



INSIDER 100
POLICY MAKERS POWER LIST

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INSIDERNJ POLICY MAKERS 2025

Naturally, the unfolding gubernatorial election significantly influenced the shaping of this year's InsiderNJ Policymakers List. We frequently hear about people's popularity in an election year, and their emotional responses to candidates. This year is no different. But there are also critical issues at stake.

Where the candidates come down on policy will go a long way in

determining who wins and who loses the 2025 gubernatorial election. An MBA-CPA, Republican Jack Ciattarelli will make the case to voters that New Jersey should sharply depart from the progressive era of Governor Phil Murphy. A former prosecutor, Democrat Mikie Sherrill will make a constitutional argument for the preservation of due process, free speech, and the freedom to peaceably assemble. Ciattarelli will

INSIDER 100 POLICY MAKERS 2025

highlight law and order. So will Sherrill. Their differences of opinion will hinge on the delicate details of public policy, and finally, different emphases to attain justice for all.

President Donald Trump's mass deportations of undocumented workers place a constitutional issue squarely at the center of the debate, as we, the voters, consider the wisest use of law enforcement and the military, and the truest expression of our rights as citizens, and the proper maintenance of power to guarantee the human rights even of noncitizens.

Also, of course, the candidates will revisit how we fund our schools in New Jersey, the library content of those schools, the size and scope of government services, transportation, housing, congestion pricing, health and safety, campaigns and elections law, and government patronage and corruption.

When you look at the list below, please consider some of these issues and the experts whom the candidates will consult as they attempt to refine their stances on policy to strengthen their respective campaigns for governor.

We all know the personalities involve, and they're important.

But in this era of instantaneous ad hominem attacks, and a morass of social media substituting for thought and substance, emotion over reason, the caves of pre-history over the Enlightenment, take a moment to consider the work of these 100 people, whose natural element is not the virtual atmosphere of incessant food fighting, but the deeper world of ideas, at last manifested as policy.

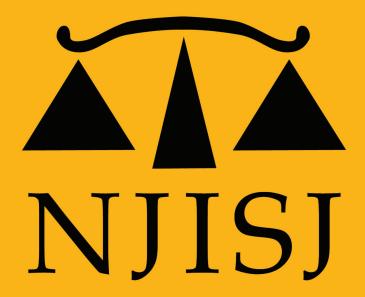


Max Pizarro Editor-in-Chief



Congratulations

to the Institute's Ryan Haygood, Laïssa Alexis, Milady Ramos and all the honorees on the 2025 Insider 100 Policymakers Power List!



NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



MARTHA HICKSON

LIBRARIAN AT NORTH HUNTERDON HIGH SCHOOL



Recipient of the 2022 Lemony Snicket Prize for Noble Librarians Faced with Adversity, Hickson withstood ignorant and hateful attempts by community members to ban books in the school library. Her efforts to protect intellectual freedom in part sparked Governor Phil Murphy to sign the state's Freedom to Read Act into law on Dec. 9th, 2024. The law "prevents arbitrary book banning and protects the rights of students, parents, and communities to have free access to age-appropriate books and learning materials at schools and public libraries," according to the Governor's Office. "The Freedom to Read Act cements New Jersey's role on the forefront of preventing book bans and protecting the intellectual freedom of our educators and students. Across the nation, we have seen attempts to suppress and censor the stories and experiences of others. I'm proud to amplify the voices of our past and present, as there is no better way for our children to prepare for the future than to read freely," said Governor Murphy.



CRAIG COUGHLIN

SPEAKER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY



The long-serving mild-mannered lawmaker from Woodbridge faces the prospect of trying to bring balance, commonsense, and reason to the budget process in the Trump era. Good luck. At a May 21 New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Business Roundtable, Coughlin said he is confident the state Legislature will approve a 2026 state budget by the June 30 deadline – despite calling this year's negotiations "trickier than usual."

"We're looking to maintain a strong surplus that protects us in the future and invest in programs that reflect who we are," he noted, with Governor Phil Murphy's proposed \$58.1 billion budget sitting on his desk.



AMOL SINHA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ACLU-NJ



As the Trump Administration targets undocumented workers, Sinha and his organization work to ensure "access to due process for detained people, curbing immigration detention in New Jersey, and holding detention centers accountable." Notably, the executive director found himself called to action on May 9th following the arrest of Mayor Ras Baraka by the Department of Homeland Security. Sinha called Baraka's arrest "a shameful escalation of the Trump administration's intimidation campaign against officials who refuse to do their bidding. Mayor Baraka was at Delaney Hall to join a tour of the detention facility with a congressional delegation as part of their authorized oversight responsibilities. Mayor Baraka — and lawmakers across New Jersey and the country — are being targeted by the Trump administration for refusing to be complicit with its ongoing violations of due process. ... The Trump administration must end its assault on the fundamental rights at the core of our democracy."

New Jersey is a gender-affirming care safe haven.*

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ZAHID QURAISHI

DISTRICT JUDGE OF THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY



The judge's 2024 ruling in favor of demolishing an infamous, long-out-of-date ballot bracketing system hardly endeared Quraishi to the political establishment. After all, he implemented a concept all but unknown in New Jersey politics, otherwise known as fairness. This year's competitive primary elections – without an organization line and absent the built-in power-protecting bracketing of organization candidates – will uniquely put the judge's fairness ruling to the test.



JOHN MCKEON

STATE SENATOR, DISTRICT 27

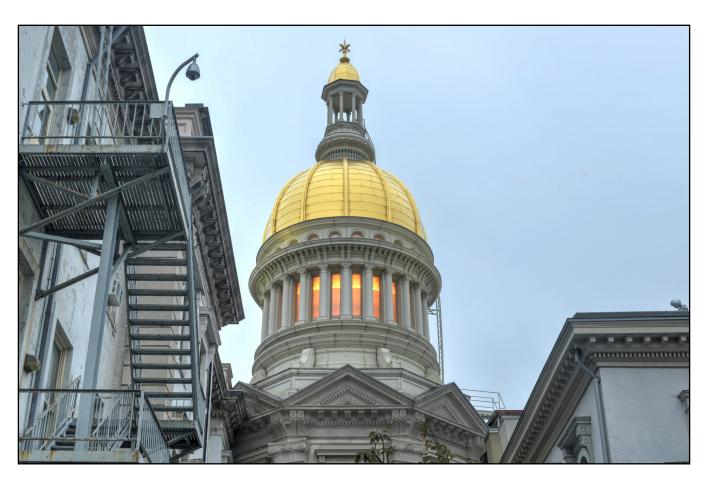


The legal brain successor to Dick Codey in the Essex-based legislative district possesses deep policy experience, especially in the areas of environment, health, and state government. A possible future state attorney general, McKeon on May 28th penned a powerful NorthJersey.com op-ed critical of President Donald J. Trump's "big, beautiful [budget] bill." Wrote McKeon: What's happening in Washington, D.C., right now should concern every New Jersey resident. House Republicans, at the urging of President Donald Trump and against the best interests of their own constituents, forced through a budget that would make deep cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. What this means for our state is starting to become clear: \$3.6 billion in federal funding for NJ FamilyCare lost every year, and at least 360,000 people kicked off their coverage. And that might be just the beginning: NJ FamilyCare insures 1.8 million New Jersey residents. That's what Trump has been up to lately. That, and endorsing Jack Ciattarelli to be our next governor; the same Ciattarelli who "now says he is full-blown MAGA."



