

# GENERAL ELECTION

## An InsiderNJ Examination of the November 8th Elections



SPECIAL EDITION



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# **J** GENERAL ELECTION **N** SPECIAL EDITION



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# INTRODUCTION



Retired state Supreme Court Judge John Wallace inevitably proved a significant player in this 2022 election cycle when he concluded the redistricting process by awarding the winning congressional map to the Democrats.

That map – in use now for the next ten years, until the next scheduled U.S. Census-driven redistricting – builds fortifications for incumbents in both parties, and we consider those as a starting point for how to assess the most competitive races in this general election.

Regardless of the issues galvanizing Democrats and Republicans, certain districts would enjoy – as a consequence of Judge Wallace’s decision – numerical advantages; and ultimately one individual (see below), in order to boost the fortunes

of his congressional colleagues, would have to bear the unenviable title of sacrificial lamb.

It wouldn’t be sacrifice in any kind of heroic sense. It never or seldom is in politics.

Pragmatism for the whole drove the final dooming verdict for one; most likely turning the Democrats’ 10-2 control of the congressional delegation to 9-3 on the other side of the Nov. 8th election.

Still, that supposedly preordained political casualty appears to have a fighting chance, in the context of these times, which punish the sitting president of the party in power, yes, but also give a better than average incumbent in terms of preparation, several important galvanizing issues.

We factor those in and put them in the larger landscape of national politics, while never losing sight of the New Jersey implications of the coming collision. Ultimately, we can write pages of analysis about these elections and that one battleground in particular, but in the words of T.E. Lawrence, “Nothing is written.”

The voters will soon speak, their chorus but an echo perhaps of Judge Wallace, who hath not written – so much as spoken.



**MBI**

# 2022 GENERAL ELECTION SPECIAL REPORT:

## The NJ Battleground Within the Battleground



### The Not-So Magnificent Congressional District Seven

Tom Malinowski never endeared himself – in any sustaining way – to the New Jersey political establishment, but he spoke the universal language, which immediately endeared him to the NJ political establishment. He arrived in the district like a fur trapper of old, unknown and unexamined, with fuzzy photos of himself playing baseball in another lifetime, but promising goods in exchange for services. He promptly threw a couple

of mildewed Jersey guys on his payroll, enough for the local, beaver-clad chieftains to say, “Ok, he gets it, let him in. He can hunt here.”

It was that easy.

So easy he must have had a good laugh over the dissipation and mediocrity of Jersey politics as he beat up an incumbent Republican without breaking a sweat and ascended the throne of the 7th Congressional District. Based on what he had seen to that point, the guys who held the keys to the kingdom had all the sophistication of the characters in the earliest scenes of *2001: a Space Odyssey*.

Surely, they wouldn’t (or couldn’t) check up on him again.

He was too smart for a herd of local pushovers.

So, Malinowski – perhaps inevitably, no one free from the excesses of human nature – went and got careless.



While saying all the right, Trump-outraged, righteous republic-fearing things, he cultivated a portfolio of individual stocks and failed to report them to the U.S. House of Representatives – a violation of House rules. As the country nosedived into COVID, Malinowski pocketed a cool, unreported up to \$2.7 million in assets. Prompting a probe by the House Ethics Committee, he subsequently put his stocks in a blind trust. “Dudes,” tweeted the man of the people, I... “co-sponsored the stock trading ban months ago. The main NJ politician resisting this movement is wannabe Congressman Tom Kean, who lives off his trusts and apparently has some explaining to do. Let us know when he gets on board.”

Surely, the small-time fat cats wouldn't care enough to dump him, right?

He hated Trump, just like them.

Right, guys?

Well, not exactly.

First of all, New Jersey's political establishment mostly enabled Trump, getting pushed around by him here to contribute to the megalomania on display later by the country at large, then blaming him while hoping he hung on so they could have someone to blame in perpetuity.

But the establishment didn't represent actual voters, Malinowski asserted, and the voters hated Trump, even though the brain-dead Republican won reelection by 1% in the 7th District, while losing overall by nearly seven million votes. But

back to the establishment and Malinowski.

Surely, they wouldn't dump him, at least not in any way that might create havoc for themselves, like denying him the party line and then having to endure his aggrieved, progressive counter-offensive in a Democratic Primary. He'd seen enough of the inside to do some damage. Couldn't risk that. They'd give him the party line, all right; only this time, the priests of New Jersey politics didn't mind sacrificing him on the altar of redistricting, that once every ten-year process that expunges the party's dirty laundry in a neat, tidy, friendly little “What, we're all pals here,” way.



