum from 2018 spills into 2019, and with it, a public appetite to make the GOP pay for the obscenity of Donald J. Trump even in state mid-term elections, while Republicans hope exhaustion from last year keeps the electorate fairly flat, and trust in state issues galvanizing new pockets of persuasion, who are fearful of a combination of one-party rule and jacked Democratic taxes.

Most immediately, Assemblyman Bob Andrzejczak will try to secure the senate seat left behind by U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, a fellow Democrat. Presumably he will face Cumberland County GOP Chairman Mike Testa. It might be as simple as that but at a minimum we know

Andrzejczak will fill the senate seat and run to keep it a special election, and while others show interest, Testa at the moment shows the strongest footing to land the GOP nomination.

As referenced above, we also should note LD21, once ground zero of the Chris Christie rat pack, now looks competitive, in light of the fact that Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick and his running mate, Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz, won by around 2,500 votes in 2017. Democrats interested in running there include independent social advocate Lacey Rzeszowski of Summit, attorney Goutham Jois of Summit, and attorney Lisa Mandelblatt of Westfield.

Just as Democrats want to capitalize on gains made by Tom Malinowski in LD21, the backers of Mikie Sherill hunger for more blue turf in LD25. Medical doctor Lisa Bhimani of Mendham Township and business analyst Darcy Draeger of Chester want to oust Assemblyman Tony Bucco and his as-yet undetermined running mate to supplant retiring Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll. Bucco won by about 3,700 votes last time. Again, he'll be trusting that his voters understand the difference between empowering Trump and empowering one-party rule in Trenton.

*Continued on Page 38*



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## WHERE THE ELECTIONS ARE IN 2019, THE PLAYERS, AND WHAT THEY MEAN *CONTINUED*

It will be interesting to see how Democrats respond to this election cycle, especially in LD21 and LD25. Dissing Murphy at every turn, legislative leadership may decide to look the other way on Bramnick and Bucco, giving the two nice-guy Republicans with deal-making capacities a pass by not playing hard in their districts behind Democratic challengers. But depending on that lapping blue wave out there, their backroom handshakes may prove ineffectual

(as the 2017 cross-the-aisle move to protect Senator Kip Bateman almost did), leaving the door open, in the fractured Democratic Party, for Murphy to champion their candidacies. Of course, that would tie them more directly to a governor who has already gone on record with “it’s too early to tell” on the subject of new tax increases, which might not play well in those suburban districts guarded by the GOP. But then again, Murphy’s progressive, up-by-his-own-bootstraps,

anti-cobwebby machine party political brand might be just the kind of shot in the arm to revive voters impassioned by the 2018 cycle. In the best of all possible worlds for the challenging Democrats, the governor and the Democratic Party establishment emanating from South Jersey could find themselves in a bidding war to leave their indelible fingerprints on those newcomers, should they prove successful.

*Continued on Page 40*



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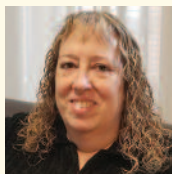


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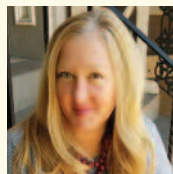
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## WHERE THE ELECTIONS ARE IN 2019, THE PLAYERS, AND WHAT THEY MEAN *CONTINUED*

This also needs to be said, given the gulf between Murphy and his party. Will he decide to primary one of the leaders or lapdogs in the South Jersey establishment? He would have to be careful, of course. Any show of aggression, or cloaked designs on depriving a rival of power, would have to result in complete success, lest he give birth to a second version of Steve Sweeney v. NJEA Part II. If Murphy and/or his allies decide to buck a South Jersey-allied brand name, they must finish the job. Might that be Speaker Craig Coughlin (D-19), the white male occupant of a district with a profusion of Latinos? Our guess is no. But given the depth of acrimony between the front office and legislative leadership, neither would some show of executive resistance surprise us.



