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2019 RETROSPECTIVE



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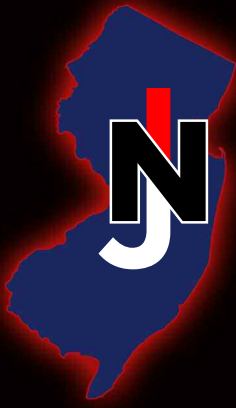
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INTRODUCTION

You don't ever get to the end of the year in New Jersey without one last political bombshell going off, and as we dutifully labor to finish the InsiderNJ 2019 Retrospective we pause to ponder the latest.

This time it's U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew providing 11th hour drama amid the hustle of Christmas cheer. His decision to oppose the impeachment of President Donald J. Trump prompted the Democratic Party establishment to pull the plug on him, shoving him into the arms of Trump, who oversaw his transformation from pragmatic Dem to New Jersey's 2020 winner of The Apprentice otherwise known as Jeff Van Flew.

The congressman's decision to cut ties with the party he came up in but finally felt alienated from sparked outrage everywhere. Democrats were angry. Republicans were angry.

"Jeff has played this little game for years, and it finally caught up with him," said one Democrat, speaking on condition of anonymity, as he considered Van Drew's track record of providing crunch time Senate Budget Committee votes to Gov. Chris Christie, who through Van Drew added another layer of political adhesive to the South Jersey Democratic Machine.

Others – staffers and longtime backers of the always nattily attired congressman – said they felt flat out heartbroken. In their eyes, their always pragmatic and intelligent champion was far from the wild-eyed transgressions of the president.

And yet, it would be done.

Unable to reconcile his own decision to oppose impeachment with the rank and file in his own party, Van Drew – rather than change his position – changed parties.

It was a fitting end to a year defined once again by campaigns and elections, and in particular that collision in Van Drew's old senate district, where his protégé, war hero Robert Andrzejczak could not – in the Republican bastion of deep South Jersey – withstand the Trump-affiliated march of Vineland attorney Mike Testa, Jr., chair of the Cumberland County GOP.

On the final session of the year in Trenton, lame duck Assemblyman R. Bruce Land (D-1), defeated by the Testa ticket in November, choked back tears as he bade farewell to his fellow lawmakers in both parties.

Even as Van Drew secured himself to a president reviled by those who once loved and now felt betrayed by him, the tough old beloved veteran from the Vietnam War, a survivor by trade of the world's worst trials, never quick to criticize or be partisan, felt the pangs of those personal connections he made under the gold dome, as he exited the statehouse, a casualty of politics.

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**WINNER OF THE YEAR
MIKE TESTA, JR.**

New Jersey is kind of like the entire country bulldozed into one seafront spillzone. It's got everything. For every millionaire banker not from here who buys his way into office, you have someone who actually rises out of the tilled soil of his own backyard. Bob Andrzejak was an excellent incumbent candidate. He's a man who reminds others of the value of public service and sacrifice and, God knows, courage – all virtues in short supply in a state more God forsaken than God-fearing. But Testa insisted on telling his own authentic story and convincing voters that his skills would better serve them in Trenton. Testa reminded the state of a critical political lesson: it's not enough to depend on a combination of anger and the temper of the times. You have to offer something constructive.

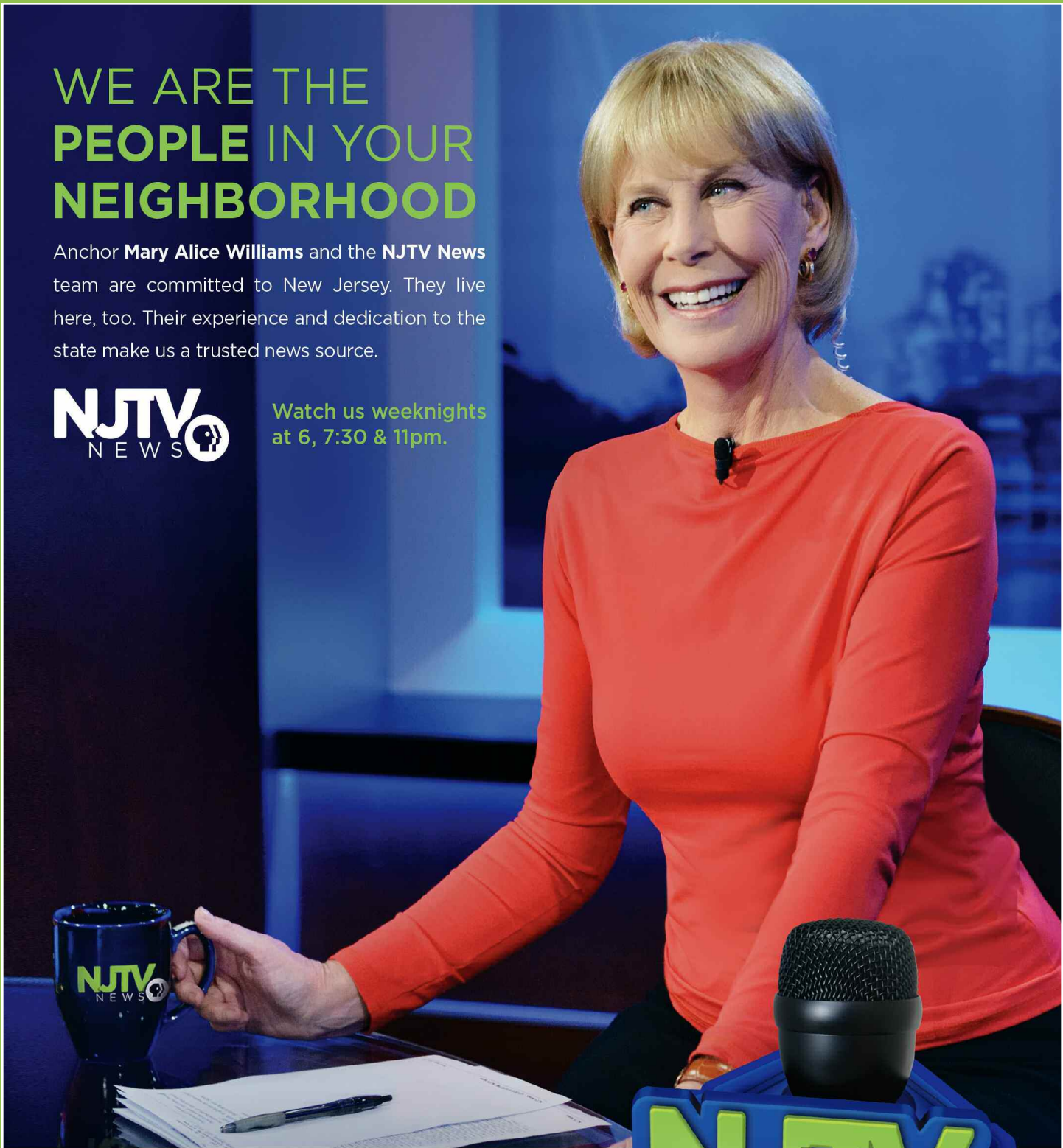


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**WINNER OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP
PEG SCHAFFER**

The Somerset County Democratic Committee Chair took advantage of Trump horror in her home county to put her party in charge of the Somerset Freeholder Board for the first time since the Lyndon Johnson Administration.