A decade ago, the establishment's medicine men vaporized Steve Rothman.

The 9th District congressman had backed Barack Obama, the only member of the New Jersey congressional delegation to do so in a bitter 2008





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New Jersey Democratic Presidential Primary. Rothman had been sufficiently visionary to see through the conventional wisdom, question the wisdom of dynastic rulership by bucking his party's endorsement of Hillary Clinton, and conjure a glimpse of the country's first African-American president.

In response, the establishment tomahawked him.

Not even an 11th hour appearance in the district by David Axelrod could save him.

If Rothman could radiate roadkill vibes as an ally of the president (remember, this is the state that responded to Abraham Lincoln by embracing Lincoln's political enemy – the history-discredited George McClellan – as its governor), Malinowski dragging the anvil of a scandal on his back into the redistricting process, made him an easy target.



If someone had to go, it was Malinowski.

Wait a minute, I don't get it. If the establishment's corrupt in New Jersey, wouldn't they want a compromised creature like Malinowski hanging around to step and fetch in a pinch? Maybe in a non-redistricting year. But with a map to make and favors to dole out to those intently not creating embarrassing headlines for the party and threatening the gravy train, Malinowski offered a veritable personalized Rothman-like dunk tank. It was a no-brainer option for Democrats – chop up his district to give a dangerous, Joe Biden-mired midterm edge to fellow Dems Mikie Sherrill (potentially a future governor after back-to-back Goldman Sachs dudes coughed up by the party establishment) and Josh Gottheimer (a fundraiser from another planet), while protecting Andy Kim (that other congressman, who, like Sherrill, Malinowski and Gottheimer came of age with an anti-Trump 2018 win). It boiled down to this on the winning Democratic Party redistricting map: all the incumbents (in both parties) got a little stronger, except Malinowski.

His do-gooder liberal pals cried, while the establishment winked and high-fived.

The Republicans hadn't asked for much. The lone-clinging post Christie, post-Trump Republican congressmen in New Jersey (Chris Smith and Jeff Van Drew) received more Republican real estate, and, at Malinowski's expense, party scion Tom Kean, Jr., received yet another federal whiffle ball on the tee opportunity to try to hit over the outstretched glove of the pitcher. The son of former Governor Tom Kean, Sr., junior had three



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strikes already behind him, with failed tries in 2000, 2006, and 2020. But that was okay. At 54, he still had zestful youth on his side, at least by blue blood standards.

After losing to Malinowski in 2020 by 5,000 votes, he would try again in a district fashioned in part for his benefit, a plus-one Republican battleground with 17K more registered Republicans than Democrats.

All he had to do was close his eyes under the big, oversized helmet and swing the plastic bat, and he would wake up as the congressman. It seemed, to echo that atmosphere Malinowski enjoyed four years ago, so very, very easy.

But if the immediate aftermath of redistricting had Malinowski wearing goat ears at a two-party duopoly bacchanal, the tide shifted somewhat in the coming months.

His successive losses had shrunk, not bulked, Junior, making him appear progressively miniaturized in the fight against Democratic Party evil. What had started as mere elevator fodder for the state's political intelligentsia – a study in how not to behave in a campaign and a walking laugh track of Hudson County lawnmowers – had become an alarming case study in a complacency so rigidly exercised, that a whining, self-obsessed GOP mercenary like Trump would prompt Kean to burrow in and hide lest the young man receive an uncomfortable question.

While Kean sagged into oblivion in the best tradition of an aristocrat who lets other men do the



fighting for him, trusting in a perfect storm of PAC money (this time they didn't have to make up the charges for endlessly running ads; they had the stock investment story), voter anger over inflation, and the new CD-7 map, Malinowski appeared not to have received the memo.

The "battle," such as it was in this post-tricorn world, already took place amid the black slapping, rubber band zinging confines of last year's redistricting process. In exchange for "winning" (you may notice a pattern here – words don't really mean what they purport) the map and augmenting a comfort zone for their party's incumbents, Democrats coughed up a single district that improved the GOP's chances and finally gave Kean senior what he wants: a win for junior.

Kean couldn't miss.

Choke up on the bat. And...



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Right?

Well, not exactly.

