

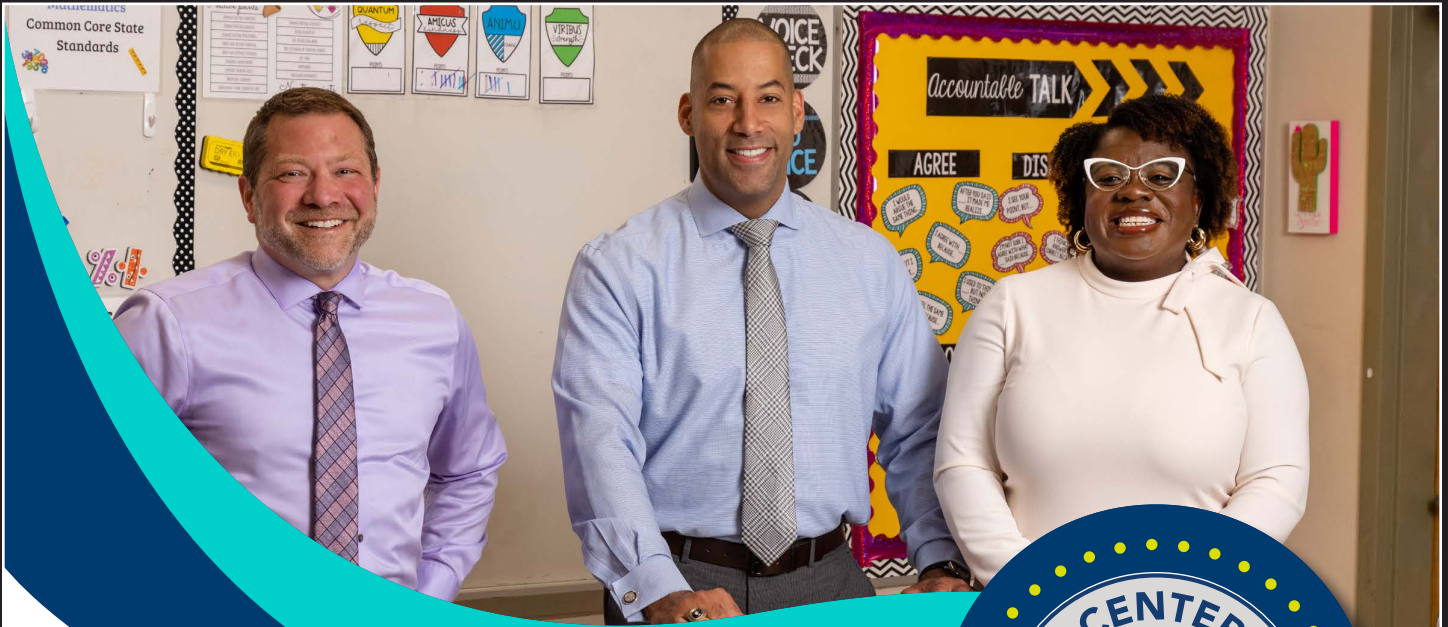
# INSIDER



# 100

# POWER 2023

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# WELCOME

to the

## 2023 InsiderNJ Power List

Democrats this year held onto a 25-15 majority in the state senate, while the assembly went from 46-34 to 51-29 Democrats. State Senator Sam Thompson (D-30), who retired this year, surrendered a Democratic seat to the GOP on Nov. 7. Election Day, but former Assemblyman John Burzichelli (D-3) made up that loss with his win over Republican state Senator Ed Durr (R-3).

Senate President Nick Scutari (D-22) probably wasn't overjoyed that

South Jersey Democrats showed some resurgence behind wins by Burzichelli and Paul Moriarty (D-4). But the senate president rattled off any Republican threat to his upper house party majority, most significantly on the strength of his backing by the Middlesex County Democratic Committee, and Middlesex's strong alliance with Essex and North Jersey.

Middlesex's Speaker Craig Coughlin (D-19) made history this year as

a fourth term speaker of New Jersey's General Assembly (for more on that, please see the entry on Middlesex County Democratic Committee Chairman Kevin McCabe, below).

All in all, a dominant year for New Jersey Democrats in control of the Legislature, behind their dual message of fortifying abortion rights and the StayNJ plan, engineered to make life more affordable for cash-strapped senior citizens.

How long will it take for them to implode?

As long as the multiply indicted former President Donald J. Trump hangs around, will it matter?

Which of the parties implodes most catastrophically?

The year 2024 will prove extraordinary, no doubt, as – presumably – GOP frontrunner Trump goes up against his conqueror, President Joe Biden, a Democrat, and New Jersey, always a fundraising cash cow, looks to play on the bigger, national stage. Statewide, voters will determine a successor to indicted U.S. Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ). For the record, key Democratic bosses offloaded Menendez in the aftermath of his alleged gold bar scandal, while most Republicans appear unable to give Trump the same unceremonious heave-ho.

On the horizon, the fight for New Jersey governor goes on – and on - and inevitably connects to next year's U.S. Senate candidacies and contest.

For the moment, we must supplant the dreadful

New York football season (unless you live in South Jersey), with politics, that pastime most critical to civilization, if not exactly as the founders intended and maybe somewhat indecorous, a way of life in New Jersey, nonetheless.

*See you in  
Atlantic City!*



*Max Pizarro*  
Editor-in-Chief

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*Insider 100: Power*

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# 1. LeRoy Jones

Democratic State Party Chairman  
Essex County Democratic Chairman



The murky nature of New Jersey politics can make the job of Democratic Party State chair a pretty thankless one, as the various Flash Gordon fiefdoms seek to blame the power on the throne for their own woes. But this election year gave little room to the naysayers, as Democrats mopped up, and Jones – targeted by his enemies in the lead-up – rightly basked in the glow of success. All the leveled body blows administered by Jones to the GOP (and to re-

gional warlords woozy from his willingness to trade shots) fades now in advance of 2024, the toughest test for the Democratic leader, as his party seeks to retain the presidency in the face of a flaming asteroid-out-of-control candidacy of Donald J. Trump. Barring a significant shift in GOP strategy (and casting selection) Jones figures to win here in his home state, of course, but look for the chairman to seek an extension of his influence, especially into neigh-

boring battleground Pennsylvania. Remember, Jones derives his stature from stacking totem poles of political power, starting with what he built as chairman of the East Orange Democratic Party, a position he still maintains, sandwiching Essex chair between that and his duties as leader of the state party. Now, heading into a presidential contest, he looks to launch a national-sized rocket off a sturdy NJ political Mayan temple of his own making.