THOMAS KOENIG

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND FINANCE OFFICER



Expert on the NJ budget (a whopping \$58.1 billion this year, as proposed by Governor Phil Murphy), Koenig in his April testimony to the Senate Budget Committee described an alarming revenue plateauing trend. Said the Finance Officer: "At the risk of oversimplification, the current fiscal picture can be synopsized as follows: since FY 2024, state spending has exceeded and is expected to exceed slowly growing revenue collections, a scenario that steadily erodes the state's relatively elevated reserves. The projected FY 2026 year-end surplus is still substantial by the state's historical standards. But were the current trend to persist, the surplus would be depleted around the end of FY 2028."





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FRANK PALLONE

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM LONG BRANCH



The ranking Democratic member of the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee, Pallone has occupied a key oppositional position throughout the Trump Budget process. When Energy and Commerce Chair Brett Guthrie (R-KY) fumbled a question about why people under the Republican proposal would be prevented from buying into the Affordable Care Act plans at a subsidized rate, according to Politico, Pallone said, "If I'm kicked off Medicaid because I didn't file the paperwork — which is what CBO says is the main reason why people are kicked off, not because they're not eligible, … then the CBO assumed they would naturally then go to the ACA marketplace, the exchange, and buy a subsidized policy, and therefore there'd be no savings. Republicans want to meet this draconian cut, so … they have to say to those people, 'You can't go to the marketplace.'"



MATT PLATKIN

ATTORNEY GENERAL, STATE OF NEW JERSEY



An aggressive, proactive top cop, Platkin has proved a strong check and balance on the Trump administration. A case in point occurred in May, when the AG joined a coalition of 15 other attorneys general to block Trump's attempts to cut critical National Science Foundation (NSF) programs and funding that help maintain the United States' position as a global leader in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). According to Platkin, on April 18, NSF began terminating projects focused on increasing the participation of women, minorities, and people with disabilities in STEM fields. On May 2, NSF announced that it would also cap "indirect costs" of research projects like laboratory space, equipment, and facility services at 15 percent. This arbitrary limit on indirect costs would slash millions of dollars for groundbreaking scientific research across the country, jeopardizing national security, the economy, and public health. Said Platkin: "Gutting funding for the development of the STEM field will devastate New Jersey's world-class research universities, the many high-tech companies that call our state home, and our future generations of STEM workers. These unlawful cuts will deeply impact the groundbreaking research and development that takes place in New Jersey every single day and not only hurt our state but our country, as foreign nations take advantage of these illegal actions by the Trump Administration. We are taking the Administration to court to stop this clear assault on a critical field in our state."



DR. MONICA DRISCOLL

MOLECULAR BIOLOGIST AND BIOCHEMIST, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY



Threatened by Trump cuts, the specialist in neuro-degenerative disease research – a member of the National Academy of Sciences – took to the front lines this year to lend her considerable, respected voice to the cause of New Jersey scientific research. Dispatching billionaire Elon Musk to overhaul government, Trump in his first two months in office undertook an antiscience crusade resulting in the freezing of federal grants, sweeping layoffs across federal agencies, and funding cuts for biomedical research. "I love the way the U.S. has done science – at least in the past," Driscoll told a packed general-purpose room in the Life Sciences Building on the Busch Campus. But now, "I am stunned and devastated by this government-mediated dismantling of an incredibly successful scientific enterprise."





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MAUREEN MCMAHON

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

A veteran of the Legislature since 2002, the soughtafter McMahon throughout the years has served as Lead Counsel and Section Chief of the Utilities, Transportation and Communications Section, Acting Section Chief of the Human Services Section, and Assistant Director and Director of the Central Management Unit. A graduate of Marist College and Rutgers University School of Law.







STEVE ADUBATO, JR.

HOST, STATE OF AFFAIRS AND THINK TANK

The Emmy Award-winning Adubato brings real world experience (he grew up in Newark in politics and served in the NJ Assembly) and erudition to the ongoing conversation about New Jersey's future. As host of Think Tank, he brings together thought leaders, innovators and experts from a variety of fields to explore the critical issues, trends and challenges facing society today. On State of Affairs, Adubato dives into all the policy machinations under the Gold Dome.





DIANA HOUENOU

CHAIR, NEW JERSEY CANNABIS REGULATORY COMMISSION

Appointed by Governor Murphy, Houenou works with other members of the Cannabis Regulatory Commission to regulate legalized cannabis. A former senior policy advisor and associate counsel for Murphy, fluent in French, Houenou advised the governor on policy and legislative issues concerning criminal justice, military and veterans, community affairs, and immigrants' rights.





DENNIS ZEVELOFF

DEPUTY CHIEF POLICY ADVISOR

Former Director of Budget and Outcomes for the Murphy Administration, where he coordinated the Governor's state and federal spending proposals and helped jumpstart numerous initiatives across departments, Zeveloff has a reputation as a critical thinker with legitimate economic chops. Zeveloff previously served as the Policy Coordinator for then Governor-elect Murphy's transition team and as Policy Advisor during then candidate Murphy's gubernatorial campaign. He grew up in Bergen County and received his Bachelors of Arts Degree from Dartmouth College and Juris Doctor and Master of Business Administration Degrees from Yale University.





BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN

U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN FROM EWING



Gubernatorial candidate Ras Baraka (see below) received the headlines when federal agents arrested him at Delaney Hall in Newark for protesting the Trump Administration's immigration detaining policies. But the Congresswoman – an 80-year-old cancer survivor – demonstrated rare courage that day as she made a stand for due process. When Department of Homeland Security Spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin told CNN that congresspeople roughed up ICE agents, Watson Coleman responded. "The notion that I or any of my colleagues 'body slammed' armed federal officers is absurd," she said. "DHS is lying because they know their agents were out of line." The congresswoman laid out the events of May 9th in an interview with Democracy Now!

"We were there for reasons that are permitted under law, to conduct this inspection or oversight inspection of the facility. We were delayed and delayed and delayed, and there was one excuse after another. Finally, everyone showed up from the Newark offices of ICE. We thought now we were going to start the tour. That didn't happen. We went outside, because we understood the mayor was there, and these ICE officials were going down to meet him. We were there when they asked him to leave. He turned around, walked away, walked behind the gate and went on public property. We thought now we were going to proceed to go to do our tour. We saw ICE members huddling together on the phone. And the next thing we heard was 'We're going to arrest the mayor. We're going to lock him up.' And we asked, 'Well, why? He's on public property. You asked him to leave. He left.' There was no issue with his leaving. And so, when they opened the gate, they rushed upon him with several officers, maybe 20 or so, and [Congresswoman] LaMonica [McIver] and [Congressman] Rob [Menendez] and I tried to shield the mayor. We tried to stand between them and the mayor, hoping that this thing would not escalate. At the same time, we were saying, 'Why are you doing this? Why are you doing this? He hasn't done anything.' And then you saw the chaos after that."