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WINNER OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP
SHEENA COLLUM



The progressive Village President in South Orange crushed challenger Deborah Davis to win a second term.





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**WINNER OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP
JON BRAMNICK**

Widely dismissed as collateral damage of the Trump presidency, nice funny Republican guy Bramnick prevailed with a show of street smart moxie despite Democrats trying pretty hard to upend him on the strength of Central Jersey Trump agony.



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**WINNER OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP
DONALD J. TRUMP**

Headed for impeachment at year's end, the President hates the state, evidently, but could depend on good ol' New Jersey to create an advantageous national narrative when U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew of South Jersey opted to switch parties sooner than back impeachment.



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POLITICIAN OF THE YEAR
RYAN PETERS

What do you do when the senator who occupies the top of your slate changes parties and aligns with the most powerful boss in the state to defeat you? If you're Peters, you go into Navy SEAL mode. The LD8 Republican assemblyman ditched dead weight slate mate Joe Howarth and installed proven countywide winner Sheriff Jean Stanfield on his ticket. He defeated Howarth in the GOP Primary while resisting his former running mate's efforts to have him sign a Trump loyalty pledge. Heading toward November, he collected the endorsement of the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) as he looked to defeat a Building Trades labor-backed candidate. Then he withstood a running salvo of attacks by the General Majority PAC while crushing a MAGA candidate plant and – with Stanfield's help – beating his Democratic opponents by about 1K votes. Like fellow attorney Testa, Peters believed in himself and in the mission, and trusted in his ability to deliver his own individual narrative to the voters. Look for a 2021 state senate run.





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**POLITICIAN OF THE YEAR RUNNER UP
SUE ALTMAN**

The new Executive Director of the New Jersey Working Families Alliance replaced legendary hell-raiser Analilia Mejia and proved more than up to the job. The former professional basketball player and Columbia University superstar showed the power of dissent when state troopers dragged her out of a pitiable George Norcross legislative hearing.





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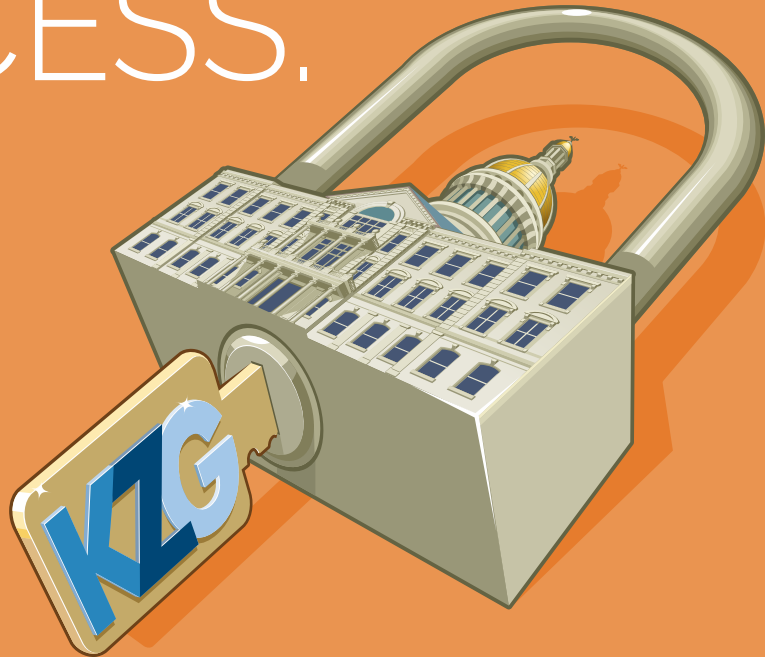


**POLITICIAN OF THE YEAR RUNNER UP
DOUG STEINHARDT**

The Republican State Party chairman demonstrated leadership chops as he kept the state party relevant in the clutch. He managed to reverse a deadening couple of years for the NJGOP and pilfer a state senate and two assembly seats in LD1.



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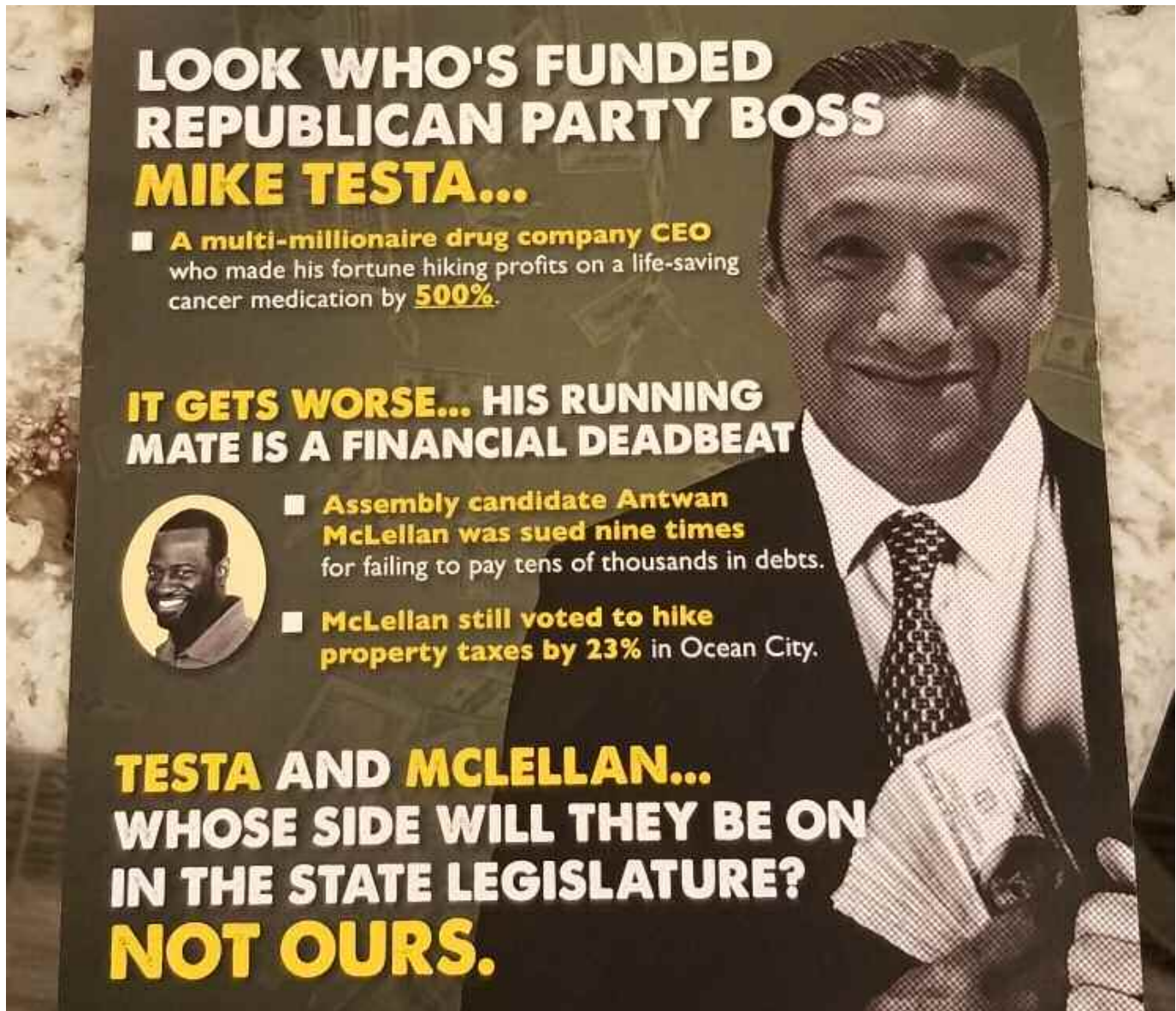