## 2. Kevin McCabe

Middlesex County Democratic  
Committee Chairman



No other chair went to war this year this year like McCabe, taking a Dublin GPO mentality into the trenches of legislative races and letting anyone connected to him know that he refused to give ground. He didn't. If no one could have predicted Senator Sam Thompson's defection from the GOP, surely Avi Schnall acrobatics into the LD-30 assembly seat caught by surprise those not paying attention to the back dramas of Democratic Party persuasion and opportunism. At the very least, Middlesex needed to corral Vin Gopal, Andrew Zwicker and Linda Greenstein back into office, while maintaining

his Vitale-Diegnan-Smith core, which McCabe did, with an exclamation point. As chatter abounded in the leadup to election day about collapsing structures, the Middlesex Democratic chair also played a critical role in ensuring the victories of all those battleground party slates. The chairman's performance secured the leadership of Speaker Craig Coughlin (McCabe's political ward, making history as a fourth-term speaker) and Senate President Nick Scutari (whose survival depends on McCabe's chain link umbilical cord). Lest anyone forget, no one else in the state brings the atmospherics of Celtic chieftain

to the role of chairman quite like McCabe. Less William Wallace face paint, more ruthless decorous attention to political detail, McCabe employs real-time tactics while demonstrating Connor MacLeod perseverance in an old school orbit that includes former chair John Lynch. The ultimate Trenton gamesman, whose election year tactics included frontend-loading the StayNJ argument to muzzle budget critics, McCabe also relies on the politically magnetic Gary Taffat, a critical whisperer in the ear of power, insurance broker and former chief-of-staff to then-Governor James McGreevey.

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### 3. Matt Platkin

New Jersey Attorney General



Boy Wonder to Phil Murphy’s Batman, Platkin took a hiatus from state government in time for the Murphy Administration to offload Gurbir Grewal, who offended key players in the Murphy political orbit.

Platkin returned, certainly not as an unoffending, Murphy luggage-lugging Igor (most people peg him as the smartest man in state government) but because the early kitchen cabinet player (and COVID-19 era

counsel) earned the governor’s rough weather trust. Indeed, when Murphy unveiled his choice as New Jersey’s next attorney general earlier this year, Murphy appeared positively giddy.

# 4. Tammy Murphy

First Lady of New Jersey



The alleged corruption meltdown of Bob Menendez provided the perfect starters' gun pistol crack for an eye-of-the-tiger TM to race out of the blocks in hungry pursuit of the family's next political goal. This time, it will be the first lady as the candidate, as the Murphys rally around the party for 2024 support toward her United States senate candidacy. The charred remains of Menendez's political

life left at least a blueprint for Phil Murphy to rummage out of the ashes, namely how to use political office to propel a family member into power. Menendez did it for his son, serving as the 8th District congressman, and now the governor will exercise his influence to augment his wife, while extending his own political life. In a way, nothing's really changed. It's still all in the family. Simultaneously, as Gov-

ernor Murphy segues to full-time presidential possibility, Tammy Murphy will be there with an ever upwardly mobile guiding hand. But can they pull off president and U.S. Senate on the same timeline? Even the Clintons had to stagger their political hula hoops over time, but maybe times have changed. And they never had the immediate inspiration of a New Jersey political template.



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## 5. Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti

Chief-of-Staff for Governor Phil Murphy



This is a big job. Dig? You don't think so? Ok. First, keep in mind that the New Jersey governor wields more power than any other governor in the country. Then, well, this governor – he travels a lot. So, the person he installs there needs to know what the hell she's

doing. That's why Murphy went with Gutierrez-Scaccetti, who shone in her job as commissioner of the Department of Transportation. Now, this is New Jersey, so granted, *appearing* to do things is actually more important than *doing* them. As someone with a

government record and actually accomplishments, she's got her work cut out for her, toning herself down in a tank occupied by toothless sharks and cardboard fins swimming around in the Camden aquarium facsimile that is Trenton.

## 6. Phil Sellinger

U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey



The former assistant U.S. Attorney, the former Co-Managing Shareholder of Greenberg Traurig LLP's New Jersey office and former co-Chair of

the firm's Global Litigation Practice, Sellinger came to the position in late 2021 with a deep resume. At least, we know Menendez liked it, but

that didn't prompt Sellinger to play ball, according to the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, who charged Menendez.



Angelo J. Genova, Esq.



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## 7. 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 Newark airport at the start of his long career. Elected AFL-CIO President in 1997, he leads an organization that

serves one million members, and jumps onto the front lines of real labor issues, like the nurses' strike at RWJ Barnabas.

## 8. Bill Mullen

President of the New Jersey Building Trades Council



Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-3) went down in 2021, but his close friend Mullen still wields considerable power – and wisdom. “Don’t get involved in special interest causes,” he told his members in Atlantic City

ahead of Election Day that same year, as the frayed Democratic Party – ill served by its barge loads of patty cake playing insiders - failed to hammer out a mature, relevant, and convincing message for voters. Apparent-

ly, Democrats got the message, and Speaker Craig Coughlin this year advanced the StayNJ plan (over the initial objection of the governor) to directly address New Jersey affordability issues for seniors.



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## 9. 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 stands at the head of an organization that

represents more than 70,000 working families in the Garden State – including 40,000 state workers, 15,000 county and mu-

nicipal workers, and thousands of workers in the telecommunications, airlines, health care, and direct care industries.

# 10. Paul Juliano

Bergen County Democratic  
Committee Chairman



Unlike other counties that would never feel the impact of red wave weather, Juliano actually had to sweat it out a little this year in a big, complex county where Republicans never operate entirely out of the running. Primarily tasked with ensuring the reelection of his commissioners and LD-36 incumbent state Senator Joe Lagana, Juliano accomplished both, and did so without a lot of fanfare. The LD-36 race, in particular, caused

some late-in-the-game palpitations. Democrats fumbled away Paramus a few years ago, so any race in which Paramus figures into the final outcome presents legitimate challenges. Juliano escaped the embarrassment of losing an assembly seat (that wouldn't have looked good with South Jersey mildly resurgent and Middlesex running the table), and occupies a strong position ahead of back-to-back statewide election years. Part of

his power will hinge perhaps on what U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-5) intends as part of his political future. Right now, it looks like Gottheimer wants to be the next governor, which will put Juliano on a Democratic Party collision course with LeRoy Jones, who backs U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-11) to succeed Murphy. How will they decide that pre-primary contest? McCabe might have something to say on that front. Others, too.



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# 11. Bill Castner

Partner, Connell Foley



The consummate backroom spiderman leaped clear of the South Jersey machine before it cracked up on Election Night 2021, resurfacing as a key advisor to Governor Phil Murphy and primary craftsman on New Jersey’s gun reform legislation. Now, the south is resurgent, so he’s got to watch his back. Just kidding. It’s not that bad. Or is it? Well, for starters, John Burzichelli (the Democratic senator-elect in LD-3) is not GN3. So, we’ll see.



