

Animal House versus Animal Farm:

The Condition of New Jersey's County
Political Party Organizations



SPECIAL EDITION

Animal House Versus Animal Farm

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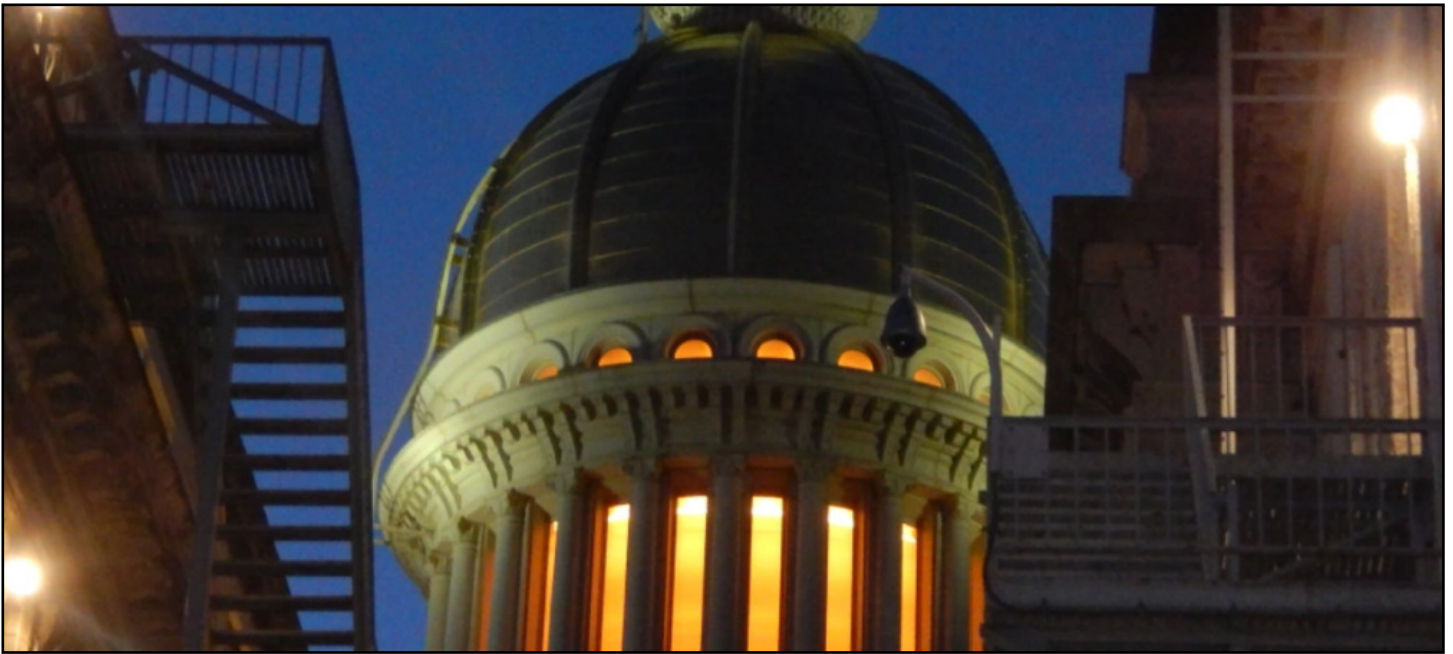


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Animal House versus Animal Farm:

An Examination of the County Party Organizations



“During the predatory culture labor comes to be associated in men’s habits of thought with weakness and subjection to a master. It is therefore a mark of inferiority, and therefore comes to be accounted unworthy of man in his best estate. By virtue of this tradition labor is felt to be debasing, and this tradition has never died out. On the contrary, with the advance of social differentiation it has acquired the axiomatic force due to ancient and unquestioned prescription. In order to gain and to hold the esteem of men it is not sufficient merely to possess wealth or power. The wealth or power must be put in evidence, for esteem is awarded only on evidence. And not only does the evidence of wealth serve to impress one’s importance on others and to keep their sense of his importance alive and alert but is of scarcely less use in building up and preserving one’s self-complacency.”

–Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*



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Introduction

If county party organizations exist – at least on paper – primarily to provide structure and thereby avoid the meaner influence of anarchy, they simultaneously protect their members from those crude formulations of toiling taxpayers who operate according to a measure close to morality and/or industry.

At their strongest, the layers of institutional protection contribute to near total inoculation from the cares and concerns of regular people, while supposedly preventing the entire system from capsizing into chaos, which regular people should, of course, appreciate; or, even better, be utterly unaware of as they cede, by virtue of indolence, indifference or, as is much of the time the case, through overwork, their democratic franchise.