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LOSER OF THE YEAR **GENERAL MAJORITY PAC**



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MATE IS A FINANCIAL DEADBEAT**



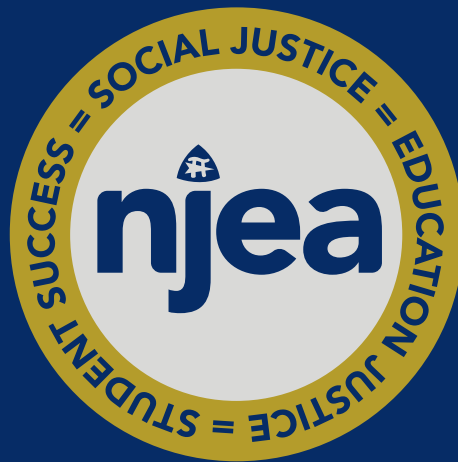
- **Assembly candidate Antwan McLellan was sued nine times** for failing to pay tens of thousands in debts.
- **McLellan still voted to hike property taxes by 23%** in Ocean City.

**TESTA AND MCLELLAN...
WHOSE SIDE WILL THEY BE ON
IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE?
NOT OURS.**

The PAC with ties to South Jersey Power Broker George Norcross III released that dreadful, race-baiting mailer targeting Ocean City Councilman Antwan McClellan in the 1st District. It was that moment in a tight campaign that gave Team Testa the moral upper-hand, usually not good for much in New Jersey politics, but in this case significant, as the councilman became Assemblyman-elect and the only African-American Republican legislator in Trenton.



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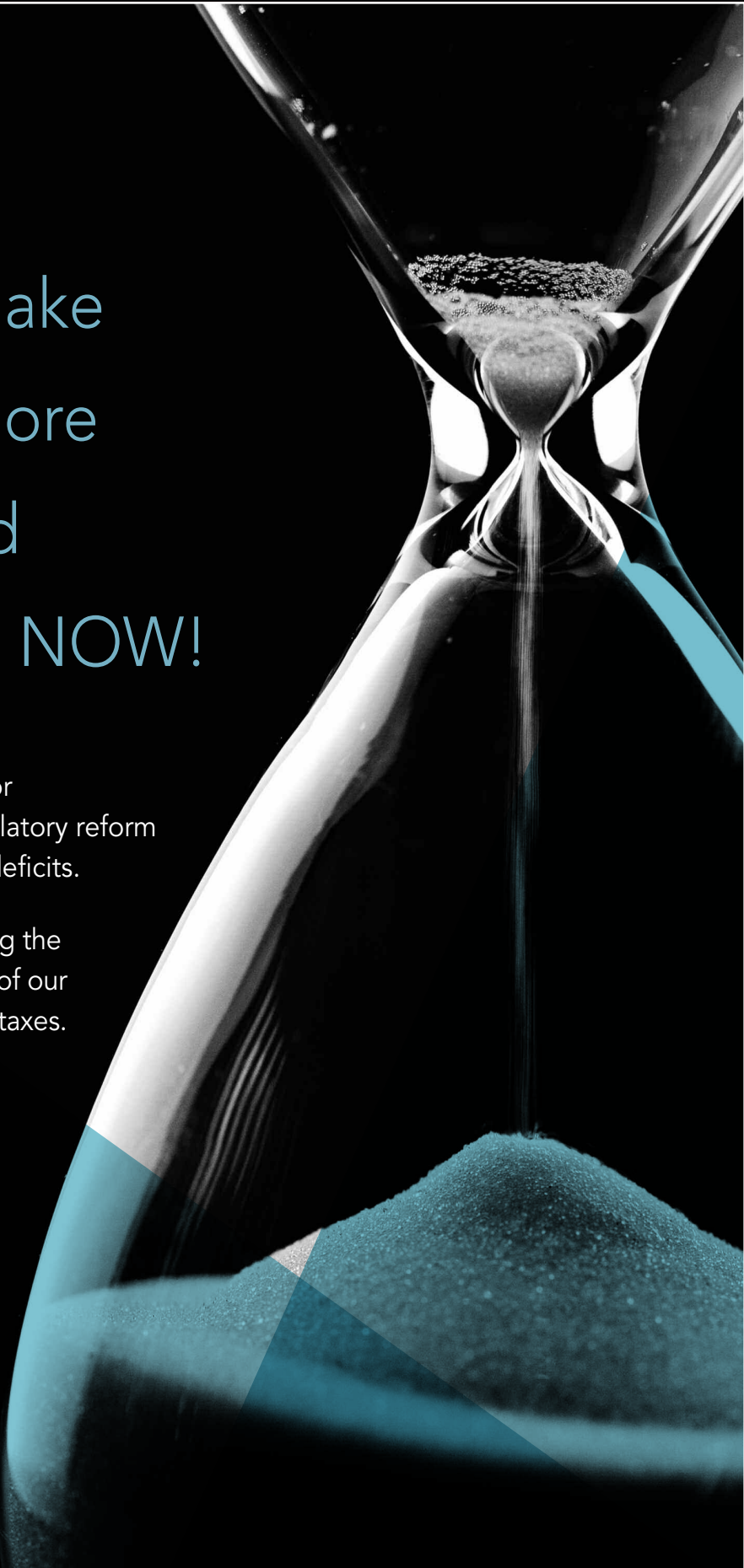


Steve Swetsky, Executive Director

**LOSER OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP
FRANK GILLIAM**

The guy makes Joey Torres look like a saint. Bad? Suffice to say the FBI's takedown of a man who stole money from a children's basketball league was the best news the downtrodden Atlantic City received since 1935, when Parker Brothers announced production of a board game inspired by the oceanfront gambling mecca.





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LOSER OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP GEORGE NORCROSS



The boss had a bad year. First it was the Governor's Task Force making a criminal referral to the AG's Office in the matter of Economic Development Authority tax incentives that benefited Norcross' business interests. Then it was the news that U.S. Attorney William McSwain had taken an interest in the matter. Then his General Majority PAC lost the two highest profile contests where the PAC competed (LD1 and LD8). Then his testimony before a senate panel prompted state troopers to forcibly remove a dissenting Norcross antagonist. He had glimmers of wins, and some outright wins. The legislature again stymied Governor Phil Murphy's attempts to secure a millionaire's tax, a prized Norcross objective; and continued to beach-head Senate President Steve Sweeney's (D-3) Path to Progress agenda. But all in all, New Jersey's own Gordon Gekko had a far less than celestial complement to his usual rarified, helicopter-riding atmosphere.



