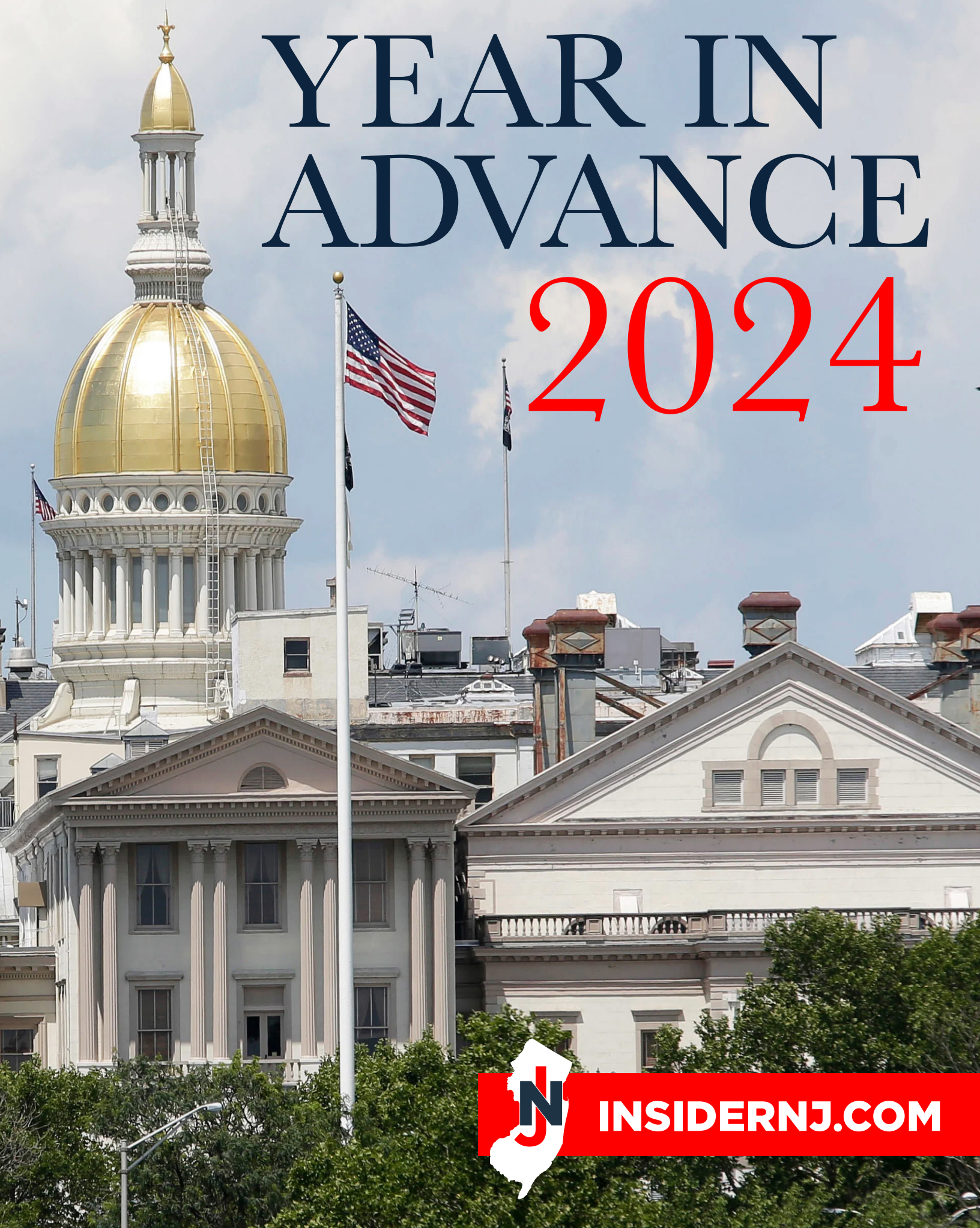


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INTRODUCTION



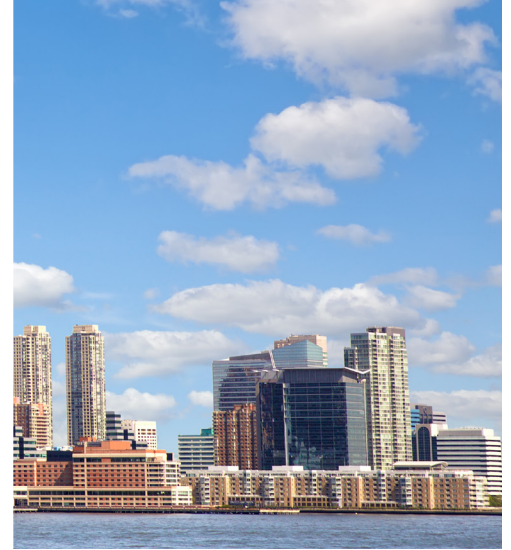
Staggering through swamplands and toward eastern border mountains the rest of the world laughs at from their Olympian perches, New Jersey will play a critical role this year in the presidential contest, trying to augment itself beyond merely piggy bank status and blue state security blanket in the grand scheme of events.