In New Jersey, county party organizations have a particularly relevant and even expansive political history, going back to Frank Hague of Hudson

County, whose machine helped catapult Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the White House. In Hague's day, and not to be pollyannish about it, he extracted plenty, the boss secured specific political promises from FDR, like a worker and Irish immigrant-friendly policy agenda adapted from New Yorker Al Smith.

Today, the machines only inadvertently advance national-sized political careers, as they did in New Jersey with Atlantic City casino mogul Donald Trump, by giving him a place at the trough, or in this case at least a syringe-filled beach. They also have created more static space – and less responsibility – with their habit of relying on financial powerhouses such as Trump and the likes of retired Wall Street executives Jon Corzine and Phil Murphy, in exchange for a variation of Thorstein Veblen's leisure class.

But it bears greater scrutiny...



Essex and other Powerful Considerations



The party chairman here in the county with the most registered Democrats (nearly 300K), LeRoy Jones, also occupies the job of Democratic State Party chair, in a kind of ultimate display of party power. Jones got the job in part by executing a judo throw on South Jersey Democrats. Still convinced of his role as the Camden-centric version of Hague, George Norcross III believed he had control of Jones, not the other way around. Just as Norcross and Senate President Steve Sweeney figured out that Jones had out-grappled them, they got backed over by a bus (or truck, actually) driven by Republican non-union truck driver Ed

Durr. In control of the Democratic Party in the halls and cloak rooms of Trenton, Norcross and Sweeney forgot about the reddening of the Pine Barrens. Jones' audacious toppling of South Jersey in a fight for the party chairmanship preceded Durr's (and Republican voters') utter swamping of Sweeney. Then Jones followed up by giving the utterly bewildered former senate president an ignominious heave-ho off the legislative redistricting commission – and burdening South Jersey with a map that makes it harder for Sweeney to limp back to the Statehouse.

If Norcross had essentially been in charge of Essex going back to when Essex ejected its own senate president (Dick Codey) on the strength of South Jersey's hatred of Codey, and accepted an Essex-based speaker (Sheila Oliver) in exchange for a South Jersey-based occupant of the stronger position of senate presidency, Jones as chairman of the party signaled a stunning development: North Jersey's apparent willingness to actually exert power naturally invested by virtue of population and plurality advantages.

Amplified by Republican Governor Chris Christie, Norcross had tried to keep his statewide reign going in the Christie aftermath, registering

some success until he got caught in the aforementioned two-pronged combine of Jones and regional Republican growth epitomized by the unknown Durr defeating Sweeney.

For his part, Jones would have the challenge of maintaining power against those forces keen on helping Norcross and Sweeney exact revenge. Given the methods of control (primarily jobs and patronage) long exercised by Norcross on a statewide scale – and the relatively static condition (by design, of course) – of the party structures and players – in addition to other counties seeking to prevent Essex from amassing too much power and maintaining distribution, South Jersey had a path back to influence. Their aggression and eagerness to humiliate usually had a reliable partner in the North, which exhibited the learned behavior of politics not as an organizing tool but as a way of being a tool for someone else's organization (especially if that organization had its location in South – not North – Jersey).



Trying something different in the way of North Jersey power exertion as opposed to submission, Jones had his own internal challenges, inevitable in a county as large and complex as Essex. For one, he had an unresolved 2023 primary, presumably between Nia Gill and Codey, mashed into the same legislative district. On a large scale, he had several prospective 2025 candidates for governor from within his own county, among them Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-11), Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, and Montclair Mayor (and New Jersey Education Association President) Sean Spiller.

By way of contrast, South Jersey Democrats had one, namely Sweeney.

If Norcross and Sweeney wanted to fuel the havoc wreaked on Jones by multiple ambitious statewide prospects (while improving the former senate president's prospects), they would find a way to play on Essex County's innate divisions and keep Jones pinned down at home. They might also try to improve the fortunes of that candidate advisable to Essex Democrats and impossible outside the county. Within party organization politics, Jones had to consider a gubernatorial candidate who not only had appeal to both primary and general election constituencies, but also who gave him a chance to horse trade with other key county leaders. If indeed Jones wanted Essex to have the governor's seat, he would presumably have to rely on support from other counties for his candidate by backing their choices for speaker, senate president, and lieutenant governor. Such dealmaking required a saleable statewide commodity.

South Jersey would obviously prefer to see Jones walk into bargaining with Hudson, Bergen, Middlesex and Passaic with a sack of turnips, or at the very least, a less than advisable statewide candidate.

Jones is said to like Congresswoman Sherrill as a gubernatorial prospect.

But does Sherrill like Sherrill as a gubernatorial prospect?

For now, she's focusing on winning her 11th District seat in the November election.

On the other side of November, as long as Jones fancies her candidacy, she will have to navigate the mischief-making of a defanged South intent on regaining some measure of influence, which, as a consequence of diminished population, must include North Jersey extraction.