Kean had shrunk to the point of making himself invisible, while Malinowski, quoting Shakespeare's Henry V, decided to dive into the breach, once more, against Kean, that son of a former governor whose years in politics had taught him three things: let the backroom handle what you can't accomplish in public; communicate in the vaguest possible terms while waiting for the mood of the country to change; and avoid the media like the plague.



No one in the Democratic Party-heavy establishment cried for Malinowski. In the inimitable words of one insider, he had “f’d” up with the stock trade, which, coupled with the newly fashioned Kean district, and coupled with the inevitable pendulum swing against Biden in a midterm election season, certainly wouldn't ex-

actly catapult him back into office.

It looked over for the Democrat.  
Who cares?

If another Goldman Sachs guy didn't run for governor next time, they'd find one to run for congress against Kean. He'd put 20 local crumb-bums on the payroll, not just five.

But Malinowski kept hanging around, stepping up his public schedule while Kean – still stinging from his earliest forays into politics when Bob Menendez gave him a glimpse of the devil in high relief and nearly turned the young, earnest suburban Republican's hair Anderson Cooper-white – hightailed it from reporters.

Then the U.S. Supreme Court got involved, and suddenly, in the ensuing fight to animate their respective bases in the lead up to Nov. 9th, Malinowski appeared to have a pulse. Against the backdrop of the Donald Trump-stocked federal Court overturning Roe v. Wade, the congressman came out of the general election gate highlighting his commitment to protecting a woman's right to choose. “Period,” Malinowski deadpans into the camera, contrasting himself with Kean, a former state senate minority leader, who tried to project “fierce” – his word – pro-life views in the Republican Primary, only to turn around and offer a “no abortions after 20 weeks except in cases of rape or incest and threat to the life of the mother” in time for the general. Kean even scrubbed his GOP Primary website in an effort to look more suburban women-friendly.

It looked bad.



At a Hunterdon Federation of Republican Women event, retiring state Senator Mike Doherty (R-23) described Kean as “pro-choice,” before he and slate mate Assemblyman Erik Peterson (R-23), who ran to the right of Kean in the GOP Primary and lost, decried the general election absence of stronger fibered Republicans.

Kean was trying to deride Malinowski as the political hack who will say anything, while hiding, presenting a campaign website devoid of substance, and offering a mangled message on abortion; contradicting himself, in short, or, essentially, saying anything – or nothing.

The press howled.

Let ‘em.

Kean’s allies could easily twist their charge’s fear of the media into contempt, and thereby rouse that portion of the GOP base angry at him for failing to channel a clear pro-life general election voice.



Kean’s pro-choice.

Yeah, but he hates the liberal media.

Well, I guess he’s okay.

He’s a good egg, Kean. He’s got nothing to say – or will say anything when he does rarely open his mouth - but he hates the media.

The same media that said Trump didn’t win the election.

Yeah. Go, Kean.

My congressman (or at least my challenger to the sitting congressman) is NOT a rocket scientist but could be the post Rush Holt era bumper sticker of choice in these parts.

Oh, well, no one ever said a congressman had to be anything other than an emblem of the everyman, and Kean already had the encumbrance of a Dartmouth undergraduate education, which meant his fuzziness as a candidate could be spun as average intellect – just like you and me. Anyway, he had the security blanket of inflation which hovered throughout the season between 8.5 and 8.2 percent. Trying to play to polling that consistently shows the economy – not abortion and voting rights – as the key battleground issues of this election cycle - Kean shot an ad in a grocery store, where he complains about the high cost of goods under President Joe Biden’s watch. Desperately trying to channel regular guy mode, Malinowski meanwhile continued his accelerated appearances on the stump. His attempt at high





*Komjathy  
& Kean*

fiving a random kid met with a derisive splash of water apparently did little to dampen his enthusiasm.

The colorless Kean supermarket ad, in which the candidate almost projects unfamiliarity with his surroundings, felt like a box check or an after-thought; something to prop on the airwaves while the GOP prepares heavier artillery. Secure in the knowledge of Kean bunkered in, mustering at best a pigs in blanket presence at closed Republican events, the PACs prepared to annihilate the 7th District with reminders of Malinowski's ethics problem, in an attempt to amplify the Democrats' inflation problem.

Obviously irritated by the snail-like Kean, Malinowski supplemented his pro-choice message in the face of the Supreme Court's unraveling of *Roe v. Wade* by attacking Kean's inability to summon a voice in the wake of the Republican base's Trump-exhorted trampling and desecration of the United States Capitol on Jan. 6th, 2021.

