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## WELCOME TO THE **INSIDERNJ SPECIAL EDITION IN HONOR OF LABOR DAY**



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It's called struggle for a reason, because no one ever thought the fight for a just wage would be easy. "We were very welcome to the workers," IWW organizer Elizabeth Gurley Flynn said, in reference to the Wobblies' 1913 forays into Paterson. "But we were set upon by the city authorities with vicious fury."

"Vicious fury" doesn't accurately convey the ongoing tensions between private sector versus public sector labor in New Jersey. But it may relate those deeper disaffections and agonies experienced by laborers not protected by unions, forced to work for an unlicensed temp agency, like Edilberto Caicedo, a forklift operator who died on the job in Kearny in 2019.

In the pages ahead you will find an essay on the political collisions of the Labor Movement in New Jersey over the course of the past few years, and what they mean for this campaign cycle as Governor Phil Murphy and Senate President Steve Sweeney pursue reelection.

You will find labor leaders and elected officials considering some of the most pressing issues impacting the workforce, including unemployment, labor expansion, the infrastructure bill before the U.S. House that would fund the Gateway Tunnel project, project labor agreements, minimum wage, diversity among labor groups, **the deadly impact of Hurricane Ida**, and, of course, the COVID pandemic.

You will also encounter our InsiderNJ Labor List recognizing the main players in the New Jersey Labor Movement, among them the leader of the guild helping Gannett reporters in their quest to unionize, some other new names based on their political impact in 2020, and those enduring labor leaders you've no doubt seen over the years.

"Enduring."

That's a fitting description for labor in New Jersey on Labor Day.



Whatever the movement's altered aims, imperfections, impediments, cross purposes, or work undone, the roots here remain, going back to the Paterson silk strikers who marched under a banner that read:

*“We Weave the Flag.  
We live under the Flag.  
We die under the Flag.  
But Dam’d if we’ll starve under the Flag.”*



Happy Labor Day, New Jersey!  
*from* **InsiderNJ**



Max Pizarro

*Max Pizarro*

Editor, InsiderNJ



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## A POLITICAL HISTORY OF NJ LABOR IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM: PART 1



One of the most union friendly states in the country, notoriously disjointed New Jersey simultaneously lags dismally in Blacks and Latino family net worth and median household income, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. In an era defined by a deepened divide between the super-rich and the working class, workers fighting among themselves benefits the coddled few not the discomfited many, and easily arm-twisted New Jersey happily obliges. Made up of mostly white ethnics who forced their way into jobs in defiance of edicts that

included “No Irish Need Apply,” and worse, the trades find themselves challenged now by other populations striving for fair wages, searching for respect from the ranks of those others at the heart of the labor movement, and resisting the cyclic conditions of poverty.

Nowhere do the fractures appear starker than in the clash of non-citizen and citizen workers, non-unionized and unionized labor, and public and private sector workers, amplified with a vengeance by the New Jersey

Education Association (NJEA) versus the Building Trades, the latter most visibly represented by Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3), vice president of the Ironworkers International (see no. 1 on the Labor Power List, below).

A lifetime of trades irritability welled up in him in a state absolutely poleaxed by property taxes (an average of \$9,112 annually), Sweeney and Republican Governor Chris Christie partnered to require state workers to pay between 3% and 35% of their



healthcare pensions on a scale based on phased-in income. That set the public sector – leery of Sweeney in the senate presidency to begin with – and particularly the NJEA on the warpath. Their backing the cause of no-name Republican challenger Fran Greiner against the reelection of Sweeney, more than just a punch in the mouth, by extension, to Sweeney’s benefactor, insurance magnate George Norcross III. The 2017 collision resulted in \$18.7 million (unofficial estimates run higher) expended.

Sweeney won.

And that meant there would be hell to pay.

Union leadership never minded don-

ning the tricorn hats of imperial design provided someone had the money to back up their maneuvers. They tangled with each other as a matter of course, even if the price tag – as it obviously did here - went haywire. In this case, the political consequences of the NJEA forcing the Senate President into the most expensive legislative contest in U.S. history splattered mostly on Governor Phil Murphy, not an innocent bystander, but also not properly a union member. The teachers’ union might have proved a sufficient target for revenge in the aftermath of Murphy’s statewide – and Sweeney’s 59-41% districtwide - win. Going back to his 2005 pre-Christie proposal to cut 15% from state worker salaries and benefits, Sweeney had to have known

they would return fire at some point. Even though he beat them, and it felt good, the contest depleted independent expenditure coffers he counted on, and showed – even if they fell short - that the teachers didn’t mind a good ornery labor scrap. Better candidate next time? They make things difficult again, if come short of nuking him. Targeting them didn’t make any sense. Well, he could target them. Just not jump up and down on them.

They were labor, after all.

Kind of.

More on that later.

But “Middle Class on a Good Day” Murphy?



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The best the Goldman Sachs multi-millionaire could do in the way of projecting a pro-labor vibe was to allow his campaign to run an ad featuring an actor playing a teenage Murphy on his summer job as a dishwasher. Not only did Murphy lack union cred, that ad all but mocked labor. Moreover, and this part infuriated Sweeney – Murphy, as the Democratic nominee for governor, chose not to intervene with the leadership of the teachers to persuade them to abort their massively funded, Republican-assisted (ah, the irony; after all the teachers’ protestations of Sweeney’s alliance with Christie) effort to take down the sitting senate president.

Public and private sector didn’t get along.

Everyone knew that.

But to have a Wall Street goody-goody suddenly surface, wrestle the governorship away from him on the strength of North Jersey support heavily undergirded by the public sector, and then essentially give his tacit approval to one arm of labor going ape on another, enraged Sweeney.

It went deeper than Murphy, of course, although Murphy, aloof from the murk of New Jersey politics with his out-of-town Ivy League credentials – would prove a suitably vulnerable incoming foil. He wanted to play

governor, just like that actor played a dish scrubber? Sweeney would humiliate him the way Murphy had humiliated him.

“What the NJEA has done is shit,” NJ Building Trades President Bill Mullen bull-horned to a crowd of union craftsmen ready to march for Sweeney on Election Day.

“Elections have consequences,” he added with an edge.

The last time someone had said that in relation to LD3 was four years earlier, when Christie declared, “Elections have consequences,” in response to Tom Kean, Jr. running someone





against Sweeney without the financial backing of the NJEA. Sweeney didn't need Kean anymore to prop up as his own personal Thurston Howell political punching bag. Without Christie around, the Republicans radiated insufficient relevance. If the teachers' union thought their relationship with a Democratic governor would give them the clout they lacked during the Christie years, Sweeney and Mullen – never the most eloquent book-learned players – would promptly and savagely educate. Beating the NJEA in the ultimate labor versus labor gladiatorial contest gave them the right.

They would start by binding and gagging Murphy on the train tracks of Trenton.

He wanted a millionaire's tax?

Easily reupped as senate president, Sweeney – in blue Braveheart face paint – derailed it.

Murphy wanted free college?

Sweeney killed that, too.

Someone from Building Trades had the notion of trying to make nice with the governor.

"Can't... we... all... get... along?" John Ballantyne of the Carpenters seemed to say when he resisted Mullen's rejection of Murphy's pick to run the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. Then Ballantyne accepted a position on the Sports Authority, courtesy of the governor.

That went too far.



Almost overnight, the brotherhood politically beheaded Ballantyne. He showed up at the union offices of the Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters, and there were none.

They had restructured the union around him; dissolved it out from under him.

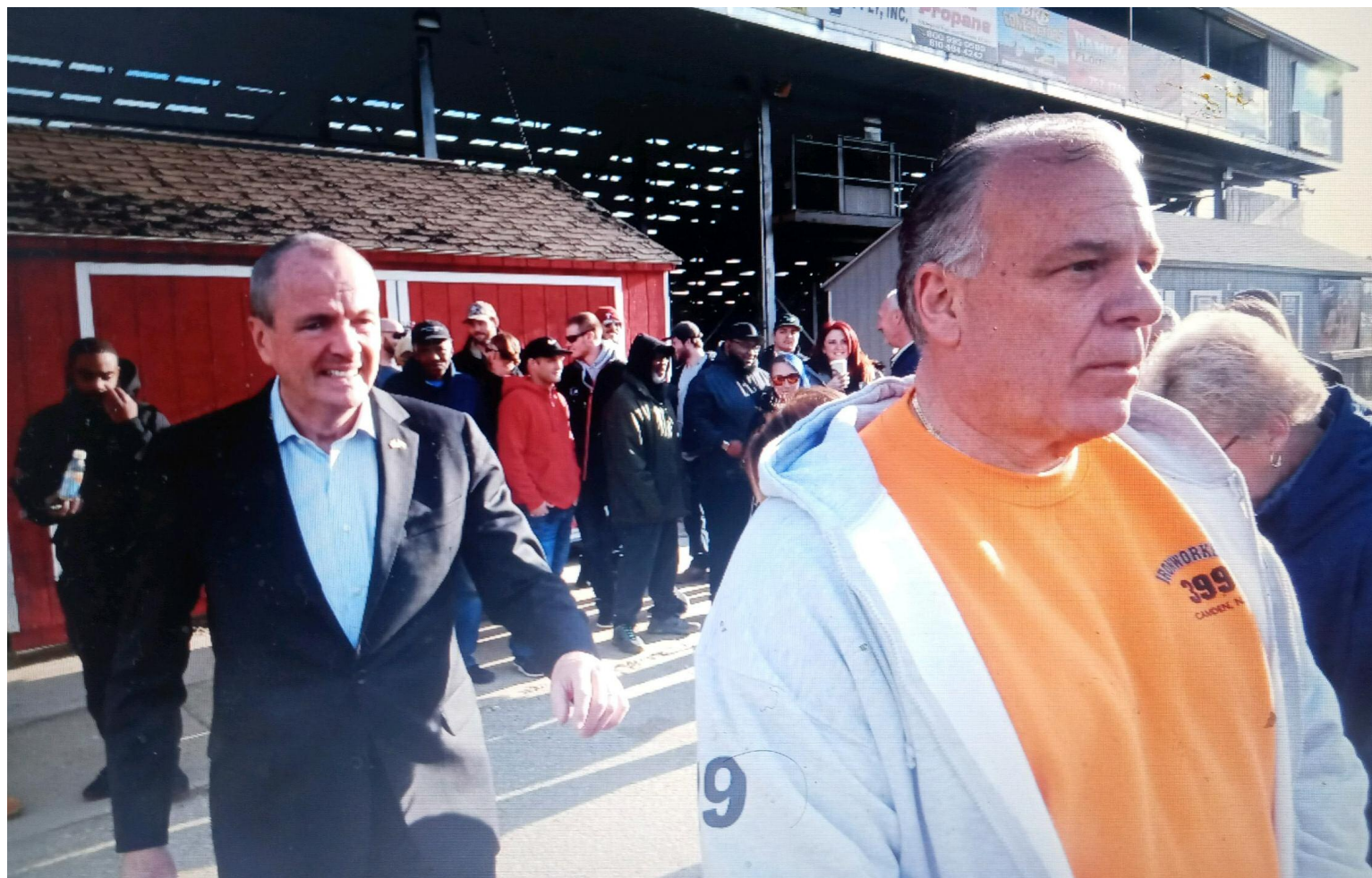
It sent a chilling message to the leaders of the 15 New Jersey Trades who represented 150,000 workers: if you team up with Murphy without the rest of us or in defiance of the Building Trades prez, you'll find yourself out of a job, out of a political orbit, and expunged from the union family.

Trying to be a good guy, Murphy gave a job to Ballantyne's also suddenly jobless political director at the Carpenters, Lizette Delgado Polanco.

Surely, she'd be safe in the administration of one of the most on-paper powerful governors in the country.

She wasn't.

And so it went: a season of Sweeney stampeding the halls of the Statehouse whenever Murphy tried to exert his influence. Forced into temporary offices down the street after Christie ordered a Building Trades-affirmed renovation of the Gold Dome – an-



other dagger thrust - in his wake, the new governor couldn't even occupy the premises.

If it seemed overly vindictive and heavy handed – Murphy worked on Wall Street, so what? – it belied – again – the deeper discord at the core of New Jersey politics.

Labor versus labor – of course, but with a decided regional context.


Long neglected, South Jersey in the new millennium had at last gained a sustaining statewide power when they vaulted Sweeney to the senate presidency. Presumably forged when

Christie served as U.S. Attorney and selectively prosecuted for his own political benefit, toppling leaders in Middlesex, Bergen, Essex and Hudson, leaving South Jersey Democratic Party boss George Norcross alone, their alliance with Christie gave them leverage to extract northern allies. They had an in with Kaiser Sose. Officially, from 2010 through – as it would turn out – at least 2021, they remained the one upper-hand constant in the dealmaking that forged legislative leadership, with Essex, Hudson and Middlesex taking turns in the speakership while Sweeney of South Jersey remained on the senate throne.

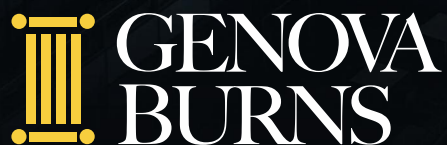
The most cynical interpreters of New Jersey politics attributed Christie's affection for the south to his having something on them. Why throw someone in jail for a headline today when they can work for you in perpetuity?

But why the south, a relatively unpopulated – and relatively weak Democratic Party region of the state? In 2009, Republican Christie defeated the Democratic incumbent in Sweeney's home country of Gloucester by 4%. Just last year, Republican turncoat Jeff Van Drew would beat Democrat Amy Kennedy in Gloucester by about 3,000 votes.





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Why not snow some shlemiel up north?

Christie would grab some bodies up there, too, of course.

But it started with the South.

No one else had the deep impact, conservative-leaning, full service political operation of the south.

No one had organized Labor quite like they did.

It really boiled down to labor.

Other regions of the state had their own ties to the movement, some of them substantial; a movement of forms as various as AFSCME and CWA, the bricklayers and steelworkers, the cops and clerks and teachers. In Union, for example, state Senator Joe Cryan maintained close ties to an army of public sector workers, including cops. In Essex, Assemblyman Tom Giblin developed a boss' reach within the electrical workers local and beyond.

Labor influence ran deep.

But outside the south overall they lacked, critically, the summit of the pyramid of Building Trades power - as the elimination of Ballantyne proved. They lacked uniform dedication, and maybe - this was sensitive - they lacked the built-in survival skill of those who thought at any moment and maybe for moments that stretched into months - that they might lack work and a wage; anxiety

soothed over time - and years of organization - by very powerful moneyed interests.

A lawmaker or political leader might sympathize with the teachers. He or she might be married to one. Certainly - and this was huge, they had the temerity, after all, to go after *Sweeney*, the threat of the NJEA's considerable financial coffers created a certain conformity among Democrats fearful of offending the organization. But they did not all come from the root of the same oak of labor. They did not all adhere to the same pragmatic transactionalism that grounded the politics of an organization like the Building Trades.

They could be bullied.

Those who refused to be bullied could be removed.



Those who attempted a relationship with South Jersey (or who inhabited a fiefdom where the boss did) - then-Assemblyman Ruben Ramos (a teacher who opposed Sweeney's and Christie's public pensions and benefits overhaul), then-Speaker Sheila Oliver (who opposed charter schools, because of their potential harm to public schools), and then-Assemblyman Jason O'Donnell (who vociferously bucked pensions and benefits) all found themselves separated from their titles, the perches they had occupied reinstalled with supposedly more pliant players.

## The message?

Confronted by a law enforcement-manipulating governor who had inflamed property taxpayers *and* had Building Trades labor on his side, everyone could fold eventually, or be folded, especially when northern Democratic leadership (in many cases lobbyists who curried favor with Senate President Sweeney) had the tendency to promote public dime workers to the legislature. Easier to control them that way, use their would-be public sector power against them, when power - intimidating South Jersey, Christie-welded power - came knocking.

In the South, and this was critical, the labor leaders were also the political leaders in the engine room of the machine. The men who built the South Jersey Democratic Party came from the labor movement, specifically the Building Trades.



They grew up in Pennsauken, the core guys.

Sweeney and Donald Norcross shared a personal and professional history that went back to the work sites of South Jersey. The former punched the iron, and the latter did the electrical work, and they organized their respective union halls. These were union men to the core; not just people whose parents came up in labor, but men who actually knew the trades and worked the jobs.

And yes, their parents came from labor, too.

Sweeney's late father served as a local Ironworkers president. The Norcross brothers hailed from an AFL-CIO household where their father privately complained about public sector workers. They enjoyed Cadillac benefits, and their leaders didn't have to negotiate from job to job, he railed. They had it made, not like the trades. The trades guys only had one another.

As they expanded, they would partner with others who occupied their own power bases and enlist allies to their ranks. Those who became loyal princes of the realm and eventually became political encumbrances, like Congressman Rob Andrews, never – or seldom – came from the inner sanctum. Andrews was an attorney who got jammed up finally and run out of town. Congressman Jeff Van Drew? He's a dentist. They didn't really give a damn when he changed parties. Or rather, it didn't altogether surprise them. Van Drew never laid

brick. He flossed. He didn't weld. The core group was labor.

He could work for them as a Republican. They never worked for him.

They called the shots.

They promoted the men from key labor roles into critical political positions. They sawed the boards. They banged the nails. They knew how to build a structure from the foundation up. That is the shared skill offered to a state otherwise entangled in multiple private interests and competing public agendas, often with no direction and no leadership.

Someone else – a Goldman Sachs executive – might suddenly appear and declare himself a friend of labor.

Why?

Because he worked one summer as a pearl diver and wanted to be governor?

Steve Sweeney *was* labor.

In 2011, during a break from restricting in the Helderich Hotel, Sweeney looked out a window and saw a scaffold on another building in the dizzying grey height of a New Brunswick rain. He mused about how he had gone from that to this, from the hand tools of the ironworker trade to the maps and Mephistophelian motives and intrigues of the political game. He might have allowed himself a moment to reimagine the working man world of his youth, but the will-

ful man would not become wistful, as might a screen actor remembering his lean years of stocking grocery shelves. Finally, the worlds for Sweeney the organizing ironworker and Sweeney the organizing lawmaker occupied the same seamless space.

But labor itself – labor was still divided.

And Sweeney didn't mind reminding people of that fact.

If teachers would make their case to unaffiliated taxpayers, as Jon Corzine did when he said people who didn't like the services here could move to the Dakotas, as Murphy, in NJEA-speak, eventually would when he said if tax rate is your issue, "We're probably not your state," that teachers contributed to the state's unique quality of life, Sweeney – like Christie – would make his own case in a state with \$44.37 billion in bonded debt, that the teachers and their ilk drained too much money from the residents, the schism be damned.

The senate president would widen it, if he had to, dammit.

"Look, if we don't make changes, we're going to have a \$4 billion deficit by 2023," he said, repeatedly. "All of our revenue growth goes to [public] pension and healthcare. We can't provide more funding [for other programs]."