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# 12. Dale Florio

The President and CEO of Princeton Public Affairs Group



David Carradine look-alike Florio possesses a calm, in-control and results-driven demeanor, which makes him stand out as a stoic in a state so often conditioned by hyperactivity – and little progress. A longtime Somerset County ally of state-wide candidate Jack Ciattarelli, Florio played a critical inner circle 2021 role in rebuilding

the GOP in the aftermath of Trump’s Godzilla-like ravaging of the party, only to watch it torched, torn down and ravaged again. Really, it must be a little tough to be the ex-party boss version of Florio, kind of like Sting having to sit in a tux and listen to Jose Feliciano sing “Every Breath You Take” onstage. Schooled by the late,

great Millicent Fenwick, Florio must listen to the greatest hits of his party reimagined as parental notifications. It’s akin to him knowing and understanding Gibbons’ treatment of the Romans, then being forced to realize it reenacted as a Leroy Neiman painting. At least he’s got Ciattarelli running in 2025 – and a booming business.

# 13. George Norcross

South Jersey Democratic Party Power Broker



Photo Credit: Kevin Sanders, NJ Globe

The Democratic Party Power Broker had a great 20-year run, expanding his empire in South Jersey while northern counties killed one another with excessive individual egos run amok. If Norcross himself suffered from hubris, that quality prevented anyone else in his orbit from playing the role of Caesar, and it helped him expand power. The 2021 election truly ran his chariot into the ditch, though, as three straight years

of incremental losses contained the last and most injurious, when Steve Sweeney fell spectacularly from power, setting Norcross up as the Democrats' number one Eagles tailgate party organizer. His organization submerged deeper into red ebb last year as Cumberland went to the GOP. Two critical wins this year, though (LD-3 and LD-4), have him back in the game, ready once again to reassume imperial command.

His critics say not so fast, pointing out that he's holding serve (Norcross is a tennis fan) with the LD-4 seat, and laugh at the fact that Sweeney lost in the first place because the organization forgot the first rule of politics, courtesy of Tip O'Neill. Of course, Norcross is going to try to soliloquize at the center of the stage again, humbly playing his part as a victimized emperor hauling himself out of the wilderness.

# 14. Middy Baraka

Chief of staff to Mayor Ras Baraka

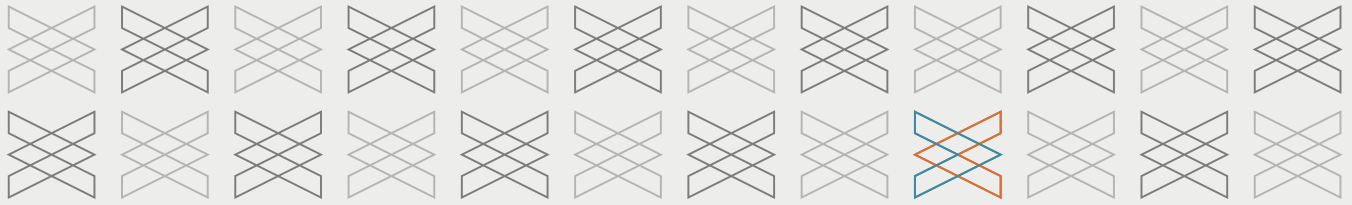


The so-called Bobby Kennedy of Baraka world will turn his attention statewide as the mayor lays the groundwork for a 2025 gubernatorial bid. This should be interesting. Middy is used to smacking people around in Newark, not literally, but figuratively. They rule the roost

over there, the Baraka brothers. Now, will they be able to do that statewide, off-the-line? Good question. They arrive at the dance less than politically polished after a few years of uncompetitive citywide elections. Maybe that's not entirely fair. They were noncompetitive be-

cause Ras (and certainly Middy) deftly headed off any potential problems prior to each election season. Keep in mind, too, that they vaulted into city hall as leaders of the new rebellion, so they have a history of occupying the outside land and suddenly cutting inside.





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# 15. Peg Schaffer

Somerset County Democratic Committee Chair  
 Vice Chair of the Democratic State Committee



Union County native Schaffer lives and breathes politics, unlike those who use politics as a metaphor for a former life of high school sports. This is real – and real time - for the hard-nosed chair, who had another good year this year, on the

strength of wins by commissioners Doug Singeterry and Paul Drake. Democrats have cemented power in Somerset, where the GOP must obediently run for cover in the county seat where former President Donald J. Trump likes to routinely go

for a steak dinner. Watch Somerset next year, centerpiece of a congressional district where U.S. Rep. Tom Kean, Jr. (R-7) will have to fight for his life, apparently on the same ticket as Trump, where Schaffer won't be playing any games.

# 16. 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. As of press time, the House could be decided by crime in NYC, where five incumbent Democrats from Long Island through the Central Valley could go down. That outcome reasserts the political role of cops in a significant way.





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# 17. Jack Ciattarelli

2021 Republican candidate for Governor



In a state with one million more registered Democrats than Republicans, the statewide GOP pizza parlor and bowling alley hopper from Hillsborough – a former assemblyman came

within three percentage points of dethroning Democratic incumbent Governor Murphy. His secret to success? He spoke plain English to the people. He's running again, and no less

engaged. Tan, fit, substantive, aware of the issues that real New Jerseyans grapple with, and ready for action, you'll see him soon, no doubt, at a political event near you.

## 18. Al Gaburo

Lobbyist, Princeton Public Affairs Group



The former chairman of the Somerset County GOP continues to prove a capable ally of his long-time friend – and fellow Raritan Borough product – Republican nominee Jack Ciattarelli, who kept a brisk 2023 schedule in advance of the next state-wide Republican primary.

## 19. George Gilmore

Ocean County GOP Chairman



If Gilmore’s life were a movie, it would be titled, “The Man who would be Pardoned by the King.” But it might have been different. It could have even starred Sean Connery at one point, or at least Cliff Robertson. Pardoned by then-President Trump after getting jammed up on tax evasion charges, Vivaldi-loving kingmaker Gilmore returned – by the skin of his teeth - to the chairmanship he wielded for over two decades in New Jersey’s biggest Republican county. Looking to return to his Genghis Khan glory days as the state’s premier GOP boss, Gilmore will have to contend with considerable fracturing in the party. The fact that Trump pardoned him gives you some idea of where his loyalties lie. He did ok this year, but suffered the embarrassment of a Democratic Party assembly sniping in LD-30.

# 20. Joseph Tobin

Cardinal, Archdiocese of Newark





Six years on the job as the senior-most Catholic cleric in New Jersey, Cardinal Tobin received critical appointments by Pope Francis as a member of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, Congregation

for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Synod of Bishops, Congregation for Catholic Education, Pontifical Council for Culture, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Council for the Economy, and Congregation for Bishops. Political, he famously walked the

Chamber of Commerce Train to Washington, D.C. in the first year of his installment, and got down with New Jersey's elected officials and assorted Trenton chattering classes. In addition, the cardinal has rock star Bishop James Checchio backing him up in the Diocese of Metuchen.