While Trump whines, beats his breast in white-man's self-burdened pity and continues to clang the moronic bell, Kean enfolds himself like an underground baby rabbit waiting for the worst to blow over, or so says the accumulated messaging of Malinowski.

The race developed mostly without surprise.

Malinowski kept doubling back on abortion and Kean cowardice.

Kean, in absentia, doubled back on inflation and

a violation of trust in government, while repeatedly mouthing the words "Nancy Pelosi".



The establishment clung to the edge of a collective bar. The barstool CW ran something like this: "Kean's terrible. Malinowski's a stiff. The numbers and the atmosphere favor Kean." Cue the sound of a head going face down on the bar.

But the dimensions of the campaign season told a slightly different story, crystallized at a Gateway Chamber of Commerce debate on October 13th when Malinowski, hardened by his troubles and rising to the challenge of an isolated faceoff with his Republican rival, went into Jean Claude Van Damme mode and promptly eviscerated Kean. It was hard to watch, in a way, for several reasons. As the contrived, cross-the-aisle prize summoned by the Democrats, Kean embodied the kind of hack-like Democrat wind-up style long fielded by the party he opposes. He was that two-decade-shielded automaton of the establishment who refuses to speak coherently lest someone in a position of power take offense. Since the days when he grinned vacuously on an elevator in the face of pointed (but relatively easy) press questions about his lack of accessibility, he has gotten



worse, not better. The thud of public punches not only lumped him up, but apparently left him believing those softening words of allies who told him, “Shame on them, Tom, for criticizing you, the son of a former governor. Imagine.”

“It was like watching a fourth grader trying to debate a college professor,” Somerset County Democratic Committee Chair Peg Schaffer told InsiderNJ after the Malinowski-Kean debate. Republican desolation answered the assessment.

It was true.

For all his sneaky panther priorities, Malinowski arrived at that debate prepared.

Prepared to circumvent the public will for his own private purposes?

Certainly, the stock story stuck in the collective craw.

But the sitting congressman spoke with command on the subject of Kean’s non-presence – and the pointed public implications of Kean’s studied reclusiveness.

Kean, if he wins, will go to Congress and again disappear, allowing minotaur headdress-wearing Trump harpies to dominate the landscape, or at least cyberspace. The smiling, silent child of power will, once again, keep his head down in the face of an onslaught of Trump extremism. By stark contrast, Malinowski, the congressman argued at the end of the Gateway Chamber of Commerce debate, will fight those forces who al-

lowed a crying, tyrannical lame duck president to exhort them to undo an election.

Mired in a miasmic party meltdown of politically correct programming (not to mention his own bad judgment on individual stock trading), Malinowski nonetheless exhibited intellectual excellence as Kean mumbled canned slogans in a spiritually sweaty, deer-in-the-headlights showing for a Republican running a campaign impaled, not just on cowardice in the face of the Jan. 6th desecration, but on the sin of privileged sloth.

The public’s scorn for the process and retreat from politics had created an awful atmosphere in which Malinowski and Kean became the choices, their interfacing presence on a stage not a reinforcement of public trust, but of public arrogance, in Malinowski’s case arrogance for thinking he was smart enough to attempt to circumvent rules created to protect the public; and in the case of Kean, private almost to a fault, and as vague and inarticulate as anyone who has surfaced in either party as a candidate for federal office – the arrogance and remoteness of privilege, as he doesn’t even pretend to run an actual public campaign.

Finally, in backs-against-the-wall Alamo mode, Malinowski’s allies argued the intensity of his core progressive supporters – the not-so-hidden army of suburban women incensed by the Dobb decision, while the GOP – and those in the establishment (in both parties) distrustful of galvanizing forces that might upset the balance of expectation in an election designed for Kean’s benefit, trusted in progressive overreach with the Biden agenda



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in a 33% Republican, 30% Democrat and 35% unaffiliated voter district. The sleepwalking Kean remained the apparent slight favorite.



## The Deft Playmaking of Andy Kim

If CD-7 conveyed a kind of cynicism at the core of the country, CD-3 suggested a less rotten principal. Redistricting rewarded the no or low drama U.S. Rep. Andy Kim (D-3), who proved the hardworking pupil of public service that Malinowski (see above) – for all his gifts – couldn't quite embody.

The wonky Kim improbably emerged from the backroom process with a plus-five, leans-Demo-

crat district, the beneficiary of mapmaking that offloaded Republican behemoth Ocean County onto salivating GOP incumbents Chris Smith and Jeff Van Drew and in exchange gave the Burlington congressman a larger share of Democratic Party-leaning towns.