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ZOE BALDWIN

VICE PRESIDENT, REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION (RPA)



New Jersey Director for RPA, Baldwin leads research, planning, and advocacy activities for the independent non-profit civic organization that develops and promotes ideas to improve the economic health, environmental resiliency, equity, and quality of life of the New York metropolitan area. A heavy policy hitter, Baldwin served as Director of Government Affairs for the Utility & Transportation Contractors Association where "she advocated for increased federal and state investment in water and transportation systems, and for greater transparency and efficiency in public procurement," according to RPA. Former Projects Director for United States Senator Cory Booker and Senior Specialist for Transportation and Environment for US Senator Frank Lautenberg.



DAVID BROGAN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CEO OF THE NEW JERSEY APARTMENT ASSOCIATION



The lead voice in Trenton for the interests of the multifamily housing industry, Brogan and his association represent a quarter of a million rental units around the state. In the New Jersey Apartment Association, developers have an avenue to voice concerns and support for different policies in the State Capitol. Brogan meets head on those things in the legislative arena that may drive up the cost of housing, impact supply and demand, and worsen local hurdles for the development industry, including reg proposals for planning and zoning boards and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) rules that restrict developable land and/or drive up development costs. He particularly pays attention to mandates on housing providers. In Brogan's words, "Every mandate has a cost. Our job is to remind the legislature that every mandate has a cost." A United States Navy veteran, Brogan served from 1985 to 1989 as an Antisubmarine Warfare Operator and U.S. Naval Rescue Swimmer.

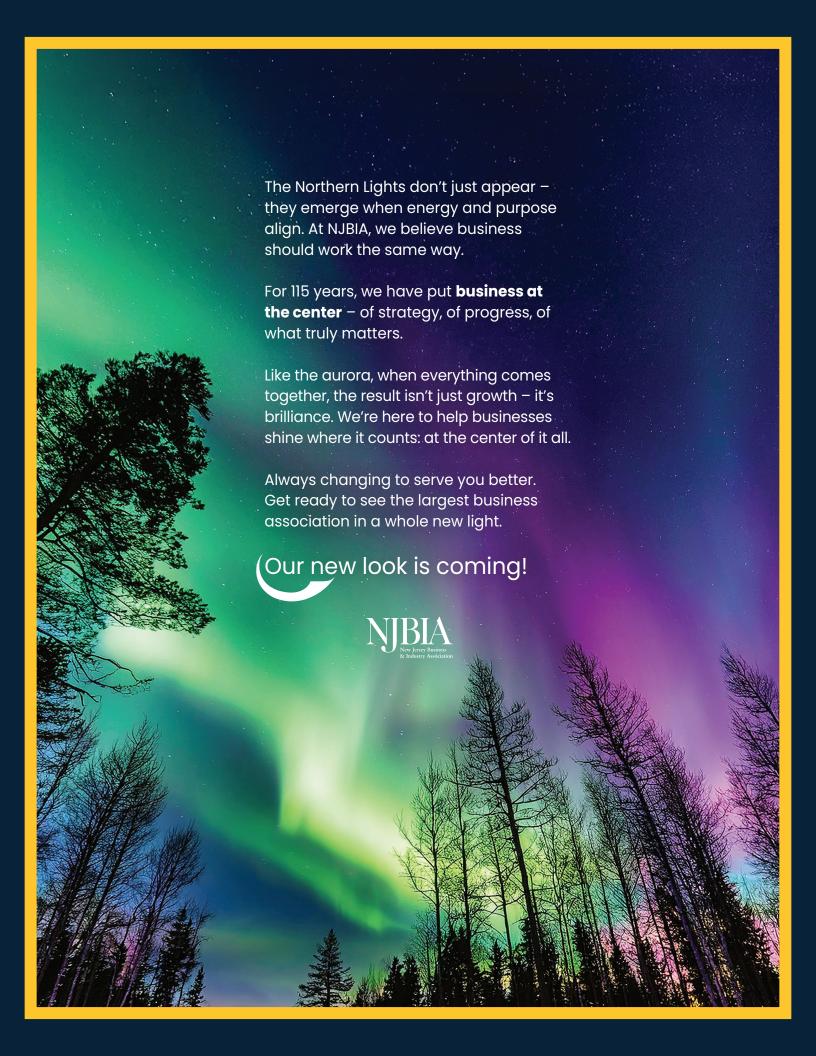


TROY SINGLETON

STATE SENATOR (D-BURLINGTON)



The BurlCo brand has an elite level pedigree in state government, going back to when he worked for then-Speaker Joe Roberts. He has labor ties to the Carpenters Union and is organizationally powerful. Singleton is on the 2025 short list for Lieutenant Governor.



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NICK SCUTARI

SENATE PRESIDENT

Just as Bogie and Bacall would always have Paris, Scutari – chair of the Union County Democratic Committee and long-serving senator from the 22nd District – will always have pot. He's mostly the brains behind legalizing the controlled substance in New Jersey.



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TODD WOLFSON

NATIONAL PRESIDENT, AMERICAN
ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS
(AAUP) AND PRESIDENT OF RUTGERS
AAUP-AFT

Associate professor in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rutgers University, Wolfson wrote and edited three books, Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left (2014), The Great Refusal: Herbert Marcuse and Contemporary Social Movements (2017) and The Gig Economy: Workers and Media in the Age of Convergence (2021), along with dozens of peer-reviewed articles. An anthropologist, the labor leader is also codirector of the Media, Inequality & Change Center, a partnership between the University of Pennsylvania and Rutgers University.





KATE MCDONNELL

CHIEF COUNSEL TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

The ultimate behind-the-scenes Trenton power player. Formerly Deputy Chief Counsel to Governor Murphy, McDonnell served as General Counsel to the Assembly Majority Office for eight years, subsequent to a tour as Associate General Counsel in the Majority Office. A Magna cum Laude graduate from the University of Notre Dame, McDonnell holds both a J.D. from the Rutgers School of Law – Camden and a Master's Degree from Rutgers – New Brunswick's Bloustein School of Policy and Planning.



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DALE FLORIO & AL GABURO

PRINCETON PUBLIC AFFAIRS GROUP

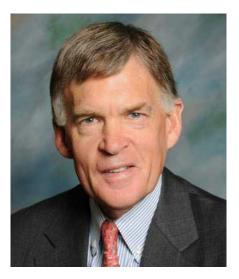
Respectively the top and near-top of the food chain at New Jersey's most influential lobbying firm, Florio and Gaburo have strong ties to Jack Ciattarelli's (see below) Republican gubernatorial campaign. How close? As a teenager and future bonified wonk, Ciattarelli used to referee Gaburo's little league ball games in Raritan. Don't be fooled by the Ivan Drago optics here, as Gaburo is an expert on healthcare, hospitals, and insurance. Florio is the ultimate utility player.