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LOSER OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP SOMERSET GOP



For years they held off stampeding Dems, going back to the 1960s. But they ran out of political ammo. Chairman Al Gaburo and the gang finally couldn't fend off the agony from within, over President Donald J. Trump. Frequently in the county at his golf course in Bedminster, the GOP Prez antagonized moderates, independents and Republicans. He positively enraged formerly sleepy and mostly politically complacent progressives, who didn't appreciate his Twitter temper tantrum-throwing ways, ignoble personal practices, caustic appetites, and spoiled child agenda.





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**LOSER OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP
GEORGE GILMORE**

The long-standing boss of the Ocean County Republican Party was finally toppled, leaving behind a wave of hysteria in Ocean, and bored looks in the rest of the state where Democrats still outnumber Republicans by 1 million registered voters.



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**LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR
ANNETTE QUIJANO**

Veteran Assemblywoman Annette Quijano (D-20) led her fellow Hispanic Statehouse colleagues to secure a tier of driver's licenses for non-legal residents of New Jersey. This was a big legislative moment for Quijano, state Senator Tereza Ruiz, Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez, Senator Nellie Pou, and former Assemblywoman Marlene Caride. "Today marks a historical day in our state. I can't even believe we're here. It's been many years," said the Elizabeth assemblywoman, who worked with her fellow lawmakers, the governor's office, labor groups, including 32BJ SEIU, and advocates to make New Jersey the 15th state in the country to adopt a driver's license law for those without legal status: half a million people in New Jersey.





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**LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP
JOE VITALE**

Governor Phil Murphy this year signed into law the Middlesex County Senator's bill removing the statute of limitations on civil suits for child rape cases abuse cases. That was a significant piece of legislation, aimed at chopping down those predators taking refuge behind the walls of powerful institutions like the Catholic Church. Vitale also authored the year's successful driver's license bill, which will enable undocumented workers to obtain a way to legally drive in the state of New Jersey; controversial, to be sure, but again written to assist a vulnerable population. Usually in New Jersey, lawmakers planted in Trenton are there to help the powerful. Apparently Vitale has a different take on his purpose in power.



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**LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP
RONALD RICE**

No one in Trenton works harder than the Newark senator, a beat cop turned detective, who now in his seventies still applies the same level of detail preparation and homework fulfillment he did when he worked in investigations. Rice had a very productive year, as he won the argument over Governor Phil Murphy and Senator Nick Scutari to get the focus on marijuana decriminalization instead of full-blown recreational legalization. He also showed his horse trading skills in the halls of power when he got behind Vitale's driver's license bill (see above) only when he secured Senate President Sweeney's commitment to championing bills easing punishing penalties on driver's with child support arrearages, authorizing the court to waive imprisonment as a penalty for accumulated driver suspensions, and replacing fines for driving offenses with community service.





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COMEBACK OF THE YEAR MATT MOENCH



When Mayor Patricia Flannery retired in 2011, Moench stepped up to succeed her but failed to outduel Dan Hayes for the support of the

Bridgewater Twp. Republican Party. Eight years later, Moench signaled to Hayes that he wanted to run for mayor, but Hayes dug in, prompting a GOP Primary challenge from the veteran councilman. In one of the best performances of the year, Moench defeated same-party rival Hayes, then went on to soundly thrash Democrat Jeff Brookner in the general to fully bounce back and resume course in what insiders have long seen as a highly promising political career.



OPERATIVE OF THE YEAR BRITTANY O'NEILL



Schooled in the Tom Kean, Jr. universe, the Campaign Manager for Team Testa in the 1st Legislative District proved graceful under pressure, tough when it mattered, and more than prepared for the challenge of going toe to toe with the Norcross Empire in South Jersey as her ticket Republican ticket swept Democrats out of power.

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FIGHT OF THE YEAR, IN HONOR OF THE JERSEY DEVIL VERSUS PATERSON MURPHY V. NORCROSS



Murphy's admittedly at a disadvantage. He actually seems to enjoy life, family, travel and maybe even occasionally books; whereas he's up against guys who seem to wake up every morning trying to figure out who they can make squirm that day, or worse. Maybe that's why they got along with a certain former governor, though we're not naming names. Murphy got bloodied first. The Legislature denied him his millionaire's tax, then legalized pot. Tried to make a fool out of him at every turn. So the governor dropped that little tax incentive bomb on Norcross. There were other skirmishes, of course. An authority member squeezed. A governor's ally – often John Currie – slapped. But when the board members of the Economic Development Authority (EDA) refused to vacate their seats, hunkering in as a statement of comfort with their votes to approve those controversial Camden tax incentives, the political situation went to condition red. First it was a governor's task force criminal referral. Then it was an AG's investigation. Then the FBI was reportedly sniffing around. Then Essex County Democratic Committee Chairman LeRoy

Jones – with South Jersey (Senate President Steve Sweeney) and Middlesex (Speaker Craig Coughlin) behind him - was challenging Currie for the state chairmanship of the party, looking to weaken the governor's hold on the state party's politics. But he still supports him for governor, he told Politico's Matt Friedman; though Norcross told Friedman there will be a primary.

HONORABLE MENTION SCUTARI VERSUS ARMSTEAD



It's hard to keep score of this one. We'll try. Scutari launched an investigation into Armstead. Then

Armstead demanded repayment of the late Jerry Green's campaign coffers, which Scutari's allies had distributed to other Scutari allies. Then Team Scutari opened an investigation into Peter Brown, an Armstead ally. Then Armstead opened an investigation into Scutari. Then Scutari called the cops when Armstead showed up at a Union County Democratic Committee Breakfast. We're not sure exactly what happens next but we're pretty sure someone will open something, most likely an investigation, into someone else, and that someone else will retaliate, with an investigation. Anyway, we're just glad these guys are focused on good government and not on not being petty and vindictive.

HONORABLE MENTION JOHN CURRIE V. LEROY JONES



The powerful Chair of the Democratic State Committee from Passaic County ended the year locked in a battle with his challenger to the statewide throne, powerful Essex County Democratic Committee Chair Jones. The winner of this Homeric war would be able to go home to his power base, like Ulysses to Penelope, more or less unfettered by the intrusive interests of others, while the loser would find himself saddled by a basically humiliating consolation prize otherwise known as Chairman of the Democratic State Committee.

HONORABLE MENTION DAVE HENDERSON V. KELLY YAEDE



The Republican Primary for mayor in Hamilton was so brutal, Yaede's finally impressive victory over the

humiliated Henderson could mean only one thing: Yaede's humiliation at the hands of impressively performing general election victor Democrat Jeff Martin.





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THE HALLS OF MONTEZUMA-USS INTREPID MASTER COMMANDER RICHARD SOMERS AWARD

NO AWARD THIS YEAR

THE GENERALS NORMAN SCHWARTZKOPF AND RAY ODIERNO GRACE UNDER PRESSURE IN THE DUNES AWARD

NO AWARD THIS YEAR



THE NEBUCHADNEZZAR PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

NEWARK SUPERINTENDENT ROGER LEON



Celebrating his 50th birthday party at the Robert Treat Hotel, Leon provided an example to students and

faculty alike of those untold luxuries, earthly delights, and opulent self-in-

dulgence fit for a Babylonian king potentially awaiting those who enter a life of New Jersey public service.