# THINK TANK WITH STEVE ADUBATO



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## 21. Angelo Genova

Partner, Genova Burns LLC



You don't want to be caught on the opposing side of power attorney Genova with the judge's gavel dropping. Just ask the legal team of Steve Rothman, which in 2012 found itself blandly teleconferencing in to a rainy pre-Election Day Passaic County courtroom where Genova showed up in person looking like a U.S. Marine ready to storm Normandy Beach. Powerhouse in his own right Paj Parikh, election law expert, serves as a key figure in the Genova empire.

## 22. 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. His members this year began to work on those long-term projects created by President Joe Biden's federal infrastructure act, including the Gateway Tunnel; and the Portal Bridge.



## 23. Michele Siekerka

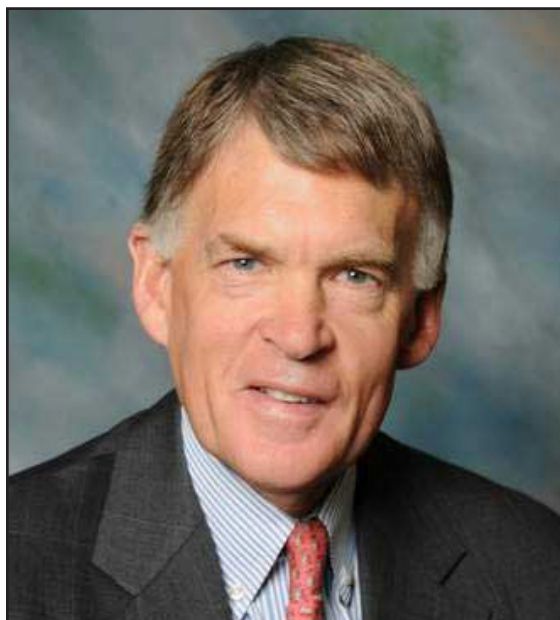
President and CEO of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association



A routine critic of Governor Phil Murphy, Siekerka champions what she calls an economic plan seen through the lens of regional competitiveness and affordability. Through the COVID crisis, Siekerka – like Tom Bracken – served as that voice of clarity on the economic engine front, pressuring Murphy not to lose sight of suffering New Jersey businesses. In an election year, with the interests of suffering businesses on the ballot, Siekerka proved to have had not only her ear to the ground – but her voice leading a choir of resistance.

## 24. Tom Bracken

President of the NJ Chamber of Commerce



Bracken (along with Siekerka) remains the state’s leading business advocate, and proponent of a stronger state economy through implementation of the Chamber’s Plan for an Affordable New Jersey. As politics devolves into pitched tribal camps of general wretchedness, Bracken offers that Tom Kean Sr.-era school gravitas that most people are starved for, without even knowing what they lack.

# 25. John Currie

Passaic County Democratic Committee Chairman



The Passaic County party icon had a tough couple of years, before rectifying some county-wide bleeding (it appeared, at least, at press time), with close countywide wins in another tight election year. He lost commission seats in the 2021

Ciattarelli swamping, then appeared sidelined as party members rushed to install the next senate president. Probably the most significant thing to watch with Currie is the developing situation around CD-9, where veteran U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell

appears poised to retire after a long and distinguished career. Sources point to Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh as Pascrell's most likely successor, but it could get complicated. That's kind of where Currie thrives.

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No aspect of this advertisement has been approved by the Supreme Court of New Jersey.

## 26. Phil Alagia

Chief-of-Staff Essex County Executive  
Joe Divincenzo



Known as a Steve Aduato GOTV acolyte, Alagia obviously retains a hand in North Ward Newark politics, and keeps his hand on the lever of engine room power in New Jersey' most populous Democratic Party county.

## 27. Ray Greaves

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



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.

## 28. Avi Schnall

Assemblyman-elect, LD-30



Director of the New Jersey office of Agudath Israel, the national advocacy organization for Hareidi Jewry, Rabbi Schnall of Lakewood scored an LD-30 Assembly seat on Nov. 7th. An anti-abortion, pro-school choice, and strong advocate of parental notification Democrat.



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**DR. PATRICIA CAMPOS-MEDINA**

**LABOR POLICY EXPERT**



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## 29. Mo Butler and Mike Soliman

Principals, Mercury



The pair of veteran power players respectively represent the broader interests of Senator Cory Booker and U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer. Both served as state directors for the senators (Soliman for Menendez) before they partnered in private professional life.

## 30. Larry Hamm

Founder and Director of the People's Organization for Progress (POP)



Hamm isn't so much a permanently public unreconstructed rebel as he is a defender of the republic for – of all things – the actual public. Having learned his trade on the streets of his native Newark during the 1967 troubles, Hamm shows no signs of slowing down. If anything, he's more active now than ever. An unsuccessful candidate for the U.S. Senate in 2021, Hamm is running again, presumably in a Democratic Primary against First Lady Tammy Murphy and U.S. Rep. Andy Kim (D-3).

## 31. Charles Boyer

Founding Director of the Salvation and Social Justice



Boyer also serves as the pastor of Greater Mount Zion AME Church in Trenton and has the ears of some of the most powerful politicians in the state, including Governor Phil Murphy

## 32. Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel for Governor Murphy



When Platkin left the Murphy Administration two years ago (only to later return to become the state's new Attorney General, see above), Garg stepped up to become the governor's new chief counsel. Formerly having clerked for state Supreme Court Justice Stuart Rabner, Garg received his B.A. from Georgetown University, magna cum laude, and J.D. from Harvard Law School, cum laude.

## 33. Marcia Marley

President of BlueWaveNJ



The Montclair-based Marley leads one of the state's most potent progressive groups, critically important as U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-11) – also from Montclair – prepares for a 2025 gubernatorial run.

## 34. Christian Fuscarino

Executive Director of Garden State Equality



Fuscarino professionalized the outfit to make it indisputably the premier LGBTQ rights advocacy organization in New Jersey. Tough, vigilant, and speedy in his response to the needs of his statewide constituency.





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## 35. Joshua Henne

Founder, CEO, Whitehorse Strategies



Spokesman for mammoth labor organization CWA, Henne possesses granular level institutional knowledge of the state’s political game, and TV studio savvy for the message war. The whole package.

## 36. Joe Andl

Burlington County Democratic Committee Chairman



Andl has his handle on Burlington, and plays Jack Klugman to Adam Malamut’s Tony Randall. He had a good year in BurlCo, holding onto countywide advantages secured in the Trump era and now cemented during the Biden years. How will he respond to the fledgling U.S Senate candidacy of Andy Kim, his home county congressman? We’ll find out in 2024.