TOM BRACKEN & MICHELE SIEKERKA



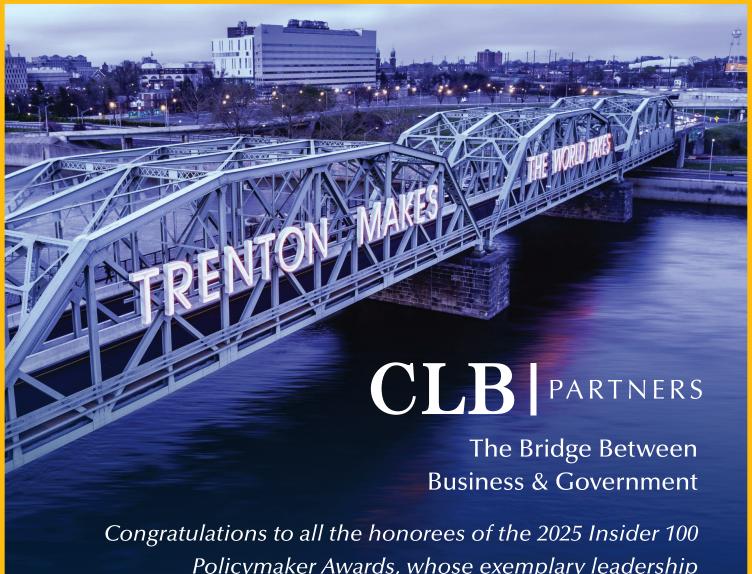
PRESIDENT OF THE NEW JERSEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

A retired banker, Bracken in 2017 helped establish and became co-chair of Opportunity NJ, a coalition of major state business organizations supporting government policies that pave the way for job growth, affordability and prosperity in the state. A member of the New Jersey Business Hall of Fame, in 2014, Bracken became chairman of Forward NJ, a coalition promoting investment in the state's transportation infrastructure.



PRESIDENT OF THE NEW JERSEY BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

NJBIA President Michele Siekerka celebrated ten years with her firm last October, in that time skillfully navigating Democratic and Republican worlds as she fought against corporate tax increases by the Murphy Administration and tirelessly advocated for the state's business community. She spearheaded their strategic partnership with NJMEP, was made Chair of the Conference of State Manufacturers' Board of Directors and serves as a top voice for women in the business world as a master communicator.



Policymaker Awards, whose exemplary leadership continues to shape our future.



Jon Bombardieri **Managing Partner**



Jonathan Boguchwal Partner



Karen Kominsky Partner



David Glass Partner



Nicole Howarth Director





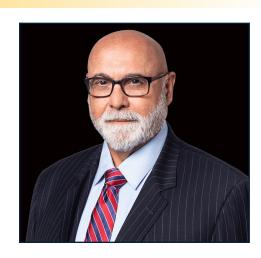




ANGELO GENOVA

CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING PARTNER, GENOVA BURNS

The state's foremost election law attorney, the veteran legal mind will continue to aggressively engage amid official ongoing examinations into elections integrity, both in New Jersey and nationally.

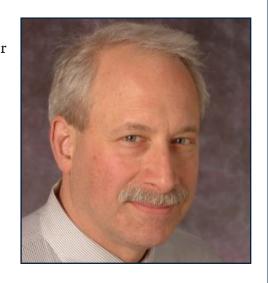


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JOEL CANTOR

DIRECTOR, RUTGERS CENTER FOR STATE HEALTH POLICY

Cantor serves as the founding director of the Rutgers
Center for State Health Policy and a distinguished professor
of public policy at the Rutgers Edward J. Bloustein School
of Planning and Public Policy. A national leader in health
policy and services research, Cantor focuses on innovations
in health services financing and delivery for Medicaid
beneficiaries and other groups experiencing health-related
social needs and barriers to high quality health services.
According to Rutgers, "He currently leads the NJHealth
Study, the Integrated Population Health Data (iPHD)
project, and studies of Medicaid health services outcomes
for people experiencing homelessness funded by the NIH
(R01MD015261) and the Robert Wood."





LUCAS MARXEN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRON-MENTAL ANALYSIS AND COMMUNICATIONS GROUP AT THE EDWARD J. BLOUSTEIN SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND PUBLIC POLICY AT RUTGERS



Expert in planning, policy, data analysis, and public informatics development, Lucas leads applied research projects focused on supporting state and local planning and policy making across various aspects of climate change, environmental policy, and resource development/management. According to Rutgers, "He manages a team leading the development of digital informatics systems that combine computer science and data visualization techniques into platforms that bring research and data to a broad set of stakeholders to support decision-making across a diverse range of subject and research areas. Lucas also has expertise in developing geographic information systems (GIS), enabling spatial analysis and modeling for research initiatives in a variety of disciplines."



JOHN REITMEYER

REPORTER, NJ SPOTLIGHT NEWS

The Samson Agonistes of government news reporting, Reitmeyer stands in the temple essentially holding up the pillars of what remains of the demolished Fourth Estate in the New Jersey Capitol. His budget dispatches are essential reading for even the most carefree wonk, and, in fact, provide the crafters of the state budget with the primary source materials they need to start – and finish – the process.





JOHN DIMAIO

ASSEMBLY REPUBLICAN LEADER

Former Mayor of Hackettstown DiMaio has a strong understanding of budget issues and convictions on spending priorities as he works effectively across the aisle and with the members of the GOP caucus.





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The New Jersey Apartment Association is the premier statewide organization representing all facets of the multifamily rental housing industry, advancing the success and professionalism of its membership through government affairs advocacy, education, training, and industry events.





BRIANA VANNOZZI

ANCHOR, NJ SPOTLIGHT NEWS

The Emmy Award-winning public television star (formerly the NJN bureau chief at the State Capitol) leveraged maximum effectiveness this season as chief moderator in a policy debate among the Democratic Primary contenders. With Vannozzi in the command chair, the hour-long program served as both a sparkling and substantive forum for New Jerseyans to educate themselves about the candidates' positions on key issues.



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ANDREW ZWICKER

STATE SENATOR, LD-16

The Princeton University-based plasma physics department outreach director, Zwicker brings a technocratic core intelligence to his assignments aboard Budget and Appropriations, Higher Education, Labor, and Veterans Affairs.





NICOLE RODRIGUEZ

PRESIDENT, NEW JERSEY POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Formerly NJPP's research director, Rodriguez has guided the think tank's policy agenda and supervised its research staff since 2019. A Boston native and former star at the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, Berger says, "With democratic institutions and basic freedoms under attack in our nation's halls of power, the need for community-driven policy has never been greater. We have a lot of work to do in building a state and economy that works for everyone, and I know that with this team we can get it done."