THE POLITICS AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE GEORGE ORWELL CHUTZPAH AWARD

LEROY JONES



Evidently channeling his inner D'artagnan in the spirit of "all for one, one for all," the chair of the Essex County Democratic Committee took to signing his state party dispatches with la plume pour fleurir: "In Unity." Given the fact that Jones was trying to splinter sitting state Party Chairman John Currie out of commission, his appeal seemed the political equivalent of dropping a bomb in the name of peace.



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ATLANTIC CITY MAYOR FRANK GILLIAM



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Then like a rogue nefarious Christmas elf, he slam-dunked that money on things for himself.

Now much can be written via twitter or text, but the moral of a story's all about context.

Some break tackles, like Gayle Sayers, some break laws, like Atlantic City mayors.

Frank ain't bad, in fact he's kind of good, if you consider him the embodiment of NJ's version of Robin Hood.



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THE GOVERNING BODY FROM HELL (OR THE LET'S KEEP THEM AROUND) AWARD

THE CITY OF TRENTON



The local elected officials of New Jersey's capital city had a year in which they looked so bad, they made the Trenton-based state elected officials look great.



THE PRAGMATIC CANDIDACY OF LOVE AWARD

CORY BOOKER



Even if he couldn't connect with his message nationally, by running for president long past his due date, U.S. Senator Cory Booker reinforced a valuable statewide lesson about peace, not war. Better New Jerseyans be bottled up behind him in loving solidar-

ity than all over the map and at odds. Better they express a front "in unity," to borrow a LeRoy Jones expression, than exercise independent thought at the risk of political cannibalization. Booker's symposium in Platonic love likewise has a pragmatic consequence, as his doomed presidential candidacy clogs the lane at home and prevents the very cry-havoc doomsday progressive scenario feared by the establishment Democratic Party, which ultimately, like Cory, advocates love, of the kind expressed in Jones' attempted take-down of John Currie.



THE AMIR KHAN AWARD

AMIR KHAN



Having lost by kayo to Canelo Alvarez and Danny Garcia, British boxer Khan surfaced in Camden as a progressive activist egged on by fellow former professional athlete Sue Altman to run for mayor of the city that once produced Jersey Joe Walcott.



THE IBN HAJAR AL-HAYTAMI APPRECIATION AWARD

RARITAN TWP. DEPUTY MAYOR LOUIS REINER



Having called the entire Muslim faith "violent" and a "cancer," Reiner received a peace award in the form of a vacation

package to South Paterson, New Jersey.



THE WALT WHITMAN AWARD FOR PRECISION DELIVERY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY



The upbeat, energized and relentlessly positive Murphy's routine use of the phrase "shovel-ready" accurately described the condition of the entire state of New Jersey.





New Jersey LCV is proud to announce our top priorities for the 2020-2021 Legislative Session.



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➡ **Modernizing our transportation sector**



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THE VINCE LOMBARDI AWARD OF THE YEAR

PAUL JULIANO



With no battles left to be won in Bergen following the retirement of Lou Stellato, incoming Bergen County Democratic Committee Chairman Juliano quoted Vince Lombardi – “Winning isn’t everything, it’s the only thing,” as he promptly resigned and announced his candidacy for the head coaching job of the New York Jets.



THE DONALD J. TRUMP AWARD FOR UNBEARABLE EGO

FRANK HOLMAN



The new chairman of the Ocean County Republican Committee was so gung-ho about taking over from the deposed

George Gilmore that he promptly declared the organization permanently irrelevant in statewide matters.

THE GOVERNOR RICHARD J. HUGHES AWARD FOR PUBLIC ELOQUENCE

TOM MASTRANGELO



The Morris County Freeholder has obviously read the entire works of Cicero.



AD CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR

LD16: ZWICKER AND FREIMAN



Eschewing campaign worries about the pair appearing together at a playground, the Democratic Assemblymen nevertheless did bully each other on a seesaw, then took their differences to a ping pong board, where things got rough enough to warrant their paddles getting taken away. It was one and one at that point, with a rubber match consisting of a high noon-scheduled game of marbles in Committee Room 14 at the Statehouse.

MISFIRE OF THE YEAR AWARD

SOUTH JERSEY DEMOCRATIC POWER BROKER GEORGE NORCROSS III GOING AFTER THE FIRST LADY



Notwithstanding the presumed giggling and cackling on the other end of the phone as NJ.com faithfully transcribed the boss’s words for an “exclusive”, Norcross’ verbal attacks on First Lady Tammy Murphy went over about as well as the mother of Newt Gingrich badmouthing Hillary Clinton.



THE JOHN KERRY GARBLED REFERENCE AWARD

PHIL MURPHY



Trying to quote his hero, John Kerry, Governor Phil Murphy took a snarky swing at Senate President Steve Sweeney after his old pal failed to get recreational marijuana done in the senate:

“We’re here to talk about legalization. You know, legalization, if you make the most of it and study hard, do your homework and make an effort to be smart, you can do well, if you don’t, you get stuck in the state senate.”



The fight for equality isn't over. Let's get to work.

- Transition-Related Care Insurance Mandate (7.21.17)
- Transgender Student Guidance (7.21.17)
- Higher Education SOGI Data Collection (1.18.18)
- Gestational Carrier Agreement Equality (5.30.18)
- The Babs Siperstein Law (7.3.18)
- Gender Identity Death Certificate Equality (7.3.18)
- Transgender Equality Task Force (7.3.18)
- LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum (1.31.19)
- Ban the Gay+Trans "Panic" Defense
- Bill of Rights for LGBTQ Older Adults
- HIV Criminalization Reform
- Funding for Homeless LGBTQ Youth
- Over-the-Counter Access to PrEP / PEP
- The Equality Act
- Overturn the Transgender Military Ban
- Safety Waiver for Name Changes
- Intersex Surgical Autonomy
- Restore Benefits to Discharged LGBTQ Veterans
- Amend Law Against Discrimination for Health Programs & Activities

The Sacred and the Profane



The verdict was in on the subject of Phil Murphy's vision for the State of New Jersey, at least by the reckoning of residents in Silk City. If you want to see the face of God, you pray. Hard. If you want your view obfuscated, you endorse a marijuana grow facility in South Paterson.





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jamelholley.com

WHICH HELICOPTER WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH?



Assemblyman-elect Brian Bergen's Apache Helicopter



U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill's Navy Sea King



South Jersey Power Broker George Norcross' golf course hopper



Chris Christie's gubernatorial chopperhopper



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AND WE'RE THE ONE'S THAT STOP THEM ONCE AND FOR ALL

Filming of the remake of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* got underway in the summer of 2019 in Paterson, where InsiderNJ received a sneak peak at the fledgling Steven Spielberg masterpiece starring Phil Murphy, Steve Sweeney and George Norcross.

HERE'S A SNATCH OF THE SHOW-STOPPING QUINTET:

Sweeney, Mark Magyar, and Kevin Drennan:

South Jersey's gonna have their shot
Tonight
South Jersey ain't gonna legalize pot.
Tonight
Phil Murphy has his task force.
Unfair argument.
But if you look at legislative past
course
the front office is incompetent.