Already defined in part by bold leadership decisions to further untangle his party from the bullied era of former Governor Christie and his most immediate allies, starting with Norcross and Sweeney, Jones has crossed the Rubicon in a sense and must beware the Ides of March – at all times.





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Ocean's LD-12

and Opportunities for Other Transitional Counties



If Jones represents that most towering organizational figure in the North, Ocean County Republican Chairman George Gilmore stands as that counterweight to southward, both regionally and in terms of party affiliation.

Gilmore's return to power this year signified an important and defining political event for New Jersey Republicans.

Ocean represents the most politically potent county, at least when it comes to raw Republican Party representation, and Gilmore as chairman of the Ocean GOP for 23 years (1996-2019) had a Genghis Khan-like grip.

Notwithstanding Vivaldi's Four Seasons on his voice message recording, he embodied the tough guy boss New Jersey prizes in politics going back to the days of Frank Hague. If George Washington was the indispensable man in the country's formation, George Gilmore was the New Jersey county version, with a ring instead of a tricorn hat, which every Republican ran to come statewide primary season. The organization line in Ocean meant a huge leg-up on Election Day, the equivalent of making other competitors wear leg-irons in a 100-yard dash.

Alas, Washington's sense of sacrifice for the country proved the inverse example of New Jersey

politicians and their backers devoted to permanent relief from the concept of noble sacrifice. In 2019, Gilmore ate a six-count indictment charging him with tax evasion, filing false returns, failing to pay payroll taxes and making false statements on a loan application. A jury got him on the payroll and loan application charges, and a judge sentenced him to a year and a day in prison – time never served on a pardon issued by President Trump just before he left the White House. In June, the come-backing Gilmore defeated Ocean County Sheriff Michael Mastronardy by a vote of 333-320 to return to his seaside throne.

In a party terrified of Trump, which chucks the likes of Liz Cheney to the Wyoming wolves, makes Jeff Flake in Arizona tap out rather than risk the humiliation of losing a GOP Primary, and revises the history of war hero John McCain to make him look like a Republican disloyalist because of grave opposition to the former president, Gilmore is one of Trump's more obvious diehard loyalists.

He owes him.

He would have done time had Trump not intervened.

So, while the GOP undergoes some – yes, some, hardly Oedipal-level – catharsis, and suffers the divisions of itself in public but mostly sits on its hands a la Tom Kean Jr. in his Republican Primary in CD-7, reserving for the media the ire it should direct at a national leader who tried to subvert the 2020 election results by sparking a riot at

the United States Capitol, Gilmore – in strictly political terms – is Trump, or his most ardent spear carrier.



To his credit, 2021 Republican gubernatorial candidate Jack Ciattarelli made a clear and definitive statement in the Republican Primary concerning the 2020 election.

Trump lost, Ciattarelli said.

That position alone puts the former LD16 Assemblyman on a collision course with Gilmore in a statewide primary.

Now, of course things can change.

But at this moment in time, the Trump specter comes complete with live and intimate electrical wires in the same state that Trump used as his staging era to flatter – and cozy up to – Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Like Jones up North, Gilmore has some work to do.

Well, not like Jones, exactly.

First of all, he barely won his chairmanship, then suffered a humiliating defeat in his first real test, when his candidate of choice failed to land the seat formerly occupied by the late Assemblyman Ronald Dancer. The latter contest revealed the willingness of surrounding counties to weaken him by going against him (their numbers combined produced the victory for Jackson Council Vice President Alex Sauickie with 106 votes over Plumstead Township Committeeman Dominick Cuzzo, who received 44 votes).



If Trump gurgles under the swamp at some point at last, Gilmore, cast as that emblem of the insurrection, its own kind of irony given his transac-

tional establishment identity for two decades, will perhaps face a political price. For all the public cowardice of his party, and collective quaking nerves around Trump's Twitter feed, the GOP still has the misshapen appearance of something not yet fully settled.

In that way, and in the truest tradition of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, it looks a lot like the Democratic Party, and certainly a lot like the Hudson County Democratic Organization (HCDO). More on that in a minute.

But the fracturing of Ocean (Gilmore had little support among elected county and legislative officials in his home county when he won his chairmanship again) has implications. As long as Ocean's operation remains at less than full strength, other counties have a chance at greater influence.

The Monmouth County Republican Organization (in a county with 152K Republicans, or second statewide just in front of Bergen [151K] and climbing toward the behemoth Ocean [178K]) under the leadership of Shaun Golden (who simultaneously serves as county sheriff) played a role in denying Gilmore's choice for the 12th District Assembly seat; as did the Burlington County Republican Organization chaired by Sean Earlen. The latter scored a key win last year in helping Jean Stanfield defeat incumbent Democrat Dawn Addiego for the LD8 senate seat. Those county organizations combined could do some damage on the statewide front, particularly if the ever-pragmatic Gilmore can't realign Ocean at full strength.