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RYAN HAYGOOD

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Haygood primarily concerns himself with policy that empowers at-risk urban communities. As such, he finds himself engaged 24-7, mostly against a political establishment primarily consumed with disempowering those same at-risk urban communities.





STACI BERGER

PRESIDENT, HOUSING DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY NETWORK



Hardcore affordable housing activist Berger of Piscataway takes aim at all the wearying enemies of working-class people in search of a fair shake. She wants the codification of Mount Laurel to guarantee affordable housing in all of New Jersey's communities. She seeks rental assistance expansion aimed at protecting tenants. She wants to evict eviction as a policy from the state of New Jersey. Steadfastly political, she takes pride in having moved the affordable housing issue needle in this ongoing Democratic Primary season. "Rent," says Berger, "is just too damn high." In addition to diminishing people's quality of life, it's "preventing people from being homeowners." While spiritedly engaged both in Trenton and in her hometown, Berger also sees the dismal, callous attacks initiated by the Trump Administration in Washington and says, for the moment, she's mostly focused on stopping fascism in America.

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ELIZABETH COONER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NJ STATE POLICY LAB

Cooner conducts rigorous, nonpartisan research and analysis of policy issues facing the state with an eye toward equity and social justice, according to Rutgers. Formerly the Vice President of Social and Public Policy at Louis Harris & Associates, where she focused on policy issues related to health, well-being, and access to care.





TIM SULLIVAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER, NEW JERSEY
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY

Sullivan comes from New York, where he served as Chief of Staff to the New York City Deputy Mayor for Economic Development, and where he'll probably return once his gig in this state is over.





PETER CHEN

SENIOR POLICY ANALYST, NEW JERSEY POLICY PERSPECTIVE



Chen serves as tax and budget lead, coordinating analysis of state and local fiscal policy. Expertise includes child and family policy advocacy in New Jersey since 2014. Most recently, according to NJPP, "he spearheaded New Jersey's creation of a state-level Child Tax Credit. Peter's work has included coordination of the statewide nonprofit Census complete count campaign, advocacy to strengthen state and local laws to protect children from lead exposure and reducing chronic absenteeism from school." Previously Peter served as Policy Counsel for KIDS COUNT grantee Advocates for Children of New Jersey. Peter received his JD from Yale Law School and his Bachelors of Arts from Indiana University-Bloomington.

Congratulations Team PPAG.

Named to the Insider NJ: Policymakers Power List



Dale Florio



Al Gaburo



Bill Pascrell, III (BP3)



Janice Fuller



Christina Zuk







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MARY COOGAN

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY

Succeeding Cecilia Zalkind as leader of ACNJ, Coogan stands at the forefront of key policy advances in child welfare, early care and education and health care in New Jersey.



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BILL PASCRELL III

LOBBYIST,
PRINCETON PUBLIC
AFFAIRS GROUP

A partner at Princeton Public Affairs Group since 1999, Pascrell has established himself as the state's leading expert on all things related to the gaming industry – and cannabis.





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AMY TORRES

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEW JERSEY ALLIANCE FOR IMMIGRANT JUSTICE

Torres' work takes on new and urgent relevance in the face of the Trump Administration's mass deportations, private detention areas that operate above public scrutiny, and the dismantling of due process.





BILL MULLEN

PRESIDENT, NJ BUILDING TRADES COUNCIL

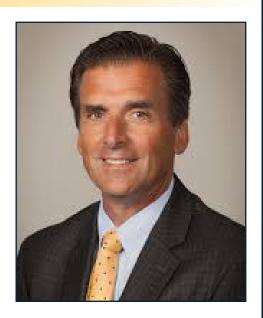
The hard hat labor leader occupies a critical zone of influence amid the peripheral scraps that drag down both major parties.



DENNIS HART

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHEMISTRY COUNCIL OF NEW JERSEY

With over four decades of environmental policy experience, the former NJDEP Assistant Commissioner is an expert on water infrastructure regulations, and currently heads up the Chemistry Council of NJ.



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SHIRLEY TURNER

SENATOR, LD-15

The environmental justice advocate continues to distinguish herself with legislation aimed at protecting urban residents from hazardous materials and creating funding opportunities to create conservation and preservation in the City of Trenton.





PATRICK MURRAY

FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF STIMSIGHT RESEARCH

The nationally recognized leader in the field of opinion research, Murray is the founder and former director of the respected Monmouth University Polling Institute, which was named one of the top five polling organizations in the U.S. by 538.com. Murray also held key roles in policy and media research at Rutgers University, where his work covered a wide range of issue areas.



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DR. STUART SHAPIRO

NJ STATE POLICY LAB

Permanent dean of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University, Shapiro joined the school over two decades ago after receiving his Ph.D. from Harvard University and working for five years at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.





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CATHERINE TUNG

MCCARTER AND ENGLISH

With a particular focus on economic development and recovery, Tung worked on the tax incentive bill that was designed to diversify EDA's economic development toolkit to support sustainable growth, as well as many business assistance bills to ensure small business wellbeing during and after the pandemic.



45

SARAH FAJARDO

ACLU POLICY DIRECTOR

As the leader of ACLU-NJ's powerhouse policy team, Policy Director Fajardo proved a highly effective organizer who fosters meaningful relationships and impactful coalitions with local advocacy groups and legislators. Fajardo was integral in the creation and implementation of the People's Lame Duck Agenda, an initiative that successfully pushed for the passage of multiple long-stalled racial and social justice bills. She and her team continue to fight to save the Open Public Records Act, regularly meeting with electeds and partner organizations to protect government transparency and accountability across the state.



SHEREEF ELNAHAL

PRESIDENT/CEO UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

The 21st Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health in the State of New Jersey in July 2019 became president/CEO of University Hospital in Newark.



47

JANICE KOVACH

MAYOR OF CLINTON TOWN & COMMISSIONER WITH THE NEW JERSEY MOTION PICTURE AND TELEVISION COMMISSION

Kovach goes back at the beginning as the on-the-ground leader of Governor Phil Murphy's initiative to create more opportunities for film and television in the Garden State. How's the NJ film industry doing now? It's booming, with Lionsgate expanding and other new studios coming in and Netflix production thriving. "With all the crazy politics going on, I can escape to fantasy films and even horror," cracked avid film buff Kovach.





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SHOSHANNA PAGE

DEPUTY CHIEF OF POLICY & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIST TO MAYOR TED R. GREEN, EAST ORANGE, NJ

Page turned the page from Newark, where she was a key architect of progressive policy under Mayor Ras Baraka, to East Orange, where she now serves as a top advisor to Mayor Ted Green bringing her signature blend of strategy, community focus, and results-driven leadership.





JANICE FULLER

PRINCETON PUBLIC AFFAIRS GROUP

Formerly of Anbaric Development Partners, the former chair of the Redistricting Commission and Chief-of-Staff to U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone joined the powerful lobbying firm in March, arming PPAG with another weapon.