# 37. Jackie Cornell

Executive Director of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund of NJ



Also the Chief Government Relations Officer of the Planned Parenthood of Northern, Central and Southern NJ (PPNCSNJ), Cornell oversees a refuge for people without health insurance, including patients keen to continue their pregnancies. “There is no more essential place to be, in this moment, than at Planned Parenthood,” Cornell said in a statement this year when she assumed command of the organization. “Reproductive health and rights are foundational to strong public health and to thriving communities, which is something I’ve carried with me since my first position at Planned Parenthood nearly 20 years ago. I’m delighted to return to the Planned Parenthood team to ensure that every New Jerseyan has access to the reproductive health care they need — no matter what.”

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## 38. Adam Malamut

Managing Attorney, Malamut and Associates



Close to Andl and a behind the scenes player based in Burlington, Malamut has helped build the riverside county into a legitimate political powerhouse for the Democratic Party. Savvy.

## 39. Hanna Mori

State Director for U.S. Senator  
Cory Booker



The implosion of senior U.S. Senator Bob Menendez will put that much more pressure on Booker's office, run by pro Mori.

## 40. Peter Murphy

Passaic County Republican Chairman



Murphy has what a lot of other Republican operations lack in this state: a machine. In his case, he runs it in old school fashion, right out of his Totowa-based bar. Murphy knows what he's doing (unlike much of the rest of the GOP, at least this year). He runs campaigns the old way, the hard way. Watch for him to be a player as the pieces come together in advance of the 2024 U.S. Senate contest and the 2025 gubernatorial, and in demand when it comes down to GOTV.

## 41. Kenyetta Stewart

Newark Corporation Counsel



A savvy big city player, Stewart remains a close ally to Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, and a vital part of the mayor's operation – particularly important as Baraka continues to make moves toward a 2025 gubernatorial bid.

## 42. Michele Adubato

CEO, the North Ward Center



A veteran of the Newark Public School System, Adubato founded the nonprofit Center for Autism and took over the reins of the Newark-based North Ward Center from her father, the late Steve Adubato, Sr.

## 43. Dave Pascrell

Co-Chair, Government and Regulatory Affairs



The Gibbons PC powerhouse has additional weapons in his wheelhouse, including the sitting CD-9 congressman Bill Pascrell, II; and his brother, Bill Pascrell III, over at Princeton Public Affairs.

## 44. Iris Delgado

Executive Director of the Middlesex County Democratic Party



Veteran director of Victory 2017, the coordinated campaign that helped elect Governor Phil Murphy and other Democrats in New Jersey, Delgado also serves as executive director of the NJ Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee, tasked with preserving and expanding upon the Democratic majority in the New Jersey General Assembly. Trusted by Middlesex County Democratic Chairman McCabe. Also – she’s half Chilean.

## 45. Nancy Solomon

Reporter, WNYC



Solomon did the most valuable reporting work of the year in 2022, with her deep dive podcast on the still shamefully unresolved and unsolved Sheridan killings. When people complain about the media in these intellectually and morally impoverished times, they ought to look at Solomon’s work, use her as a template what reporting should be, and take heart, that this kind of journalism persists. That stuff’s still floating around out there.



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## 46. John Burzichelli

Senator-elect, LD-3



The former assemblyman, one of the best minds in the state on budgetary issues, on Nov. 7th toppled incumbent state Senator Ed Durr to lead a come-backing South Jersey Democratic Party. With his Election Night victory, Burzichelli exacted revenge on Republican MAGA incumbent Durr, who in 2021 had shocked Senator Steve Sweeney and then-Assemblyman Burzichelli.

## 47. Deb Cornavaca

Director of Government Relations, NJEA



How many Fulbright scholars are running around the State House? Masters and PhD from UCLA. Tough as nails and formerly Governor Murphy's strongest governmental connective tissue to New Jersey's reform community, and former Legislative Director for New Jersey Working Families.

## 48. Laura Ali

Morris County GOP Chair



Ali created the Republican Party line, which enabled the Republican chair to wield more influence, and resulted in Assemblywoman BettyLou DeCroce getting pushed under the bus in 2021. DeCroce lost again in 2023, along with a slate of others on the outside of Ali’s machine. They lost, recementing the sitting chair’s grip on power.

## 49. 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. A close ally of South Ward Councilman Pat Council and Hasani Council, Newark School Board Member and his father’s COS.

# 50. Trish Zita

Lobbyist



CEO of the Zita Group, the veteran Zita learned her trade in the Speaker Doria era and has emerged as one of the most powerful women in Trenton as head of a full-scale lobbying firm that includes stars like Jeannine LaRue (see below) and Christie Administration veteran Chris Hughes.

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*ELEC825 is the labor management fund of Operating Engineers Local 825*

# 51. Fred Snowflack

InsiderNJ columnist



An old school reporter from Union City, Snowflack has stellar credentials as a former reporter and editor for the Daily Record and Bergen-Record and veteran InsiderNJ columnist. If you love reporting and realize and revere its foundation in our system of government, Snowflack’s pieces are like Zen Bonsai tree art as much as critical dispatches. They uniformly lack all unnecessary ornamentation, revel in economy, and always advance that most elusive political currency: substance. If you want to know something, count on Snowflack of Union City, by way of Rockaway, to give it to you the only way he knows: straight.

# 52. 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, he successfully spearheaded the moment to land a \$19-per-hour by 2023 for half of all Newark International Airport workers. Now currently engaged in a fight to unionize condo workers.

## 53. David Cruz

NJTV Chief Political Correspondent



Consummate professional Cruz of Hudson County has done an admirable of taking over Reporters Roundtable duties from his friend, the legendary Michael Aron, who retired in 2020 to assume part-time duties at the public television network.

## 54. Briana Vannozzi

Anchor of NJTV News



A former Statehouse Bureau Chief, Vannozzi brings competence and class to her work, making NJTV's nightly news broadcast must-watch viewing for anyone trying to stay apprised of daily happenings in Trenton.

## 55. Harry Hurley

Host of the Harry Hurley Show,  
WPG Talk Radio



No other radio host show in New Jersey covers politics as hyperactively as Hurley, who has earned the trust of key players in both parties while amplifying the concerns and troubles of regular voters. An asset to the state.

## 56. Rev. Steffie Bartley

Senior Pastor of The New Hope Memorial  
Baptist Church



The Newark native oversees his flock in the City of Elizabeth, and routinely jumps into thorny issues, like he did in the aftermath of the 2021 election when he offered his opinion about the next senate president. CEO of The New Hope Memorial Community Development Corporation and The New Hope Memorial Childcare Center. Chaplain to the City of Newark Police Department.

## 57. Esther Suarez

Hudson County Prosecutor



Suarez survived numerous attacks on her integrity that would have long ago toppled lesser mortals. Married to top notch operative (and Chairman Currie confidante) Keith Furlong out of Passaic County.

## 58. Craig Guy

The next Hudson County Executive



Following his general election victory, the veteran political operative stands in line to succeed sitting County Executive Tom DeGise, who's retiring. Schooled as DeGise's chief-of-staff, Guy will double up as the successor to Anthony Vainieri as chairman of the Hudson County Democratic Organization (HCDO). First order of business? Securing a mayor in the aftermath of Steven Fulop, who's running for governor (and maybe some other higher office in the realm of Menendez world).