"Nothing in this life is free," Sweeney added. "In 2001, there was a nine percent increase in their [public sector]

pension retroactively, with no money. We created a system that was not sustainable. Everyone can point fingers at each other, but the problem's not going away. How do we fix the pension system without hurting anyone?"

The jeers from the ranks of the public sector rained, and he felt the reverberations, most notably when the NJEA took that run at him, and again, as he ran roughshod over the Democratic governor.

He heard them.

They said he was a reactionary.

All – or most – the Building Trades guys heard the same buzz, not just

about Sweeney, but about themselves. How far would they go?

Up at 3 a.m., again, younger than Sweeney but not by much, with no political future ahead of him, another ironworker bused over the river into Manhattan among his fellow travelers. Three months out of a job during the pandemic, he reveled in work. When he reached the site, the foreman ranted about public sector employees gaming the system. Then he mentioned that he had just heard the Biden administration had ordered a mask mandate for federal workers.

"That's Nazism," the foreman sneered.

The ironworker shouldered a spud wrench and ratchet.

He hadn't gotten COVID yet – as far as he knew – but his daughter had it. He reflexively strapped on his mask next to his fellow workers as they rose 30 stories above the East River and stepped gingerly out on a scaffold.

The ironworker grinned. What else could he do?

"My boss thinks I'm falling prey to the Nazis," he thought.

Damn, he shrugged, "At least I have a job."



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## PART 2



If Murphy didn't feel humiliated by Sweeney it was only because he charged underlings to sweat the details – and take the hits. But early in his first term the supposedly fancy-dress balls where he and the first lady presided began to look more like MASH units for political casualties than the New Jersey version of Camelot.

We're supposed to be Democrats here, the mostly neophyte Murphy world operatives moaned. Christie limped out of office with a 16% approval rating, and they were letting the lackeys who propped him up push them around?

Disgraceful.

Embarrassed and bloodied, the front office fought back by having Murphy condemn the eight-year Christie-Norcross-Sweeney relationship epitomized by a positively hypocritical \$11.5 billion tax incentive package benefiting Norcross' corporate network, the same network that relied on the trades to rebuild the Camden waterfront. Grateful for the work, the unions in return funded Norcross-interest political action committees, which funded the political empire, which Sweeney fervently leaned on, especially in 2017. The union halls kicked in manpower to ensure the

senate president's reelection. But while the white companies and white building trades made money, the mostly black and Hispanic residents of Camden lacked access to the good jobs. Outside the tourism district, little – or nothing – in the under-siege city changed.

Heading into 2021 redistricting, New Jersey (pop. 9,288,994) is one of just eight states (including the District of Columbia) nationwide with a diversity index above 65%. In New Jersey, non-Hispanic whites clock in at 51.9% of the population – down from 59.3% in 2010. The state had become very nearly a “majority mi-



nority” state and coming into office, Murphy – another redundant Irish guy on the Statehouse slag heap – had wisely packed his cabinet with diversity.

As the governor too made his case that the supposedly fiscally responsible South Jersey machine had actually gorged their corporate network on hundreds of millions in tax breaks, suddenly, after months of bullying, Sweeney and Norcross, already slumped in an unhip realm of Eisenhower era atmospherics, found themselves on the defensive.

The senate president and his allies viciously counterattacked in a variety of ways, tracking and forcing Delgado Polanco out of her job at the Schools Development Authority; and ultimately rolling out a panel dedicated to uncovering allegations of sexual impropriety – and worse – in the 2017 Murphy Campaign. Colliding task forces – one convened by Murphy to examine the tax incentive program, the other focusing on Murphy crony misogyny, vied relentlessly for the public eye, with considerable heartbreak along the way, until both – against their will, found not wisdom, to mangle Bobby Kennedy, finally dissolved in a horrific conflagration of COVID that none of those frantically sniping at one another had seen coming. Regardless of their performance in the aftermath of the virus, the two sides spent the lead-up to the pandemic in an insider octagon that had nothing to do with the rest of the poor shmucks living in

New Jersey. Even before the pandemic, the acceleration of weakening headlines began to move the governor – new to the game – toward making political peace with South Jersey. He just didn’t need the headache of guys with samurai swords chasing him around West State Street all the time.

Simultaneously, sticking by his play to reward public sector labor, Murphy hammered out new contracts with the CWA – which represents half of all state workers – generous enough to ultimately prompt the union’s leader – Hetty Rosenstein – to take a job in Murphy’s reelection campaign upon her retirement. The contract targeting

35,000 workers employed by the Executive Branch under the Administrative/Clerical, Professional, and Supervisory bargaining units, encompassed two Across the Board (ATB) increases: a two percent increase effective the first full pay period after August 15, 2017 for employees on payroll; and a second two percent increase effective the first full pay period after July 1, 2018. The contract also included a full withdrawal of costly pending litigation filed during the Christie Administration – and backed by Sweeney. A subsequent four-year deal Murphy struck with the CWA stemmed healthcare costs.

Sweeney broiled.





His so-called Path to Progress tour – a public worker belt tightening alternative to Murphy’s millionaire’s tax – derailed by COVID, the senate president took a crack at repairing his sulfuric relationship with the public sector. If he would never be the CWA’s favorite politicians – the Murphy backers chased him around the state like extras in a community theater staging of *Les Miserables* – Sweeney did sit down with his old rivals, the NJEA, and manage to secure their coveted goal of Chapter 78 relief. The senate president-championed measure provided the 200,000 member-strong NJEA with relief from high healthcare costs imposed during the Christie era – while lowering costs for local educational employers and the state.

In return, and in the ultimate symbiosis of labor financial influence, the powerful – and obviously wealthy – union cozied up to Norcross’ independent expenditure empire. The pandemic made it easy for Sweeney – long obstinately opposed – to sheepishly back Murphy’s millionaire’s tax; and the governor, for his part, threw in with the Camden County Democratic machine’s choice for Camden City Mayor. The governor even got behind a new Economic Development Authority corporate tax incentive plan. The amount? \$11.5 billion.

The NJEA partnering with Sweeney spun heads, sure, while Norcross allies replenishing the kingpin’s independent expenditure coffers with public sector flow offered an even more delectable irony.

Everyone seemed to be getting along great.

“Nice mask,” Murphy even managed to clumsily crack at a positively stone-faced Sweeney.

If they still hated each-other – and gave every indication that they would resume artillery fire after Nov. 2nd, as Murphy planned to more vigorously undertake a presidential run and Sweeney continued to focus on governor, they had found a way to momentarily submerge their feelings under the pragmatic transactional demands of the 2021 reelection cycle.

Still, the Building Trades didn’t feel they had enough from the governor. Yes, he had declared them essential workers during the pandemic, and that helped. They wanted more. Sweeney too would have to show his brothers some love after helping their old enemies the teachers’ union.

*What about us?*

The always Building Trades-benevolent senate president moved on a long-Building Trades coveted Public Labor Agreement (PLA) expansion. In New Jersey, public works projects with a value of \$5 million and up, which include construction, reconstruction, demolition, or renovation of buildings, may be subject to PLAs. Sweeney’s legislation augmented them to include highway, bridge, pumping station, water, and sewage treatment plant work.

The bill – for a change – pitted two

Building Trades against each other – the Laborers, who already did a lot of the work included in the expansion, and the Operating Engineers, who would have a crack at a lot of that work.

The bill also empowered Building Trades – to the detriment, its critics argued, of minority workers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), only 17.8 % of New Jersey’s private construction workforce is represented by a union.

“This ill-conceived PLA legislation directs public project funding to politically-connected union firms at the expense of the more than 80% of New Jersey construction workers who have chosen not to join a union,” said John Harmon, head of the New Jersey African American Chamber of Commerce. “Furthermore, 98% of minority-owned construction-related businesses are nonunion and will realize no benefits from this law. In fact, many have told me that it could double their costs by forcing them to contribute to pension funds, health care projects and union dues of which their workers are not beneficiaries.

“Moreover, this decision is devastating because there was ample room for compromise and it demonstrates an unwillingness to take a small step that could have had a transformational impact on Black-, Hispanic-, women-, veteran-owned and small businesses in our state. It appears that the fact that Blacks receive only 1% of public contracts is inconsequential to the administration; notwithstanding the

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94% percent of their vote to elect this administration. The irony is, the more things change, the more they remain the same in New Jersey. This would have been the perfect time for this administration to demonstrate their support for the national call for equity.”

Yanked at by the Laborers and Blacks, Murphy conditionally vetoed Sweeney’s bill.

The Laborers rejoiced.

Pocino himself and Sweeney had arm-wrestled at least going back to when the Laborers chief backed Christie’s reelection bid, apparently without

giving Sweeney a heads-up. The senate prez had wanted to milk speculation about his own 2013 run against Christie, not knowing, as Pocino did, that no one ever believed he would challenge the former U.S. Attorney.

Still, the Laborers represented but one of 15 unionized crafts.

Did Murphy really want the other 14 ganging up on him, no doubt led by the Operating Engineers, who obviously celebrated the public roadwork provisions in the bill?

Plus, Jack Ciattarelli – trying to position himself as the earnest taxpayer champ amid all the constant revving

of labor engines – was running a flailing and increasingly irrelevant campaign. Why throw Jack a life raft by giving him a shot at scoring one or some of the supposedly allied crafts and, as a Democratic Party incumbent, leading a divided building trades into November’s reelection?

Remember, Christie consolidated power by stripping the Trades away from public sector labor and attaching them to his other little hillside of favorite lambkins seeking a champion: the New Jersey taxpayers.

Why let Ciattarelli – no Christie, let’s face it – siphon the trades?

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Murphy simply couldn't afford to empower the statewide Republican nominee. Yes, Trump and Christie had destroyed the Republican Party in New Jersey, but COVID created too any wildcards ahead of the election. Just look at Andrew Cuomo.

And yet, and yet...

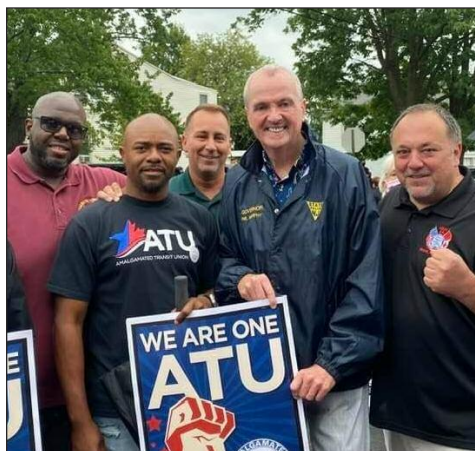
Murphy didn't want to alienate urban Blacks long ostracized by the trades, which – again – infamously dragged their work boots in the area of recruiting more diverse members. If he signed off on that PLA bill without at least some inclusive language for minorities he could contribute to depressed urban numbers in a general election.

Progressives, public sector workers and Newark voters – not the Building Trades – numbered among his natural allies.

Murphy couldn't afford creating enemies in his base.

He had staff monkey around with the language with Speaker Craig Coughlin and Sweeney. They brought back a bill that included provisions for apprenticeship programs for women and "disadvantaged communities", requiring "the public body to monitor, or arrange to have a State agency monitor, the amount and share of work done on the project by minority group members, members of disadvantaged communities, and women and the progression of minority group members."

It was weak, hogwash even, but good enough to shut up the critics and to have something vague enough to scrawl on a mail piece that could be worded to seem credible.



If Sweeney would never be a natural ally of public sector labor, Murphy carried a double affliction through the Building Trades halls. Not only had he arrived in politics affixed to the NJEA, but he was a lib. They just didn't like him. But Murphy had given them PLAs, just as Sweeney scored NJEA relief for the Teachers. Once merely a misfit tool of public sector labor, Murphy too, with the stroke of his pen, had attained the Tao of New Jersey labor relations. He had also helped the nonunion labor force by increasing (but not too much!) the minimum wage (long backed by the AFL-CIO), and legalizing driver's licenses for non-citizens. He rode a \$10 billion surplus to parceled middle class tax breaks, and legalized marijuana in semi-controversial fashion, but the legislature stopped short of further alienating law enforcement by refusing to advance enabling legislation for civilian oversight of local police departments.

It was an election year, after all.

No one needed the cops going off half-cocked in one of those battleground suburban districts – like Sweeney's, for example.

It would never happen.

Teachers? Sure, once.

Cops, never, not with Sweeney and Coughlin and Murphy in power.

They wouldn't let it get that far.

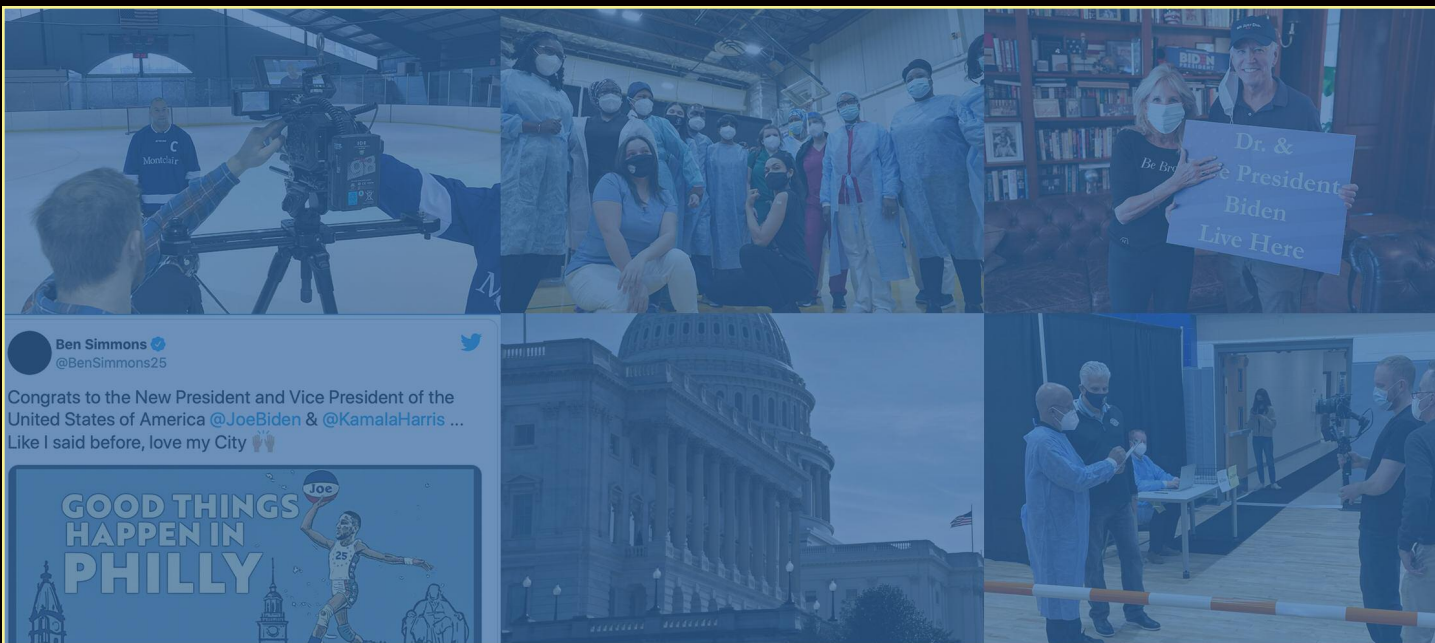
Ciattarelli?

He was screaming about high taxes, and he was right, but he had no runway of law enforcement to scare Democrats to his side in a state where Dems outnumber Republicans by a million registered voters, and if he was never in the market to get public sector workers, obviously, he also lacked Building Trades labor, as he attempted to inflate his street cred with Trump supporters.

It felt small; like he was deflating instead of expanding.

By the time the Republican Party dredged a nonunion (and of course non-funded) truck driver to run against Sweeney in the 2021 general election, one could picture the senate president and NJEA Prez Marie Blistan behind closed doors at the Statehouse high-fiving in uncontrollable hysterics.





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## PART 3



In the early 20th Century, the term “New Jersey feelings” became synonymous nationally with labor unrest. If a workplace began to teem with discontent and hover at the edge of a strike, management fretted about “New Jersey feelings.”

It’s interesting. I had occasion to work in Georgia once, and when I would set about organizing stories I’d go to labor leaders for comments, until my editor turned around in his chair finally and snapped, “Why are you talking to these guys?”

“Huh?”

“I don’t know what it’s like in New Jersey,” he said, “but here, these guys are just not relevant.”

By way of comparison:

### New Jersey (8)

- **Percent of workers in unions:** 14.9 percent
- **Change in union membership (2008-2018):** -3.4 ppt. (8th largest decrease)
- **Union workers:** 587,219 (8th most)
- **Avg. annual wage:** \$63,563 (5th highest)

### Georgia (45)

- **Percent of workers in unions:** 4.5 percent
- **Change in union membership (2008-2018):** +0.8 ppt. (3rd largest increase)
- **Union workers:** 200,070 (20th most)
- **Avg. annual wage:** \$53,035 (17th highest)



Suffice to say, no one down there held a Peter J. McGuire Labor Breakfast on a scale annually observed in Pennsauken, or wielded inner sanctum power that programmed governors and embodied a senate president. If organized labor diffused itself unequally through the grubby recesses of New Jersey, the South – with audacious leadership and the senate presidency – consolidated the trades in a way that made them power players

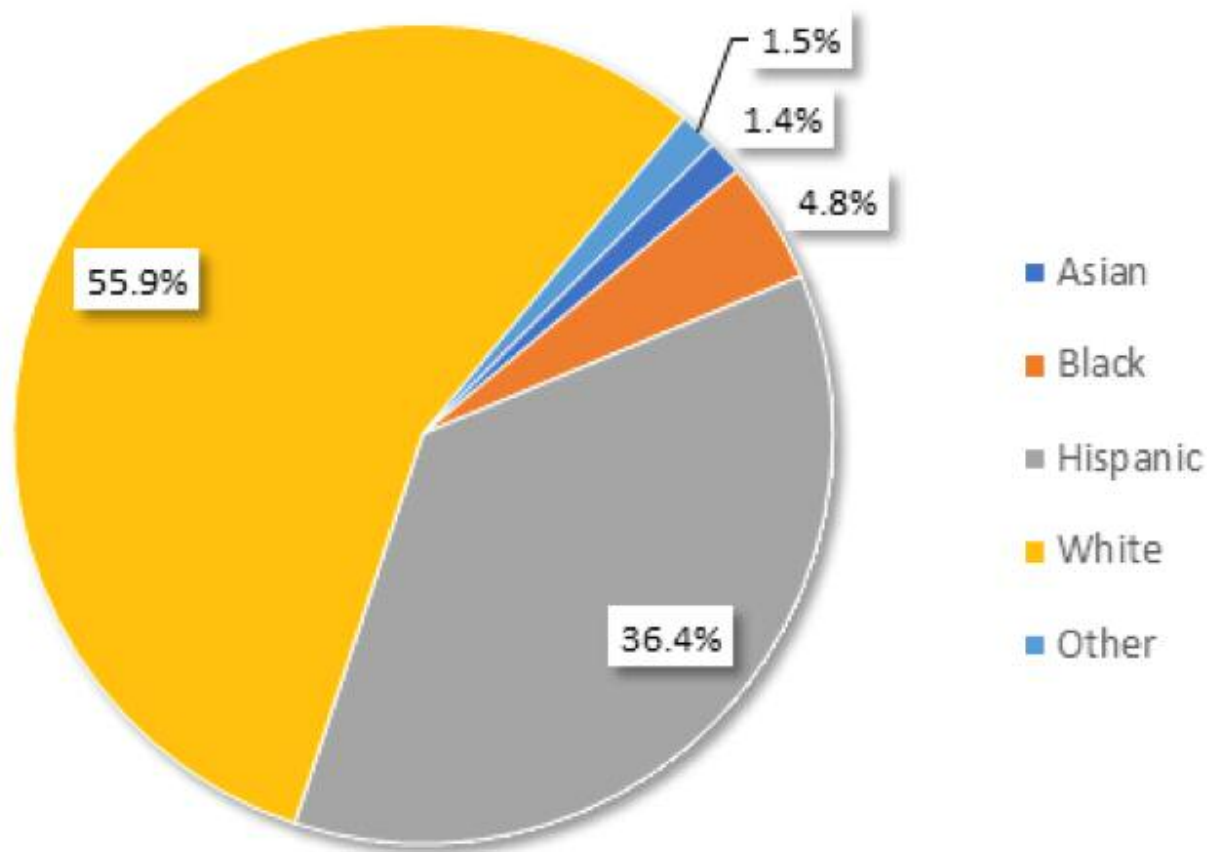
even if they lacked population or plurality. A partnership of Middlesex and Essex offered the possibility of supplanting them, but the South showed no signs of going away. Plus, they spread around some core believers. Their trades allies in Mercer (Wayne DeAngelo) and Middlesex (Joe Egan) lived for the labor movement. Those that didn't – lawyers, for example, always hanging around the party – well, they could get some public legal work

in order to maintain their loyalty, if not undying passion for a cause.