In addition, the formation just last year of a party line in Morris County strongly positions that organization led by Laura Ali as a more significant statewide player in a county with 136K registered Republicans, fourth largest GOP population in the state on paper.

While himself winning reelection victory this year, Bergen County Republican Chairman Jack Zisa suffered an embarrassing defeat when his candidate for congress in the 5th District lost the primary. His neighbor, Passaic County GOP Chairman Peter Murphy, notched a win in the

same cycle, as his organization favored the victor, Frank Pallotta over the vanquished Nick DeGregorio. Zisa's candidate for county executive won handily, however, as the once mighty Bergen County Republican Organization seeks to reassert itself in the more than somewhat Hudson Countification of Bergen over the course of the last ten years. The Passaic GOP, it should be noted in the annals of recent political developments, snagged a county commission seat in 2021, as the Democrats' supposedly big base of operations, Paterson, performed anemically amid ongoing widespread voter apathy.





Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey

Hague, Hudson and Headaches

This essay started with an invocation of Frank Hague, who came from Jersey City, that municipality perhaps most commonly identified with Hudson County.



In Hague's time, though, the boss kept the place on lockdown. "I am the law," he said infamously at one point, and while the same organization manufactured multiple personalities in his image, a decidedly miniaturized landscape ensued, especially in this century and especially in 2022.

"Hudson's a mess," a party source groaned, not without a certain underlying gleeful motive.

Hudson fragmented or weakened (and woefully underperforming, producing just 88K votes for Phil Murphy in 2021, compared to 132.5K in Essex, 145K in Bergen, 116K in Middlesex, 96K in Monmouth and 92K in Camden) makes Essex – the home of this particular source – look stronger by comparison.

Or even positively ripped.

The end result, though, getting back to the above point about North Jersey fracture inuring to South Jersey advantage – is a potentially more divided north.

While Jones contemplates a room full of Essex allies rubbing their hands together with dreams of Drumthwacket, Hudson County Democratic Organization Chairman Anthony Vainieri, who claimed the seat this year, has already announced his gubernatorial endorsement of Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop.

They can't be too divided if the chairman of the party feels sufficiently comfortable to issue a 2025 statewide endorsement in 2022.

That said, few insiders see Fulop as the party's strongest candidate. If Hudson can pull Bergen and Middlesex, that could, of course, change. Perhaps South Jersey's reanimating pull – or simply unchecked habituated bogeyman fears – will create a sweaty aversion to a candidate backed by Jones. The trouble for Hudson is the candidate likely won't be Fulop. The Jersey City Mayor and Norcross dislike each other, and if South Jersey sees a play with old warhorse Sweeney, their design will be to keep North Jersey pitted against itself while force-feeding the former senate president.

More immediately, and to the Essex source's point, Vainieri has the excruciating headache of Jersey City Councilwoman (and former HCDO chair) Amy DeGise running over a bicyclist and fleeing the scene of an accident. The July 19th episode morphed into a demonstration of what many observers in Hudson regard as the worst

kind of entitlement, unaccountability and nepotism (DeGise is the daughter of retiring Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise) routinely shoved under the Hudson County Democratic Organization rug.

The advancement of Rob Menendez, Jr. – son of U.S. senator Bob Menendez – for the seat of retiring U.S. Rep. Albio Sires (D-8) disappointed those party members in the HCDO bullpen who thought they might get the call for the seat on the strength of their work in public life instead of their family name.

The party organization that once put FDR in the Oval Office has the appearance – much like Ocean, come to think of it – of a less than full tilt boogie outfit.





Battleground Considerations



Keep an eye on other various dynamics impacting county organizations. Critically, on the legislative front, S-2866 “would exempt contributions to political parties and legislative leadership committees from the list of those that could bar a firm from securing public contracts, and it would prevent municipalities from enacting their own pay-to-play rules, a move advocates have argued effectively guts the state’s anti-corruption law,” according to The New Jersey Monitor.

Under current law, candidate committees, joint candidate committees, continuing political committees, political party committees, and legislative leadership committees are required to file with the Election Law Enforcement Commission

(ELEC) a report all contributions in the form of moneys, loans, paid personal services, or other things of value made to it and all expenditures made, incurred, or authorized by it in furtherance of the nomination, election, or defeat of any candidate, or in aid of the passage or defeat of any public question, or to provide political information on any candidate or public question. This bill requires candidates and various campaign committees to report to ELEC on a quarterly basis each year. However, under the bill, all contributions in excess of \$2,000 would be required to be reported within 96 hours of receiving the contribution. However, as amended, the bill requires political committees and independent expenditure committees to file cumulative reports.