Certainly, the Garden State wants to do more than merely furnish a laugh track for late night comics and private redemption on public time. If you're reading this, you'll know that former Governor Chris Christie failed in his presidential bid, but perhaps succeeded in his penitential bid, as he tried to undo in 2024 everything he tried to do in 2016, essentially the existential equivalent of nothingness. Only



God – or Jean Paul Sartre – can say whether he forgives Christie for backing Donald Trump and then frantically trying to shovel his way out of the endorsement. Meanwhile, businessman Hirsh Singh (who previously ran unsuccessfully for governor, congress, and senate) likewise rode back to his home state of New Jersey post New Hampshire, hauled by the same *Shooting of Dan McGrew* sled dogs that delivered a politically DOA Christie. When he thaws out, at least Singh can say he *didn't* hit for the cycle.

Having run around the country in search of his own magical presidential portal, sitting New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy appears to have accepted the consolation prize of forklifting his wife into the U.S. Senate, at last returning the favor



for her forklifting him into the governorship. It's not Oval Office level stuff, but it gets the Murphys into contemporary D.C. ballrooms, a Costco Camelot envisioned – but never attained – by the Murphys in the dreary COVID era of New Jersey politics.

Joe Biden dismantled Donald Trump 57.3% to 41.40% in the Garden State on his way to winning the 2020 presidential election, which Trump subsequently insisted he won, an ongoing temper tantrum that included his directive to a mob to short circuit his own vice president's ratification of the results. The rich are not like you and me, Scott, Ernest Hemingway once told F. Scott Fitzgerald. When they don't get what they want they prevail on thugs in MAGA baseball

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hats to storm a citadel of democracy (or they stuff the pockets of a sitting U.S. Senator like Bob Menendez with gold bars), although Hemingway might have actually meant to say Mussolini.

Most Democrats assumed the aging Biden stepped forward four years ago as a stop gap to the horrors of fascism twice put down by the Greatest Generation, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, newly resurgent in an overgrown 77-year-old version of Little Lord Fauntleroy complete with lunatic makeup job, orange pompadour, Queens accent straight out of the old *Batman* TV series, and

channeling 24-7 atmospheric wrenched from *The Death of Sardanapolis*. But having labored for a lifetime for the presidency and undertaken a painstaking branding morphology from scarf-wearing glee club aloofness to grinning hardhat blue collar comfort zone, the now-81-year-old Biden doubled down on another term.

So, if you nurse any doubts about the ailing health of the republic, just reread that paragraph immediately above, preferably when you have both feet on the ground, and you're far removed from tall buildings with open windows. In any case, we're here

to help, or at least to prevent the end of the country with more panache than just another helplessly wriggling fly circling the drain. So, see you on the 2024 trail, my lovelies, and in the inimitable words of the great Edmond O'Brien watching Jimmy Cagney atop the gurgling White Heat oil refineries of New Jersey's own undaunted mountain chain: "He finally made it to the top of the world. And it blew up in his face."



Max Pizarro

Editor, InsiderNJ

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THE PRESIDENTIAL CONTEST



New Jersey will serve as a critical staging area for the nation's contest, as President Joe Biden will emphasize federal infrastructure spending, including money for the Gateway (access to the region's core) Tunnel long denied by the GOP, while former President Donald J. Trump unwinds – or rages – on his private golf course in Bedminster.

Both candidates projected to win their parties' nominations have public perception problems.

One has a son in legal trouble.

The other faces four indictments totaling 91 felony charges.

According to a PBS News Hour / NPR Marist Poll in mid December 2023, 14 percent of voters

say they dislike both Biden and Trump, more than four times the number dissatisfied with the two politicians last Election Day.

“Biden has a slight lead over Trump, his predecessor and current frontrunner for the Republican nomination, with 49 percent of registered voters saying they'd choose the incumbent and 47 percent siding with Trump, according to the latest poll. Independents favor Trump by an 8-point margin. The race remains virtually unchanged from August and is inside the poll's margin of error.”

This from a Monmouth University Poll in December, 2023:

“Public opinion of Biden's overall job performance currently stands at 34% approve and 61% disap-

prove – his lowest rating in Monmouth's polling since he took office. Since September, his approval number has dropped four points and his disapproval number has increased by 6 points. Between October 2022 and July 2023, Biden's approval rating ranged between 40% and 44% while his disapproval number registered between 48% and 53%. Presidential approval has dropped among both Democrats (74%, down from 80% in September and 88% in July) and independents (24%, down from 30% in September and 38% in July); and it currently stands at just 5% among Republicans.”

Trump's numbers from an Economist Poll in January: 46% favorable, 53% unfavorable.

Statistically even.



Reproductive rights are **still** on the line.

This spring, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear two cases that could fundamentally alter access to reproductive health care services – even with our protections here in New Jersey. States across the country continue to restrict access to abortion care in increasingly dangerous ways, forcing patients to leave their home states for care.

In New Jersey, let's continue to do what's right and fortify access to abortion care.

No matter where future court decisions or elections may take us, the time is now to respond to these attacks and prepare for the future.

Together, we can ensure that reproductive health care remains protected and accessible in New Jersey – no matter what, no matter who.



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

www.PPActionNJ.org

Even with Menendez spiraling into the morass and rank and file operators irritated by the Murphys' sense of entitlement, the New Jersey Democratic establishment under the leadership of Chairman LeRoy Jones trusts Trump will galvanize Garden State voters against him and create opportunities for gains, especially in CD-7.