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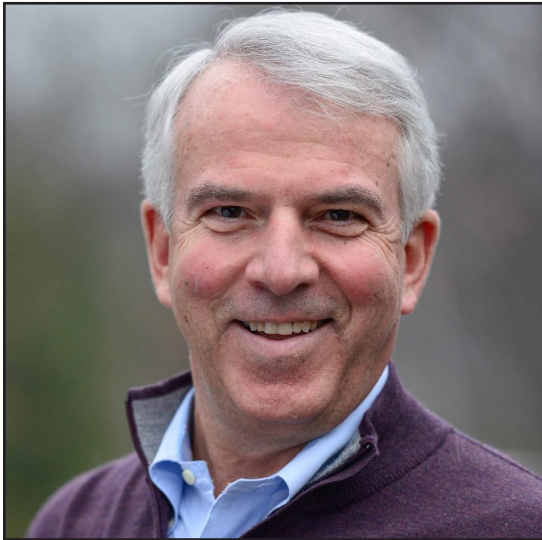
Gene Mulroy \* Gerville "Gerry" Gibbs, Jr.  
Paul Crupi \* Sabeen Masih \* Briana Piserchia





## 59. Bob Hugin

Chairman of the Republican State Committee



It's not good. He'll read this, or later say someone read it to him, or admit he never read it. Bottom line: he was chair and prowling the sidelines with the Burger King headset on when the GOP put on a New York football franchise effort at the polls in legislative contests this year. What a disaster. It looked like Lazard trying to catch a pass from Wilson. We'll leave it at that, I guess.

## 60. Jesse Frees and Julie Briggs

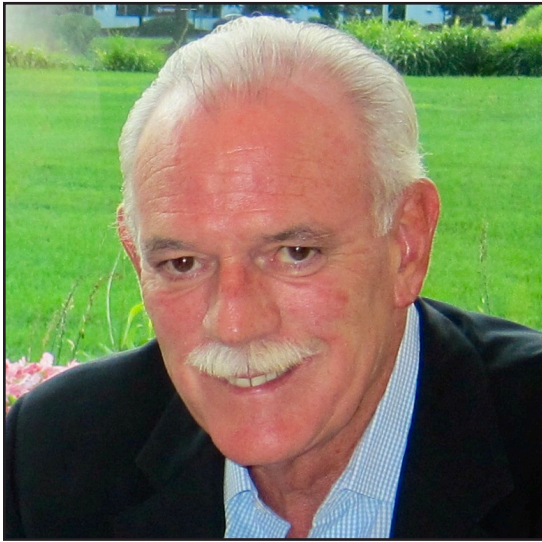
WMTR Radio Hosts



Both bonified broadcasting legends, the mother and daughter radio show hosts (each has her own political show, back-to-back, every Sunday morning) represent an ideal seldom spoken, never fulfilled, and certainly roundly derided in New Jersey politics as a matter of course: civilized professionalism. Frees is the consummate interviewer, and Briggs moderates substantive debates on key political issues. Together, they represent the best of New Jersey, not just in broadcasting, but family.

## 61. Tom Barrett

Democratic State Committeeman



The handsome Irishman from Millburn remains one of the smartest political strategists in the State of New Jersey, and a close ally of Essex County Democratic Committee Chairman Jones. In the midst of the intensifying redistricting debate, Barrett's hometown played a critical role in defending incumbent U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill (D-11).

## 62. Alex Ball

Chief of Staff, U.S. Rep. Mikie Sherrill



Tammy Murphy's U.S. Senate run perhaps complicates the picture for Sherrill. But maybe Murphy's a deflection point to keep a statewide option in play for Sherrill or U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer rather than put those two in harm's way, cannon fodder for a vengeful Menendez temper tantrum. Probably not. She's probably really running. That means Gottheimer and Sherrill will have to fight it out for governor, putting the Ball in Alex's court.

## 63. Idida Rodriguez

Partner at 1868 Public Affairs



Professional partner of Democratic State Party Chairman LeRoy Jones, veteran operative Rodriguez – a native of Paterson - has ties everywhere to political nerve centers, among them LD35 and Senator Nellie Pou.

## 64. Allison Murphy

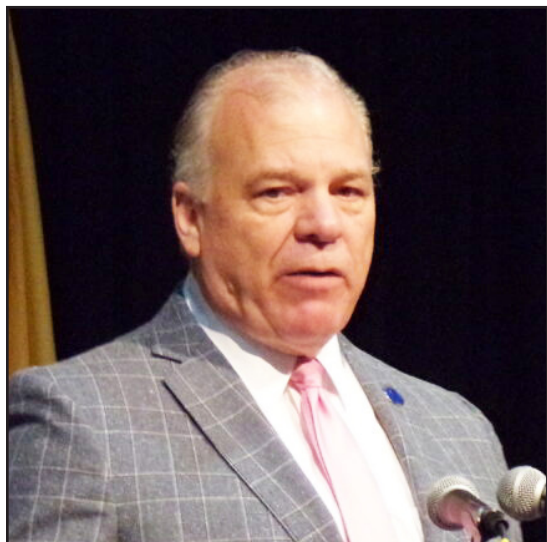
Chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew (R-2)



As South Jersey Democrats try to squirm like the Egyptian Army out of the Red Sea that swallowed them, Murphy and her boss, former Democratic Congressman Van Drew, changed chariots right in the nick of time. Van Drew followed up his 2020 party switch with redistricting victories that gave him a safer Republican district, enabling him to romp to victory in 2022 over credible Democratic challenger Tim Alexander. Now, he’s eyeballing a 2024 U.S. Senate candidacy, presumably as a MAGA ally to a come-backing (multiply indicted) Trump.

## 65. Steve Sweeney

Former state Senate President



Look for ironworker turned politician Sweeney to announce his own gubernatorial bid soon, if he hasn't already by the time you read this publication. Wins by allies Burzichelli in LD-3 and Paul Moriarty in LD-4 served as a springboard for a resurgent South Jersey Democratic Party and the return, Sweeney hopes, of momentum for his state-wide cause. A retiring Assemblyman Tom Giblin of Essex County this year warned his fellow Democrats of the consequences of failing to prioritize the Building Trades, part of the core of Sweeney's message.

## 66. Jeannine LaRue

Lobbyist



Part of the one-two punch combination at the Zita Group, LaRue joins Zita as two of the most policy-grounded people in the state of New Jersey. Count on LaRue to routinely speak out too on social justice issues, while maintaining strong back-room institutional ties.

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## 67. Gene Mulroy and Gerry Gibbs

Capitol Impact Group



The pair of public affairs specialist go back-to-back in the halls of Trenton, offering a touch of class to the proceedings.