THIRTEEN









nj.com/SteveAdubato











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GENE LEPORE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE NJ ASSOCIATION OF
STATE COLLEGES AND
UNIVERSITIES (NJASCU)

Assuming leadership of the NJASCU in 2020, Lepore works with seven key public colleges and universities in the State. Previously, he spent over 10 years in the Senate Majority Office, where he served as Deputy Executive Director and Director of Budget and Fiscal Analysis. He has become a go-to higher education policy expert for legislators, staffers, the executive branch, and members of the media since taking over NJASCU.

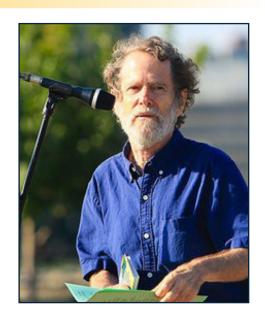




SAM PESIN

PRESIDENT, FRIENDS OF LIBERTY PARK

The ultimate local advocate for the wise use of public park land, Pesin looks forward to the new Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)-coordinated master plan – based on input from the design task force – for his beloved Liberty State Park. Pesin supports small commercial development only for the park (vendors for kayaks, for example) not a golf course and auditorium or sports entertainment complex. He and the Friends of Liberty State Park now want the legislature to come up with funds to implement the plans to coincide with the 50-year anniversary of the park, and passage of the Liberty State Park Protection Act (which includes the protection of Caven Point).





MIKIE SHERRILL

U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN, CD-11

The former Navy helicopter pilot with legitimate leadership ability has distinguished herself in Congress as a pragmatic voice on foreign policy, education, and the economy. The 2025 Democratic nominee for Governor.





BRITTANY L. HOLOM-TRUNDY

SENIOR POLICY ANALYST, NJ POLICY PERSPECTIVE

The Princeton University PhD researcher and lecturer focuses on health care system reform, the differential impact of health policies across socioeconomic groups, and the role of social and cultural factors in the access to and use of health care services, as well as health outcomes, according to the New Jersey Policy Perspective.





AMI KACHALIA

CAMPAIGN STRATEGIST AT AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF NEW JERSEY



The graduate of the Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics received a Lloyd C. Gardner Fellowship in Leadership & Social Policy and Certificate in Women's Leadership from the Institute for Women's Leadership. Her honors include the Barbara Boggs Sigmund Award for Public Leadership and a Public Service Award from a Solomon J. Neimark Apprenticeship.

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MATTHEW BUCKLEY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY, RUTGERS



Buckley described the impact of Elon Musk's DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) on the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the grants process that funds scientific research institutions like Rutgers University as insane." While the Trump Administration dumped independent attorneys general while installing vaccine skeptic Robert Kennedy Jr. at the U.S. Department of Health, the world's richest man tried to dismantle the lives of research scientists – faculty and students – at New Jersey's oldest public university. In Buckley's words, "Whatever people voted for last November, they didn't vote for the end of cancer research" and chunks removed from the country's healthcare and economic engines. For every dollar the federal government invests in NIH grants, universities generate two and a half dollars, said Buckley, a critical enhancement of our economy, especially in New Jersey, where the pharmaceutical industry accounts for 2.4% of the state's private workforce.

TARA COLTON

CHIEF ECONOMIC
SECURITY OFFICER,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY

Colton oversees over \$300 million in EDA dollars to alleviate food insecurity and eliminate food deserts, including the Food Desert Relief Act, Food Security Planning Grants, the Food Retail Innovation in Delivery Grant (FRIDG) and Sustain & Serve NJ.



57

DOUG TOMSON

CEO OF NJ REALTORS

Leader of the largest trade association for real estate pros, Tomson was also appointed to the Governor's Economic Council.



ZENON CHRISTODOULOU

COMMISSIONER, BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

The economics professor, businessman, and former Vice President of the Somerset County Democratic Party, turned heads when he popped up in Matt Friedman's Politico Playbook with this quote in reference to the BPU: "Outside opinions, including mine and others, are dismissed and marginalized. This flawed internal process worries me deeply. Many times, I've seen that expected results drives the analysis, reinforcing expected conclusions and garnering support from senior staff." He added that "dissenting opinions are not common and quite often, unfortunately, discouraged."



59

MIKE TESTA

STATE SENATOR (R-CUMBERLAND)

The South Jersey GOP firebrand has legit legal chops and the willingness to go toe-to-toe with Democrats statewide.



WE'RE SOUNDING THE ALARM.



In Congress, a bill is being considered that would "defund" Planned Parenthood and drastically cut access to Medicaid. (By the time you're reading this, this bill may have already been passed.)

These cuts could shut down an estimated **200 Planned Parenthood health centers** across the country - including centers here in New Jersey.

Congressional leadership is willing to take away patients' access to birth control, cancer screenings, and STI testing and treatment to push their own political agenda and impose their beliefs on everyone.

New Jersey has a chance to stand up to these draconian cuts. Our legislators can invest in reproductive freedom for all by funding family planning services in the SFY26 budget. Amidst federal attacks on our health, rights, and freedom, New Jersey has an opportunity to stand up for patients. Our state's health depends on it.



Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey

www.ppactionnj.org

ED POTOSNAK

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

The policy-minded, wonky Potosnak put policy detailoriented questions in front of all of the gubernatorial candidates in this politically rapacious season.



61

DAVID PASCRELL

CHAIR, GOVERNMENT AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS, GIBBONS PC

Lawyer and lobbyist Pascrell possesses government affairs expertise across a broad range, including finance and insurance, health and hospital, technology, utilities, development and construction, and public entities.



TIMOTHY MCDONOUGH

MAYOR OF HOPE TOWNSHIP

Chair of the New Jersey Conference of Mayors (NJCM) Legislative Committee, the long-serving independent mayor of Hope is universally respected.





DENA MOTTOLA JABORSKA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEW JERSEY CITIZEN ACTION

At a time of diminished trustworthy media sources, in the Project 2025 era, with Donald Trump as President and a haggardly corrupt political establishment hanging on for dear life, Mottola Jaborska leads a staff of public-minded policy commandos. Jaborska had said that their advocacy and empowerment would focus on strategic planning concerning issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion - putting their work squarely in the sights of the Trump administration which is publicly opposed to such policies.





ROY FREIMAN

ASSEMBLYMAN, LD-16

Chair of the Assembly Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee, Freiman has a problem-solving knack for avoiding the nonsense that goes into most governmental decisions, and a personality that makes people around him want to do better. A retired vice president of strategy and analytics for Prudential Financial, Freiman does something rare for powerful people in our solipsistic age: he actually listens.

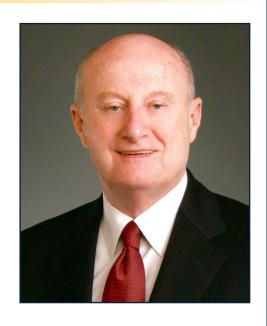


65

MICHAEL CRITCHLEY

ATTORNEY

Longtime heavy hitting defense lawyer – and plugged-in NJ insider – Critchley scored a big win this year when a judge threw out the case against his client, South Jersey Democratic Party Powerbroker George Norcross III.