But they also want to play a vital role in neighboring battleground Pennsylvania, which Biden narrowly won in 2020 50-49%, and where 2024 polls show a very close contest.

The latest from Susquehanna (Jan.

15-21) – 47% Biden, 39% Trump.

Quinnipiac (Jan/ 4-8) – 41% Biden, 39% Trump.

Redfield and Wilton Strategies (Dec. 28-30) – Trump 40%, Biden 39%.

Moreover, an Emerson College Polling survey of Pennsylvania voters “finds former President Trump leading President Biden 45% to 36%, while 11% plan to vote for someone else and 8% are undecided. In a potential 2024 U.S. Senate Election, incumbent Democratic Senator Bob Casey holds an eight-point advantage

over Republican challenger David McCormick, leading 41% to 33%. Eight percent indicate they support someone else, and 18% are undecided.”

It's volatile, with the country hanging in the balance just over the Jersey – not the Mexican –border.

Look for considerable fundraising by the Dems to the immediate westward.

As for the GOP, U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew (R-2) of South Jersey helms the Trump Campaign for the Garden State for, as he says, “Normal people like us.”

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THE DEVELOPING U.S. SENATE CONTEST



Looking to give its full, potent support to the reelection campaign of President Joe Biden, and to provide a national level Latino presence – valuable in a battleground like Florida - New Jersey promptly self-combusted as U.S. Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) imploded.

You've read about the scandal.

Allegedly working as an agent of Egypt in his role as chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Menendez took gold bars and other gifts, including a Mercedes, in exchange for work rendered, according to a federal indictment furnished

by the Southern District of New York. The longtime senator from Hudson County declared his innocence, refused to give up his seat, and promptly found himself out in the cold, with his nose pressed up against the window of the county party organizations.

A brainy progressive from Burlington County, U.S. Rep. Andy Kim (D-3) condemned Menendez on the day of the first indictment (yes, there would be more) while others in the Democratic establishment hemmed and hawed. A day later, Kim announced his candidacy for the seat as the party tried to locate a successor, and Governor Phil Murphy's allies tri-

al ballooned First Lady Tammy Murphy.

Tammy Murphy ended up being real, as the Democratic Party pooh-bahs, eager to avoid a fight and delighted by the prospect of rewarding the governor's wife in order to exact favors in return, lavished support on the ceremonial figure whose supporters adamantly asserted her unimpeachable work product.

So it would be Murphy (with the state's power centers behind her) versus Kim, he with the perfectly pure progressive credentials, unblemished by nepotism and upheld by rank and file Democrats



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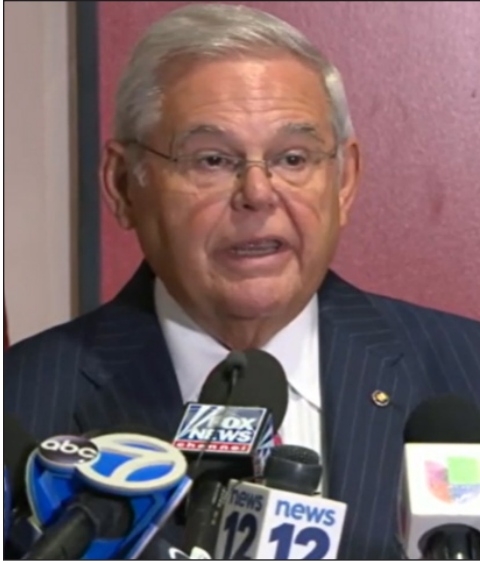


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still reeling from the Murphys' audaciousness.



No one among the insiders gave Kim much of a shot, especially in a presidential election year. Yes, Lisa McCormick in 2018 put up a respectable 38-62% off-the-line showing (without campaigning and with no money) against a courtroom-bruised but still in-the-game Menendez. Why couldn't Kim stun the early stumbling Tammy Murphy campaign with a progressive good guy and good gal army on Election Day? Look, maybe it's doable, but the cravenness of the establishment to put Murphy up to begin with arises out of the extraordinary confidence they have behind the insulation of the party line.

Progressive activist Patricia Campos Medina and People's Organization for Progress Founder Larry Hamm also want the seat,

and will likely give Kim some fits from the left, enough to create some fracture and mild havoc, and perhaps afford Tammy Murphy at least one shot in a season of hell to assume a reproachful establishment gaze.

But the Democrats aren't the only ones running.

They may outnumber the GOP statewide by a million strong, but that does not stand in the way of the indefatigable optimism of Christine Serrano Glassner, Mendham Mayor, and the apparent Republican frontrunner for the nomination.

Serrano Glassner's no Nikki Haley.

She wants Trump for president.

Already issued a full-throated endorsement.

"I will work with President Trump to lead New Jersey through commonsense solutions and usher in a new era of greatness for this country," she said in a statement.

Other candidates in the GOP Primary include Curtis Bashaw, founding and managing partner of Cape Resorts; Tabernacle businessman Justin Murphy; and former TV newsman Alex Zdan.

Serrano Glassner paid particular attention to Bashaw's entry into the contest, welcoming him to the GOP Primary with the dreaded tag of liberal.