This bill also doubles the statutory maximum contribution limits. The bill also provides for the index used by ELEC to adjust limits to be applied annually for campaigns other than gubernatorial. Under the bill, those limits would reset each year. However, the bill specifies that the adjustment of limits would be conducted annually with respect to limits applicable to candidates and committees for the office of Member of the General Assembly, and would be conducted annually in the first two years of each decade and every two years thereafter with respect to limits applicable to candidates and committees for the office of Member of the Senate, provided that such limits would be applicable for each primary election and each general election separately. The bill also allows gubernatorial candidates receiving public financing to accept additional contributions without receiving matching funds.

Lawmakers stalled the measure amid opposition from labor and other groups. “If we move forward on this, it would worsen the already terrible

problem of professional service firms essentially controlling the state and county governments and local governments,” said Sue Altman, state director of New Jersey Working Families.

But Jeff Brindle, executive director of the state Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC) told the New Jersey Monitor “the pay-to-play changes are meant to simplify a law he said was notoriously difficult to enforce and comply with. He also backed provisions raising contribution limits, noting they would aid his commission’s long-standing goal of reducing the influence of groups like social welfare nonprofits, which can be active politically but are not required to report their spending or fundraising.”

Brindle has long favored measures to strengthen county party organizations.

This from a column he wrote for InsiderNJ

Spending by “Hidden Money” organizations in New Jersey alone has overwhelmed that spent by traditional political parties and candidates, relegating both parties and candidates to second class citizen status in the realm of elections.

Often harnessing the power of social media advertising along with traditional media sources, these spenders tend to sponsor vicious and often deceptive attack ads with little or no accountability, especially when compared to candidates and parties.

This has created a witch’s brew that has not only upset conventional politics in New Jersey but has

fanned today's sharp divisions.

Despite historic antipathy toward political parties, those entities, if strengthened, may be one of the antidotes to a fractured electoral system.

As Marjorie Random Hershey writes in her book *Party Politics in America* . . . “virtually everything important in American politics is rooted in party politics. Political parties are the core of American democracy . . .”

In terms of today's polarization of politics, a strengthened party system can help to soften the divisions that exist today. By virtue of party discipline and their very nature, they can discourage extremism and encourage compromise while fulfilling their historic role of organizing majorities in government that are crucial to governing.

By providing a training ground for leadership, parties can help to build relationships even across party lines, so critical for bringing people together for the common good.

Disciplined parties that serve to ease the passage of legislation and work to bring about agreed upon public policies will go far toward ameliorating the fragmentation and polarization that ravages our politics today.

In short, strong parties have encouraged leaders on opposing sides to work together, thus bringing about majorities to enact good policy.

Of course, not everyone agrees, particularly in these divisive times, and with many voters greatly

uneased by a concentration of power in party organizations.

Altman, in fact, heads that list of skeptical critics hardly content with the existing system. Trying to return democratic power to the voters of New Jersey and away from politically connected party bosses, a coalition of progressive organizations and candidates last year joined a landmark lawsuit to force reforms in New Jersey elections by limiting the influence county party leaders exert in drawing ballots that favor particular candidates.



From their release announcing the suit:

“For decades, New Jersey’s county parties have exercised an iron grip on New Jersey elected officials — from congressperson to state legislator to

township councilperson — by wielding control over who gets the coveted ‘party line’ to give these chosen candidates an unfair advantage at the polls.

“That practice violates the United States Constitution and must be reformed, according to a lawsuit filed in the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey.

“‘This antiquated practice is truly indefensible,’ said Altman, State Director of New Jersey Working Families, one of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit. ‘If we learned anything over the last four years, it’s that our democracy is fragile and requires a vigorous effort maintain. This expansive coalition is fighting to make democracy stronger in New Jersey. Up and down the state advocates agree: It is long past time for real, competitive primary elections. Our democracy is at stake, this is a matter of equity and whose voice counts.’”



A judge will hear the lawsuit.

Its ultimate outcome could prove revolutionary, a dynamic ill applied to New Jersey’s transactional and largely static political history, with the exception of the country’s original revolution.

Other state-level legislation that will test the extent to which elected officials shaped by those organizations can actually deliver the will of the people, especially with a bill already passed by the Senate Judiciary Committee that would protect the environmentally sensitive Caven Point in Liberty State Park. The true test for the legislation, which flies in the face of a billionaire developer’s designs on a precious natural resource – will be full passage by the legislature and a bill signing by Governor Phil Murphy.