Now sin is the very stuff of politics, and the Murphy era exposed some of the worst of them in the south.

Blacks would be expected to shoulder the party, even if they got little of real substance in return.

Racial/Ethnic Composition of Construction Workers in NJ, 2019  
(N=207,187)

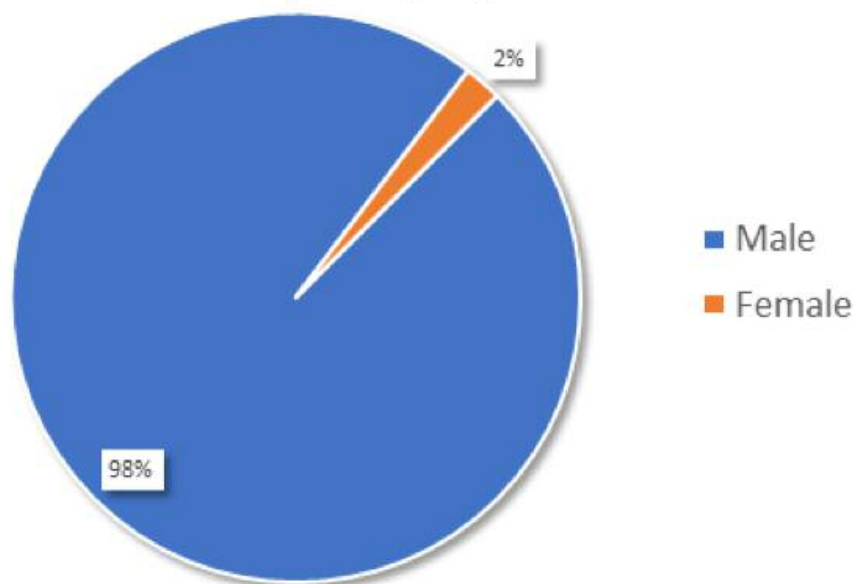


But for the Pocino-led Laborers, the on-average \$25-plus-an-hour trades (compared to an average of \$20-per-hour in the public sector) lacked African-American representation (less than 5% of the trades' 150K members, according to the state Department of Labor) and lacked women members (2%, via the state DOL),

and that fact hung out there like a giant beer belly for the whole state to see. The era of independent expenditures and the gulf between the 2% and everyone else had strengthened Norcross not weakened him. That bothered those labor backers of Sweeney who wished they could organize without the ominous shadow

cast by the labor boss. Those critics perhaps failed to understand the fundraising capacities essential to the operation. Still, the tax incentive scandal at its worst revealed the disconnect between waterfront development and the rest of a despairing \$27K median household income city, a food desert that lacks a full-service supermarket.

Gender Composition of the NJ Construction Workforce (Trades), 2019  
(N=207,187)



“Our current local leadership has neglected this,” said upstart mayoral candidate Elton Custis, who stood in the parking lot outside PriceRite less than two months removed from the June 8th Democratic Primary.

“They know this has been coming down the pipeline,” added the local School Board member who beat the machine last year in his off-the-line bid. “I believe this gentleman has called them and told them that he is

pulling out after this year and the residents still do not know about this injustice that is about to be put on us. My administration will be working hard to make sure that we have a full-service supermarket that will serve all of the residents’ needs Today, Camden is most certainly a food desert. I am told this PriceRite will be closing at the end of the year. We have to come to the table and get people involved. People have to take buses to Collingswood and Cherry Hill. It is

an injustice that we do not have a full-service supermarket.”

Custis lost to the Democratic Party machine-backed candidate, controlled by the same organization that empowered Sweeney and kowtowed to Norcross.

He also rightly predicted Camden’s loss of the supermarket.

Sweeney bemoaned “market forces.”



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When he appeared at the microphone in front of the Governor's Task Force examining the administration of NJ Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) tax incentives in his home city, Camden Council President Curtis Jenkins said, "If we don't prepare our folks to take advantage of these opportunities, it's going to be all for nothing."



There must, he insisted, be some kind of mechanism in the tax incentive program to prepare residents for jobs in the city.

"The people of Camden are my main concern," added the grandfather of a murdered grandson.

"Anyone receiving these tax incentives needs some kind of mechanism to train people for these jobs," said Jenkins, who retired from the Laborers' International Union where, over the course of a 30-plus-year career, he spent just a handful of months on projects in his home city.

The absence of jobs (not just jobs connected to the Camden County

Democratic Organization) for the people of Camden gaped in the center of the South Jersey organization.

Just as bad, for all of its amassed power and propensity to punish people, the machine suffered the absence of thought leaders. By 2021, so many had left or retired, died, or found political lives anew elsewhere. John Adler. Andrews. Bill Castner. John Sheridan. Even Wayne Bryant – at his best – offered insightful public policy, not just full contact karate. Certainly, the organization lost the deeper power of big ideas when Joe Roberts retired.

When the Camden-based speaker championed clean elections in 2007 and the likes of DeAngelo and his fellow combatants in LD14 participated in no fewer than 10 public debates with campaign contributions limited to \$10 per person, the legislative cycle came alive with something more than bodies lugging signs and campaign ads cooked up by the devil and massively amped in million-dollar television ads. In the packed, sprawling theater of Steinhart High School in Hamilton, the contest had a certain civic intellectual – yes, it was the right word, even in New Jersey – electricity.

In another pendulum swing indication of the coming political chill, which augmented the corporate financial arm of the outfit, the Citizens United Supreme Court ruling killed clean elections.

Roberts had been a worthy statesman successor to Joe Doria.

But as the casualties of political time mounted and the stagnant reek of the swamps enclosed those who remained, by contrast, Sweeney and Norcross looked like Sumo wrestlers strutting around the statehouse and its shadows, merely eager to throw skinny armed foes out of their circle and – between election cycles – contenting themselves with the occupation of settling scores.

For after all, what else was politics?

They had become arrogant. At the same time their campaigns reflected decay, or at least a lazy tendency to appeal to the lowest common denominator, as when a Camden Dems machine-assisting indie mailer in LD1 carried more than just a tinge of racism. It felt like the smarmiest of operatives crafting a piece to appeal to his vision of a fat white guy watching Fox News with a white hood over his head deep in the woods of the Pine Barrens. It felt stupid and hateful.

"They never evolved," a Democratic source told InsiderNJ, referring to South Jersey.

The Norcross relationship with the companies he tax incentivized to Camden prompted skepticism among rank and file guys who felt the old Pennsauken fox had become too corporate himself in his cocoon of helicopter pads, Mar-a-Lago membership (later canceled) and country club back rubs.



Each in the presence of the other, the non-election year resentments in particular crawled into the skin of both sides of labor: public and private. In the minds of the trades, they looked in the mirror and radiated macho know-how on par with Sylvester Stallone's *Expendables*; while the public sector members, many of them women, increasingly derided them as MAGA hat-wearing dinosaurs and a drag on civilization. The NJEA did its own dance with Sweeney, but so did the CWA. "As long as he still wants to be governor, we've got him right where we want him," a communications workers-allied source confessed to InsiderNJ, noting how the senate president's presumably ongoing statewide ambition kept him vainly searching for Democratic Party Primary acceptance.

Others scorned those gyrations for the sake of belonging to the Democratic Party. Confronted with the persistent howls of MAGA machismo in his midst, Van Drew – a longtime reluctant Democrat – finally folded, embarrassing Sweeney, who looked even more flummoxed when LeRoy Jones stepped over South Jersey to cut a deal with North and Central Jersey (Middlesex having quietly branched off – but not totally – from South Jersey) for the state party chairmanship. Following angry phone calls and chest thumping all around, Sweeney neglected to personally attend Jones' swearing-in ceremony.

Jones might have been the new chair of the party.

But he wasn't labor.

Others saw it differently.

The years of Christie chumminess and wink-winking with Trump and blurred lines between corporate power and labor had caught up with Sweeney and Norcross at last. They looked less like the robust labor lads from Pennsauken than mummified passengers of a tug run aground and maybe ready for a come-clean Republican Party makeover. The Democratic Party in New Jersey had moved on, diversified earlier and oftener while the South remained mired in the grim enthusiasms of the same white male uneducated voter who backed Trump.

Still, though, the north usually found a way to fumble its advantages, as when its top elected official got briefly jammed up and – even in his innocence – had to depend on the south and its tentacles to remain politically viable, at least for that first fragile election cycle. Moreover, and even more to the point, in the local sinister rush for ratables everywhere in tax-crushed New Jersey, the contact list of luxury commercial and residential development complete with PLA furnished Building Trades labor, made every denizen of every town and city hall in the state a potential partner – and a potential southern subject.

The trades had a functioning model in a dysfunctional state. The Murphy years revealed its incompleteness, its excruciating gaps in equality and op-

portunity, and its lack of the "big ideas" Joe Roberts once exhorted his fellow assembly people to engage, including – funny now in retrospect – clean elections, of all things.

The unimaginative corporate buildings equipped with security details and protective gates and helicopter pads rose with union labor. But they did not transform the neighborhoods of real people. Neither did they inspire; nor uplift a state submerged in the same architectural squall of glass and steel and highway sprawl from one generation to the next, or succeed in bringing communities closer, if safely physically distanced. Just as the country would pour trillions into Afghanistan while its own cities slid into violence and decay, Camden leading the way, the state prioritized gated corporate construction while its biggest city, Newark, offered drinking water out of antique lead pipes to children.

In Sept. 1983 in Atlantic City a young visiting U.S. Senator – chummy with Building Trades – said the Democratic Party "had failed to remember what got us this far and how we got here – moral indignation, decent instincts, a sense of shared sacrifice and mutual responsibility, and a set of national priorities that emphasized what we had in common. ... The party that was the engine of the national interest – molding our pluralistic interest into a compelling new social contract that served the nation well for 50 years – became perceived as little more than the broker of nar-

row special interests. Instead of thinking of ourselves as Americans first, Democrats second, and members of interest groups third, we have begun to think in terms of special interests first and the great interest second. ... We have let our opponents set the agenda and define what is at stake."

It was Joe Biden.

If the times exposed the south's sluggish mores and its built-in prejudices and antagonisms to the larger goals of labor, miniaturized versions emerged with little hint of muscular manpower on the order of the South.

What was the alternative to the power structure as currently conceived?

Sworn in last week as the new president of the New Jersey Education Association to succeed Blistan, Sean Spiller threatened a Sweeney-like story-line out of the north. A science teacher (check, his own professional affiliation and dedication to the labor cause he served), he had also gotten himself elected mayor of Montclair and appeared dangerously ascendent to those always wary private sector labor forces long appeased by the lack of a Sweeney-like "star" to resist them from the ranks of the teachers.

Could Spiller penetrate as Sweeney had, with an organization of statewide power modeled on the public sector union credentials threatened in the Christie-Sweeney years?

Was it more than merely the glut of power on the other side of the still

vast divide?

North of 195, the retirement of Lew Candura in Morris, the countywide election losses of Tom Giblin, and the fragmented nature of public sector labor, combined with the fact that "labor sympathizers" and hired guns, not rooted labor leaders and labor movement members, occupy county party chairmanships. "We have to be careful," a party leader told InsiderNJ. "Where are we going?"

Even at a cost, maybe a tremendous cost, South Jersey prioritized the aspirational alpha males of the working class and their families.

An incomplete mission?

Obviously.

Yet, Spiller notwithstanding, sources worried about a party – and a two-party establishment, for that matter – in the months and years ahead lacking an institutional basis, curiosity, discipline, guts, and organizational ambitions for something more than their narrow special interests (including a smattering of public sector support), and chiefly the dedicated protection of 2 percent wealth (forget the average taxpayer interests, they lacked a legitimate crusader, at least for the moment). Norcross had his circle of friends, yes, and they included not just the corporate high-rise occupants but the men who built those high rises, if on the backs of too many already squalid towns. If South Jersey ever fell, and it would, as everything does, would the sole lesson be their

capacity to collect and extract, lost the core manly knowledge of how to build the foundation of a house?

An alternative?

How about a forum for ideas? No, too dangerous. Too politically incorrect. The organization – whatever form it took – had to protect – not put at risk through complex or rigorous expression – incumbents dutiful to the party empire.

Socially liberal?

Sure, sky's the limit.

As long as they arrived ready to vote and didn't have to consider, with any kind of depth, real world-impact economics.







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## JASON O'DONNELL

former Assemblyman from Bayonne

During the pension benefits fight, former Assemblyman Jason O'Donnell – a career firefighter – put his political career on the line for teachers. The principles and tenacity he showed in opposition to the Christie-Sweeney overhaul came back to haunt him when the Democratic nominee for governor chose him to lead the Democratic State Committee.

South Jersey – and probably Christie – disapproved.

But O'Donnell was pro-labor.

Yes, as far as South Jersey was concerned, the wrong side of labor. They expunged him.

But along the way, the tough kid assemblyman from Bayonne offered some of the best oratory to make his case on behalf of his fellow public sector workers.

“If you want to pick on cops and firefighters, okay, I get it,” O'Donnell told a basement crowd at Raritan Valley Community College where the teachers didn't have a contract in 2011. “But you want to go after teachers? Are you kidding me? What disturbs me is the administration here is unwilling to negotiate. They're taking a tack they learned in Trenton. I feel compelled to stand with you. There's anger being projected on teachers, firefighters and police.

“Look,” O'Donnell added, “I run into burning buildings for a living and yet the day I felt most vulnerable to that point was when I handed my daughter Caroline over to a teacher on her first day of school and trusted her to take care of her. Yet we have a governor who says, ‘You're wrong. You're overpaid. You don't work hard. You don't deserve it.’ I don't accept it.”







## GREG LALEVEE

Business Manager, International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 825

### On working through the pandemic:

“Initially the COVID shutdown was a shock wave, mostly because not much was known about it, but the governor declaring us part of the essential workforce, kept the jobs going. Yes, as everyone, we lived with the specter of the unknown. What is this disease, this illness? There was a lot of trepidation. People were scared at the beginning. But for heavy equipment operators, we're more or less socially distanced anyway. Did we have members die in last the 17 months? Of course, we did. One early on and one in the surge, both men in their fifties. But overall, it wasn't as rampant as it

was in other trades. Our members walk from the car to a machine and walk back to the car and go home. One advantage we had inherently is we are accustomed to working among hazardous materials. New Jersey being what it is, it's part of the ethos of what we teach: respiratory safety. It's nothing new to us.

“Private work slowed down. There were a lot of questions going forward about office buildings, for example. What are they going to be [post-COVID, given social distancing protocols]. A lot of private money came off the table initially, and a lot came back. We saw a ten to 15% drop but

we've seen it slowly and steadily bounce back within 5%.”

### On infrastructure:

“We've seen first the American Rescue Plan, which the White House shored up, encouraged many local governments not to abandon infrastructure budgets. When they passed the American Rescue Plan, the White House did an outreach plan. The message was, ‘don't hold back on local projects,’ with a goal of keeping the economy moving. Paving projects, for example. The second infrastructure plan already through the senate, we need the House to pass it now. It's its

own kettle of fish. If passed, will take some time to get down to the money in the street, but it's incredibly ambitious and aims to improve on the recent past. We will have a long-term plan that's paid for and unlocks the door on road and bridge work: 20,000 miles of roads thousands of bridges, water lines, rail tunnels."

Including the Gateway Tunnel project.

## On the Governor's Race (the Operating Engineers have not yet endorsed a candidate):

"At the end of the day, Governor Murphy champions himself as a friend of labor. He's done several

things the unions can applaud, which have caused unions to endorse him. He has done enough in the minds of many. If I were a state worker with full pension payments, I get it. I don't know what Mr. Ciattarelli will or won't do in that regard to labor. It's at a point where it just seems quite frustrating all the way around. I think from our perspective we would like to see more specifics. What's your plan?

"We would like to see changes to the governor's energy master plan. We're not against green energy, and legislatively we have to wait until the governor's race is over and we know for absolute certain who is there. The Transportation Trust Fund is an eight-year plan, which expires in 2024. It


will need to be thoughtfully replenished. Everything now comes out of gas and oil taxes. The question is do electric cars and vehicles get a free pass. It's a good question that needs an answer."

## On the next generation of trades people:


"The operating engineers have a robust apprenticeship program. There are people camped out at our training center at those times. It's the equivalent of putting up hot concert tickets. We've become a licensed two-year technical college: robotic technology, wind opportunities. We're not going to have a people problem."

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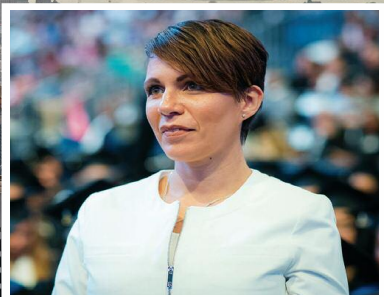
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## BILL MULLEN

President of the New Jersey Building Trades, Ironworker

### **On the Infrastructure Plan before the House of Representatives:**

“The infrastructure package is absolutely needed in New Jersey. It’s needed to make New Jersey competitive and up to date. We need the tunnel into Manhattan.”

### **On Construction Going Forward:**

“COVID has changed the game. Construction going to change. Office buildings – how they’re built.”