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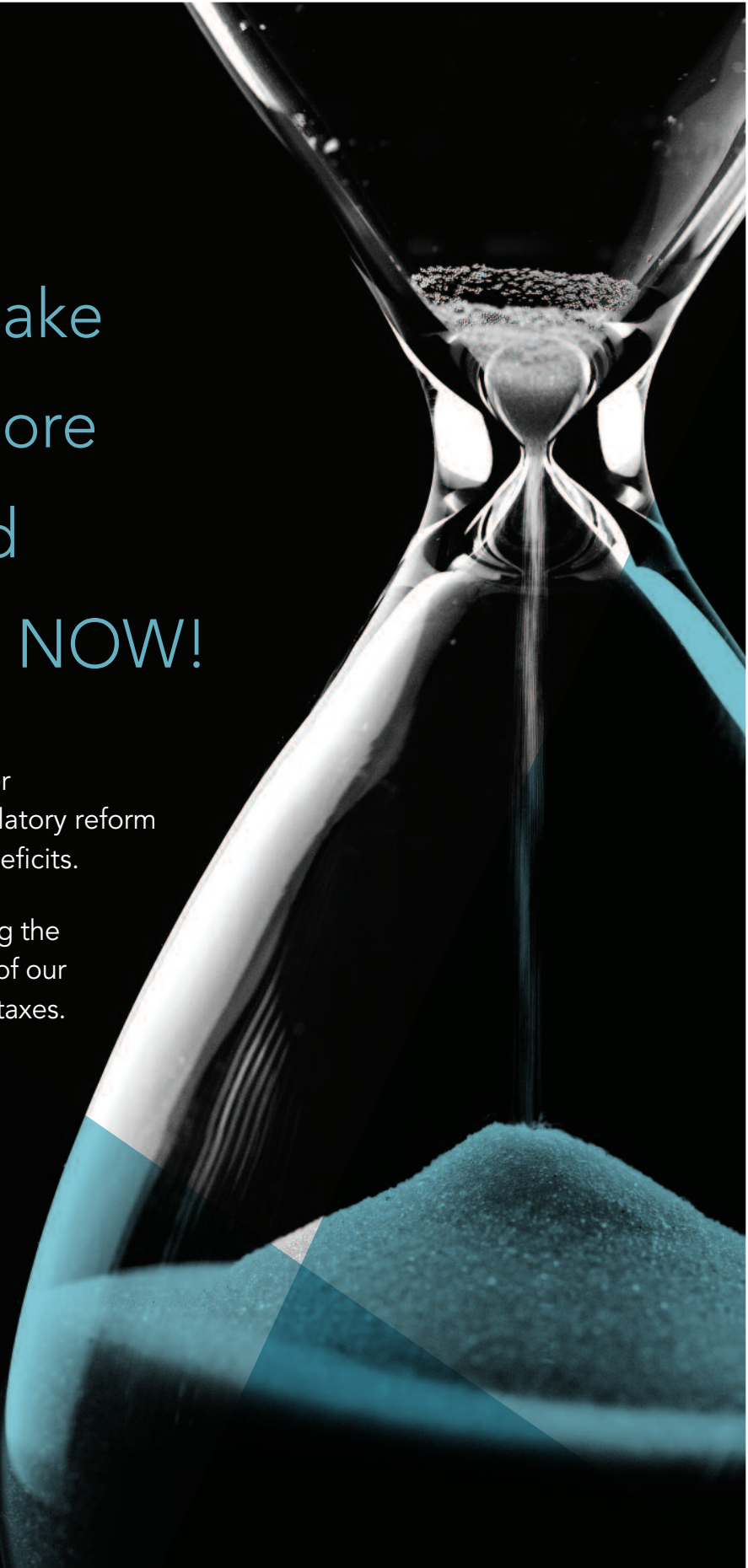
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## HUDSON, REVISITED



Mayor in his hometown of North Bergen since 1991, state Senator Nick Sacco (D-32) wants another four years on the clock of local power. He will again have to get past businessman Larry Wainstein, who singed Sacco in 2015 on his way to losing a brutal, 8,400 to 5,000-vote contest.