Murphy, George Helmy, and Dick Codey:

We're gonna take 'em to court in
Camden
Tonight
We're not gonna play Norton to
Ralph Cramden
Tonight
We said 'OK no Adam Alonso
No shammy.'
But just in case they get Steve Ayscue
gonzo
We're ready to unleash Tammy.
Tonight

Sweeney:

We're gonna get veto happy tonight
We're gonna override
And make Phil go insane.

Murphy:

We're gonna get Ronald Chen fever
tonight
The more they agitate
The more we pump the volume on
Billy McSwain.

Sweeney:

Well they went all New Jersey
Education Association on us.

Murphy:

Well they got Christie-crazy talking
Chapter 78 platinum plus.

Sweeney and Murphy:

And we're the ones committed to the
public good, even if we send the state
further down the drain!

Tonight

Phil:

Tonight, tonight
Won't be just any night
Tonight my friends from Goldman
Sachs
will take our minds off this
Goodfellas show
Tonight. Tonight.
I'll see my friends tonight
And for us stars will stop
in my Italian bungalow.

George:

Today the minutes seem like hours
The hours go so slowly
And still no one is politically
decapitated.
Oh Gold Dome
I want to play,
And make this endless day
Endlessly North Jersey lapdog
humiliated.

Sweeney:

Steve Sweeney's gonna make the
governor crawl
Tonight
Steve's gonna bounce Phil Murphy
like a basketball
Tonight
Phil's not cool enough to go to
Puerto Rico
with George and Joe D.
Jim Walden might have gotten
Alphonse "Allie Boy" Persico
But this ain't New York no more,
homes, it's New Jersey.

Phil: We'll be backing you, Currie.

Currie: Right

Phil: But Leroy ain't no bum.

Currie: Right.

Phil: I need him in 2021.

Currie: Right.



Wishing all a wonderful
2020 and beyond...

Parano & Associates

Sweeney and Murphy

But they began it
They began it
They began it

Phil and George

Tonight the legislature seems
composed of human beings
Not utterly programmable
And still the sky is flammable

Oh Gold Dome
Grow dim
enough for us to get done
what's good for us, and not for her
and her and her and him and him
and him!

Tonight!

Sweeney and Murphy:

And we're the ones to assume public

faces of concern
As the state continues to crash and
irredeemably burn
and the fires of past dysfunctions
consume
Everything except
The mansions of Middletown and
the senate majority caucus room.

...Tonight!



**GO BEYOND
THE BOUNDARIES
OF EXPECTED
THINKING**

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THE DAN RATHER UNEMOTIONAL REPORTING AWARD:

EMMA VIGELAND



Apparently after filing a report on the lead crisis in Newark, Young Turk Vigeland shouldered a bazooka and took out a tank guarding City Hall.

THE LEGISLATIVE SLEUTH AWARD:

SENATOR BOB SMITH



After an exhaustive investigation, the Senate Select Committee examining the use of \$1.6 billion in tax incentives for businesses connected to insurance tycoon George Norcross III determined that the projects, in fact, benefited Camden's poor.

THE NEW JERSEY AWARD FOR UNYIELDING POLITICAL SUPPORT:

NEW JERSEY



From the moment Booker kicked off his presidential campaign, his allies in New Jersey were all in, with the well-considered opinion that, lest someone actually prove more talented, intelligent, charismatic, successful and courageous than them, Booker's chances were doomed.



A Stronger Democratic Party for a Fairer New Jersey.

Help Us Keep Building the Democratic Party

The New Jersey Democratic State Committee is working with grassroots advocates and progressive voters to grow our Democratic Party. We are committed to electing Democrats who will fight to protect our values right here in New Jersey and in Washington. **This year alone NJDSC has:**

- ✓ Brought over 2,000 grassroots activists together for the NJDSC Conference, a record number
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ASSORTED 2019 WINNERS:

HEATHER DARLING



Showing little regard for protocol, Freeholder Darling mowed down long-serving Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll in the GOP Primary to snag the Morris County Surrogate seat.

CHRISTINE DANSEREAU



After she ran afoul of the center of political gravity in her home district, the Mayor of Roselle beat the odds and won a second four-year term. In the process, she beat activist Antoine Archange and recreation director Donald Shaw.

AURA DUNN



There was a Trevor Nunn-performance aura around Dunn that wasn't done when Bergen beat Dunn, and that convention done, meant another one begun, where Dunn wasn't done as the GOP filled a seat with none other than Aura Dunn.

MO HILL, JR.



Four years after getting bigfooted by Tom MacArthur for the 3rd District Congressional seat, the retired Navy man gutted it out to win the mayoralty in Toms River with just over 50% of the vote.

CAROLYN BLACKMAN



It was a close race, a nail-biter, in fact, but the Mayor-elect in Dover finally took a longtime incumbent.

PHOTO OF THE YEAR

Norcross and Christie with Corzine



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POLITICAL STORIES OF THE YEAR

(After Paterson native Allen Ginsberg)

- Murphy Tells Lawmakers to S-t or Get on Pot
- Confused, Lawmakers Smoke Murphy on Pot (and Budget)
- Eager to Foster Peace, LeRoy Jones Declares War on John Currie
- The Tax incentives Process Exposed
- Public Officials Take Chamber Train, Get Hosed
- Investigations Begin in South Jersey
- Nancy Pelosi comes to Atlantic City, Leaves Quickly
- Sue Altman Roughed up, Norcross Smiles Smugly
- Van Drew Bucks Impeachment

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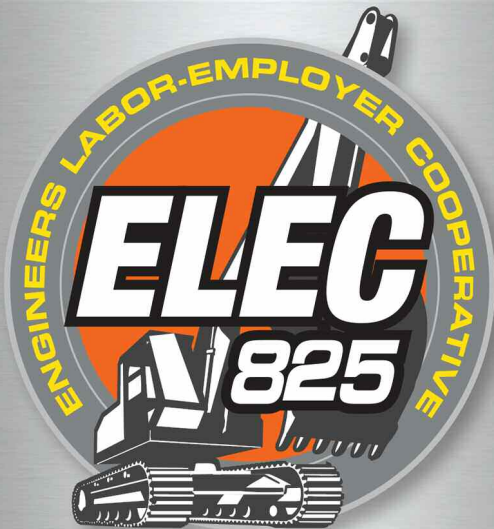
njrealtor.com

POLITICAL STORIES OF THE YEAR *Continued*

(After Paterson native Allen Ginsberg)

- Testa Takes out Andrzejczak
- Ryan Peters Proves that Men Can be Political while Residing in NJ
- Van Drew Kicked to the Curb by his own Party
- Van Drew Switches Parties
- Van Drew Prompts Others to Switch Parties to Get Away from Van Drew
- Peterson's Skin Crawls as Testifier Speaks Spanish
- Che Guevara Glimpsed at the Statehouse in Support of Driver's Licenses
- Republicans Say Documenteds will Leave the State because Undocumented have Licenses
- Democrats Say Undocumented won't Come to the State Because they Have Licenses
- The Legislature Approves Driver's Licenses for Undocumented NJ Residents
- Lawmakers Punt on Pot

**BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE
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QUESTION OF THE YEAR

(After Paterson native Allen Ginsberg)

Do losses in LD1, LD2, and LD8, the bumpy transition from Chris Christie to Phil Murphy, Van Drew's departure and a deal struck by the front office with Leroy Jones for the state party chairmanship without their consent signify the end of South Jersey's era of ruling the Democratic Party?