## 68. Dave Parano

CEO of Parano and Associates



The vote-by-mail operations guru cut his teeth with former state Senator Loretta Weinberg, and remains the chief Democratic Party operative most institutionally grounded in Bergen County.

## 69. Chris Donnelly

General Manager at Subject Matter+Kivvit

## Megan Cryan

Managing Director at Subject Matter+Kivvit

## Adam Steinberger

Managing Director at Subject Matter+Kivvit



Donnelly serves as General Manager of Kivvit’s New Jersey office, located in Asbury Park. With nearly 20 years of experience in public and media relations, he has assisted numerous Kivvit clients with their communications efforts, including the New Jersey Utilities Association, UTCA, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, AAUP-BHSNJ, New Jersey CannaBusiness Association, the successful 2016 effort to replenish the Transportation



Trust Fund and served as an advisor to the 2020 cannabis legalization campaign. As a Managing Director in Kivvit’s Asbury Park office, Cryan has led public affairs campaigns that address complex issues in New Jersey and across the country. A 15-year veteran of New Jersey politics and campaigns, Steinberger got his start during the Governor Codey days, served in the Corzine Administration and has worked on several major campaigns in



New Jersey since 2006. Since joining Kivvit in 2014, Adam has led some of the highest profile and most complicated issue and public education campaigns in New Jersey, New York and nationally that have won multiple industry awards. His work includes high profile companies and organizations including Williams, New Jersey American Water, the National Education Association and various labor and energy issue campaigns.

## 70. Sue Altman

Candidate for U.S. Congress, District 7



Running in the CD-7 Democratic Primary, Altman cut her New Jersey political teeth as the director of New Jersey Working Families. Now she wants to help the hardworking families of the 7th District get rid of elusive incumbent U.S. Rep. Tom Kean, Jr. (R-7).

## 71. Joe DeMarco

Vice Chairman, Somerset County Democratic Committee



The successor to Zenon Christodoulou, DeMarco – maybe more than anyone else on this list – embodies New Jersey politics: equally adept at urban guerilla (check out his record of against-the-grain wins in West New York and Bayonne), and golf course badger disrupter (witness his string of wins in Somerset County). A real pro, who could pop up anywhere at any time he had a good year in a battleground county that Dems swept.



## 72. Tai Cooper

Chief Community Development Officer for the New Jersey Economic Development Authority



Cooper in the aftermath of the COVID tsunami finds herself focused on small business recovery and the equitable dispersal of EDA opportunity zone resources. As always, she maintains close ties to the political culture and goings-on of her hometown, Newark.

## 73. Arlene Quinones Perez

Hunterdon County Democratic Committee Chair



A full partner at the DeCotiis Law Firm, Quinones Perez also possesses ties to that inner sanctum of Latina power players in the state, which includes Julie Diaz (chief of staff at the Department of Labor), Idida Rodriguez, and electeds like Senator Nellie Pou and senator M. Teresa Ruiz.

## 74. Rudy Garcia

President of MBI Public Affairs Firm



Garcia – the former mayor of Union City – oversees a team of veteran professionals that includes Michele Jaker (formerly Director of Government Affairs at Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey), and former Republican Assemblyman Dick Kamin.

***Congratulations to all  
those named to the  
2023 Power List!***

Rabbi Shlomo Schorr  
*Director of Legislative Affairs*

Ralph Zucker  
*Co-Chairman*

David Gross  
*Co-Chairman*



**Agudath Israel  
of America**  
*New Jersey Office*

## 75. Sammy Gonzalez

Newark North Ward Democratic Chairman



Gonzalez holds on his shoulders the local political organizing tradition of the late Steve Adubato, Sr. Married to powerhouse state Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz (D-29), and politically close to DiVincenzo COS Alagia, North Ward Councilman Anibal Ramos and Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, Gonzalez has a reputation as one of the guys you call when you actually want results.

## 76. Sean Darcy and Laura Matos

Power Couple



A shoreline power couple. Matos is a Partner at MAD Global while Darcy, the con-summate operative's operative, runs Round World Consulting, which has a history of key wins, including campaigns Darcy worked on for U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell and U.S. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman. Key allies of fellow Monmouth County powerhouse state Senator Vin Gopal (D-11).

## 77. Michael Testa Sr.

Partner at Testa Heck Testa and White



Son of the late Judge and Vineland Mayor Frank Testa, father of state Senator Mike Testa, Jr., and husband of Buena Councilwoman Ellen Testa, the elegant, erudite and eminently professionally successful Testa. Sr. stands in stark contrast to some of the regional and often dimwitted thugs who have wielded South Jersey regional influence. The elder Testa possesses strong statewide ties going back to the Kean era.

## 78. Sonia Delgado

Princeton Public Affairs Group



A former policy analyst with the New Jersey Senate Majority Office, Delgado is one of the state's healthcare systems experts. Prior to joining PPAG—Princeton Public Affairs Group in 1999, Delgado held senior executive positions at HIP Health Plan, UMDNJ-University Hospital, and Mercy Health Plan of New Jersey.

## 79. Dr. Patricia Campos-Medina

Labor and Immigration Policy Expert



Dr. Campos-Medina is a nationally recognized labor and immigration policy leader with a proven record of experience in union organizing, government affairs, U.S. trade relations, and higher education. She currently acts as the executive director of the Worker Institute at the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. Dr. Campos-Medina’s activism for working families, women’s healthcare rights, social justice, and affordable higher education makes her a well-qualified candidate for U.S. Senate in 2024.

## 80. Al Komjathy and Eileen Kean

Partners, Komjathy and Kean



A popular and avuncular Statehouse veteran, lobbyist Komjathy has a client roster consisting of Fortune 500 companies and various statewide associations, and also sits on the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission. Kean, a member of the Monmouth Board of Elections, serves as the State Director of NFIB. Alongside the NJ Chamber and NJBIA, they form a powerful political trio of advocates for pro-business policies in the state.

## 81. Grace Strom Powers

Partner, McCarter & English



Sharp insider Powers, the former chief of staff for the late Joe Fiordaliso at the Board of Public Utilities, in her new role serves as a key fundraiser for Planned Parenthood.

## 82. Joe Jacobs

Attorney



Veteran Atlantic City operator Jacobs fulfills a key kitchen cabinet role for Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small, who has put together a string of back-to-back election victories, including a 2022 squashing of the Craig Callaway-engineered government referendum question, meant to weaken Small, which only strengthened him.

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## 83. Andre Speight

Newark Central Ward Democratic  
Committee Chairman



Essex Democrats relied on Speight to do some of the house-to-house work in the contest for Central Ward council, always a torque point in every citywide election. Married to Assemblywoman Shanique Davis Speight (D-29).