Wainstein has money, and hopes to hit a somewhat dented version of the incumbent, encumbered by ongoing investigative headlines concerning North Bergen nepotism. An NBC News investigation last year revealed the presence of ten Sacco

relatives receiving paychecks from the local education system, an affiliated technology school, and the town.

Wainstein will be all over that in 2019.

What's interesting, too, is that since Vinny Prieto's decision to go off the statewide party establishment reservation, his overlord Sacco hasn't endeared himself to South Jersey. Will GN3 and company – bored during the nonpartisan cycle of the coming year – decide to interfere locally and assist Wainstein?

Probably not. Sacco and U.S. Senator Bob Menendez are close. If Menendez had lost last year, Sacco would be more vulnerable. But it's hard not to see the U.S. Senator helping Sacco where he can, and that may include talking down the dogs from Trenton who want him damaged.

Also in Hudson this year, we have another fascinating mayoral non-partisan match-up, as West New York Mayor Felix Roque seeks a third term on office. He will receive a challenge from Commissioner

*Continued on Page 44*

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## HUDSON, REVISITED *CONTINUED*

Gabe Rodriguez, the prized pupil of U.S. Rep. Albio Sires (D-8). If Sires and the party establishment decide to go all in, Roque will have a problem, but as disaffected as he is within the Hudson County Democratic Organization (HCDO) establishment, Roque – a retired Army colonel and medical doctor who twice survived indictments filed against him – has substantial street cred.

It will be a war.

Also, until filing day passes, Hudson politicians will be alert to lingering political activity around the county executive's office. They figured the issue got settled when the daughter of the sitting executive, Tom DeGise, up for reelection in 2019, beat the candidate backed by those who would have tossed DeGise out of power this year. Defeated by Amy DeGise, state Senator Brian P. Stack at year's end appeared unwilling to continue the war against the county executive. Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop, too, looked less than energized by the prospect of going against the re-muscled DeGise. But until filing day actually passes, DeGise and the HCDO will watch for any sudden sign of reanimated aggression.

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## THE JOCKEYING FOR INFLUENCE – AND SURVIVAL – BEGINS IN D.C.



U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-11) defined herself as the transcendent political personality of 2018 in New Jersey, largely because there's no one else like here. New Jersey politics prioritizes some of the basest bottom-feeder impulses imaginable, finding the very essence of itself in depravity, dissipation, and self-preservation secured as a fatal act of compromise disguised as principle. A retired helicopter pilot with a real record of public service, Sherrill stunned a state habituated more to *Goodfellas* than the public good, and more God forsaken than *Godfather*.

In her first official act as a United States Congresswoman, Sherrill actually kept a campaign promise by voting no on U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi for Speaker, which might serve her well with those constituents eyeballing her every move, but simultaneously set her back with Pelosi, who's also closely watching from atop the rostrum. Much of the matter depends on how Sherrill and her people handled the politics behind the scenes. Did the soccer mom suburbanite convince the San Francisco-based speaker of her need to maintain a moderate to conservative posture in

the district previously served by American Revolution descendent Rodney Frelinghuysen? If she didn't, Sherrill could find herself suddenly minimized in the halls of power, compared to someone like U.S. Rep. Tom Malinowski (D-7), a former lobbyist and more obviously a creature of the District of Columbia than of New Jersey's 7th District.