"Curtis Bashaw is a liberal whom the voters cannot trust. He has personally donated over \$30,000 to Democrat politicians – including over \$15,000 to help the Democrat machine retain its grip on New Jersey government – and even worked against Donald Trump in his 2016 campaign against Hillary Clinton. Bashaw will never be a conservative champion and can't possibly understand the struggles of the working men and women of New Jersey. He is more in line with Gold Bar Bob and the Murphy Monarchy than he is the small businesspeople and blue-collar workers across New Jersey who are struggling under this disastrous Biden-Menendez-Murphy economy."





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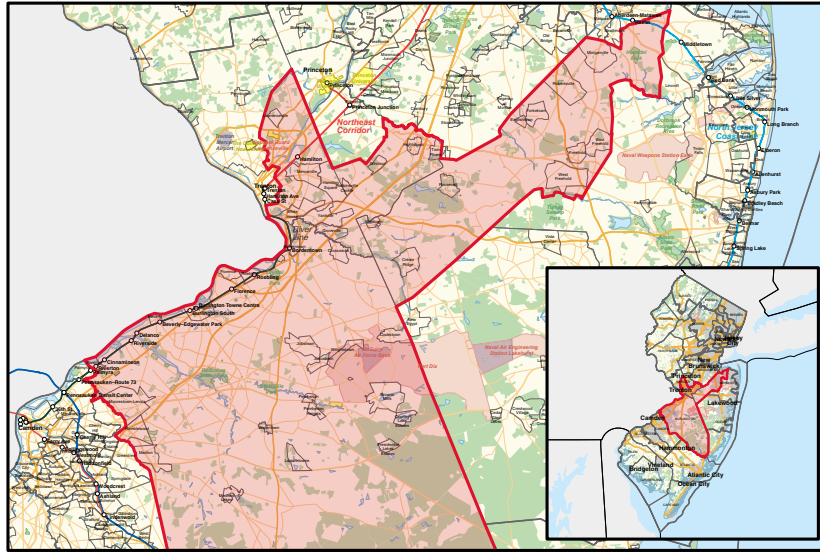
Sean M. Spiller, President (center)

Steve Beatty, Vice President (left)

Petal Robertson, Secretary-Treasurer (right)

CONGRESSIONAL BATTLEGROUND

CD-3



Sitting U.S. Rep. Andy Kim (D-3) wants to go to the United States Senate or go out on his shield as a quixotic political adventurer. Either way, he won't have to listen to Matt Gaetz anymore, Marjorie Taylor Greene, or Lauren Boebert. Might as well take a crack at a Senate seat if it forever relieves the deadening delirium of that trio's proximity.

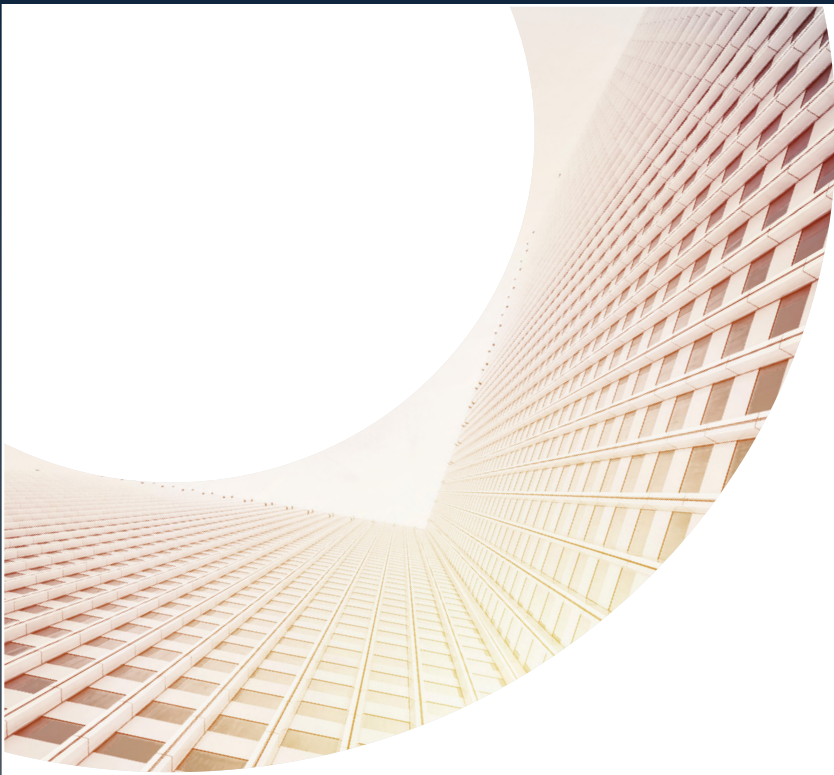
Among Democrats, Assemblyman Herb Conaway (D-7), Assemblywoman Carol Murphy, and attorney Joe Cohn want to grab New Jersey's 3rd Congress-

sional District seat in Kim's aftermath. One of them stands a good chance of nabbing it, as the last redistricting map excised heavily Republican Ocean County, and welded parts of Monmouth and Mercer, and more Democratic-friendly towns in Burlington to the Fighting 3rd.