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IT BEGINS WHERE IT ENDS

2019 began with Senator Dawn Addiego throwing her party into turmoil when she changed from Republican to Democrat. The year ended with U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew throwing his party into turmoil when he switched from Democrat to Republican.



Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey

Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey is a nonprofit, non-partisan group advocating on behalf of the tens of thousands of New Jerseyans who rely on Planned Parenthood health centers for high-quality, affordable reproductive health care.

www.ppactionnj.org



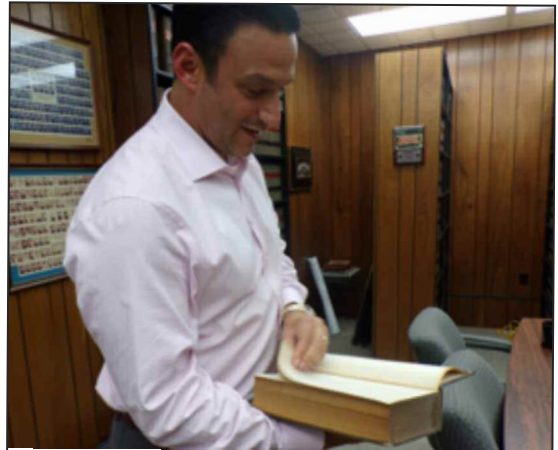
2019 INSIDERNJ SCRAP BOOK



“Yes, The Irishman was good,
but I prefer Paterson.”



“Go ahead, punk. Make my day.”



“Neither politics nor ethics nor
philosophy is an end in itself,
neither in life nor in literature.
Only man is an end in himself.”



“‘Party unity,’ that’s funny as hell,
John. Maybe I’ll use that.”



“Wait, did someone say this area is
under video surveillance?”

We're working to evolve for the benefit of our members.

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At Horizon BCBSNJ, our top priority has always been our members. Continuing to make the future of health care happen for them – and all of New Jersey – requires us to modernize the way our company is organized.

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A bill has been proposed to support Horizon BCBSNJ becoming a not-for-profit mutual. That bill would enable us to apply for a change in our corporate structure with the state Department of Banking and Insurance. It would also lay out the conditions Horizon BCBSNJ needs to meet to become a not-for-profit mutual holding company. Modernizing to this commonly used corporate structure would provide us with more strategic and operational flexibility. All of which would allow us to more effectively adapt to today's landscape of innovation and accelerated change – better positioning us to make health care work the way our members want it to. As always, we will continue to be a not-for-profit responsible to our policyholders, just as we have throughout our history.

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Access to expanded technologies and services



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Our State will benefit from:



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Additional tax revenue



Improved economic output

What's next?

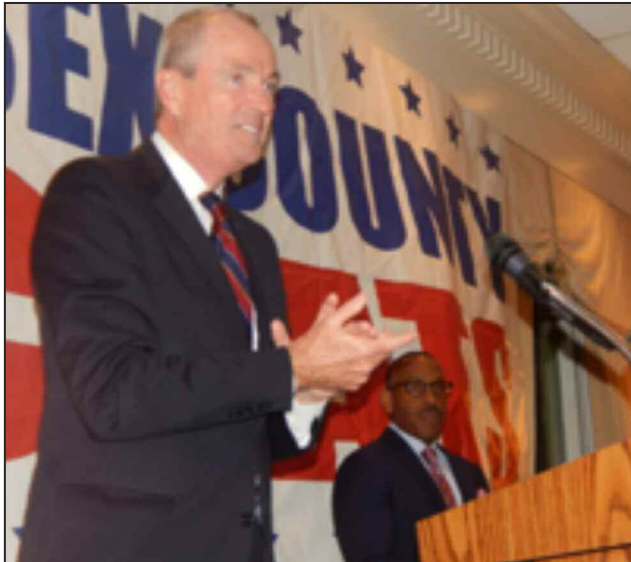
Blue Cross Blue Shield plans in 18 other states already operate under this legal structure and are delivering the very benefits this modernization will bring to New Jersey. We're committed to creating this new structure so we can meet members' evolving needs and expectations better than ever. That's how Blue works for you.

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2019 INSIDERNJ SCRAP BOOK



“Step right up to the microphone and tell us – who do you love for governor in 2021, Leroy?... Leroy? LEROY!!!!???”



“Are you going to skin that smoke wagon or just stand there and bleed?”

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QUOTE OF THE YEAR

“Don’t let the detractors dominate.”

—Pricilla Garces
Newark School Board candidate



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WHO'S UP AND DOWN

WHO'S UP?

LATINA LAWMAKERS

At the side of Assemblywoman Annette Quijano (D-20), Senator M. Teresa Ruiz (D-29) and other champions of their cause and amid shouts of “si, se puede,” Governor Phil Murphy at the end of the year with the stroke of a pen in Elizabeth officially enabled non-legal residents of New Jersey to obtain driver’s licenses.

PHIL MURPHY

The progressive Governor of New Jersey delivered on another key 2017 campaign promise when he signed into law historic legislation that allows 500,000 undocumented residents of New Jersey to obtain driver’s licenses. He also got four picks for the damaged EDA Board. Moreover, his team helped secure a reupping of his state party chair and strengthened the governor’s ties to Essex.

JOHN CURRIE AND LEROY JONES

The chairs of Passaic and Essex counties respectively secured a power-sharing agreement, which angered South Jersey enough for South Jersey Power Broker George Norcross III and Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3) to call Jones. GN3 tried to bully and got bullied by the Essex chairman, sources told InsiderNJ. The deal also signaled a statement-making win for Murphy Chief of Staff George Helmy, who assumed an active role in party chair negotiations, which ultimately inured to Murphy’s advantage.

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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WHO'S UP AND DOWN *Continued* WHO'S UNDETERMINED?

A combination of multiple organization endorsements, the imminent entrance of Atlantic County Freeholder Ashley Bennett into the contest and AC Chair Mike Suleiman's decision to keep his powder dry for the moment, appeared to give Montclair University Professor Brigid Harrison the edge in a developing CD-2 Democratic Primary. Amy Kennedy looked boxed out for the moment. But the strength of those Camden machine-connected organizations that backed defecting Van Drew will be tested – maybe with a vengeance – in 2020. Kennedy looked by year's end to be prepared to receive the support of the allies of Sue Altman's Working Families organization.



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Make Alzheimer's Count Campaign

NEW LAW S-2961 - A CAMPAIGN TO ENSURE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE & RELATED DEMENTIAS ARE LISTED ON DEATH CERTIFICATES.

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WHO'S UP AND DOWN *Continued***WHO'S DOWN?****SOUTH JERSEY DEMS**

Impeached President Donald J. Trump used U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew's party switch to try to spin a win, while Norcross and Sweeney felt themselves frozen out of Jones' deal with fellow northern county party chairman Currie.