The main challenges right now for Building Trades:

“Our biggest competitive threat is the world of non-union labor. In this state we have great labor laws, and I’ll give the governor credit. The AG, the treasurer, insurance commissioner and commissioner of the Department of Labor have all put our concerns at the forefront. This governor will enforce labor laws.”

### **Main priorities in the State Legislature going forward:**

“We could use Sweeney’s Path to Progress. Of course, last time he was out there trying to sell it, we almost got into a couple of fistfights. We en-

dorsed 22 Republicans this time. Our differences with public employees? Hey, competition makes the would go round. We’re not against workers. We live in a different world from public employees. If it rains, our guys get three hours pay. I still haven’t seen [NJEA President Marie Blistan] her since they ran against Sweeney and he beat them. As for their negotiations since, it’s a good thing when people can make compromises. She actually endorsed him. I’m proud of Sweeney. I’m proud that he was just reelected first general vice president of our ironworkers international.”

## FRAN EHRET

State Director of the  
New Jersey  
Communications  
Workers  
of America (CWA)

Deeply rooted in labor, she met Cesar Chavez as a kid in California. The daughter of the late Frank Forst, mayor of Jamesburg, member of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, and a labor leader who organized the work's toll roads, as well as the New Jersey State highway workers. Ehret got a job on the New Jersey Turnpike, where she worked as a toll collector for 15 years. Former shop steward, and treasurer of her local.

The labor leader, said then-President Ronald Reagan's decision to fire 11,345 air traffic controllers changed the direction of labor in her lifetime.

"It's been 100% downhill from there," Ehret told InsiderNJ. "You look around from there, unions are diminished. We've lost so much trajectory of wages in terms of the cost of living."

That said, her union secured gains under Governor Phil Murphy.

"The Governor is committed to fixing the pension fund. When Dick Codey was governor, Murphy chaired that committee. This governor has been the most progressive governor



I've ever seen: raising the minimum wage, securing paid sick leave. He's made a difference in people's lives. Making the decision to endorse Phil Murphy was really easy for us. What we're going through with this COVID pandemic – his leadership has been stellar, working with us to protect workers by putting in health and safety protocols. I'm pleased we have a governor who respects collective bargaining sincere desire to improve people's lives not just words to him things have been pushing proved that lived through eight years of cc where we couldn't even have a discussion with us hostile from the very first day.

"We've had our share of casualties

and, of course, COVID positives. We get a lot of notices in my office. It was pretty scary for a while there, with the concern over a super spreader event. They [the Murphy Administration] were trying to do the responsible thing. Workers had to work under incredibly difficult conditions and risked themselves."

### On the CWAs relationship with the Building Trades.

"In the public sector we have civil service. We've seen the Building Trades try to be more diverse. There is a difference between the way they were 25 years ago and today. It always could be better."





## We Know New Jersey.

Anchor **Briana Vannozzi**  
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## KEVIN BROWN

New Jersey State Director of 32BJ SEIU

“It’s obviously better when we come together,” Brown said, in reference to Senate President Sweeney’s deal with the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) to secure Chapter 78 relief. “The airport came together with Unite Here! to cover 10K airport workers with healthcare.”

Unions can’t be complacent if they want to serve the needs of real communities and exploited workers.

Brown said his union annually invests 25% of its overall budget in organizing; that is to say, reaching out to populations in need.

“If they invested in organizing, they’re unions might be more diverse,” he said, in reference to the Building Trades. “You’ve got to buck up and take x percent of our overall budget, a significant percentage, you figure out what that is, and organize. Your

budget reflects your values. We’ve secured gained for our members, but that hasn’t stopped us. We organized another 1k members in 2019, 800 in 2020.”

Next up for 32BJ SEIU: organizing 2,500 mostly minimum wage security officers across the state, fighting along the river in Jersey City up to Fort Lee. During COVID, 32BJ lost 26 members.



## CURTIS JENKINS

Camden City  
Council President,  
retired from the  
Laborers, managed  
Local 222

“If you pick Building Trades for your career, understand that most unions work off of a hiring hall list. I wasn’t willing to wait for the work. In my 20’s, when you went on the job you would stay on the job. Contractors hire you get work done, you’re laid off, you’re hired again.

“The ones that stay on the jobs are the shop stewards for the crafts - pipefitters, electricians. If you want a career in Building Trades you have to go where there the work is and accumulate hours. Learn everything you can. I tell young people, you have to be dependable. Be on time. There’s a schedule. People don’t care about your private life. Don’t come to complain about the contract. That’s the way I did it, and I retired at 55.

“Building Trades have reached out with apprenticeships, but it’s hard to get individuals engaged. I have to give credit to Ray Pocino. His people reach out and try to help people get in the Laborers with apprenticeships. It was better during the waterfront; they put a little more effort. But realize, I gave out 1k apprenticeship applications – that’s all trades, during the time of waterfront development. Those applications were for all trades. Out of 1k



people very few returned the applications. They did not want to do construction. The money you can make in construction, you can’t make anywhere else. But trying to get people in position where they can maintain – it frustrated me. Some people got in and walked away from it.

“When I managed Local 222, I wanted local guys from Camden in. I can tell you I wanted it as a councilperson, especially minority members - give some kind of tool, if you put the language in, I wanted residents into the unions. Most of the

other trade unions have a small number of apprenticeships. But even in the Laborers, I gave out 100 applications at a [recent] orientation, 40 actually showed up 23 got into the program; of that, how many lasted? “When I started, I was a stranger who came to Camden from over the river, from South Philly. I tried and tried to get work. I was always turned away. I craved a job. I remember this labor leader, Clinton Hicks, telling me, ‘You young guys.’ I stood my ground. He said, ‘Okay, I’m going to give you a shot, and 20 years later I had his job.”



## RAS BARAKA

Mayor of Newark

### **On Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) in the City of Newark:**

“We make sure that every PLA agreement goes through the business administrator, whom we have authorized to weight it in accord with our demands. Making sure that there are Newarkers working on our projects is monumentally important, given the fact there are \$3-4 billion worth of development in Newark. Sometimes our demands are not met warmly.

“I think it does help to have a diversi-

fication of projects: the Krueger Mansion on Martin Luther King Boulevard, the MakerSPACE, a huge development happening at the same time; Bears Stadium and Shaquille O’Neill working on high rise development. We want to make sure local workers are on all those projects. What it means is when projects get tax abatements and a PLA kicks in, we give the business administrator an opportunity to waive it if certain pieces of it are not met.

“I would say [the Building Trades’ attentiveness to workplace diversity] it’s

getting better. Some of the unions do great. All of them are not the same. The Carpenters, the laborers and plumbers have tried to chip in.

### **On Local mayors looking to make sure PLAs work for the communities:**

“They have to get in touch with the BA, they have to hold joint meetings, and they must have local legislation put in to put some teeth into the conversation. They have to create amenable local language for their aims.”



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## WAYNE DEANGELO

President/Assistant Business Manager at IBEW

The motorcycles piled on the sidewalks in front of the bars, the barber-shops, the tattoo parlors, and inside TirNaNog, where the smiling faces of Gerry Adams and the Kennedys stare from the walls, DeAngelo – asked for the one word to sum it all up, said unflinchingly, “Anxiety.”

It was already bad.

COVID made it worse.

Too many workers out there remain unemployed (321,500 in New Jersey in July).

An electrical worker since 1986, who first won elected office in 2000, DeAngelo right now wants to make sure government equitably distributes federal infrastructure dollars so his members benefit.

He wants suburban Hamilton, for example, to get something in par with neighboring Trenton. Through the last 17 months, the trades held themselves together around here with work provided by government entities, schools and hospitals.

Still, he said, “Working people are

struggling. Suburban taxpayers are taking it on the chin. All the focus is on the inner cities. We need a better funding formula for school districts. Places like Robbinsville and Cranbury get nothing.”

Ever since Ronald Reagan fired those air traffic controllers in the 1980s, labor has been on its heels.

If Labor is fragmented, the Trades mostly hang together.

“We’re not fraggled to the point of relationships, which remain intact,” said DeAngelo.





## TROY SINGLETON

LD-7 State Senator

### On the inequities within the ranks of Building Trades:

“Those of us who believe in the principles of organized labor have an obligation to make sure the faces of organized labor look like the faces of New Jersey. This is a sentiment that must become a reality; that must go from concept to concrete. It’s a shared responsibility. Labor has to provide the opportunities and the local leaders have to demand that it is a shared responsibility. It’s incumbent on both.”



## SAMANTHA DEALMEIDA

President of the  
Associated Builders  
and Contractors of  
New Jersey  
of America (CWA)

The Project Labor Agreement bill for public projects backed by Senate President Sweeney and ultimately signed by Governor Phil Murphy rankled DeAlmeida.

In her view, the guideline gives too strong an edge to the Building Trades, with only a cloak of diversity, which hurts her members.

The all-union model prohibits competition, she argued, and cuts out small businesses, minorities and women, because Building Trades notoriously lags in those departments.

Then-President Barack Obama raised the floor for PLAs to \$25 million, and the Associated Builders and Contractors wanted a similar outcome here.

“We thought projects \$20 million and above would have been a fair compromise,” DeAlmeida said. “They ended up going with \$5 million.”

Moreover, in her view, the bill contains no teeth to ensure proper oversight of local PLA agreements so that



labor actually follows through on giving some advantages to Blacks, Latinos and women.

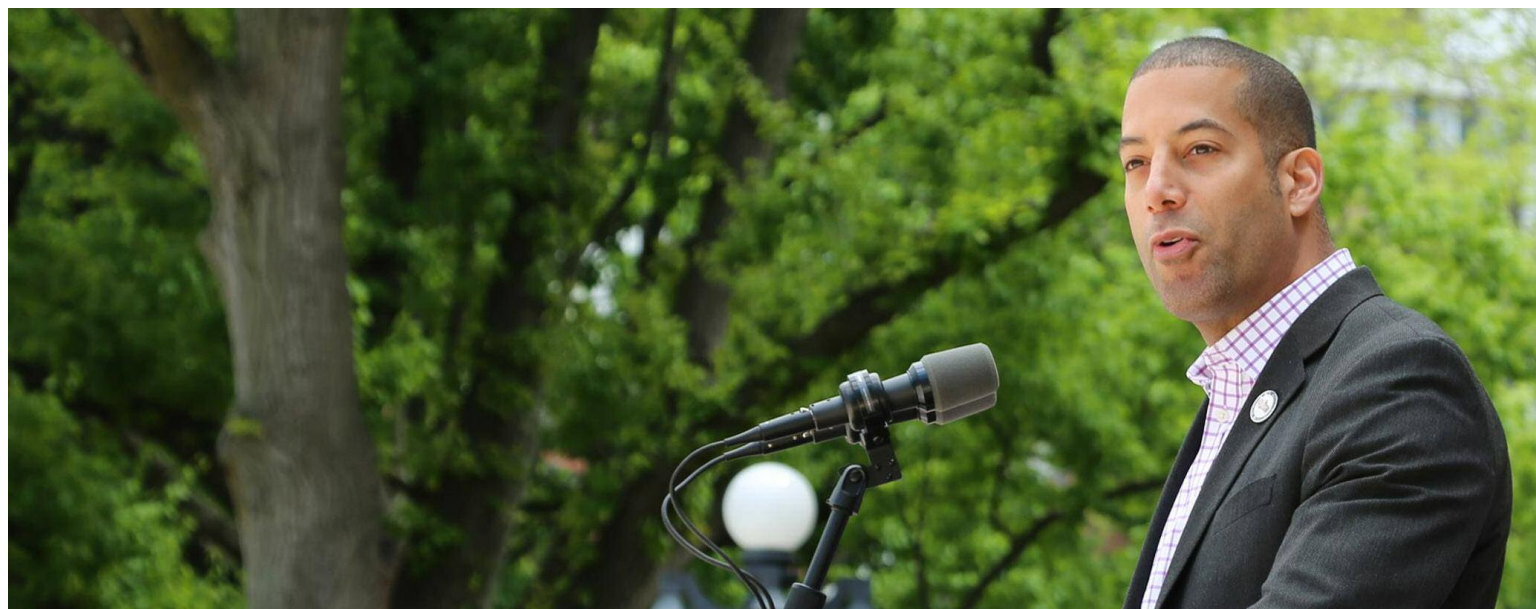
“There is no good time for a PLA but at a time when the economy is going through ebbs and flows of where the infrastructure is going to be, we should get people working in their own communities, but they can’t because of PLAs and unions from around the state,” DeAlmeida.

Her group is taking a hard look at Republican challenger Jack Ciattarelli statewide.

“We’ve not offered an official endorsement – you can expect one,” she said. “There are good things the administration has done.”

But for her, this wasn’t one of them.





## SEAN SPILLER

President, New Jersey Education Association

Spiller assumed the presidency of the powerful labor organization on Sept. 1st.

“The pandemic has thrown us all for a loop. We’re worried every day, especially because of the Delta variant. At the end of the day, we are committed to the best in-person instruction we can deliver. We want to make sure we do all we can to keep the children and the educators safe.”

Heading into the 2021-22 school year, Governor Phil Murphy mandated masks for students and teachers and vaccinations for all personnel.

In the days ahead, Spiller and his organization will press for dollars to make school buildings safer.

Many of them were already in bad condition.

COVID intensified the crisis.

“It will require a lot of money to get them up to where they need to be,” the labor leader said of school facilities.

Obviously, the NJEA backs incumbent Democratic Governor Murphy over GOP challenger Jack Ciattarelli.

“He’s been doing a great job, absolutely funding education at levels we haven’t seen and he has handled this pandemic as well as you could, with a focus on safety,” Spiller said of Murphy.

As for the NJEA’s election year peace accord with Senate President Sweeney, “At the end of the day, as you know, you find issues you agree on. We’re always going to be right there on pro

public education, and sometimes we’ll be on opposite sides. It’s a testament to issues driving the conversation as opposed to loyalties.”

Going forward, “I think we’re going to have to remain focused on schools funding and infrastructure funding. Also, we’re seeing it now. We’re going to need to step up the recruitment of educators into the profession. Our numbers are at all-time lows. In addition, high student debt. We’re going to have to address that in a comprehensive way. Certainly, we want to keep our schools number one, we want higher education funding, all of those pieces. Again, I have to reiterate the need for dollars for school buildings. In Montclair, we had a situation where we had \$6 million for schools construction, when we needed \$60 million. That’s big gap to figure out.”

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## PAUL SARLO

LD-36 State Senator, Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee

During the cannabis debate, Sarlo – an engineer by trade – expressed doubts about the impact of marijuana legalization on jobsite safety.

He wants to revisit the issue in the next session.

“We don’t have that real-time testing yet,” Sarlo told InsiderNJ. “We’re going to get there. It’s going to evolve.

Until we’ve taken more strides at the federal level, until we have more uniformity at the federal level and better testing available to us, it’s going to be a challenge.

“I’m going to maintain that the cannabis commission still has not answered enough questions for employers but more importantly – the workers,” said the senator.



## RAY GREAVES

Vice President of the  
Amalgamated  
Transit Union (ATU)  
International

“During COVID, the biggest thing for us was keeping transit workers safe. We had people working closely with the governor and I am very proud of the testing, and vaccinations and very good cooperation from the governor’s office.”

Greaves cited the importance of Biden Administration stimulus money, and federal transportation dollars secured by Congressmen Albio Sires and Donald Payne, Jr.

“[Senator Bob] Menendez too reached out to us early, on the surface transportation bill. If it wasn’t for the Democrats in government, we would have been crippled in the transportation field.”

At the time of this interview, Greaves eagerly awaited passage of the federal infrastructure bill that will pay for the long-delayed Gateway Tunnel to alleviate traffic to and from New York City.

“It’s vital. My understanding is it’s positive; looks good. Hopefully, the House understands how vital this is. Certainly, our delegation knows. They’re trying to get enough votes to



get it passed. Other politicians are putting their personal politics before the people. We have to keep the pressure on our elected officials. We need Gateway. We’ve been hearing for years how it will bring our economy back. You see the congestion on the streets and on the highways. We need to remain on top of where we need to be to bring this tri-state area back. I feel positive that we’re going to see the decisions to move us forward to bring in those dollars. The governor and our delegation have been very adamant about the need and working very hard with the Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, who was in New Jersey to talk about Gateway, and expressed how vital a project that is for the region.”

In addition, Greaves said the surface transportation bill represents an important investment for technology, including the electrification of buses.

“Climate change is real, and we need to do everything we can to make sure we make environmentally friendly investments, to reduce the carbon footprint,” said the labor leader. “The governor is pushing to move us to a hundred percent by 2040 – the full electrification of buses.”

Other projects? The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey bus terminal. “That needs to happen,” said Greaves.

As for the primary needs, especially during COVID, for his members, the ATU chairman said, “The governor gets it. New Jersey Transit is a priority. He knows how important transit is. Unfortunately, we have not found a dedicated source of funding. Turnpike dollars are keeping us going operationally, and the administration is focused on finding a way to work with the legislature to finding a dedicated



funding source. We're working with [Senate President] Steve Sweeney. We were in talks but that was all pre-pandemic. The pandemic put a strain on those talks and hampered decisions. Hopefully we get the economy back up and running again and get people back to work and find funding sources.

"It's a very serious thing [COVID]. We think about it every day. Many members were scared to go to work. Many members contracted the virus. We took a big toll. We lost over 20 workers to COVID. I lost friends who contracted COVID and died. We're always out there promoting masks, safety and compliance. I'm very happy the governor made us one of the first states where passengers must wear masks before the CDC made recommendations. Our members go to work scared every day that they can bring this virus home. But they also know they have a job to do. Many times passengers become combative. They don't want to wear masks. We can call for assistance. But most times we're out there alone. It's very serious; very concerning. Most people come on with masks. Every now and then there are those who want to challenge the system. It's something we are concerned about. We are pushing for barriers on the buses for the drivers. There is money for that in this surface transportation bill, for barriers and other safety enhancements. Far too often authorities in government don't make the

changes when they should. They make changes after someone dies or gets sick. Our people are on the front lines every day. They do the best they can. They need support. Passengers need to take into consideration the importance of the job we do.

"Our employees trained. ATU fights like hell for our members. We feel what they feel. We've been on the job going through this whole situation with COVID. It's unbelievable the job we've done. We will continue to fight for hazard pay, more safety for our conductors and drivers. We owe it to them. They know that we appreciate it. This pandemic is not over by any means. We have to never forget the members we lost.

"To date, we've been unsuccessful getting hazard pay for our frontline workers. We're hoping we can find a way with the stimulus. We're not saying it's a reward but appreciation. A lot of members have been bringing their own supplies to work to try to keep themselves and their passengers safe, spending money out of their own pockets. We want our elected officials to remember that. There's no current hazard pay bill per say. ATU, CWA and AFSCME and others have been raising the subject with our elected officials, doing everything we can to get our legislators to put forth a bill. One on the federal level bill died. We have to continue that fight."