## 84. Steve Adubato, Jr.

Host of NJTV's State of Affairs



Son of the late Steve Adubato, Sr., the television host possesses that rarest of rarified qualities in New Jersey politics: an intellect. If you truly crave policy, you need to tune into Adubato's show, preferably often. While the media world has gone for loud, garish and dumb, Adubato has quietly but insistently carved out a substantive space for himself. That's leadership.



## 85. Elnardo Webster

Partner, Ingelsino Webster Wyciskala  
and Taylor



The powerful attorney has close ties to U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and to the administration of the City of Newark. Politically savvy.

**CONGRATULATIONS**  
**TO THE INSIDER 100: POWER LIST HONOREES!**



## 86. Bob and Gail Gordon

Power Couple



Former Bergen Senator Bob Gordon served as NJPBU Commissioner, and recently took his expertise to Stevens and Lee Public Affairs, while Gail Gordon, a Republican, is a politically-connected attorney at Florio Perruci Steinhardt and Cappelli. These two provide Bergen County – and beyond – with a one-two punch of power.

## 87. Tonio Burgos

Founder and CEO, Tonio Burgos and Associates



A Democratic Party heavy hitter who's all over the 2024 presidential election in a critical advisory capacity, Burgos served as Commissioner of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and as a Director of the Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corporation, vice Chairman of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and as a member of the School Construction Corporation, Treasurer of the Camden Economic Recovery Board and a member of the Israel-NJ Trade Commission.

## 88. Amol Sinha

Executive Director of the ACLU-NJ



Sinha touts a background in journalism and law and is regarded by his peers as a constitutional rights expert. On the front line of all thorny legal rights fights.

## 89. 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.

## 90. 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. Her union took on major wage rights fights with Rutgers and RWJ Barnabas.

## 91. Samantha DeAlmeida

President of the Associated Builders and Contractors



A credible Statehouse and labor force, DeAlmeida made a mark on the 2021 election cycle in her endorsement of Ciattarelli over Murphy in the closest contest for governor since 2009. Remember that, in the lead-up to the gubernatorial race in 2025.



# Congratulations to Dale Florio, Al Gaburo, and Sonia Delgado

*2023 Insider 100 Power List*



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## 92. Joe Hayden

Attorney, Pashman Stein Walder Hayden PC



We're biased – Hayden serves as InsiderNJ's legal adviser – but the celebrated criminal defense attorney possesses one of the best legal – and lethal – minds in the state and has the moral foundation to match. Make sure to read Mr. Hayden's columns on InsiderNJ for all the best legal analysis of the Trump indictments.

## 93. Luanne Peterpaul and Margie Donlon

Assemblywomen-elect, LD-1 1



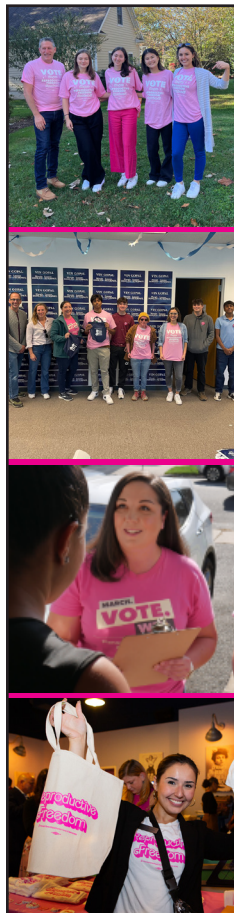
Vin Gopal's running mates in LD-11 took out two Republican incumbents to bolster Speaker Craig Coughlin's Assembly numbers. A former county prosecutor, Peterpaul previously served as Chair of the Board for Garden State Equality.

# 94. Patrick and Amy Kennedy

## South Jersey Power Couple



The former U.S. Representative from Rhode Island and the former school-teacher turned 2020 Democratic nominee for Congress have statewide ties, not to mention the international calling card of Kennedy.



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Our legislative leaders can do just that by passing the **Reproductive Equity Act (S2918/A4350).**

*Learn more at [ppactionnj.org](http://ppactionnj.org).*



*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.*



## 95. Zenon Christodoulou

Board of Public Utilities Commissioner



The former long-serving chairman of the Somerset Democratic Committee has a PhD in economics and offers the experience of something rare – almost unheard of, in fact - in his party: family business ownership.

## 96. Ed Potosnak

Executive Director, League of Conversation Voters



Very hands-on – and politically savvy, Potosnak, a former chemistry teacher, has a clear priority of preserving clean air and water and safeguarding New Jersey’s open space.





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## 97. James Gee and Jay Redd

Respectively Founding Principal and Managing Principal, Stono Public Affairs



Gee was Bonnie Watson Colman’s Chief of Staff, he’s got great ties to the Congressional Black Caucus – even throwing a Reception at the Congressional Black Caucus’ Annual Conference for Booker, Coleman, and Payne. Redd was Senator Weinberg’s chief of staff and the Senate Majority Offices Counsel. Serves on the Bloustein advisory board, Lead NJ’s advisory board, BYU Law Alumni Board and advises a number of other smaller organizations like the nonprofit Hopeloft in Bridgeton, NAMI Mercer & the InfoAge Science museum in Monmouth County.

## 98. Leila Sadeghi

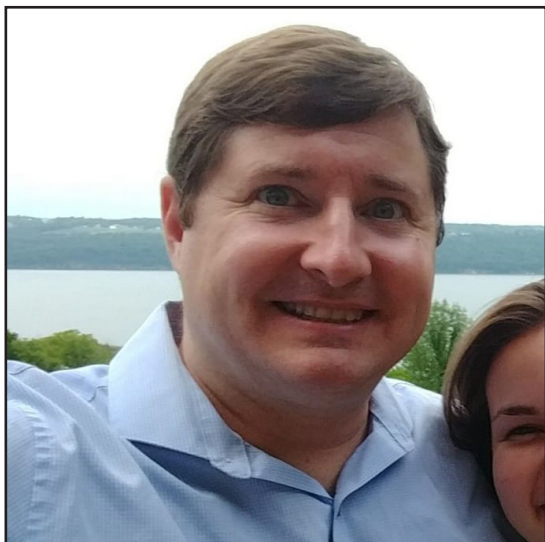
Principal, Scorpion Consulting



Very shrewd, very hard-nosed, Sadeghi has considerable experience in campaigns around the state, especially North Jersey, from the crammed streets of Hoboken to the vast stretches of Morris County.

## 99. Mitch Seim

Political Operative



The longtime veteran operator scored keys this year in Toms River and Brick as well as LD-11, the cycle's marquee contest, where he worked the campaign of victorious incumbent state Senator Vin Gopal.

## 100. Jane Fonda

Oscar Award-winning actress



The stunning star of *Barbarella*, *Klute*, *On Golden Pond* and *Coming Home* made a surprise appearance this year in LD-25, where she gave incumbent Senate Republican Leader Tony Bucco, Jr. a fright. Arguing on behalf of Democrats seeking greater pro-choice protections, Fonda backed challenger Christine Clarke in a losing – but noble – effort.