The outcome scared away more serious GOP challengers, leaving the former foreign service servant to face Bob Healey, son of a yacht builder, who went straight up buttoned down and clean shaven against a Rutherford B. Hayes lookalike from the right in the primary, and studiously sported a Bruce Springsteen-like five-o'clock shadow in time for the general election.

Healey had run over gym owner Ian Smith in the primary, arguing that while he had sung about killing people in a former life as a punker his opponent had actually killed someone. It was grim stuff, the past of Smith exhumed on the campaign trail as a glimpse of what could be if the full-blown Trump wing of the party showed its fangs on Nov. 8th.

Healey subdued Smith but found himself buffeted by an energized Kim in the general election.

If the GOP challenger had to handle Smith before he could unwind on the Democrat, Kim had to remind voters that he wasn't Malinowski, and in the best spirit of good government had taken pains to introduce legislation to prohibit elected officials in Washington from investing in individual stock. The move had the double effect of pitting Kim against Nancy Pelosi, always a favorite Republican pinata.



One of Healey's better ads poked fun at himself and his punk rock past while featuring Joe Biden looking like a zonked-out member of ZZ Top's road band, and Pelosi on drums, a discarded auditioner for a Velvet Underground reunion tour. The idea was to tie Kim to the Biden-Pelosi raft of Medusa, but Kim – ever the deft player – had managed to do something Malinowski couldn't: endeared himself to the establishment in time for redistricting while maintaining his own impassioned base.

Could Healey penetrate the independent core of the district?

Deprived of Ocean County, the Republican faced a difficult task.

## CD-5: “Money, Money, Money”

Gottheimer simply had too much money for any challenger struggling to get his chin over even just the \$100K bar to take seriously.

The incumbent moderate (to a shrieking fault) also made sure to remind his suburban female voters of the horrors of the Dobbs decision by introducing a bill choc full of federal abortion protections.

Was it political?  
Of course, overtly so.

But it was smart general election politics, and suffocating to Republican rival Frank Pallotta, who had the double challenge of trying to overcome Gottheimer's aggressive Oath Keeper branding.

It was another district in which the Democrat amplified abortion and extremism as a way to keep the bear of the economy off his back.

Would voters see through it and reward the financially challenged Pallotta?

It was a very heavy lift for the GOP.

The establishment, we should note, continued to chatter about Gottheimer as a possible future gubernatorial contender and the developing 2025 field of Democratic contenders more than it considered the possibilities of Pallotta.

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## The Sherrill Conundrum



If Kean hid from the media and Pallotta embraced the rightward reaches of the party in an attempt to authenticate himself, Paul DeGroot didn't mind just being moderate.

DeGroot won the primary in a mangled field, in no small part on the strength of his endorsement by the Passaic County GOP.

Dynamic tavern owner Peter Murphy, the party chairman, was supposedly sufficiently morally compromised to play the Democratic Party machine game, and thereby earn his keep as a "player," enough to aid the morally upright DeGroot, a former prosecutor, who might as well have been on the team that once threw Murphy in jail on charges of mail fraud.

That was then, though, and this is now, and DeGroot, with Chris Christie at his side, tried to embody the stuff of real law enforcement, in an effort to unseat incumbent U.S. Rep. Sherrill,

who only pretended to be a former prosecutor, according to DeGroot and Christie. Yeah, but Sherrill also flew Navy combat missions in the Middle East for ten years.

Yea, but I... I....

Would Sherrill's invocation of combat be enough to muzzle a stampeding GOP?

Probably. Sherrill's "safe" Democratic district, according to the Cook Report, came about as a consequence of that aforementioned redistricting strategy that chopped up Malinowski's CD-7.

But if Sherrill had a future outside the district, as a gubernatorial contender, for example, she had to be careful not to get "Kained," that is cooed in safety at the expense of developing real skills as a competitive politician who can adapt beyond the straitjackets of party power, PAC messaging, and, in Sherrill's case, much to the chagrin of most of the state's male population in politics, a compelling personal public service story.



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## General Reflections



The 6th Congressional District usually does not get much attention, specifically because U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone (D-6) commands lay-up numbers. But his Republican challenger this year, Commissioner Susan Kiley, articulated a good point in this seasonal maelstrom when she questioned the real-world impact of the Federal Inflation Reduction Act.

The summer headlines made it seem as though the act would go far (or at least somewhere!) in reducing the costs of actual people, and yet inflation (the highest since 1974) still dogs the country.