Greaves acknowledged a viral video of

a passenger protesting having to wear a mask by laying into a transit worker with a racist rant.

"Unfortunately, it happens more than we hear in the press. We run into a lot of crazies. We run into a lot of nasty people. That's the politics in this country. It doesn't feel like the USA anymore. I wear a mask. I just came back from western Pa., where I got dirty looks in the hotel lobby because I had a mask on. It does not feel good. It's quite scary. Just look at the Jan. 6th attack on our Capitol. Those images will resonate in my mind forever. I never thought I'd see something like that in this country, which is now the divided states of America.

"We need that infrastructure bill. We need that surface transportation bill. I just hope the House doesn't blow it. We endorsed Governor Murphy. We're going to work our asses off for his reelection. I will say he has done a tremendous job, not just for transit for this state. He has stood tall. He has delivered. We were the second union to back [President Joe] Biden. Biden has always been a transit guy.

"We need surface that surface transportation bill and infrastructure."

## BRITNEE TIMBERLAKE

34th District  
Assemblywoman

Mentored on labor issues by Assemblyman Tom Giblin, granddaughter of a Nabisco plant union woman, and a former baker who made nine dollars an hour and rode four buses to work, the first bus out of East Orange, Timberlake knows first-hand the struggles of the working class.

“I know how it is,” said the assemblywoman. “I know how situations snowball, and you fear the loss of your home, having to go against big banks and big landlords without the resources to have adequate representation.”

During COVID, she took the lead in the legislature on the landlord-tenant bill, which provides for the forbearance of mortgage loans and the suspension of rental payments for any resident who requests a payment reprieve during the public health emergency.

“My main thought was to relieve, not exacerbate, the housing crisis,” Timberlake said. “On the tenant side, rents have been climbing over the years. Some towns used to be affordable that are no longer. I hope to work with leadership to create more opportunities for home ownership rather



than renting, but not everyone has an opportunity to own. The cost of living continues to go up. People don't have the funds to think about owning.

“Gentrification pushes people out of the community; it's not all bad but it displaces renters who are living check to check and month to month, working full time.

“We're still waiting to see it [the law] in practice,” Timberlake added. “We're hoping people can also tap into the tremendous amount of dollars – \$500 million allocated for rental relief and assistance money for energy relief. We imbedded energy into the landlord-tenant bill, with \$250 million for energy programs. Still, I think we have to address the issue at its core.”

Timberlake also led in the Assembly

on the state's new minimum wage law. Effective January 1, 2021, the State of New Jersey's minimum wage increased to \$12-an-hour for most employees working in the Garden State, a phase-in to \$15-per-hour in 2024.

“In my heart of hearts, it would go up to \$20 but we can't put a provision on the business owner they can't meet,” said the assemblywoman. “I agree with it being stair-stepped in. Nobody saw COVID-19 coming. The businesses are closing all over. I'm glad we had the foresight to do that [make it a tiered process to \$15].”

Going forward, the assemblywoman wants to focus on issues, including unemployment. “I do applaud the efforts of all the state workers who have tried to solve cases; I don't think the system was set up for mass unemployment,” Timberlake said.





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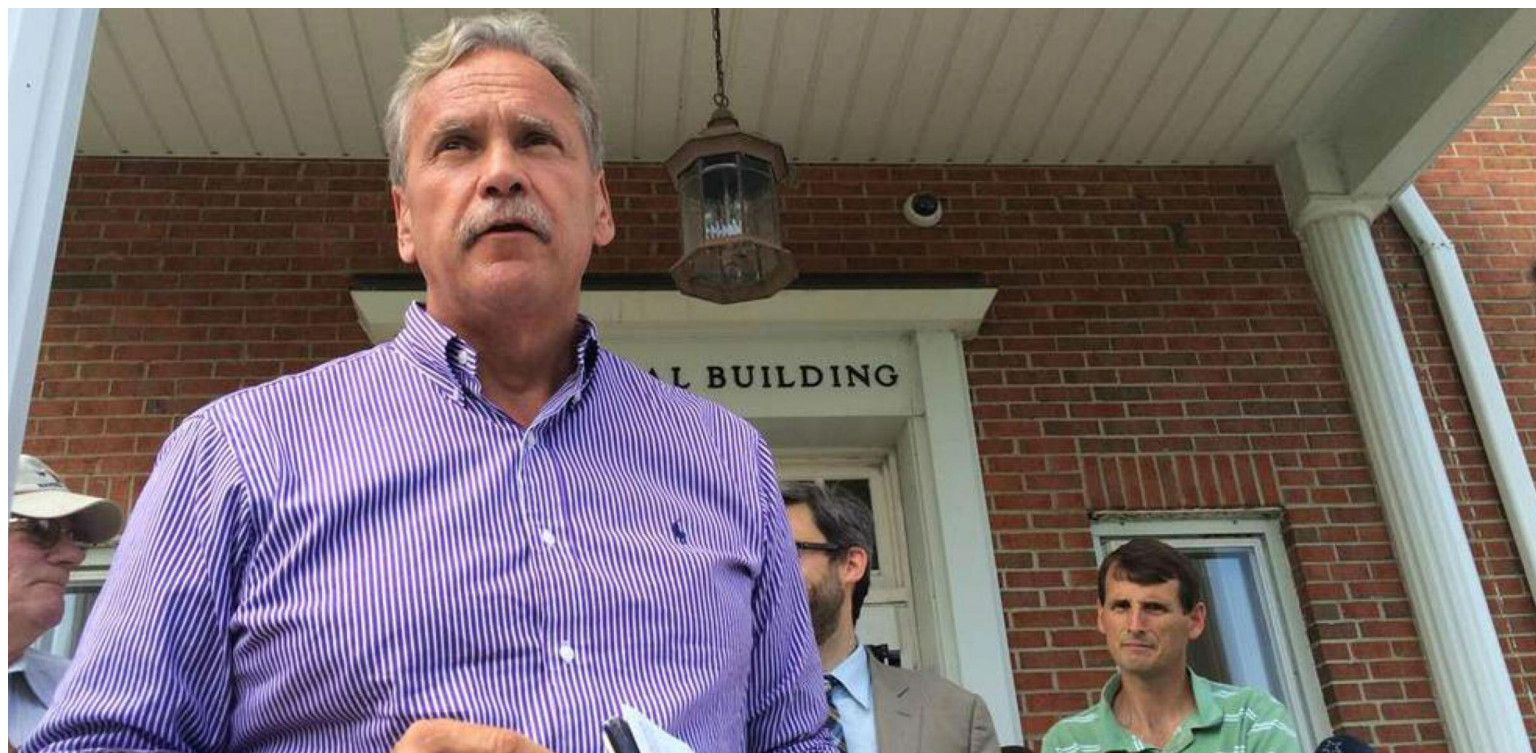
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## JEFF TITTEL

former Director, New Jersey Sierra Club

The vicinity of downtown Somerville southeast of the Courthouse looked like it had gotten slammed by a tsunami made of mud.

Cars littered the creek.

Those public parks not submerged by water were blanketed by a heavy brown dust.

Residents and shop owners moved grimly as they emptied their homes and stores of ruined goods.

Everywhere, electrical workers, fire fighters and operating engineers worked to get the town back in some kind of working shape.

“Politicians get up there and talk about it,” said Tittel, in a phone interview. “This is the 12th tornado we’ve had this year.”

And the worst.

Twenty-five deaths, six missing statewide, according to the governor’s office, as of Friday afternoon.

“This is not a wake-up call,” said Tittel. “We’re in a crisis. Three tropical storms this year. We need to take emergency steps to deal with the climate crisis. In New Jersey we have made some progress on flooding, but those rules [former Governor Chris] Christie rolled back, [Governor Phil]

Murphy hasn’t put them back in place. When it comes to the climate crisis, we are second in the nation on climate increase and climate impacts. Where’s the action? We have not reduced greenhouse gases under Murphy. We talk about moving forward with offshore wind but in order to build green you have to decrease fossil fuels. Instead of wearing masks, we’re going to have to all wear snorkels. The green jobs are in retrofitting houses for energy efficiency and offshore wind, but the Biden Agenda at the national level – and no one says Joe Biden is bold – is double what Murphy’s is in New Jersey.”



## TODD VACHON

PhD, Director, Labor  
Education Action  
Research Network  
(LEARN)

### On the Impact of the Pandemic on Employment:

“The labor market will continue to be a bit of a rollercoaster as employers and workers negotiate the new workplace. Determining what amount of work can and should be done remotely versus at the worksite in various industries will be a big factor. The unpredictability of the virus, including the current Delta variant and any potential future variants, the contin-



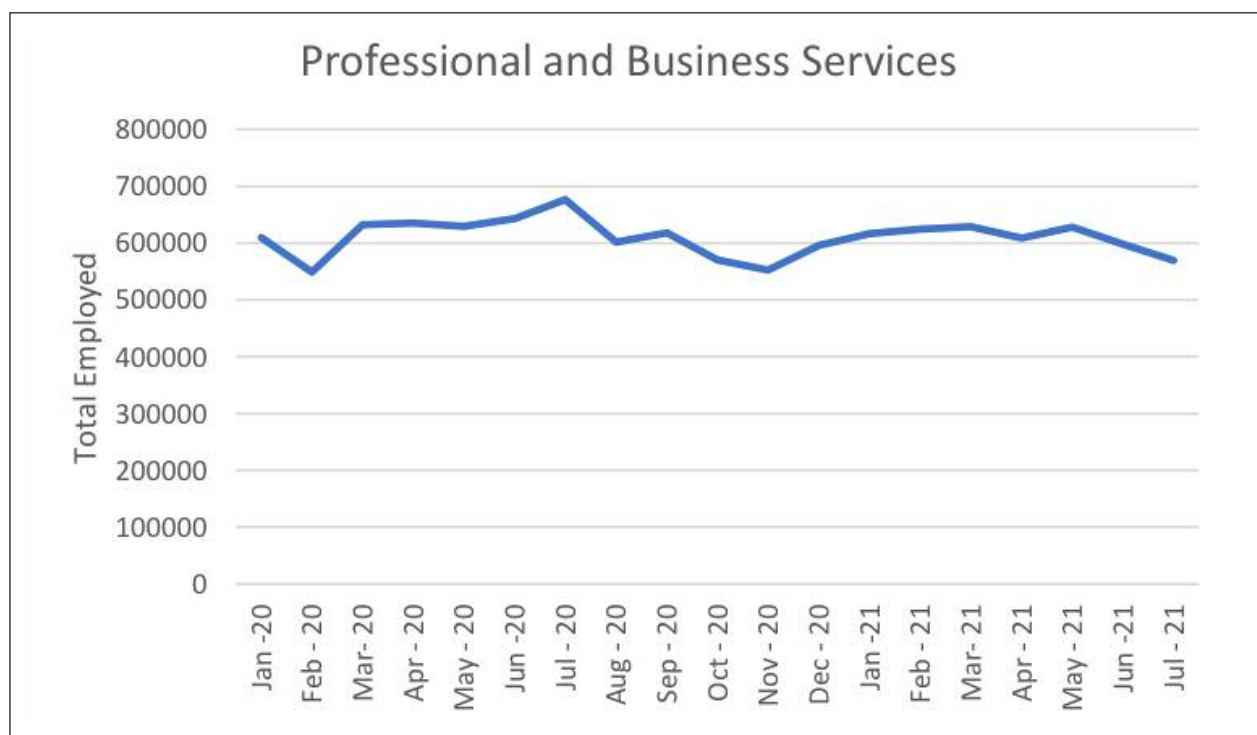
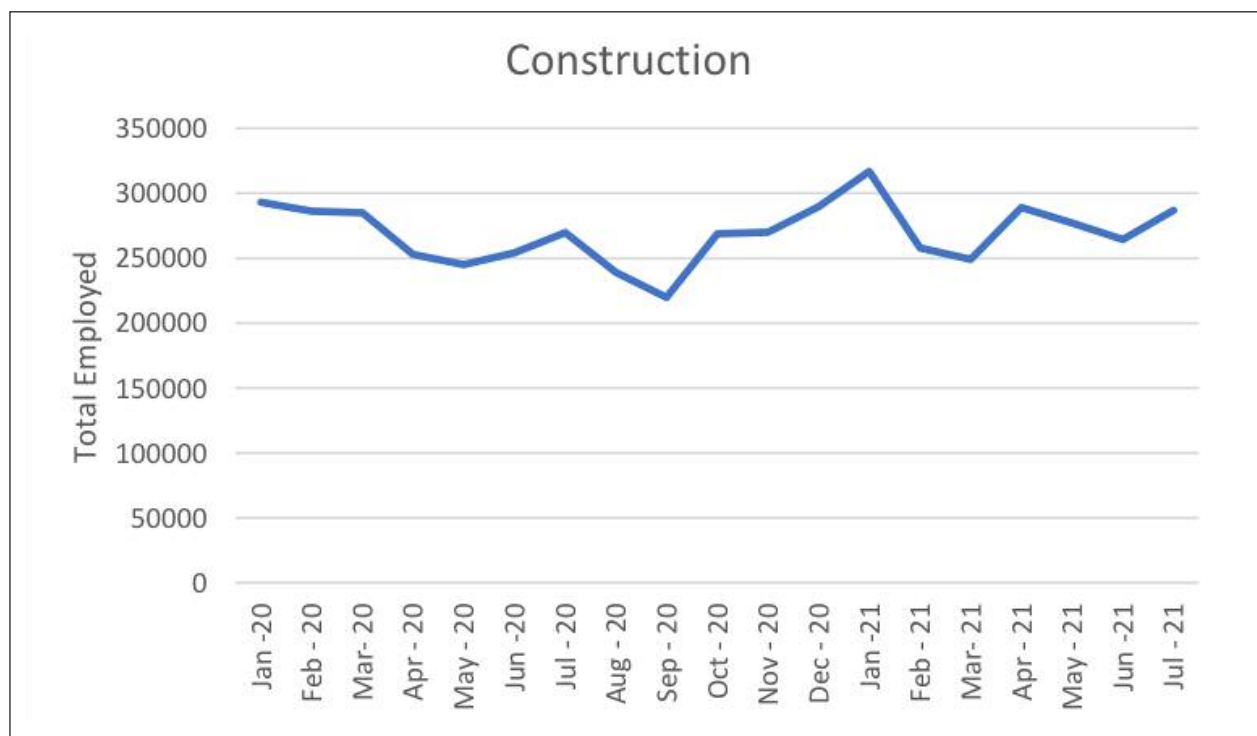
ued effectiveness of vaccines, and vaccination rates, also spells continued uncertainty for workers in frontline and exposed industries. And finally, the extent of government support for

workers will also influence the decision-making process for workers who are often forced to decide between their health and their wallet when the rent is due.”



## Employment estimates by **Todd E. Vachon, PhD**

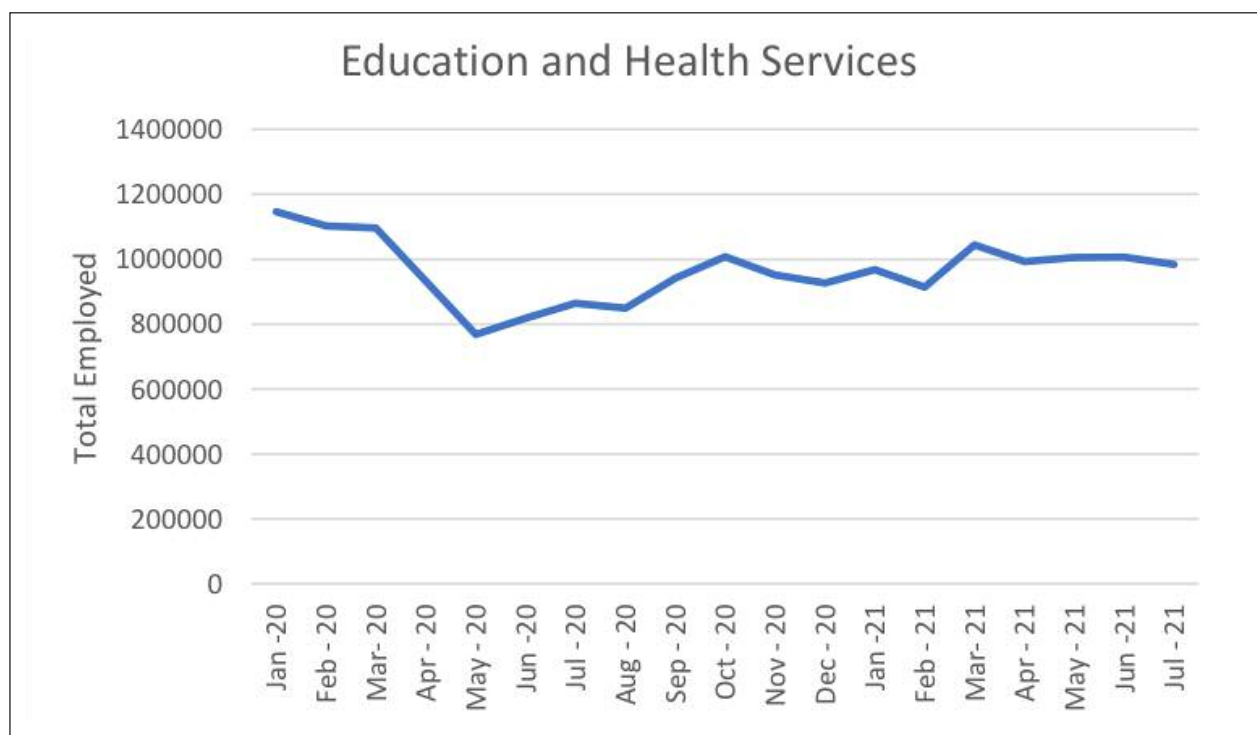
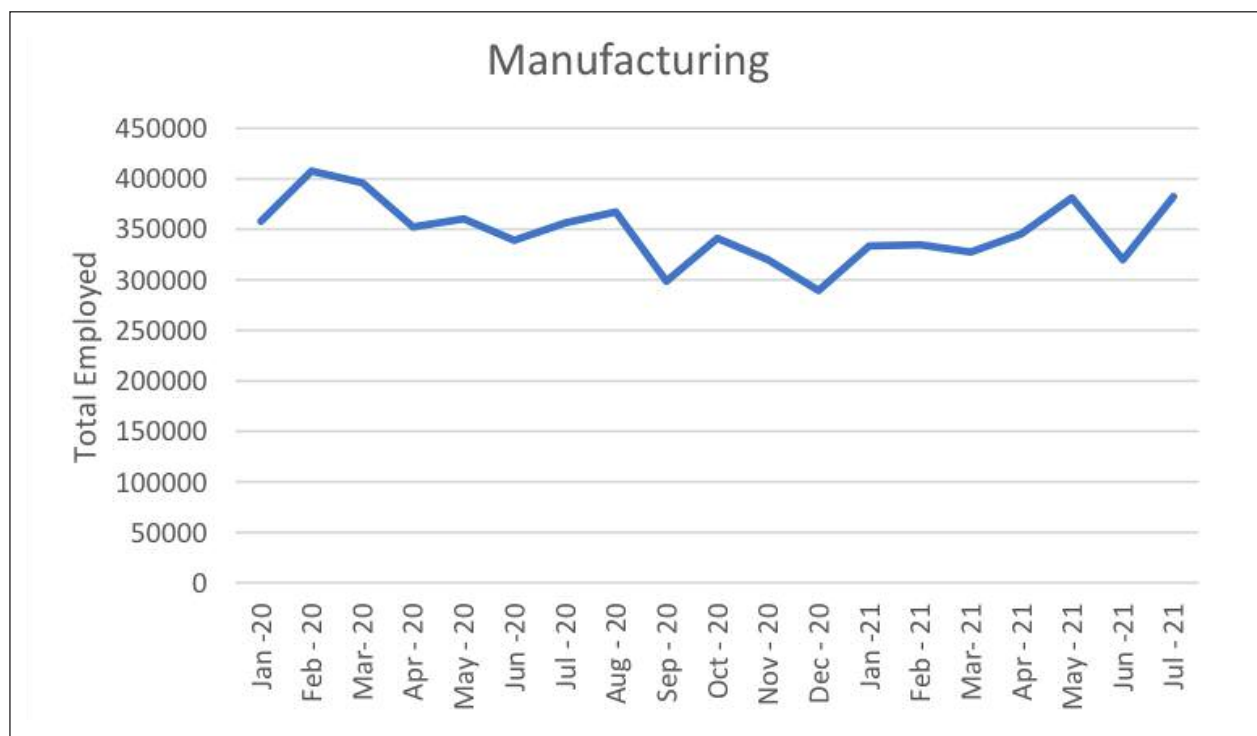
*Director of the Labor Education Action Research Network (LEARN) in the School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University*