One of the smartest people in the Legislature, with a military service record and degrees in medicine and law, Conaway has the backing of Burlington County Democratic Chairman Joe Andl. "Dr. Herb Conaway is a vital

leader in our community. From his work as physician, to the halls of the Assembly, to his tireless efforts serving the residents of Burlington County as Health Director during the pandemic, Dr. Conaway will be a tireless advocate for our families in Washington. I am proud to lend my enthusiastic support and personal endorsement to his campaign for Congress," Andl said in a statement.

"I am proud to have the endorsement of Chairman Andl. Serving Burlington County as a physician



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and in the New Jersey Legislature has been the honor of my life,” Conaway said in response. “I am ready to take that same work ethic and commitment to Congress. New Jersey families across the 3rd Congressional District deserve leadership that will fight back against the extremism and chaos in Washington.”

Not so fast.

Murphy wants a fight.

Calling Andl’s endorsement hypocritical and disrespectful, the assemblywoman declared, “I fully intend to secure the support to run with President Biden and campaign hard down the ballot to elect Democrats to offices of county commissioner, mayor, and all municipal positions. We are in this together, and as the Democratic nominee for Congress, I view my role as increasing votes for all Democrats, which has been the hallmark of my legislative campaigns.

“I wanted you to hear it from me: when I announced my intention to run for Congress, I said that a woman in politics never expects to have something handed to her. The evidence of that stands before you today [with the chairman’s declared support for Conaway]. Despite an unprecedented thumb

on the scale by the county party chairman, I intend to earn the votes I will receive on my way to winning the Democratic Party nomination and count on me to run hard through the tape to be the first congresswoman in the history of South Jersey!”

Then there’s Cohn.

“Washington is broken,” said the attorney in his opening statement of the campaign season. “Extremist politicians are seeking to polarize our nation, stoking the flames of phony culture wars, all while ignoring the critical work they were elected to do.”

On the Republican side, a pro-life conservative constitutionalist and father of eight, Gregory Sobocinski says “our government has turned on us.”

“As Your Congressman, I will protect life, work to secure our borders, stop the assault on our children in the schools, protect the 2nd Amendment, stop the abuses of our out-of-control government, secure free speech, and stop Big Tech overreach,” says the 35-year resident of the 3rd district.

Brazilian immigrant Shirley Maia Cusick is also running in the Republican Primary for the 3rd

Congressional District seat.

“I want my America back,” she says.

According to her campaign website, “she’s talking about the America she fell in love with when she immigrated here 30 years ago. She’s talking about an America that was safe, an America that had family values, an America where people respected one another. Shirley wants to restore the America she loves for her grandchildren – and yours. She also believes it’s time for New Jersey to be represented by someone who will fight with integrity and take on corruption. This Latina mama-bear is running for the United States House of Representatives to do just that. Shirley makes her home in Medford with her husband Bob. This Latina mama-bear is running for the United States Congress to do just that.”



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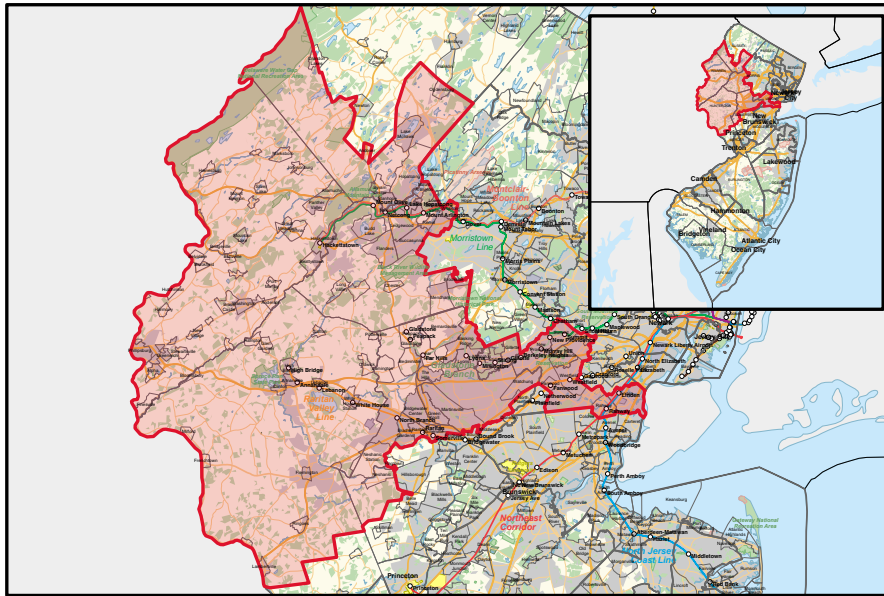
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CONGRESSIONAL BATTLEGROUND

CD-7



Having decided that the media represents a risk better left untaken, incumbent U.S. Rep. Tom Kean, Jr. (R-7) likewise appears little enamored of history and continues to determinedly slog through an oblivion of his own making.

Scion of a political family best defined by former Governor Thomas Kean, Sr., a moderate Republican and pragmatist, Kean donned a cloak of invisibility in the aftermath of 2022 redistricting, which saved every incumbent Democrat while simultaneously award-

ing Kean the 7th District seat and giving Tom Malinowski the heave-ho.

If Rob Menendez, Jr. could get a seat at the table, negotiating Democrats figured, so could the Junior Kean.

Malinowski beat up Kean in their lone debate before succumbing to the inevitability of the map.