32BJ SEIU Congratulates

2025 Insider NJ Policymakers Shaping Our State

"32BJ SEIU proudly represents 15,000 property service workers in New Jersey. This includes residential workers, commercial cleaners, and security officers. These are the essential workers who keep our buildings, transit hubs, and venues — establishments integral to life in the Garden State — safe and secure.

Congratulations to this year's Insider NJ Policymakers who are helping to craft and pass policy across the state."

Ana Maria Hill, 32BJ SEIU Vice President and NJ State Director





32BJ SEIU is the largest property services union in the country

HUGH O'BEIRNE

PRESIDENT, HAWTHORNE AVE STRATEGIES

Skilled in cannabis regulation and policy, government relations and legal writing, O'Beirne founded Hawthorne Ave. Strategies, which focuses on optimizing business outcomes and strategic goals for US and international cannabis operators.





ALLISON LADD

DEPUTY MAYOR /
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC
AND HOUSING
DEVELOPMENT FOR
THE CITY OF NEWARK

Expert in Real Estate Finance, Affordable Housing, Policy Analysis, Economic Development, and Real Estate Development, Ladd has key allies in Newark as a consequence of her constant insistence on equity. Critical in the development of the Gant-Gilbert Arts Collective at 505 Clinton Avenue.



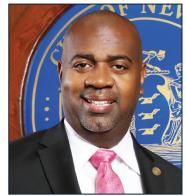
INSIDER 100 POLICY MAKERS 2025

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RAS BARAKA

MAYOR, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

As a leading figure in the Democratic Party, Baraka's policies have reshaped the landscape of Newark, and influenced initiatives across New Jersey and beyond. His leadership resulted in the replacement of over 23,000 lead service lines in the Brick City, the launch of New Jersey's first municipal land bank, the advancement of the city's award-winning 360 Master Plan, and the establishment of



one of the state's most forward-thinking inclusionary zoning ordinances. His Guaranteed Education pilot program reflects his commitment to building a more just and equitable future for Newark's youth. In this year's Democratic Primary for Governor, he finished a very respectable second and solidified his position as one of New Jersey's leading critics of the administration of President Donald J. Trump.

69

JESSELLY DE LA CRUZ

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LATINO ACTION NETWORK

The Hispanic community advocate occupies the front lines in the brave new world of the Trump era.



LEANY PICHARDO

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AT OFFICE OF ASSEMBLY-WOMAN ELIANA PINTOR MARIN

Former project manager for the New Jersey Department of Human Services advises the Assembly Budget Chair from Newark on all policy matters.



71

DAN SMITH

SENIOR ASSOCIATE, 1868 PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Former Senior Advisor to New Jersey General Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin, Smith specializes in legislative affairs for corporate and government organizations.



PAUL SARLO

STATE SENATE BUDGET CHAIR

The South Bergen diehard (still mayor of Wood-Ridge after all these years) stood at the center of budget negotiations at an especially thorny time as Trump's "big, beautiful bill" threatens to put the chokehold on New Jersey.



73

MICHAEL FELD

DIRECTOR, CENTRAL MANAGEMENT UNIT, OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

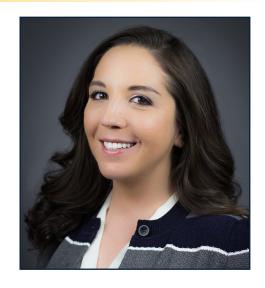
The longtime director manages approximately 150 professional and administrative staff who provide nonpartisan staff support services to the New Jersey Legislature.



KAITLYN WOJTOWICZ

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AT PLANNED PARENTHOOD ACTION FUND OF NEW JERSEY

With deep policy knowledge in all areas pertinent to Planned Parenthood and experience in grant writing, marketing, medical services, education and finance, Wojtowicz comes to the work prepared.



75

RICHARD HENNING

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE NEW JERSEY UTILITIES ASSOCIATION

Henning provides strategic direction and sets policy for NJUA members and represents utilities in various political and governmental activities in the State of New Jersey, according to the NJUA. "This would include legislative, executive, administrative, and regulatory state governmental operations."



JOSH GOTTHEIMER

U.S. CONGRESSMAN, DISTRICT 5

Challenged by progressive politics in a statewide Democratic Primary, Gottheimer in the comfort zone of his leafy, sedate, and conservative North Jersey district, proves pragmatically spectacular.





MARLEINA UBEL

SENIOR POLICY ANALYST, NJ POLICY PERSPECTIVE

According to NJ Policy Perspective, Ubel "researches the criminal legal system with a focus on alternatives to policing that center restorative justice. Previously, [she] was NJPP's 2020-2021 Kathleen Crotty Fellow where she analyzed the state budget process and researched public spending on state and local law enforcement."





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SUSAN TELLONE

CLINICAL DIRECTOR AT THE SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF TEEN SUICIDE

Tellone's impassioned work as an advocate for the mental health of young people takes on a special significance amid headlines in New Jersey of mass youth mayhem.



79

ERIN K. REAGAN

POLICY ANALYST, N.J. ASSEMBLY MAJORITY OFFICE

The PhD advises Democrats on technology and energy policy, with a specialty in vaccine and infectious disease.





PRISCILLA GARCES

ACTIVIST AND PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, FAMILIES, AND PEACE

Board Member of Lupe Fund, member of the Women's Federation for World Peace, public policy diehard Garces this year took up the fight for the preservation of federal Medicaid funding.





JOE CRYAN

STATE SENATOR (D-20)

The Union-based veteran lawmaker, former chair of the Democratic State Committee (and former sheriff), has one of the state's finest policy minds, and is expert on law enforcement, campaigns and elections, labor, and the budget.



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*A description of the selection methodology can be found at https://www.event.law.com/njlawjournal-njlegalawards/methodology.

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



CHRISTINA ZUK

PRINCETON PUBLIC AFFAIRS GROUP

Experienced government affairs agent. Worked in the New Jersey State Senate, serving as Chief of Staff to the Budget & Appropriations Committee Chair and later to the Senate Majority Leader.



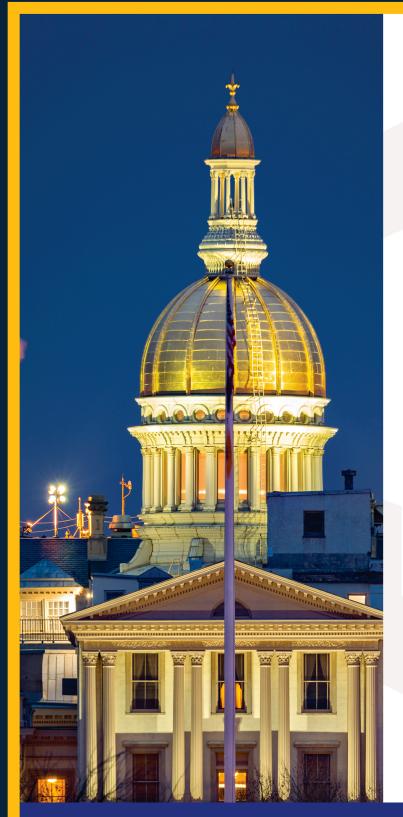
83

BENJIE WIMBERLY

STATE SENATOR (D-35)

A legendary Paterson-based coach, Wimberly is a go-to guy on urban affairs, housing, healthcare and education. A short-list candidate for Lieutenant Governor on the Mikie Sherrill ticket.