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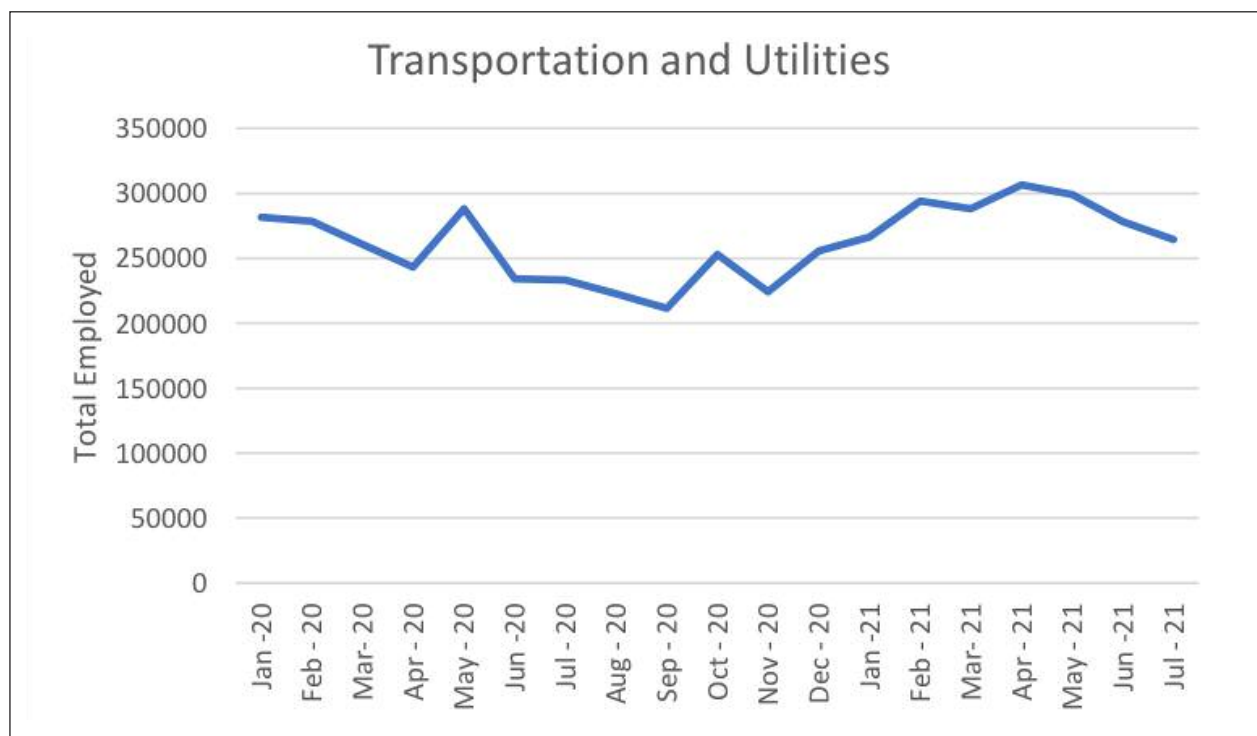
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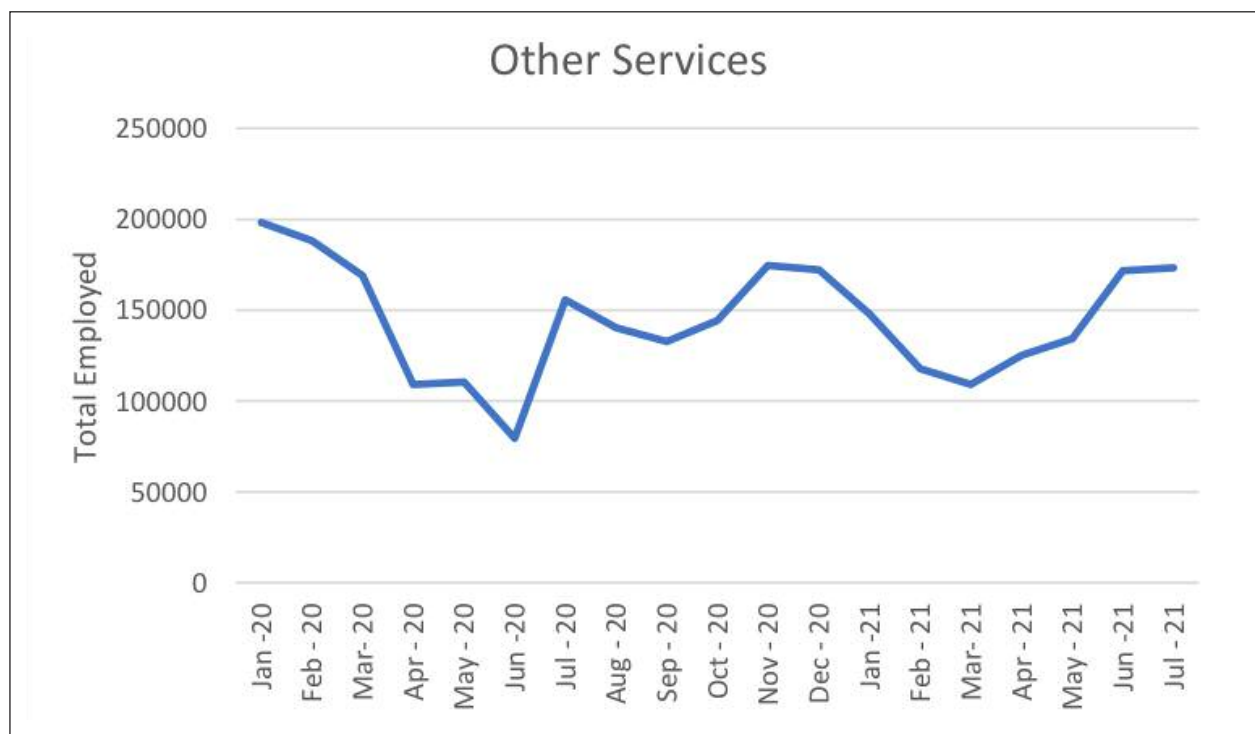
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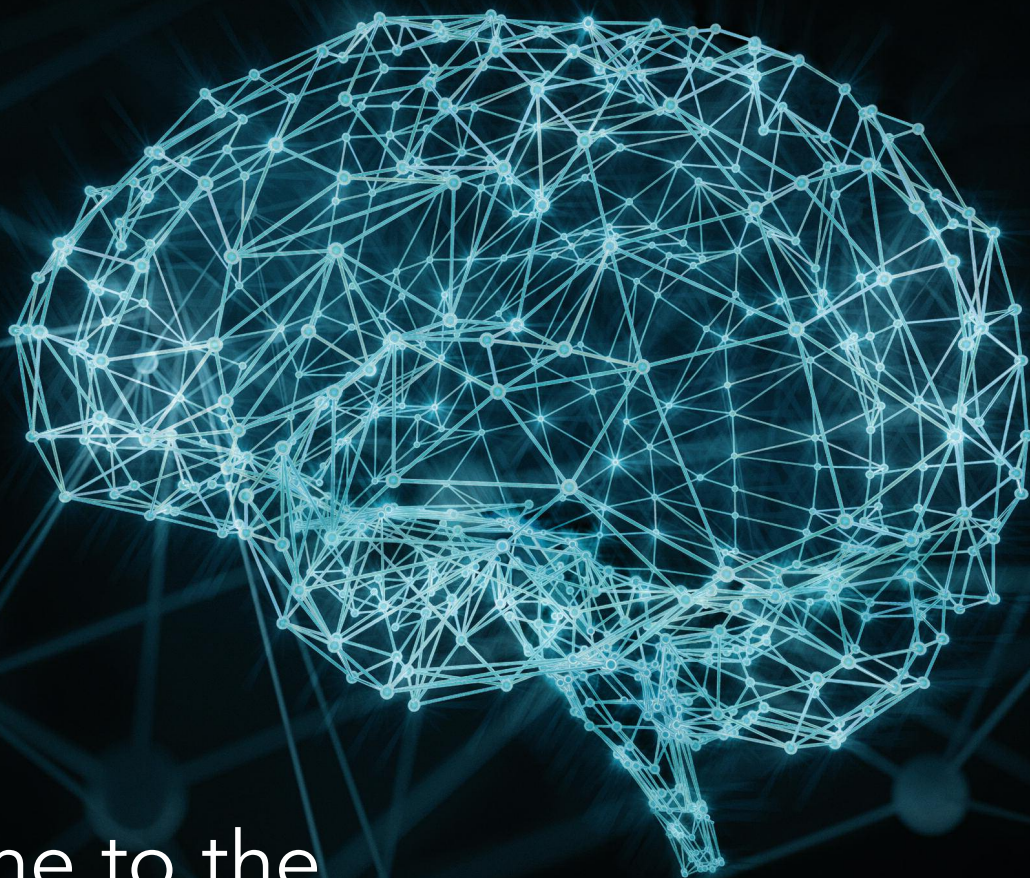
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2020	Construction	293047.2	286119.5	284948.6	252883.2	245071.9	254195.4	269673.5	239220.4	219926.7	268880.0
	Manufacturing	357923.6	407797.4	395933.3	352243.5	360311.7	339052.4	356497.1	367072.7	298616.0	341255.3
	Wholesale and Retail Trade	533134.0	517572.1	497228.8	376896.8	413067.7	433671.7	466527.1	540356.7	501997.8	501774.6
	Transportation and Utilities	281572.4	278624.8	260725.8	243171.3	288099.7	234295.3	233263.5	222736.3	211452.4	253111.1
	Financial	430302.7	427636.2	497228.8	451230.3	489769.5	548566.5	438919.6	445472.6	447924.1	389370.7
	Professional and Business Services	609485.2	549314.2	632436.2	635009.5	629329.6	643185.8	676584.3	601870.5	617812.4	570106.6
	Education and Health Services	1146149.9	1102155.3	1096193.4	932716.9	768515.4	817780.8	864235.4	849534.0	941447.6	1007996.9
	Leisure and Hospitality	308493.9	341227.3	294637.8	138955.0	172859.8	149438.4	278876.0	321640.9	315161.0	240981.2
	Other Services	198159.9	188248.1	169119.4	109072.2	110375.9	79600.3	155642.4	140315.8	132763.1	144346.1
2021	Construction	316668.8	257742.1	249097.5	289104.0	277253.2	264288.3	286936.7			
	Manufacturing	333720.2	334861.8	327502.0	345534.4	381274.4	320014.2	382582.3			
	Wholesale and Retail Trade	519661.7	579209.5	497786.7	470662.9	407484.4	468343.4	501215.6			
	Transportation and Utilities	266326.6	294272.5	288299.8	306687.4	298958.4	278219.8	264359.4			
	Financial	422631.1	416446.3	450009.0	436313.9	429189.6	398686.1	327986.3			
	Professional and Business Services	616692.3	624263.6	628869.2	608876.7	628222.2	597824.2	569358.0			
	Education and Health Services	967463.9	914071.3	1043759.5	993258.2	1005401.3	1005934.5	983958.9			
	Leisure and Hospitality	224104.1	230953.2	179268.5	215907.9	212547.2	301165.7	346458.6			
	Other Services	147778.8	117709.0	109031.2	125128.4	134326.5	171685.0	173229.3			

Monthly Employment by Industry Group, New Jersey: January 2020 – July 2021.  
Employment estimates by Dr. Vachon.



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## INSIDER 100 POWERLIST

### 1. STEVE SWEENEY

*Vice President of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers.*

Initiated into Camden Local 399 in 1977, Sweeney became a general organizer in 2008, servicing Philadelphia and the District Council of Northern New Jersey. He won his state senate seat in 2001 and assumed the office of the senate presidency in 2010. In 2014, he became general vice president of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Iron Workers.



### 2. WILLIAM T. MULLEN

*President of the New Jersey Building Trades*

Joined the Ironworkers Union in 1968. Since 1990, spokesman and director of the activities of the statewide trades, comprised of 15 international building unions and 13 county councils, representing some 150,000 members.



### 3. CHARLIE WOWKANECH

*President of the New Jersey AFL-CIO*

A second-generation member of International Union of Operating Engineers Local 68, Wowkanech worked on a start-up crew at a Newark airport. Elected AFL-CIO President in 1997, he leads an organization that serves one million members.



## 4. RAY POCINO

*LIUNA Vice President and Eastern Regional Manager*

Starting his career in 1956 as a general laborer, he became vice president of the union's eastern region in 1998. He oversees activities impacting 40,000 laborers in New Jersey, Delaware, New York City, Long Island and Puerto Rico. In addition to his labor duties, Pocino serves as a commissioner to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.



## 5. SEAN SPILLER

*President, New Jersey Education Association*

Former Captain of the two-time championship Rutgers Hockey Team, by trade a high school science teacher in the Wayne Public Schools, Spiller became vice president of the NJEA in 2017, and president last week on Sept. 1st. In 2020, Spiller became Mayor of Montclair.



## 6. GREG LALEVEE

*Business Manager, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 825*

Started working as a crane operator in 1984, elected business manager of the 7K-strong men and women in 2010. Maintains strong political ties around the state of New Jersey; prevailed on Governor Murphy to include roads and bridges in PLA agreements totaling over \$5 million, a boon to his union.





## 7. RAY GREAVES

*Chairman of the New Jersey Amalgamated Transit Union,  
Vice President of the ATU International*

Greaves joined ATU Local 819-Newark, NJ in 1985 after hired on to the NJ Transit Newark Shops Maintenance Department. Serving as Shop Steward from 1989 to 1994, he later served as Recording Secretary, Legislative Representative, and an Executive Board member. In 2011, he was elected Chair of the ATU New Jersey State Council and served until 2019, when he became International Vice President. Former Bayonne Councilman. Represents over 7500 New Jersey Transit workers, and over 30,000 between New York and New Jersey.



## 8. FRAN EHRET

*New Jersey State Director for the Communications Workers of America, District 1*

Leader of one of the most powerful unions in the state, former toll collector Ehret leads an organization that represents more than 70,000 working families in the Garden State — including 40,000 state workers, 15,000 county and municipal workers, and thousands of workers in the telecommunications, airlines, health care and direct care industries.



## 9. KEVIN BROWN

*New Jersey State Director of 32BJ Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and Vice President of the union*

Brown began his organizing career with SEIU in 1987, when he helped organize cleaners in Washington, D.C. Moving to New Jersey in 2001 after a successful organizing run in Connecticut, Brown worked to organize and expand to 13,000 the ranks of unionized commercial, residential, public school-contracted, and airport private sector service workers throughout New Jersey. Significantly, successfully spearheaded the moment to land a \$19-per-hour by 2023 for half of all Newark International Airport workers. Now organizing security workers in Hudson County.



## 10. BOB MCDEVITT

*Unite Here Local 54 President*

As prez of Unite Here Local 54, the Atlantic County-based McDevitt oversees the activities of over 10,000 members working in the hotel, gaming, and food service industries across New Jersey and Eastern Pennsylvania.



## 11. MILLIE SILVA

*President, SEIU State Council, Executive Vice President  
1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, New Jersey  
Region*

Bronx native, Columbia University graduate Silva stepped forward in 2013 to run on the statewide Democratic ticket with Barbara Buono, largely in defiance of the public pensions and benefits overhaul ramrodded by Governor Chris Christie and Senate President Steve Sweeney.




## 12. ROB ASARO-ANGELO

*Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Labor*

Son of an Atlantic City labor organizer and himself formerly an organizer with the Laborers International Union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and the Service Employees International Union Local 111 and formerly executive director with the Democratic State Committee, Asaro-Angelo from 2010 to 2017 served as Eastern Regional Representative for the U.S. Department of Labor under the Obama Administration.







# **BLACK *TRANS* LIVES MATTER**



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EQUALITY**

## 13. WILLIAM SPROULE

*Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters (EASRCC)*

Former President and Regional Manager of the Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters, dissolved and merged into Keystone/Mountain/Lakes Regional Council of Carpenters on May 30, 2018. EASRCC represents more than 41,000 members in Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the Territory of Puerto Rico.



## 14. PAT COLLIGAN

*President, New Jersey State Police Benevolent Association (NJPBA)*

A veteran of Franklin Township Local 154, the PBA Prez oversees the labor organizing activities of more 33,000 officers in the State of New Jersey.



## 15. INES GARCIA-KEIM

*President of NJSCM The New Jersey State Council of Machinists*

An airline worker by trade, Garcia-Keim began her career at Continental Airlines in 1988. She joined the International Association of Machinists (IAM) following the merger of Continental and United Airlines in 2011. An active member of Local 914 in Newark since 2011, Garcia-Keim is the first woman elected President of the New Jersey State Council of Machinists.





## 16. TOM GIBLIN

*Business Manager, International Union of Operating Engineers, AFL-CIO, Local 68*

Elected to the Assembly in LD-34 in 2005, Giblin is the former Essex County Democratic Chairman and the former Democratic State Committee Chairman. Chair of the Assembly Regulated Professions Committee.



## 17. EDDIE DONNELLY

*President, New Jersey Firefighters Mutual Benevolent Association*

A firefighter for the Union Fire Department for 21 years, Donnelly took on the role of leading the FMBA in October of 2013. Also the chairman of the Police Firemen's Retirement System (PERS), Donnelly briefly flirted with a 2021 run for the state senate.