In the days since, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) has gleefully

observed a silent Kean plodding through the dreadful GOP atmospherics of Trump subservience, while heaping a steady diet of anti-Kean invective into the quiet little dumpster fire.

An example:

“It’s been three days since the disgraced former president said that immigrants were ‘poisoning the blood of our country’ and Tom Kean Jr. has yet to speak out against this hateful, fascist, and antisemitic speech,” the DCCC

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chortled in late December of last year.

According to reports, Donald Trump's rhetoric is taken directly from Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* – yet Kean Jr. has refused to condemn the wannabe dictator.

Why?

Because no matter how hard Kean Jr. attempts to act like a moderate, he will always remain loyal to Donald Trump, even when he's espousing theories from *Mein Kampf*.

DCCC Spokesperson Aidan Johnson: "Tom Kean Jr.'s silence on Donald Trump's decision to weaponize language from Adolf Hitler is telling: regardless of what the former president says or does,



Kean Jr. will *always* stand by him." Already firmly zipped into the same campaign harness as 2022, an ever-cocooned Kean apparently counts on less than robust Democratic Party support for the 81-year-old Biden, the GOP-fortified dimensions of the district, and perhaps a party establishment less than animated over its selection of Malinowski successors. "Invisibility is the best policy," seems to be the wise counsel of Kean's cohorts.

Democratic frontrunner, former Executive Director of Working Families Sue Altman, possesses above average speaking and organizational skills, and a willingness to take on power.

She will be a credible general election candidate if she gets by Jason Blazakis, a former national security official. "Whether it's denying free and fair elections, taking away a woman's right to choose, or making New Jersey more expensive to live in, the MAGA extremist agenda isn't the Jersey agenda," says Blazakis. "Tom Kean is a rubber stamp for MAGA extremism. On reproductive rights, on the cost of living, and on protecting democracy, Kean gives in to extremists and Jersey pays the price."

Altman agrees, taking yet another



er opportunity to beat up Kean, for example, after his vote for Mike Johnson as Speaker of the House. "As if his vote for Jim Jordan weren't shameful enough, Tom Kean Jr. just helped elect a bigot who wants to ban same-sex marriage as the Speaker of the House. Once again, he's shown his moderate rhetoric is nothing but an act, and that he is willing to throw the LGBTQ community under the bus and risk the rights they have won in order to further his political career and consolidate power in Washington D.C. Tom Kean Jr. owes it to his constituents to stop hiding and explain this indefensible vote."

Of course, that won't happen, but Altman appears committed to making Kean pay for his complacency.

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PASSAIC COUNTY'S FUTURE



This is a sad story.

One of the most shocking incidents in New Jersey politics in the last 20 years occurred on January 23rd, when Passaic County Sheriff Richard Berdnik walked into the men's room in Toro's Restaurant in his hometown of Clifton and, according to authorities, put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger.

The loss of a human being under any circumstances throws us into correspondence with the unknown or the ultimate, and in Sheriff Berdnik's case we must as-

sume an additional weight of sorrow to know that he suffered – so much so that he took his own life. A reporter remembers the first time he saw Richard Berdnik.

Not long before, sitting Passaic County Sheriff Jerry Speziale announced that he had accepted a position at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and would not pursue reelection as a Democrat. This was 2010. His announcement threw the Democratic Party establishment into chaos a year after Gov. Chris Christie's position atop the ticket in Passaic helped the GOP rack

countywide wins. Then, on a deal arranged by Christie allies, Speziale would not man the party battlements, leaving Chairman John Currie and his allies speechlessly apoplectic.

Currie's first thought was to look to sitting state Senator John Girgenti (D-35) to run in place of the evacuated Speziale.

But Girgenti blinked, and others started lining up on the chairman's invitation to a screening at party headquarters, among them Paterson Councilman Aslon Goow and former Paterson Police

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Chief Lawrence Spagnola.

Then Berdnik pulled up, got out of his car, and slung a jacket over his shoulder.

You knew.

You just knew.

This was going to be the pick.

How did you know?

Currie and U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-9) had already signaled their interest in the Clifton detective and longtime Police Department veteran and came away favorably impressed.

Berdnik that evening showed a sense of tranquility.

That was the word.

Tremendous *tranquility*.

He walked in and screened.

The Democratic Party gave him the line.

They had to, for who in the middle of a tempest can afford to resist a person whose professional excellence immediately imposed a transcendent calm?

That was Richard Berdnik.

He would go on, with Pascrell campaigning beside him, to defeat a credible Republican campaign for sheriff mounted by county jailer Felix Garcia.

Years later, he would, authorities said, shoot himself to death, and one wonders, amid the roil of eviscerating politics in our emotionally stratified and intolerant time, how much the world he entered, the world of public consumption for private gain, contributed to his demise.

He appeared often uncomfortable in the swim of events, an almost forlorn figure in a uniform, like a dignified constable in a circus.

We are unlikely perhaps to ever know why this man apparently committed suicide, on the heels of a public event, and we will, faced with anyone's ending thus, heed the words of the Japanese author Yoshikawa, who wrote, "Who knows the heart of the sea 100 feet down? Who knows its depth?" But whatever the case may have been, the mournfulness intensifies with the thought that one who so ably stepped up when needed, with an obvious sense of purpose and direction, a man who could inspire others, finally felt that there was nowhere else to go.