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JACK CIATTARELLI

FORMER LD-16 ASSEMBLYMAN

With a combination of on-the-ground campaign chops and a presidential endorsement, Ciattarelli easily won the Republican nomination for governor. Don't underestimate a key reason for the former assemblyman's continued political success: his unique, detail-oriented, and personable ability to communicate difficult policy issues, especially in the areas of finance, the economy, and budget.



85

AMY MANSUE

PRESIDENT AND CEO, INSPIRA HEALTH

Mansue has deep experience in health policy, and currently serves as CEO and President of Inspira Health. She has previously served as Executive Vice President and Chief Experience Officer for RWJBarnabas Health and President, Southern Region, RWJBarnabas Health; President and Chief Executive Officer of Children's Specialized Hospital; and Chief Strategy Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Health System.



ERIC DOBSON

STRATEGIC CONSULTANT TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE FAIR SHARE HOUSING CENTER

A major lowkey force, ordained minister Smith possesses deep powers of coalition building, the result of interfaith outreach.



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GABRIEL NEVILLE

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL, OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES

A legislative staffer for two decades, Neville served as Deputy/Associate/Senior Counsel in the Central Management Unit, and as Senior/Assistant Legislative Counsel in the Office of Legislative Counsel. Appointed to his current post three years ago, the legislative counsel provides professional, nonpartisan staff support services to the Legislature and its officers, members, committees, and commissions. A graduate of Queens University of Charlotte and Temple University's Beasley School of Law.





DAN HARRIS

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR FOR SPEAKER CRAIG COUGHLIN

Harris possesses real world grounding as a member of the Woodbridge Board of Education. Critical in the development of StayNJ, and a vital part of the Speaker's efforts to strike a budget balancing act come crunch time.





KRISTINE ALLEN & CARY LOPEZ

ACT NOW FOUNDATION IN HUDSON COUNTY

Both excel at navigating the politics there to further their policy goals – which in its own right is laudable – increasing Alzheimer's awareness, care, and funding. They combine policy chops with an on-the-ground understanding of the reality of the issue, advocating in the Statehouse, while caring directly for those afflicted patients, caretakers, and families.





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CHRIS DURKIN

ESSEX COUNTY CLERK

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MARJORIE KAPLAN

SENIOR ASSOCIATE
DIRECTOR OF THE RUTGERS
CLIMATE AND ENERGY
INSTITUTE

According to Rutgers, Kaplan operates "at the nexus of environmental science, natural resources, and human and ecological health within federal and state programs, for a major utility, two international consulting firms and academia."





JEFF TITTEL

FORMER STATE DIRECTOR, SIERRA CLUB

Even though he no longer runs the Sierra Club, Tittel made a deep and lasting mark that will not soon be forgotten by environmental advocates in the state of New Jersey – and he continues to effectively communicate his ideas and passion. "There is no environmental movement in New Jersey right now," Tittel said of his beloved home state. "The sleeper issue in the gubernatorial campaign is development." Specifically, he says, overdevelopment, as voters everywhere sit in bumper-to-bumper traffic.





ALEX AMBROSE

POLICY ANALYST, NJ POLICY PERSPECTIVE

Expert on policy and legislation to protect clean water, preserve open space, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions with an emphasis on equity. Helped pass plastic pollution legislation including the statewide single-use bag ban.



MILADY RAMOS

POLICY ANALYST, NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Experienced in the operations of nonprofits with missions rooted in human rights work, including the prioritization of families and children in the child welfare system.





PAULA WHITE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JERSEYCAN

A former New Jersey school leader and NJDOE exec, Paula White is an education policy expert and the current head of JerseyCAN. She has developed deep bonafides in bipartisanship, legislation, and advocacy for public schools, educators, parents, and most of all, students. A key education voice in both Trenton and local school districts, White made a big splash with her statewide crusade to address literacy - uniting various anchor groups around the issue and developing policy recommendations that directly informed recently passed literacy laws.





proud advocates for educators, students, and the nation's **BEST** public schools.

Pictured above:

Sean M. Spiller, President (center)

Steve Beatty, Vice President (left)

Petal Robertson, Secretary-Treasurer (right)

LAÏSSA C. ALEXIS

NJ REPARATIONS COUNCIL RESEARCH FELLOW, ECONOMIC JUSTICE PROGRAM DO SOCIAL JUSTICE

Drafted research memos on a variety of social justice issues for Prof. Amna Akbar, visiting scholar at Columbia Law School in the aftermath of the police killing of George Floyd.



97

JANELLEN DUFFY

LOBBYIST, RIVER CROSSING STRATEGY

Having worked for the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and as Education Policy Advisor and Director of Policy for Governor Jon Corzine, Duffy carries heavyweight credentials into her work in Trenton.



LISA J. PLEVIN

FORMER CHIEF OF STAFF
FOR REGION 2 OF THE US
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AGENCY, LEAGUE
OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

Former Campaign Coordinator for the NJ Environmental Federation. Developed a statewide coalition of 85 organizations, organized fundraisers, press conferences and lobbying sessions, wrote press releases and testimony for hearings and served as media spokesperson.

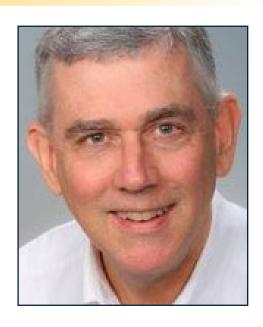


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CLINTON ANDREWS

DISTINGUISHED
PROFESSOR AND THE
ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR
RESEARCH AT THE
BLOUSTEIN SCHOOL

Provided context for New Jersey climate innovations, a critical contribution in a state where "public service" usually means giving corporate developers the kings to the kingdom.



Congrats! TO NJ REALTORS® CEO DOUG TOMSON





The voice for real estate in New Jersey.

NJ REALTORS® Government Affairs Team



CATHERINE BEST Director of Government Affairs



Director of RPAC & Regulatory Affairs



RJ CLIFTON Coordinator



Government Affairs Government Affairs **Coordinator**

njrealtor.com



STEVE PETER

SOMERSET COUNTY CLERK



President of the Constitutional Officers Association of New Jersey (COANJ). Expert on the unbracketing process. Speaks five languages. Election law expert. As President of COANJ, he's had his hands on everything related to Clerks, Recorders, Sheriffs, and Surrogates, working with their lobbyist on legislation. Gov. Phil Murphy named him to the re-opening working group as we came out of COVID.