## 18. WAYNE DEANGELO

*Assistant Business Manager at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 269, Assemblyman*

As assistant business manager of IBEW Local 269, DeAngelo oversees the organizing activities of 1200 members throughout Central New Jersey and Bucks County, Pa. He also serves as president of the Mercer-Burlington County Building and Construction Trades. A former Hamilton Councilman, DeAngelo has served as a Democratic Assemblyman in the 14th District since 2007. Chairman of the Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee.



## 19. JOE EGAN

*Business Manager, IBEA Local Union No. 456,  
Assemblyman*

A member of the New Brunswick City Council from 1982 to 2010, Egan first became an assemblyman in 2002. Chairman of the Assembly Labor Committee.



## 20. RAHAMAN MUHAMMAD

*Deputy Mayor for Employment, City of Newark*

An organizer out of the South Ward for SEIU, Muhammad operated with a central principle when it came to Newark: “You need five votes on the city council, and who’s the mayor.” His union work led him to forge a close relationship with fellow South Warder Ras Baraka, and when Baraka became mayor in 2014, Muhammad went to the cabinet to head workforce development. He’s been there ever since.



## 21. MICHAEL MALONEY

*President, Mercer County Central Labor Council*

A native of Trenton, Maloney began his work career as a steamfitter apprentice in Plumbers and Pipefitters Local Union #9 September of 1977. A member of the first apprenticeship class of Local 9 in Central New Jersey, Maloney is the President of the New Jersey State Pipe trades and, as President of the Mercer County Central Labor Council, oversees the activities of 50,000 families in 49 area unions in Mercer County.





## 22. ANTHONY ABRANTES

*Organizing and Political Director for the Eastern Atlantic State Regional Council of Carpenters*

Essex County native Abrantes represents 43,000 Union Carpenters from, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina & Puerto Rico. As a delegate for Carpenters Local 254, he represents nearly 4,000 men and women in NJ.



## 23. FRED MADDEN

*Chairman, Senate Labor Committee*

Close to fellow Gloucester County resident Sweeney, Madden assumed the oath of office in the state senate in 2004 after retiring from the state police force in 2002. Dean of the Gloucester County Police Academy.



## 24. RICK SABATO

*Bergen Building Trades Council*

The Sweeney/Mullen ally never hesitates to speak his mind, and has been known to criticize both Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop and Governor Phil Murphy when they haven't backed the Trades to his liking. Retiring in January, he will be missed in his official capacity.



# ***POWER. ABSOLUTELY!***

Labor Unions exist to protect and advance the rights of workers, and doing it effectively requires power. The New Jersey State Laborers Political Action Committee utilizes the power of LIUNA to address policy issues important to our members and our industry. We work to elect candidates who share our vision for New Jersey and are willing to fight alongside us to do what's right.

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## 25. VIRGIL MALDONADO

*President, International Longshoreman's Association  
(ILA) Local 1588*

A political player. Close to Bayonne Mayor Jimmy Davis, Maldonado convinced Davis to replace Assemblyman Nick Chiaravallotti with crane operator William Sampson IV.



## 26. ERIC HOUGHTALING

*Assemblyman*

A Neptune native, former Mayor of Neptune, and member of the LU400 IBEW, Houghtaling, an electrician by trade, won his LD-11 assembly seat in 2015. Serves on the Assembly Labor Committee.



## 27. ANTHONY VERRELLI

*Assemblyman*

A carpenter by trade and past President of Carpenters Local Union 254, Verrelli serves as the vice chairman of the Assembly Labor Committee.



## 28. JULIE DIAZ

*Chief of Staff to Labor Commissioner Asaro-Angelo*

Veteran legislative operator, grassroots political organizer (Obama 2008) and labor organizer (32BJ SEIU) Diaz went to the Murphy Administration in 2017.



## 29. DONALD NORCROSS

*Congressman, 1st District*

Former assistant business manager of the IBEW Local 351, and former president of the Southern New Jersey Building Trades Council, Norcross served in the state senate with his old labor buddy Sweeney prior to assuming office in Congress in 2014.



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## 30. DEBBIE PARKS

*Vice President, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)*

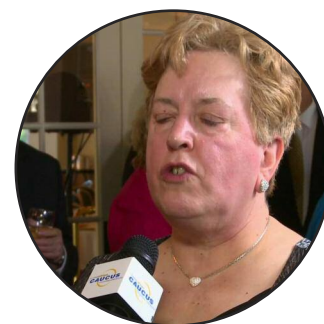
A member since 1982, former field coordinator Parks became an International Vice President in January 2018. Formerly vice president of AFSCME Council 73, Parks represents over 20,000 workers. Last month, labor leaders and rank-and file members from the New Jersey State AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions, pro-labor state legislators and AFSCME New Jersey Council 63 members staged a picket line and rally outside behavioral health provider SERV headquarters in Ewing on Thursday to protest lack of progress in contract negotiations.



## 31. MARIA REFINSKI

*President, NJ Nurses Union*

The labor leader has grounded cred as a veteran of the Saint Barnabas Medical Center's Post Anesthesia Care Unit.



## 32. DEBBIE WHITE

*President, Health Professional Allied Employees (HPAE)*

A registered nurse at Virtua Memorial Hospital for 27 years and a long-term Med-Surg nurse, White took over from HPAE founder Ann Twomey.



## 33. DAVID CRITCHLEY

*Secretary-Treasurer, New Jersey Building Trades*

A roofer and Business Manager of United Union of Roofers Waterproofers and Allied Workers Local #4, Critchley became President of the New Jersey District Council of Roofers in 2004. Became Secretary-Treasurer of the NJ Building Trades in 2007.



## 34. CHARLES HALL

*President of Local 108*

Born and raised in Newark, the labor leader who represents department store employees has a long career in labor, which includes organizing poultry workers in the south. An ally of social justice activist Larry Hamm of the People's Organization for Progress (POP) who will routinely takes to the streets come crisis time.



## 35. MARK LONGO

*Director, Engineers Labor-Employer Cooperative (ELEC)*

Longo has deep labor roots in government affairs and building trades public affairs. Formerly director of government affairs and political Action for IUOE Local 825.







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## 36. ROBERT M. FOX

*President, New Jersey Fraternal Order of Police*

A Member of the Fraternal Order of Police since 1973, Fox served as Cherry Hill police officer for 25 years. A union diehard, he held several offices in Cherry Hill FOP Lodge #28, including: Treasurer, State Trustee, Guard and President for 14 years.



## 37. PATRICK KELLEHER

*President, Hudson County Building & Construction Trades Council*

Kelleher will be at the heart of the matter when the U.S. House passes Biden's infrastructure plan and the federal money comes through to build the long-awaited Gateway Tunnel.



## 38. NICK JAYME

*Political Director for the Teamsters*

Trying to re-politicize the Teamsters Local 560 after a dormant period for the labor organization.



## 39. LINO SANTIAGO

*Business Representative at International Union of Operating Engineers Local 825*

The Building Trades' Essex-based leader.





## 40. HETTY ROSENSTEIN

*Former President, NJCWA*

The long-serving and tenacious labor leader retired to go to work for the Murphy Reelection Campaign as senior adviser for progressive coalitions and outreach.



## 41. WYATT EARP

*President, Monmouth and Ocean Counties Central Labor Union, AFL-CIO*

The veteran chairman of the Ocean County Democratic Committee initially came up short in his support for LeRoy Jones as state party chairman; but with Jones chairman now he presumably has a key ally in the north.



## 42. MARIE BLISTAN

*Former President, NJEA*

Blistan served as one of the most consequential presidents in the history of the labor union, field generaling the organization's attempt to take down Sweeney, then negotiating with him to attain Chapter 78 relief for her members.



## 43. TRICIA MUELLER

*Treasurer, General Majority PAC*

Deeply rooted in the labor movement, after serving for 15 years as a Political Director for the Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters, Mueller moved to the independent expenditure side of the PAC with ties to political powerhouse George Norcross.



## 44. MARIA FOSTER

*Director of Government & Community Affairs, Painters and Allied Trades District 711 (IUPAT DC 711)*

An At-Large representative of the Brick Township Public Schools, Foster was also a Democratic appointee to the Board of Commissioners of the Brick Township Municipal Utilities Authority.



## 45. EDDIE OSBORNE

*at-Large Newark Councilman, Director of Government Relations for LIUNA*

Spurned in his first attempt at a council seat in 2008, Osborne bounced back on Ras Baraka's slate, and will take a crack at a third term in office next year.



## 46. CURTIS JENKINS

*Camden City Council President*

A lifelong labor member, Jenkins retired from LIUNA, but has naturally in his efforts to organize people locally in the Building Trades.



## 47. BOB HENNELLY

*Reporter*

A Paterson native, the former WBGO labor, politics and government reporter, now reporting for the Chief Leader in New York and InsiderNJ, Hennelly this year published Stuck Nation, his consideration of a dysfunctional economic and political system when it comes to working people.



## 48. SUSAN DECARAVA

*President of The NewsGuild of New York*

Gannett reporters from the Bergen Record, the Daily Record, NJ Herald, Courier News, Asbury Park Press and Home News Tribune this year announced they are unionizing.



The new unit, which is called APP-MCJ Guild, is affiliated with DeCarava's NewsGuild.

"These workers are fighting to safeguard the legacy of local news in northern New Jersey and justly advocating for stronger, more diverse newsrooms that can continue to be a critical lifeline, celebrated storyteller, and most importantly, a necessary watchdog for our communities," DeCarava said. "We call on Gannett for swift recognition so that we can get to the table to ensure that the collective voice of these workers, and the interest of our readers, are heard, and respected."

Gannet has declined to recognize them.



## 49. PATRICK DELLE CAVA

*Business Manager, IBEW Local 102*

Grandson of Pasquale Delle Cava, who ran the Laborers Union back in 1932 out of Paterson, the Parsippany-based labor leader oversees the organizing and negotiating activities of 3,100 skilled electrical workers throughout New Jersey and Pennsylvania.



## 50. PAUL ROLDAN

*Business Administrator, LIUNA Local 3*

Based in Kearny, serves Essex and Hudson, signing contractors to CBA/Demo/Terma/ NMA/agreements; participates with local city councils implementing pre-apprentice programs for participation with Local PLAs.







Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey

## Congratulations to Insider NJ's 2021 Insider 100: Labor Honorees!

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*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](http://www.PPActionNJ.org)**



## Labor Day 2021 – Is a Great Reset Upon Us?

By BOB HENNELLY

For decades, thanks to the powerful macro forces of globalization, financialization and automation, it's been capital that has shaped the labor market with workers on the losing end, as levels of wealth concentration and income disparity spiked dramatically.

Yet, no more than a year and a half into the pandemic, there are a million more jobs than people seeking one and we are seeing desperate employers in the restaurant industry offering \$1,000 signing bonuses. Some employers are offering double digit raises while others offer sweeteners like pet insurance or the flexibility of remote work.

In June, a Fairleigh Dickinson Uni-

versity Poll found that more than 25 percent of the New Jersey residents it surveyed who had weathered the pandemic by working remotely from home, doubted they would ever go back to their workplace.

"Just 27 percent say that they're going to a workplace full time, with 28 percent saying that they combine working at a workplace and home," according to the FDU poll. "This represents an enormous shift in work habits, and one that has ramifications for mass transit, and the economies of the states surrounding New Jersey."

This reset, between labor and capital isn't just an American phenomenon. The BBC reported that Microsoft did

a survey of more than 30,000 global workers which indicated "41 percent of workers were considering quitting or changing a human resource survey of workers in the United Kingdom and Ireland which "showed 38 percent of those surveyed planned to quit in the next six months to a year."

Even before the pandemic hit, there was statistical evidence of a major realignment where workers were opting to vote with their feet from their current employment situation amidst what was then, a tightening labor market.

In January of 2020, a few months before the declared pandemic emergency, CNBC reported that in the

prior year a record number of U.S. workers had quit their jobs.

“The data goes back to December of 2000,” CNBC reported. “In August of 2019, a record-breaking 4,478,000 workers quit their jobs. That amounts to roughly 3% of the total nonfarm U.S. workforce, and is the highest quits rate recorded by the BLS. When seasonally adjusted for annual labor patterns, that figure is closer to 2.4%, still tying for the highest rate on record.”

A year into the pandemic we are still seeing millions of Americans quitting their jobs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in February 3.38 million, or 2.4 percent of workers moved. On by June, it was up to 3.86 million, or 2.7 percent.

There are a number of reasons people are seeking a change, in what some economists have dubbed the ‘Great Resignation’,” according to the BBC. “For some workers, the pandemic precipitated a shift in priorities, encouraging them to pursue a ‘dream job’, or transition to being a stay-at-home parent. But for many, many others, the decision to leave came as a result of the way their employer treated them during the pandemic.” During the pandemic, as part of the government’s attempt to limit the spread of the virus, we started to designate individuals who had to leave their home risking infection or worse as essential workers. Early on in the pandemic, media reports highlighted the awful toll on health care workers

and first responders who lost their lives to the virus, often putting their families at risk as well.

The pandemic has hit our state particularly hard, with the Garden State’s close to 27,000 virus fatalities ranking us near the top of the nation in terms of our per capita COVID death rate. “To date, there have been 1,067,758 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey, equal to 11,986 infections per 100,000 people — compared to 11,376 infections per 100,000 people nationwide,” according to 24/7 Wall Street.

For a few months, there was a display of affection for these workers expressed by the public with cheers and the banging of pots. Elected officials pledged to push for hazard pay which failed to materialize. Some of the nation’s largest retail employers added an hourly premium with much fanfare, only to roll it back as the virus ebbed and flowed.

Thanks to the reporting of the Guardian newspaper and Kaiser Health Care, we know that at least 3,700 health care workers and professionals who died as a consequence of their COVID exposure. We know that by almost a three to one margin they were people of color. Close to 700 of these healthcare workers were from New York or New Jersey. According to the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation, the number of public safety employee COVID deaths has jumped from 15 in July to 43 in August. All totaled, since the

start of the crisis, 483 police officers, 149 firefighters and 78 EMS members have died from the virus, for a total of 737.

But the death toll, is tragically only part of the story which is helping to define the risks benefit reward ratio that every essential worker, whatever their job might be, has to live with. Depending on which peer reviewed study you consult, a COVID infection you survive can have long term health consequences of varying severity.

Edward F. Sullivan, who as president of the New Jersey Superior Officers Law Enforcement Association represents 400 Lieutenants employed by the state’s Department of Corrections, the Juvenile Justice Commission and the State College and University Police.

Sullivan said, while none of his members had died from COVID, several of their subordinates had, with the Department of Corrections and Juvenile Justice Commission the hardest hit.

“But we have had hospitalizations and members in ICU and on ventilators,” Sullivan said. “There’s been ongoing health issues with most of the complaints I get is that they don’t have the same lung capacity or stamina and there are a lot more complaints about general fatigue with a large number having lost taste and smell.”

So far, there doesn’t appear to be a



comprehensive public health study that looks at how New Jersey's essential workforce have fared during the pandemic.

Individual unions like the Communication Workers of America have tried to track the scores of their members who have died in the New York metro area from COVID, like Rebecca Pina, CWA Local 1040, who worked at Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital and Sharon Miles, CWA Local 1037, with the State of New Jersey's Department of Children and Families.

In June, Time magazine reported that a research project that reviewed the cases of two million people diagnosed with COVID by the non-profit FAIR Health found that "twenty-three percent of them reported one or more health issues at least 30 days after being diagnosed with COVID-19."

"The most common included pain, breathing trouble, high cholesterol, malaise and/or fatigue and high blood pressure," Time reported. "But the reported post-COVID symptoms were quite varied, running the gamut from depression and anxiety to skin conditions to heart issues and gastrointestinal distress."

According to Time, the study found patients "can develop Long COVID even after a mild initial case of COVID-19. Half of the people who were hospitalized for COVID-19, then discharged, developed at least one issue lasting 30 or more days, followed by 27.5 percent of people who

were symptomatic but not hospitalized and 19 percent of people whose claims never reported an acute COVID-19 symptom. That finding refutes the idea that young, healthy people will be fine after a COVID-19 infection—even for those with symptom-free cases, there can be lasting consequences."

Across the river in New York City, the New York Committee for Occupation Safety and Health, a non-profit supported by community and labor unions, calculated about 38 percent of that state's workforce could work remotely.

The non-profit estimates 250,000 workers came down with COVID. There are another 150,000 that tested positive, but showed no symptoms, but could still have long term health consequences from their brush with the deadly virus.

So, if in New York State alone there were 400,000 workers that were touched by COVID, how many are there in New Jersey? How many in the nation?

It will be up to the nation's labor movement to ask that question not our friends at the Chamber of Commerce.

Franceline "Fran" Ehret, the New Jersey director of the Communication Workers of America, which represents tens of thousands of the state's public employees, says her union made worker safety a top priority while at

the same time trying to maintain the continuity of services upon which the public relies. Ehret believes that in the age of COVID, those without a union, work at the mercy of their employer.

"COVID has such a profound impact on everything in our lives, including how we do our work and how we think about work," Ehret said. "And that has made people decide that they may want to make changes in what they will tolerate as far as their treatment at work and I think that has been really important and has sort of driven some organizing throughout the country. I can see that continuing if we nurture it in the right way."



“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.”