How does that happen?

We should know.

For the moment, a reporter chooses to remember Richard Berdnik not as the less than sure-footed politico amid the ravages of underhanded political goings-on, but as the detective, all those years ago, showing up, rangy, strong, and self-possessed, when it mattered.

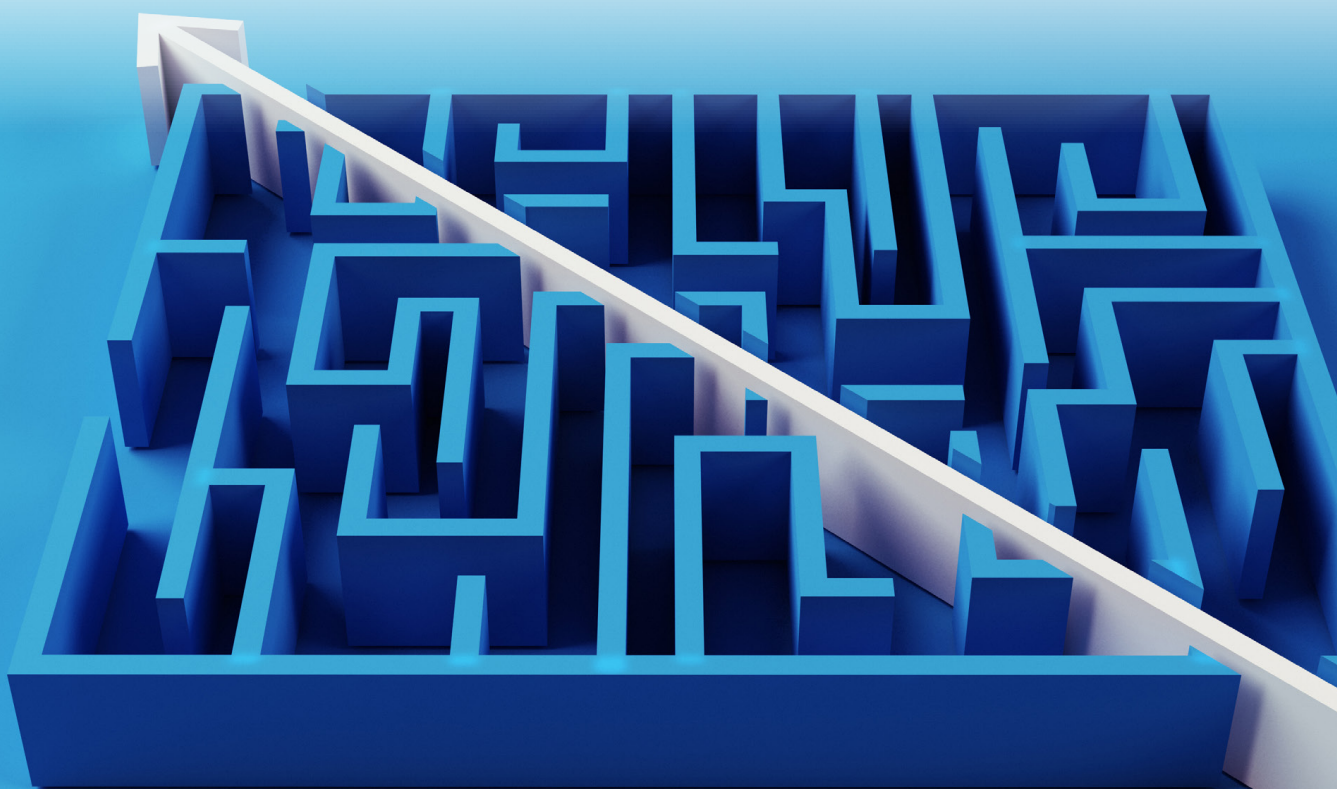
Now, there's some talk of a full circle amid mutterings of Jerry Speziale, currently serving as Paterson's police director, coming in and helping to save the Democrats in their sudden hour of peril. That might be a stretch for those party faithful, who can't forget what happened in 2010, but if Speziale or someone else highly qualified, with a calming presence, steps into the breach, that prospective Passaic County sheriff will attempt to relive a masterful moment epitomized by Richard Berdnik, Clifton detective.



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RE-ELECT JOE BIDEN



Look, probably better you hear it from us rather than from someone on the street somewhere. But in case you haven't figured it out already, we're with Joe Biden. Now, let me be clear. I'm an independent and I strenuously reject both parties. I miss John McCain and am proud that American leaders like Mitt Romney and Liz Cheney continue to assert the values of the country I love. But at the heart of it, my primary pas-

sion for the language makes me especially resistant to those flimsy grammatical structures painstakingly favored by Republicans and Democrats, which guillotine thought in place of unaccountability, and supply codes and profanities for The Word.

Our professional adventure requires us first to prize the crisis of ideas, and to look constantly for those occasions to engage those

public men and women in substantive conversation. Thankfully, we have many Republicans in our state who continue to represent the highest levels of civilized discourse and action. I am grateful for the daily exchange of ideas with them, just as I value contact with Democrats who similarly seek a finer refinement of our assailed land.

Even now in his old age, Biden –

“

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like John McCain and Mitt Romney – is such a man, serving our nation with dignity and distinction, and fundamentally understanding the horror Trump represents to the future of the United States of America.