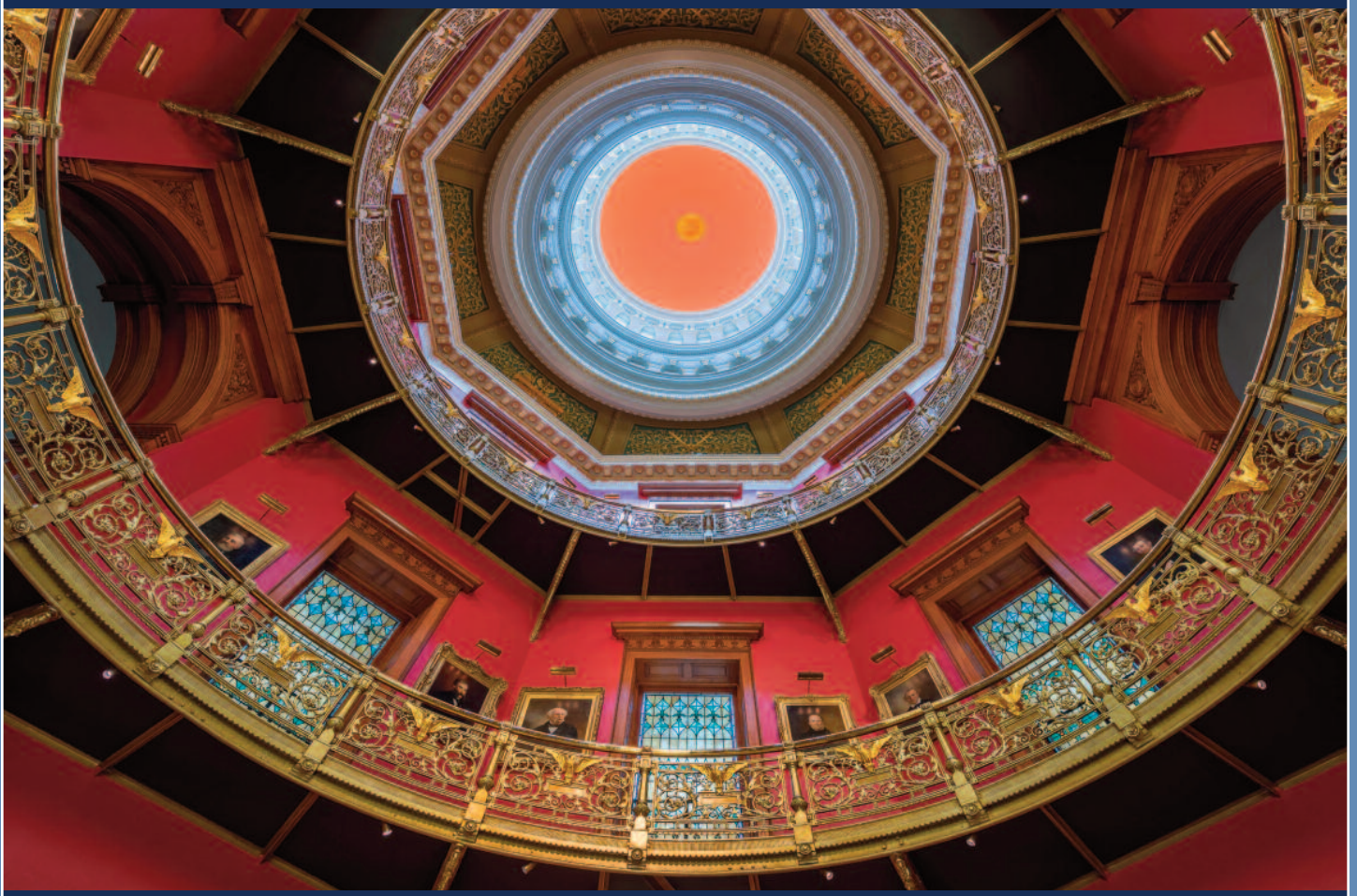
Combat veteran Sherrill's campaign scintillated on the trail, but will Malinowski – who voted aye for Pelosi – prove better footed for a cloak and dagger D.C. comfort zone?

*Continued on Page 48*



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**THE JOCKEYING FOR INFLUENCE – AND SURVIVAL – BEGINS IN D.C. *CONTINUED***

Possibly.