-Winston Churchill

**Warmest Congratulations to the Top 50 2021 NJ Labor Leaders!**



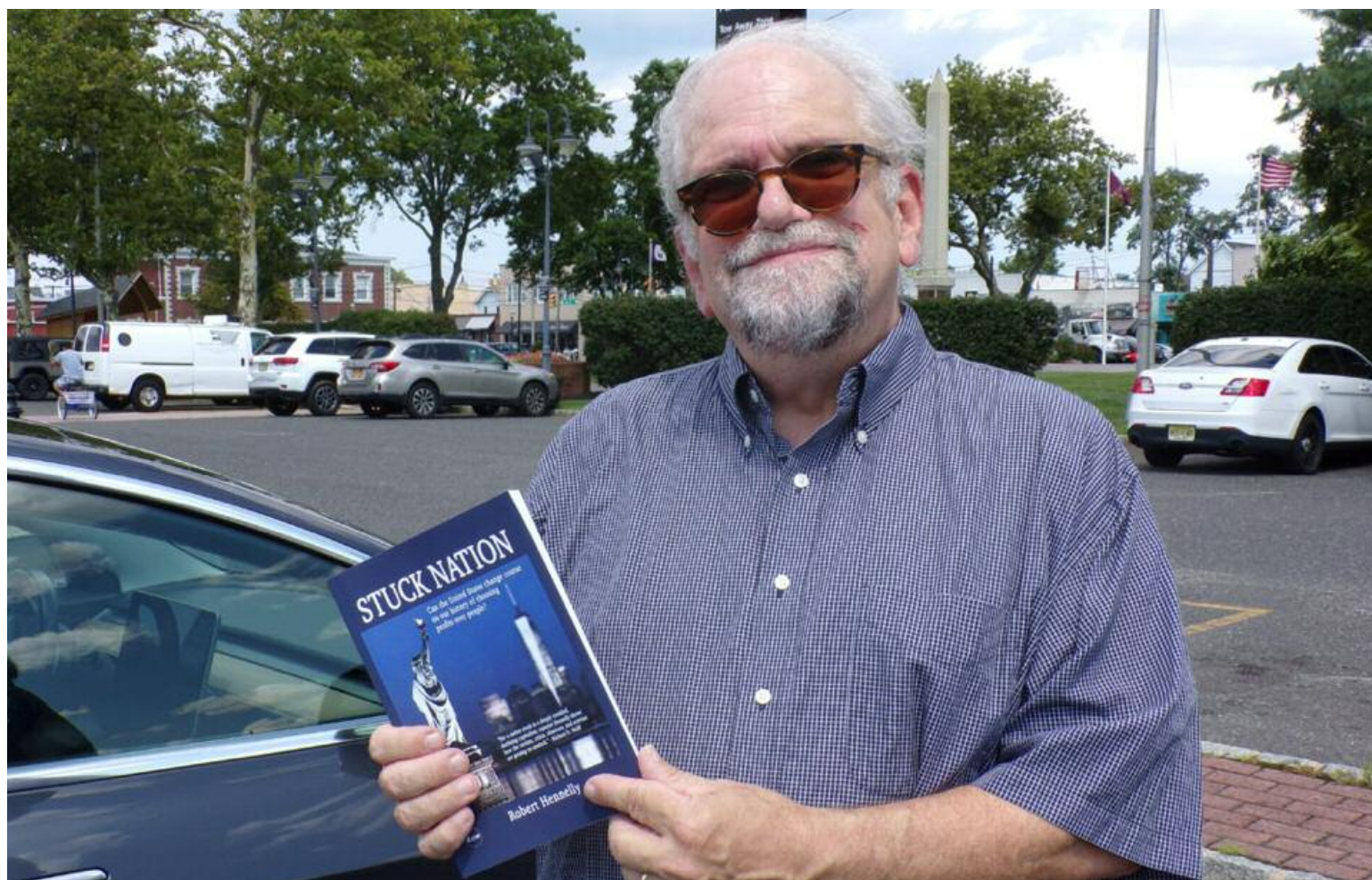
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## ‘Stuck Nation’ Author Hennelly Sees a Chance for Labor to Gain Ground

BRADLEY BEACH – A native of Paterson, Robert “Bob” Hennelly earned ten cents an inch when he started working for the *Ramsey Mahwah Reporter*, a job in which he all but acted as a human barricade against total pave-over, as overdevelopment in New Jersey – in the name of lowering property taxes – created so much impervious surface that the earth lost its ability to recharge water.

That event – and myriad others like it – expressed and continue to express,

the compounded capacities of *Stuck Nation*, which happens to be the title of InsiderNJ reporter Hennelly’s new book, published by Democracy at Work, an on-the-ground dispatch on the condition of America; how we got here, and how we can get out.

“There are two core principals in our country operating at the same time, one is community-minded and considers the collective well-being of citizens; and one is rooted in individual competition and individual success,”

said Hennelly. “Government is in a position to mediate that so that the public interest isn’t undermined to the point where you see capital interest ruling the roost.

“Unfortunately in my lifetime, since the 70s, the balance of power between capital and labor became skewed so heavily toward capital,” added the author.

The COVID-19 crisis and the deaths of 613,000 people, including large



numbers of essential workers, have forced America into a position where we will either profoundly reconsider that balance of power, or further fall prey to the late stages of vulture capitalism, in Hennelly's judgement.

The son of North Jersey activists, the future award-winning WBGO-Newark Public Radio, CBS 60 Minutes and New York Times reporter originally felt compelled to immerse himself in government and politics reporting following the assassination of John F. Kennedy. As a child, he felt the loss of idealism in the country as a consequence of that event, never substantially regained. A critical opportunity – the election of Barack Obama to the presidency in 2008 – became merely another re-entrenchment of a Stuck Nation.

## From the book:

*As the Obama years drew to a close, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) observed astutely that the country had “suffered from rising income inequality and chronically slow growth in the living standards of low – and moderate-income Americans.” The 2015 EPI analysis continued, “This disappointing living-standards growth – which was in fact caused by rising income inequality – preceded the Great Recession and continues to this day. Fortunately, income inequality and middle-class living standards are now squarely on the political agenda. But despite their increasing salience, these issues are too often discussed in abstract terms. Ignored is the easy-to-understand root of rising income*

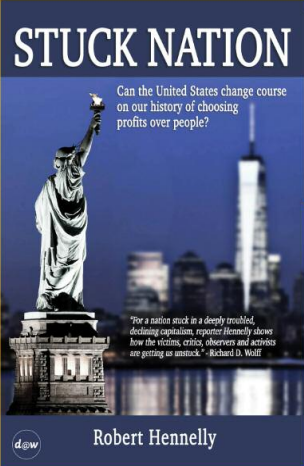
*inequality, slow living-standards growth, and a host of other key economic challenges: the near stagnation of hourly wage growth for the vast majority of American workers over the past generation. Countering that by generating broad-based wage growth is our core economic policy challenge.*

*By Labor Day 2016, after eight years of Obama, America's workers were really stuck and even losing ground, as wealth concentration and income disparity actually accelerated. Despite adding 10 million jobs over his tenure, 1.6 million working-age Americans actually dropped out of the workforce. The labor force participation rate slid from 66 percent to a low of 62.6 percent under Obama.”*

*The erosion of the middle class that has been in the making at least since the 1970s – when American workers stopped seeing their wages grow at a pace with their increasing productivity – was continuing By August 2016, EPI re-*

*ported that from 1973 until 2015, while productivity was increasing more than 73 percent, hourly pay for workers went up only 11 percent. In other words, productivity grew by more than six times the rise in wages earned by workers.*


Over the arc of Hennelly's years as a reporter, we traded the diminishment of our natural resources, including drinking water, for the promise of affordability, even as the quality of life for most declined or remained flat, along with incomes. “We fooled ourselves into believing that we were living in the halcyon days of the 1950s, when in reality we were running up debt; going hundreds of billions of dollars into debt, in part owing to military investments, which is all coming due now. A huge amount of wealth is not going to innovation but LLCs domiciled in the Cayman Islands, leveraged to influence our politics. Science is a process. It's not static. Unfortunately, our politics is



## NEW BOOK FROM d@w

“Hennelly brilliantly analyzes our capitalist crises and how individuals cope with them, tragically but often heroically. He helps us draw inspiration and realistic hope from how courageous Americans are facing and fixing a stuck nation.”

**RICHARD D. WOLFF**



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stuck. Politics is about propaganda as opposed to having the courage to evaluate our... circumstances.”

COVID-19 revealed the starkest divisions.

It revealed a president, – a “white supremacist authoritarian” – Donald Trump, intent on pitting states against one another for his own advantage instead of acting as a shield to help those states. His leadership during the crisis was “as threatening as the virus itself.”

“Credit Cuomo, Murphy, Lamont and other regional governors pulling together in a compact to fight COVID-19, which I believe historians will see as significant as what hap-

pened with the 13 colonies,” Hennelly said.

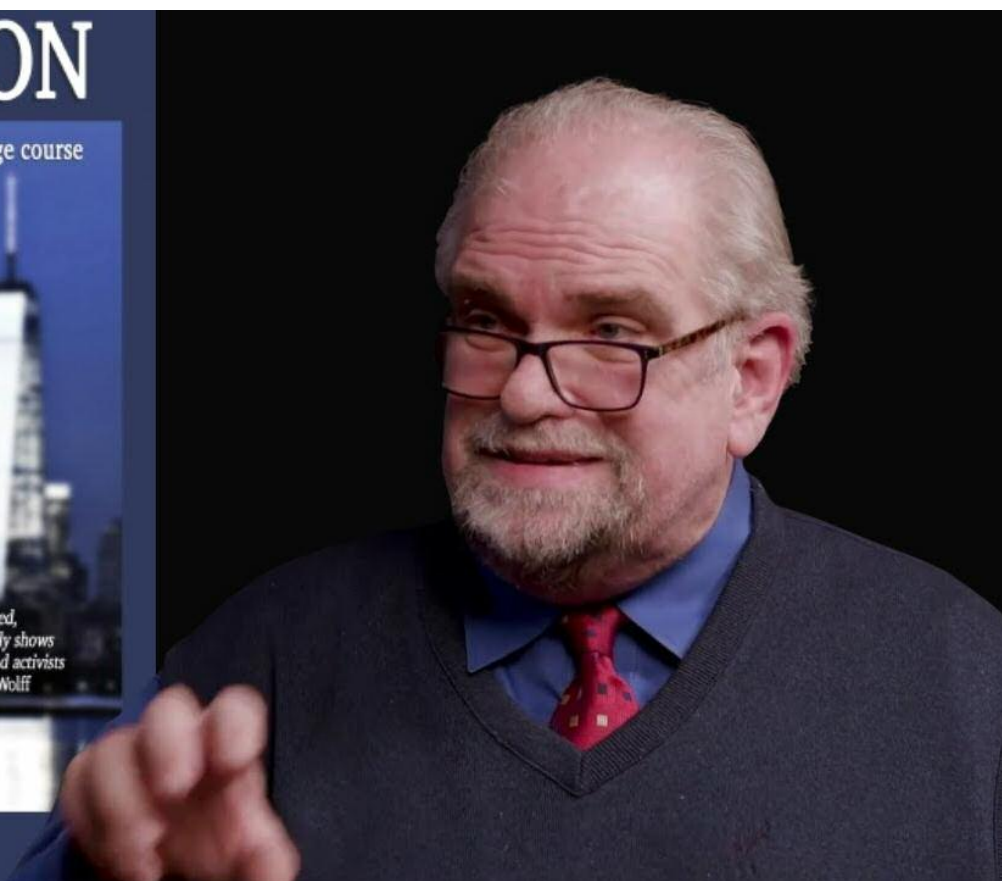
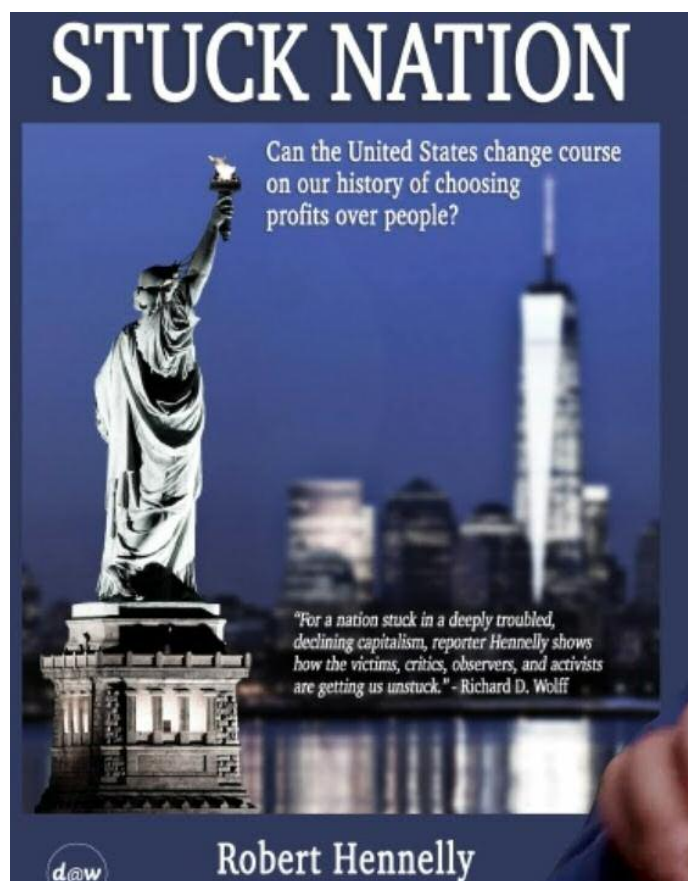
Significant, but far short of the structural overhaul America requires in order to offset the longstanding imbalances we created, going back to those local planning boards Hennelly covered in North Jersey, and back to the early 60s, to the airbrushed killing of Kennedy, and the deepening of a political system that protects corporate power at the expense of working people.

“The president denied the [COVID] problem and resisted efforts by unions to get testing and masks; the whole notion was we can’t have this disease imperil our economy,” said Hennelly. “People had to choose between their

jobs and their lives. What we see now is there is a national reconsideration about work. People are voting with their feet. They are asking, ‘What is my life really about? Is it about making the most money I can or quality of life?’ I did see in the aftermath of 9/11, unions, first responders and lower Manhattan come together to make sure there was a program to deal with their health issues; acting in a collective interest.”

It can happen again, Hennelly insisted, and it must – with greater and more sustained impact.

*Editor’s Note: The piece is reprinted from August 2nd.*



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## **“Normal” was Never Equitable for Working Women**

By Mary Gatta

As COVID-19 ravaged New Jersey some residents experienced unexpected job loss, others became responsible for overseeing remote schooling of their children, and still others risked their lives to staff the state’s hospitals, grocery stores and other essential workplaces. The pandemic has amplified long-standing inequalities that are endemic in our labor market. Women, particularly women working in low-wage jobs and those who are working mothers, experienced some of the harshest economic impacts.

Prior to the pandemic our labor market was characterized by high levels of sex segregation—meaning that men and women are typically concentrated in different occupations. Women, and

particularly women of color, were disproportionately represented in service occupations (such as retail and hospitality), along with sales and other related occupations, as compared to men. Overall, these jobs tend to be characterized by low wages, lack of workplace flexibility and predictable hours and little job security. And many of these jobs cannot be performed remotely—a waitress needs to be in the restaurant to serve a meal, and a cashier needs to be in the grocery store to ring up and bag food.

At the start of COVID, many women either found themselves suddenly unemployed or performing essential services with increased health risks. As the Center for Women and Work at

Rutgers University found, women were disproportionately represented among workers in industries with the most unemployment in New Jersey. Specifically, women made up 51% of workers in accommodation and food services and 77% of workers in health care and social assistance, two of the top three industries hardest hit by unemployment claims. And these numbers may be underestimating the impact. According to the Center for American Progress, since February 2020, more than 1.6 million women nationally have left the labor force entirely AND are not looking for work, therefor not part of the unemployment statistic. As such, the National Women’s Law Center estimates that the true unemployment rate for

women is 7.6 percent in June 2021. Across race Black women's unemployment rate was closer to 11.7 percent and Latinas around 10.5 percent.

Yet sex segregation is only part of the story—women also faced increased responsibilities in the home as schools pivoted to remote learning. According to NJ Policy Perspective close to three-quarters of children live in households where all parents work, and 84 percent of all single mothers are in the workforce. Women with children under three years old were six times more likely to have left their jobs to manage childcare than were men at the start of the pandemic. They further found that low-income Black and Latino/a parents were 1.5 times more likely than parents overall to either take time off from work or leave their job to stay at home when their child is not in school.

As Debra Lancaster, Executive Director of the Center for Women and Work aptly summarizes, “Women are bearing the brunt of the economic crisis and social upheaval triggered by the pandemic. We saw this early in the unemployment numbers when female dominated industries were hardest hit. We also saw mothers taking on a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work at home to support their school age children with online learning and care for their youngest children through childcare disruptions. And we saw women drop out of the labor force permanently.”

In time we will emerge from the current crisis, yet as Lancaster notes, “we need changes in policy, culture and mindset to reduce the burdens of the next pandemic or crisis on women.” New Jersey does have paid family leave insurance and earned sick

leave—two important state policies that help workers maintain some economic security while caregiving or falling ill themselves. But that is not enough. New Jersey must ensure accessible and affordable childcare, workplace flexibility, and healthcare for workers. In addition, we must forward policies toward living wages for workers in low wage jobs, many of whom are women and people of color.

The COVID pandemic provides us with the opportunity to refashion our workplace and economic policies to mitigate the inequities that were spotlighted. While the rally cry has been that we just want to “return to normal”, our “normal” was never equitable for working women. We need to create a world that truly does value the work women perform in our workplaces and in our homes.







## The Property Tax Challenge for Ciattarelli

by FRED SNOWFLACK

Jack Ciattarelli says he wants to “scream” when he hears former New Jersey residents are living in the Carolinas and paying \$3,000 a year in property taxes on four-bedroom homes.

As he has appeared on a number of media outlets after securing the Republican gubernatorial nomination, Ciattarelli says what you’d expect a candidate to say – property taxes in New Jersey are too high!

This is not exactly breaking news.

The obvious challenge for Ciattarelli – like it’s been for many candidates from both parties before him – is to do something about it.

In contrast to some who seek the governorship, Ciattarelli, at least, is well familiar with the problem.

Property taxes fuel local government and Ciattarelli has been both a town

councilman and a county freeholder (now commissioner).

The overall problem here is that “solutions” are easy to say, but almost impossible to implement.

Let’s begin with the basics.

We have too much local government in New Jersey – there are 565 municipalities, 599 school districts and 21 counties. And that’s putting aside



such things as improvement and utility authorities.

As many have said previously, with so many towns and school districts maintaining their distinct police and administrative staff, costs quickly rise. And property taxes pay the tab.

This spectacle is fairly easy to see. Drive down a main road in this state for 15 miles and you can easily pass through four or five municipalities.

Simple logic suggests combining towns, or short of that, consolidating services.

But logic doesn't always mesh with politics.

Just in Morris County, a location I know well, attempts to do just that have failed miserably – generally because of resident opposition. These failed plans have included merging police in Mendham Borough and Mendham Township, contracting for an out of town police department to serve Mount Arlington and even a most audacious plan to merge Mount Arlington and Roxbury.

There have been some success stories – police in Chester Borough and Chester Township have been consolidated. But by and large, the public seems to like the idea of “home rule” even if it costs them money.

Another way to reduce property taxes is probably more unpalatable politically – scale back services.

Try that and see what happens. If a town sought to save a few bucks by ending recycling pick-ups, there likely would be a crowd of miffed residents at the next council meeting. Ditto if a school board tried to eliminate a sport or just about any extracurricular activity.

As frustrating as the topic is, voters expect a gubernatorial candidate to have ideas. And in truth, Phil Murphy seldom talks about property taxes and the need for bold action to lower them.

Ciattarelli in general has talked about school funding, which is where most of your property taxes go.

The school funding formula certainly needs reform, but even if it is made more equitable, the total amount of state aid going to schools may not increase; it may just be shifted around. That may lower property tax demands in some towns, but raise them in others.

Another option – at least on paper – is to review the state's entire tax structure and consider removing property taxes as the main supporter of public schools. The downside of doing that would be that other taxes — sales, income etc. – likely would have to increase.

Ciattarelli, one hopes, will explain what his thoughts are.

But there is a sobering, if not cynical, reality here.

No magic wand is going to reduce property taxes.

That can't happen unless we have fewer towns, more regionalization of services and maybe a different tax structure.

Candidates have to articulate a vision, but the public has to be willing to accept change.

*Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from June 18th.*