Referring to his predecessor's actions on Jan. 6, 2021, the President spoke these words earlier this month in Blue Bell, Pa., as he reflected on the death of New Jersey's own Officer Brian Sicknick, who died in the line of duty that day, and the suicides of four police officers in the days and months after the riot.

“Because of Donald Trump's lies, they died because these lies brought a mob to Washington. He promised it would be wild, and it was. He told the crowd to fight like hell and all hell was unleashed. ...He promised he would... be side by side with them. Then, as usual, he left the dirty work to others. He retreated to the White House as America was attacked from within. Donald Trump watched on TV in a private small dining room off the oval office. The entire nation watched in horror. The whole world watched in disbelief and Trump did nothing. Members of his staff, members of his family, Republican leaders who were under attack at that very moment,

pled with him: ‘Act. Call off the mob.’ Imagine if he had gone out and said, ‘Stop.’ And still, Trump did nothing. It was among the worst derelictions of duty by a president in American history. An attempt to overturn a free and fair election by force and violence. A record 81 million people voted for my candidacy and to end his presidency. Trump lost the popular vote by seven million. Trump's claims about the 2020 election never could stand up in court. Trump lost 60 court cases. Sixty. Trump lost through Republican controlled states. Trump lost before a Trump appointed judge. And Trump lost before the United States Supreme Court.”

Biden's right.

Trump threatens America on par with the nightmare vision of the great Philip Roth of Newark, New Jersey, who wrote in his *Plot Against America*, “What a repugnant spectacle our country has become! Falsehood, cruelty, and madness everywhere, and brute force in the wings waiting to finish us off.”

In addition to his sedition, Trump represents the most public repudiation of the sacred code of manhood itself, as he demeans the weak and vulnerable, abuses women, and cries publicly and contin-

ually amid the ravages of his own shrinking mortality. Trump dared say this about the late John McCain, shot down, captured, and imprisoned in Vietnam, for five and a half years: “He's not a war hero, he's a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured, okay?”

Come on, America.

The idea that our great country – and I've lived in every part of it, North, South, East, and West – can, out of our collective laconic pragmatism, get behind a whiny Emperor Nero – even once – shows you how removed we are from the core of our enduring patriotic mission.

We must exercise what our founders called “our sacred honor” as we, children of the Enlightenment and of the hardiness and character of the West, refrain from allowing a wimp back in the White House. Vote for Biden, a man molded out of our best institutional traditions, and stepped in the rule of law, who stopped this pillar of madness once with the people behind him, 81 million strong, and with the people behind him will stop him again on Nov. 5, 2024, and demonstrate to the country and to the world the intact honor, and democratic republican wisdom of America.

~ Best Wishes ~

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IN MEMORIAM



OFFICER SICKNICK

President Joe Biden on Jan. 6, 2023, honored the memory and service of New Jersey's own, Officer Brian Sicknick, with a Presidential Citizens Metal presented to Officer Sicknick's parents.

Gladys and Charles Sicknick accepted the award from the President in a ceremony at the White House on the two-year anniversary of the Jan. 6th 2021 mob insurrection at the United States Capitol where Mr. Sicknick lost his life defending the democratic process. The youngest of three sons, Mr.

Sicknick grew up in South River and attended East Brunswick Technical High School. Prior to becoming a Capitol Police Officer, he served in the New Jersey Air National Guard and was honorably discharged as a staff sergeant after serving in Operation Southern Watch and Operation Enduring Freedom.

On Jan. 6th, 2021, Mr. Sicknick was part of a "police line guarding the perimeter of the U.S. Capitol on the day that pro-Trump mobs attempted to stop lawmakers from

certifying President Biden's Electoral College victory.

"Sicknick was attacked with chemical spray during the confrontation and collapsed later that evening. He suffered from two strokes and died the next day. Sicknick was 42."

The New Jersey native is interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

The Sicknicks joined more than a dozen other individuals, among them other law enforcement offi-



Pictured above:
Sean M. Spiller, President (center)
Steve Beatty, Vice President (left)
Petal Robertson, Secretary-Treasurer (right)

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cers who were injured on the fateful day, including a Capitol Police officer who died the day after rioters stormed the building, officers who died by suicide after defending the Capitol, and election workers who rejected efforts by former President Donald Trump to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

As he honored the officer's memory, President Biden spoke to the group at large about those law enforcement officers who died as a consequence of the mob. "This is warranted and overdue, particularly for the families of a hero defending our Capitol and our democra-

cy," said Biden. "People will look at you and say, that's the grace and dignity I want to display."

Gladys and Charles Sicknick have expressed their disgust with GOP leaders who went out of their way to buttress the false election claims by Trump and his supporters, or who failed to seek justice in the aftermath of their son's death.

From NBC:

"We got together and said we're not going to shake their hands," [said] Gladys Sicknick, mother of the late officer.

"She called out congressional Republicans who continue to support former President Trump, 'go down to Mar-a-Lago and you know, kiss his ring or whatever the hell they do down there, you know.' She met with Republican lawmakers last year asking for them to vote in support of creating a bipartisan, independent commission to investigate the Capitol attack. McConnell and McCarthy were opposed to the commission. The legislation passed the House, but it was blocked in the Senate due to a Republican opposition led by McConnell."



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