In addition, the 2022 general election will provide more clarity on the strength of battleground party organizations that have used elections in the last half decade to tease trend lines. As mentioned earlier, the southern region of the state has grown more Republican, and the north more Democratic, leaving a place like Somerset, which tiled full blown blue in the Trump era, to now offer a true definition of itself, particularly as it pertains to the key battleground election in CD-7, a rematch between incumbent U.S. Rep. Tom Malinowski (D-7) and Republican challenger Tom Kean, Jr.

Finally, 2022 will bleed into 2023 with an acceleration of 2025 considerations, as sitting New Jersey Governor Murphy tries to go national, and his would-be successors kick the tires on their

own statewide suburban SUVs.

Sweeney's already set to roll, as is his longtime rival Fulop.

Speaker Craig Coughlin (D-19) too appeared with furrowed brow alongside the similarly perennially concerned U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) as Middlesex angles for a continuing seat in the statewide sweepstakes for governor, senate president and speaker.

Radio personality Bill Spadea has also revved up making the rounds of county party organizations over the course of the past year, fueling speculation of a statewide 2025 run. If Spadea fulfills the most easily identifiable Trump wing of the Re-

publican party, Newark Mayor Baraka perhaps stands forth as he most readily of the Democrats' AOC variety.

As these prospective statewide candidates and others navigate New Jersey in an attempt either to curry favor organizationally or – ultimately – defy the establishment of their respective parties, county party leaders will have to negotiate both the ground underfoot in terms of rank-and-file voters and their appetites; in addition to the back-room game of forging alliances through safe and bankable candidates who will value the rules of patronage and power. This is particularly important in New Jersey, whose county party overlord – that ironfisted uncle without an avuncular bone in his body – doubled as The Law.



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A Closer Look

20 Top County Chairs in 2022



*Komjathy
& Kean*



LeRoy Jones

Essex County Democratic Chairman

In political terms, Jones has considerable grounding, a human scaffold of party organization conglomerate rock. Chair of the East Orange Democratic Committee, the Essex County Democratic Committee (cash on hand \$349,598, according to the state Election Law Enforcement Commission), and the Democratic State Committee, he also chaired legislative redistricting, has an opportunity to consolidate another key ally in the state senate from the Essex delegation, and stands at the vanguard of his party's most powerful chairs as Democrats assess the successor to Governor Phil Murphy. Essex Dems remain firmly atop the rockpile with a staggering registration advantage over the GOP: 294K to 58K.



Kevin McCabe

Middlesex County Democratic Chairman

McCabe bulked up with an additional slab of power when Andrew Zwicker went to the state senate, depriving Somerset of senatorial courtesy and enhancing Middlesex's statewide power projection platform. In charge of a party that claims 241K registered voters to the Middlesex GOP's 95K, McCabe also possesses close ties to state Senators Joe Cryan and Vin Gopal; and to Senator Brian P. Stack of Hudson County.



Paul Juliano

Bergen County Democratic Committee Chairman

Republicans want to try to dent the Democrats' power structure this year in Bergen, where Dems control everything, including the county executive and seven-member Board of County Commissioners. The primary election revealed moribund turnout, with the GOP posting 30K votes to the Dems 39K. So Juliano (whose organization has \$359,187 cash on hand, according to ELEC) still has the edge, but he needs countywide wins this year in addition to helping the Bergen-based U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-5) win reelection.



Anthony Vainieri

Hudson County Democratic Organization Chairman

Hudson (the HCDO has about \$100K COH) doesn't look tough anymore. While their awesome plurality (at present, 219K to 43K) has scared people in the past, they don't produce scary numbers, and the organization has a sickly glow. A veteran of county politics and chair of the county commission, Vainieri assumed command of the once vaunted HCDO after this year's primary election. On paper they still should be able to do damage coming in fourth in terms of registered Democrats (219,168) behind Essex, Bergen and Middlesex. But Vainieri will have to convince others around him that Hudson means business.



Nick Scutari

Union County Democratic Committee Chairman

The caretaker senate president who hastily mustered support after the political demise of Steve Sweeney, Scutari survives atop the smoldering heap of political power according to the pasted together alliances of other power centers. Scutari controls the constitutional arms of government, but lacks the frightening fortress factor of someone like Jones or McCabe, who keep him afloat. Still, the senate presidency puts in him in a uniquely advantageous position on this list, and his organization has a whopping \$444,983 cash-on-hand, according to ELEC.



James Beach

Camden County Democratic Committee Chair

Say what you want about Camden (\$281K Cash on Hand). They get the vote out. That's why people respect them, even now, after their surrounding South Jersey allies absorbed heavy losses. Consider this, in the 2022 Democratic Primary, Camden produced more Dem votes than any other county (45K). They also hauled a quite respectful 92K votes for Democratic Governor Phil Murphy in last year's general election. Their congressman, U.S. Rep. Donald Norcross (brother of South Jersey Democratic Power broker George Norcross) has close ties to speaker Nancy Pelosi.