President Joe Biden's presidency consequently suffers.

Most polling shows Biden's job approval hovering in the low to mid-forties as his party tries to maintain control of the United States and the U.S. House of Representatives.

The President's political challenge somewhat resembles that of President Ronald Reagan in 1982, when a similarly low to mid fortyish-mired Reagan lost 27 seats in the House, as most experts this year anticipate Democrats fumbling their 221-212 edge in the House. With only apparently CD-7 hanging in the balance in his home state short of an unforeseen massive voter insurrection, New Jersey Democratic State Party Chairman LeRoy Jones spent part of his time this cycle helping his fellow party chairman Sharif Street from Pennsylvania, as NJ's bigger neighbor to westward wages a statewide battle that may determine party control of a loggerheaded United States Senate.

The core challenge stands forth amid the "strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles, [or] the conduct of public affairs for private advantage," in the words of the Old Gringo Ambrose Bierce. Who can convincingly and demonstrably wield power not just for friends who might get part (or none!) of the job done, or self, but for the public good, and specifically in hard economic terms?

The party in the majority has struggled to find its footing (or authoritative voice) on the economy, and seldom tries to discuss the issue as it falls for the easier realm of abortion and Trump to make its case, even as unemployment stands at its lowest in fifty years.

"When asked what the most important issue is in their decision of who to vote for in Congress this November, 16 percent of registered voters in the state mention something about the economy. Re-



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productive and women's issues come in a distant second at 9 percent, followed closely by taxes (8 percent) and partisan and ideological values or opposition (8 percent), and then inflation (5 percent).

“While independents (17 percent) and Republicans (23 percent) are most likely to cite economic issues as impacting their vote choice, Democrats’ top issue is reproductive rights (13 percent), followed closely by the economy (11 percent) and partisan and ideological values or opposition (11 percent). Reproductive rights comes in third for independents (9 percent) after taxes (11 percent), while Republicans are instead focused on inflation (12 percent) and immigration (11 percent).

“There has been a lot of speculation about what single issue will be the decisive factor in vote choice this midterm election cycle given sky-high inflation and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, but the answer is that different issues – and even a combination of different issues – may be front and center for different voters,” said Ashley Koning, an assistant research professor and director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling (ECPIP) at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. “While the economy is number one for all voters, for most demographics, and especially for key voting blocs like Hispanics, at least one in 10 white voters, young voters, senior citizens, both low and high-income voters, and women mention reproductive rights – the last of which rate it as their top issue. But no matter what issue is top of mind, what matters most is what issues ac-

tually mobilize voters to the polls.”

Too often, Democrats – perhaps themselves dozing in the splendid treasures of dynastic rule – keep in mind, if Kean wins on a map enabled by Dems, fully a fourth of New Jersey’s congressional delegation will be the offspring of former governors or congressmen - appear to get their rivals to bite on other subjects.



Anything but the economy, the Democrats seem to say.

Usually operating from leafy and protected climes and unable to help themselves from morally chastising others, Republicans fall prey to the set traps.

DeGroot, for example, appears distracted at times by sex education (con) and choice (pro) at the expense of holding stronger ground on economic issues, which the public wants, if you believe the Rutgers poll. To his credit, Malinowski makes a strong case for the infrastructure bill he and his Democratic colleagues voted for, which enables funding for the long-delayed labor-friendly Gate-



**CWA**

way Tunnel project, while Kean limits himself to unspecific Nancy Pelosi-centric messaging.

Again, though, to Kiley's point, politicians in this volatile environment where lack of trust abides, must go beyond the mere price tags to walk voters through the actual detailed itemization of work and how it will make life better for a besieged public.

We have all seen too many ribbon cuttings while the world falls apart.

Will the politicians understand?

Can they?

Dare they?

Trump will tear the country to pieces, say the Democrats.

Ah, yes.

Of course.

But do resisting forces have adequate resolve to meet and repel him and make the case for government as a good – not ill?

Malinowski likes to talk about climate change, and perhaps if he loses he will decry the establishment that prefers the cocooned alternative of Kean as an emblem of itself, detached and remote from a public that – deep down – demands more; and yet even the bright but maybe doomed Democrat can't really attack the underlying problem of land-use, that other nagging piece of insider trading – of money and power for rampant development at the expense of an economy of human scale, which goes on and on through the storms, despite all the woeful, feeble, politically concerned progressive rhetoric.