THE POLITICAL ENEMIES OF PHIL MURPHY

The presence of Democratic State Committeeperson Mary Dougherty (a Currie backer) in a corruption sweep after Democrats secured the chairmanship in a razor thin, every-vote-counts fight left insiders seeing the governor as more than merely the politically clumsy and affable buffoon of yore, when South Jersey ran the state. Murphy gave the impression of being able to weaponize the AG's Office, which must have left Chris Christie feeling like that crestfallen guy on the old Survivor series who discovered that others could also hunt underwater with a spear in shark-infested waters.

WYATT EARP

"I think everyone just wants to be done with Wyatt at this point," groaned a source, in reference to the Ocean County Democratic chair, who supposedly pulled a Van Drew (no, he didn't change parties) when he was with one group (Currie) and then went with another (Jones). His sweetener for the maneuver included Marta Harrison for vice chair, but Somerset County Chair (and sitting vice chair) secured a re-up for her spot as part of deal between Currie and Jones.

CORY BOOKER

The presidential campaign of the junior senator from New Jersey failed to ignite heading into 2020, even as old school progressive Larry Hamm – head of the Bernie Sanders Campaign in New Jersey – prepared to run in the Democratic Primary for the U.S. Senate seat Booker must return to New Jersey to defend. He's the favorite, of course, to win another six years in the senate, but his prez candidacy underwhelmed.

Congratulations to
Max Pizarro and InsiderNJ.com
on another successful year!



*Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.,
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Tony Bucco, Sr. In Memoriam

By Fred Snowflack

There was never anything flashy about Tony Bucco. I recall when Bucco ran for the state Assembly for the first time in 1995, he told voters that, "When I'm in Trenton, you're in Trenton."

It was corny to be sure, but there was also something genuine about it.

To Bucco, who died in September after a lengthy political career, serving his constituents was what it was all about.

Anthony R. Bucco was not a spellbinding orator or an intellectual giant. He was an old-school politician who worked to help those living in his district.

Bucco was certainly a conservative Republican, but that only went so far. He had many friends on the other side of the aisle.

Conventional wisdom suggests Morris County Republicans have things pretty easy. And it's true that some Republicans never really have a tough race.

That was not what Bucco's career was all about.

Back in the early 1990's, he lost his seat on the freeholder board. At the time, I asked him if his political career was over.

He said politely and honestly that he really didn't know.

A few years later, he was appointed and then elected to the state Assembly in the aforementioned 1995 race.



One of those he beat was a freeholder named Chris Christie.

At that time, the senator in the 25th District was Democrat Gordon MacInnes. The Boonton Republican took him on – and out – in 1997, but before he got there, he had to win a tough primary against Peter Mancuso, of Morris Township. So he had two tough races in five months.

Six years after that, Bucco was seriously challenged again by Blair MacInnes, the wife of the senator he beat to win his Senate seat in the first place. He won in another pricey race.

I was at the Morristown Daily Record as a reporter and editorial page editor when all this was going on. Bucco often joked that the Daily Record never endorsed him. He was right about that, but judging from his success, an endorsement from the Daily Record wasn't really needed.

And to prove it didn't matter, the senator actually gave me an award once – the Tony Bucco Award – at his annual golf outing fundraiser. It was a nice gesture, albeit a bit embarrassing.

Bucco underwent cancer treatment earlier this year. When it ended, he understandably looked a bit weak, but he still tried to resume his duties.

After all, if he was in Trenton, so were his constituents.

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Salena Lesniak In Memoriam

By Jay Lassiter

When I read the news of Salena Lesniak's death at age 43, I could scarcely comprehend the words before my eyes.

"Wow," I said to myself, "that headline makes it seem like she's dead which makes no sense and can't possibly be true."

Of course, it was true.

Iconic LGBT ally

Salena cemented herself into the annals of Garden State political history when she hosted the first gay wedding in New Jersey history back in 2015. In addition to decades of pro-LGBT advocacy, Salena was a zealous champion of animal rights and the longtime wife and partner to Senator Raymond Lesniak.

If I had to describe Salena with a single word, I'd choose fun. She was a hoot. And our time together always included cute clothes, good wholesome gossip, and lots of champagne.

Usually the good stuff.

Preferably Veuve Cliquot.

*"I hope we don't look too bougie," I quipped to the waiter, "But yes, we'll have another bottle."
"Were not bougie, we're childless," Salena clarified.
"We don't have kids so we can afford it."*

And if Salena was the craziest dog mom in Garden State history that's ok with me. I'm too busy planning my cat's bar mitzvah to judge.



Those were the kind of jokes we shared and I'll miss that. And when I think about Salena's beloved dogs Penny and Sammy, I'm nauseous. Those dogs were robbed. We were all robbed.

Mostly, Salena was robbed.

A Rose By Any Other Name

To most people, a Sloppy Joe means a ground beef/tomato sauce concoction served on a hamburger bun.

At Bella Gina's in Linden in Union County, their Sloppy Joe comes with "turkey, ham & Swiss cheese on 3 layers of (hearty) rye bread smothered in coleslaw & Russian dressing."

In Salena's hometown of Linden, the Sloppy Joe is something like a wet, sloppy, un-grilled ryebein sandwich. And certainly nothing like what most of us grew up with.

I learned about the only-in-Jersey-style Sloppy Joes earlier this year when I stumbled across some listicle ranking New Jersey's 10 best sandwiches.

I immediately called Salena, noted Union County foodie, to confirm the existence of this alternative Sloppy Joe sandwich.

"You need to come up and try one," she said and I promised I would.

But I never did.

And now she's gone.

Embedded in my regret is a reminder to grab your phone and call someone you love. Or someone you've drifted from. Or the bestie you haven't have lunch with in a while.



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Saying farewell

The drive to Linden from Cherry Hill to say goodbye was brisk, a reminder how easy that Sloppy Joe road trip would've been. It was brutally hot for Salena's final journey and the AC in the funeral home was blessedly up to the task. It was a tender mercy on a day when shock and grief occupied our thoughts.

Senator Lesniak, perched next to his wife's coffin, held court admirably. The grief-stricken look on his face told the story.

Eventually I gravitated toward the kitchen because that's what women and gay men do at funerals. Gretchen Hickey, Linden Councilwoman, greeted me at the top of the stairs with a long hug. She and Salena were sisterly and you could tell she was hurting by the look on her face.

Gretchen has a queer son whose coming out was markedly less bumpy for having an iconic LGBT ally like Salena for a surrogate auntie.

Someone suggested a toast and a bottle of Veuve Cliquot appeared which honestly felt like a perfectly-chilled, bubbly kiss from heaven.

"To Salena" someone cried out. We, the newly-minted stewards of her memory, were too stunned and sad to conjure up the stemwinder Salena's remarkable life deserved.

Then we drank to a friend who'd be proud we brought the good stuff.

Someone popped open more champagne and I needed little nosh before having another.

I'm not a religious man but when I saw a huge tray of Jersey-style Sloppy Joes on the counter, I couldn't help but chuckle because the lord is supposed to work in mysterious ways and there he goes being all obvious about things.

And as I stood there in the kitchen of a North Jersey funeral parlor having a Jersey Sloppy Joe for the very first time I was grateful that my broken heart didn't interfere with the appetite.

Because that sandwich was spectacular.

It was truly a Jersey original.

Just like Salena Lesniak.