John Currie

Passaic County Democratic Committee Chairman

The former Democratic State Party chairman who repeatedly showed guts in the position, Currie's organization has the most cash-on-hand of any on this list (\$625,374, by the reckoning of ELEC). But the raw registration advantages of his party in Passaic (130K to 69K) haven't lately translated into massive pluralities on election day. In the June Democratic Primary, just 15K people came out to vote, compared to 11K Republicans.



George Gilmore

Ocean County Republican Committee Chairman

The ultimate old school transactional political boss ironically now late in his career stands as the institutional protectorate of the classic drain-the-swamp Trump voter (see above). Even if the come-backing Gilmore has considerable work to do to stabilize and exert his political influence (the organization has \$29K COH), Ocean is not quite the Essex of the Republican Party, with a 172K to 99.5K advantage in registration, but the state's chief GOP strong point nonetheless.



Shaun Golden

Monmouth County Republican Committee Chairman

Golden doubles as the county sheriff in Monmouth, where he has a firm grip on the constitutional officers and a strong, influential home county senator in Declan O'Scanlon. Still, Monmouth has battleground written all over it, with Republicans maintaining a mere 147,187-141,348 registration edge.



Laura Ali

Morris County Republican Party Chair

Morris used to pride itself on scorning establishment politics, as it conducted elections without vaunted party lines. That changed last year, with a vote to join the rest of the state in the creation of a party line system, and the immediate result was more power for Ali. Morris has become more of a battleground in recent years, and certainly in the Trump era, when Democrat Mikie Sherrill won the congressional seat formerly occupied by Republican scion Rodney Frelinghuysen. Ali controls an organization that looks out over a county with 134K registered Republicans to a respectable 116K Democrats. Keep an eye this year on the organization helmed by Ali's newly elected rival, **Amalia Duarte**, Mendham Twp. Committeewoman, who will prioritize Sherrill's reelection.



Peg Schaffer

Somerset County Democratic Committee Chair

Also Vice Chair of the Democratic State Committee, the veteran Schaffer incrementally took control of the Board of Commissioners in her home county, the clerk, and the sheriff's office. The test now will be whether she can hold onto it (89K to 63K voter registration edge over the GOP), as her organization posted \$160K cash on hand this summer. Republicans under the leadership of Schaffer's rival, GOP Chairman **Tim Howes**, are trying to rebuild here, and see the CD-7 race as their primary opportunity.



Mike Testa

Cumberland County GOP Chairman

Former state co-director of the Trump reelection campaign, Testa has carved out a go-getter style in the state senate, and capitalized on South Jersey red-dening to routinely upbraid Governor Murphy and the Democrats on key issues, mostly spending related but also on the social front. The Cumberland GOP has \$64K cash-on-hand and still has not caught the raw registration numbers in countywide registered voters: 23K to 34K.



Jack Zisa

Bergen County Republican Organization Chairman

Zisa took a hit in the primary when his organization's candidate lost, but he won reelection and wants to try to make something happen this year in the one-time full-blown swing county. It's tough now, though, as Republicans hover in 147.5K to 257K no-man's land. The primary also took a financial toll. After raising \$113,422 and spending \$112,466, the BCRO is down to \$3,889, or at least was earlier this summer.



Peter Murphy

Passaic County GOP Chairman

Scrappy Totowa tavern owner Murphy picked up a county commission seat last year and looked politically astute when the candidate his organization backed in CD-5, Frank Pallotta, outdueled the BCRO-backed Nick DeGregorio in the Republican Primary.



Joe Andl

Burlington County Democratic Party Chair

Under Andl's watch, Democrats took over county government, and won secured the Third District Congressional seat occupied by U.S. Rep. Andy Kim. In addition, congressional redistricting strengthened Kim's 2022 reelection chances into the foreseeable future, as he shed heavily Republican Ocean County and picked up (mostly) Democratic Party towns in Monmouth and Mercer. The Burlington Dems have \$167K cash-on-hand, compared to a whopping \$516K in the hands of the Burlington Republican organization run by **Sean Earlen**. But the party has bulked up considerably in terms of registered voters, and enjoys a 138K to 91K registration advantage over the GOP.



Jacci Vigilante

Gloucester County GOP Chair

Since helping to get Ed Durr elected to the state senate in LD3 and deposing Steve Sweeney, a lot of Republicans have looked to Vigilante as the model for upstart county party leadership.



Janice Mironov

Mercer County Democratic Committee Chair

The Dems remain firmly in control in Mercer, with the bonus of having a Democratic congressman's footprint extended into Hamilton.



Michael Donohue

Cape May Republican Chairman

The veteran Donohue has a key ally in U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew (R-1), with clear-cut ties to the Trump wing of the Republican Party in a region of the state that got more red – not less – during the Trump presidency.