But consider this: Malinowski, like Sherrill and fellow freshman U.S. Rep. Andy Kim (D-3) never served in elected office, and in that regard at least shares a similar narrative to those particular two of his newly sworn-in congressional colleagues. Of the four newly minted U.S. Representatives from New Jersey, only U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew (D-2) previously served in elected office. Veteran members of the New Jersey Congressional delegation, U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone (D-6), U.S. Rep.

Donald Norcross (D-1), U.S. Rep. Albio Sires (D-8), U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-9), and U.S. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-12), all also served in elected office prior to assuming the oath in D.C. So did former U.S. Representatives Frel-inghuysen and Frank LoBiondo (R-2). So did former U.S. Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-3), supplanted last year by Kim. Besides those aforementioned three newcomers to the delegation, only U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-5) and U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (R-4) (the latter now a veteran with 37 years of experience

on the Hill) didn't hold elected office prior to their D.C. service. Will the freshmen have enough moxie to survive?

Will Malinowski and Kim (a former State Department official, who also backed Pelosi for speaker) have a Beltway edge because of their knowledge of the town?

Will Van Drew – first elected to the Dennis Twp. Committee in 1991 – prove to get the game quicker as a

*Continued on Page 50*





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## THE JOCKEYING FOR INFLUENCE – AND SURVIVAL – BEGINS IN D.C. *CONTINUED*

result of his having juggled backrooms and barbecues for almost 30 years?

Is Sherrill – the stand-out last year – potentially at the greatest disadvantage this year, given her dearth of experience in D.C. (Malinowski and Kim) and her lack of elected office (Van Drew)?

Whatever dynamics develop among them as they begin their D.C. careers likely won't impact too much the 26-year congressional trajectory of Pallone, who this year – with Democrats now in the majority - assumed the chairmanship of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and replaced the banished Frelinghuysen as – right now - the most powerful congressperson in New Jersey.

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## JONES VERSUS CURRIE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC STATE PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP



The antidote of inevitability can deflate even the most zealous – and promising – designs on power. It’s the instrument most readily employed by that brain trust otherwise known as South Jersey to give the appearance of a game ended, even when it has just begun.

So it was that those allies of South Jersey Democratic Party Power Broker George Norcross and Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3) sounded the political death knell of Democratic State Party Chair-

man John Currie even before their preferred candidate, Essex County Democratic Committee Chairman Leroy Jones, expressed interest in the job.

Norcross, Sweeney and company want control over the coming 2021 redistricting process – and the coffers of the state party - and along the way don’t mind weakening Governor Phil Murphy, who backs Currie for state party chair.

The battle for the chairmanship between Jones and Currie would

appear to favor Jones, whose allies have more instrumentation to get people to do what they’re told than Murphy, a neophyte governor with an inexperienced staff in the front office. So far, 11 county committee chairs have committed to Jones and seven to Currie. Three are neutral. But, the Governor’s allies argue, the departure of Murphy Chief of Staff Peter Cammarano will reset the clock. As soon as Murphy picks a new chief, presumably one with a better inside political game, the

*Continued on Page 53*





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## JONES VERSUS CURRIE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC STATE PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP

Governor has a year left on Currie's present term to employ better methods of persuasion than Cammarano to cohere a majority of Democratic State Committee members.

Again, Jones' allies will tell you it's already over.

But if the Governor's Office of New Jersey – that sleeping cyclops among well-organized and well-engineered pygmies – exerts influence as yet unseen, Currie may still have a fighting chance against the favorite Jones, for an office supposedly no one wanted, but inevitability, creates, if not the aura of power, at least the *association* of the aura of power.

Over the course of the last two weeks, Jones seemed to express less *Any Given Sunday* urgency for the position, maybe because he realizes he can't maintain excitement for a chair's candidacy for the entirety of 2019. But watch developments throughout the year to see if he does try to make incursions that will suffocate Currie out of power by year's end and simultaneously deflate Murphy.

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