Sean Earlen

Burlington County Republican Chairman

He has a good cash haul (see the Andl write-up above) as he tries to use the Joe Biden midterm election to put a vengeful indentation in the Democratic Party machine and regain some GOP equilibrium in the once Republican-vaunted Burlington.



Don Purdy

Atlantic County Republican Committee Chairman

Atlantic County remains a legislative battleground, but state Senator Vince Polistina's (R-2) 2021 victory - plus redistricting advantages for U.S. Rep. Van Drew - put the GOP firmly in charge here, as Dems under the veteran leadership of Chairman **Mike Suleiman** look to rebuild with some kind legislative success in 2023.



Campaign Finance Activity of Democratic County Party Committees

January 1 through June 30, 2022
from the state Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC)

COUNTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND	NET WORTH*
Atlantic	\$24,429	\$26,341	\$4,539	\$2,073
Bergen	\$412,656	\$199,710	\$359,187	\$359,187
Burlington	\$99,383	\$23,723	\$173,829	\$167,454
Camden	\$174,725	\$231,018	\$280,969	\$280,969
Cape May	\$10,941	\$955	\$11,041	\$11,041
Cumberland	\$32,065	\$12,801	\$22,387	\$22,387
Essex	\$217,913	\$223,989	\$349,598	\$349,598
Gloucester	\$58,232	\$95,716	\$214,798	\$211,858
Hudson	\$10,621	\$128,885	\$8,370	\$100,404
Hunterdon	\$46,370	\$39,601	\$58,857	\$58,857
Mercer	\$55	\$46,000	\$384,392	\$384,392
Middlesex	\$121,040	\$287,508	\$15,592	\$15,592
Monmouth	\$52,830	\$87,955	\$37,108	\$37,108
Morris	\$70,440	\$51,641	\$28,967	\$28,966
Ocean	\$14,114	\$101,885	\$7,658	\$23,825
Passaic	\$175,306	\$149,429	\$625,374	\$625,374
Salem	\$140	\$12,623	\$76,716	\$75,918
Somerset	\$87,361	\$60,920	\$161,954	\$160,543
Sussex	\$4,513	\$12,869	\$10,875	\$10,875
Union	\$128,484	\$194,022	\$444,983	\$444,983
Warren	\$2,447	\$11,549	\$14,457	\$16,654
Democrats Total	\$1,744,064	\$1,999,141	\$3,291,652	\$3,187,251

**Net worth is cash-on-hand adjusted for debts owed to or by the committee.*

Cape May reported a cash reserve larger than \$100,000. Bergen and Morris Counties reported a negative net worth when debts they owe are subtracted from their cash-on-hand.

Campaign Finance Activity of Republican County Party Committees

January 1 through June 30, 2022
from the state Election Law Enforcement Commission (ELEC)

COUNTY	RAISED	SPENT	CASH-ON-HAND	NET WORTH*
Atlantic	\$15,502	\$33,691	\$13,648	\$13,648
Bergen	\$113,422	\$112,466	\$3,889	\$6,111
Burlington	\$18,972	\$50,571	\$9,121	\$515,984
Camden	\$8,397	\$9,412	\$28	\$28
Cape May	\$116,693	\$68,000	\$180,281	\$180,281
Cumberland	\$76,810	\$14,385	\$64,291	\$64,291
Essex	–	\$1,085	\$16,894	\$16,894
Gloucester	\$89,307	\$83,497	\$21,471	\$21,471
Hudson	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hunterdon	\$53,499	\$52,911	\$21,140	\$21,140
Mercer	\$2,725	\$1,610	\$2,685	\$2,684
Middlesex	\$23,783	\$9,677	\$22,113	\$22,028
Monmouth	\$291,751	\$303,416	\$37,670	\$37,670
Morris	\$109,169	\$105,987	\$8,054	\$6,946
Ocean	\$40,415	\$30,527	\$29,274	\$29,274
Passaic	\$189,825	\$185,926	\$28,955	\$28,955
Salem	\$10,915	\$7,908	\$27,286	\$27,286
Somerset	NA	NA	NA	NA
Sussex	\$2,758	\$21,597	\$75,655	\$75,655
Union	\$21,440	\$30,808	\$47,159	\$47,159
Warren	\$63,617	\$60,057	\$17,151	\$17,151
Republicans Total	\$1,248,999	\$1,183,531	\$626,766	\$1,108,542

*Net worth is cash-on-hand adjusted for debts owed to or by the committee. NA=Not available.

The numbers in this analysis are based on reports filed by noon July 29, 2022. They have yet to be verified by ELEC staff, and should be considered preliminary. Individual reports can be reviewed at www.elec.state.nj.us