

NEW JERSEY

2026

LOCAL ELECTIONS.
NATIONAL CONSEQUENCES.



NEWARK AND
PATERSON RESHAPE
THE POLITICAL MAP



BAYONNE'S
HIGH-STAKES
MAYORAL FIGHT



LOCAL GOVERNANCE
MEETS FEDERAL
PRESSURE

PROVIDING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES TO FAMILIES LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

- CAREGIVER SUPPORT 
- CRISIS MANAGEMENT 
- LONG-TERM CARE PLANNING 
- COGNITIVE ASSESSMENTS 
- DISEASE EDUCATION 
- CARE COORDINATION 

201-721-6721



**Give Back to the
Fight Against Dementia:
SCAN TO DONATE**



400 38TH ST, STE 402
UNION CITY, NJ 07087

ACTNOWFOUNDATION.ORG
@ACTNOWFOUNDATION



ACT NOW
FOUNDATION

Dementia Resource Center

INTRODUCTION



Leave it to Bayonne (see below) to provide the most interesting mayoral contest on the May 12th election schedule, mostly by virtue of a vacancy creating the most intense flashpoint of local drama.

In Newark, an open at-large seat makes that the most watched Brick City (citywide) contest this year while the Central Ward offers arguably the most competitive ward matchup (details below). In Newark, as in Paterson, the mayoral contests have potentially significant future higher office implications.

But more immediately, the greatest challenges in New Jersey's implications appear to come less from within the towns than from Washington, D.C. These May elections contain strong suggestions of the populations in those towns running against President Donald J. Trump more than colliding strictly in the politics of their respective municipalities.

Against the backdrop of abuses by the Trump-led Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Agency, Governor Mikie Sherrill signed three bills protecting the Constitutional rights

of New Jerseyans and “keep[ing] communities safe from federal law enforcement abuse,” in the words of the Governor, among them the so-called mask bill aimed to curtail “anonymous and deadly ICE overreach.”



“We’re not going to allow masked fed agents to terrorize our state,” said Sherrill. “We’ve all seen them in videos - unknown, unnamed, unaccountable, chasing after citizens. Again - not here in the United States of America. We’re not going to tolerate masked roving militias pretending to be law enforcement agents.”

Sherrill likewise took a stand against Trump’s unconstitutional executive order to derail fair and safe elections. Nosediving toward the November midterm elections, starting wag-the-dog wars, dementia-flailing, Trump is terrified of empowered Democrats force-feeding his past in the form of late pal Jeffrey Epstein. The President will fail to stop what’s coming for him in November, the Governor said, and New Jersey will do its part to ensure his failure, while simultaneously upholding America. “Elections are by the Constitution state-run,” Sherrill told

InsiderNJ. “We’re going to fight back. We’re going to be successful and I know we’re going to run a safe election.”

New Jersey is a model for safe and easy voting. “The President is going in the opposite direction, threatening to put ICE agents in the streets and attacking mail-in voting,” said the Governor. “I know we can run a safe vote, and I am working closely with my LG. If we need to go back to the legislature [for strengthened laws] we’ll do that.

“At the same time,” Sherrill cautioned, “I can’t promise that for every state in the nation.”

Sherrill blocked Trump’s efforts to access private voter information here, he sued, and “We will win in court,” Sherrill said, “but not every governor is protecting the vote in their state.”

Baraka expressed similar sentiments in his 2026 State of the City Address, as he prepared for his own reelection effort. “While the country is moving away from equity, it is time that we begin to lean in... We need all of our financial experts and partners, corporations, capital investment institutions, public sector leaders,” said the Newark Mayor. “We need your technical and financial support now. We don’t just need you to raise your hand at a meeting – verbally say you support Black and Brown people at public events or press interviews. We need history to judge you as an ally and a friend.”

And this from Mayor Sayegh in Paterson on the pressing issue of Trump’s repeated

Local news is more important **than ever**



TAPINTO PROVIDES ORIGINAL LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE EVERY DAY IN MORE THAN 150 NJ TOWNS

Objective Local News Coverage

No Comments/
Anonymous Comments

No Editorial Page

No Paywall

To Advertise:
TAPintoMarketing.net

Franchising
Information:
StartTAP.net

Sign Up for Our
Free Newsletter:



statements about nationalizing elections, and his conflation of isolated instances of ballot fraud or alleged ballot fraud with overhauling the entire constitutional system of state-run elections in his favor: “There are isolated instances [more on those isolated instances below] but as far as the process is concerned, elections are fair and free and people have an opportunity to exercise their democratic right.”

Issues of taxes, development, public safety and sanitation abound in towns home to nonpartisan elections this season, even as a withering of local media, intensified nationalization of politics – and, yes, the wholly self-serving attempted nationalizing of elections by Trump - has most everyone in New Jersey politics on high alert heading through this season of local politics toward the seismic schedule of the 2026 congressional midterm elections. Certainly, Trump mayhem gives New Jersey Democrats a common enemy, and local power brokers an easy way – at the very least

- to shift the conversation from potholes and, in Newark, Liberace-wriggling Superintendent Roger Leon, to the downward-pressing, twittering impact of a nuclear codes-possessing maniac. In addition, locally grounded elected officials here see an opportunity to take a public stand and to tell a story uniquely New Jerseyan, which is to say, uniquely American, albeit in certain cases, at the very least, in alarmingly bas taste.



Max Pizarro

Editor-in-Chief




SHAPING POLICY. DELIVERING RESULTS.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS | STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS | REGULATORY STRATEGY

Representing businesses, organizations, and institutions
across New Jersey with proven results in Trenton and beyond.



 212 WEST STATE STREET
TRENTON, NJ 08608

 PHONE 609.392.3100
FAX 609.392.6347

 INFO@MBI-GS.COM

 MBI-GS.COM

INSIDER NJ

InsiderNJ is a nonpartisan website dedicated to political news in the state of New Jersey.

Veteran award-winning reporter and editor Max Pizarro is contractually in charge of all news content and professionally focused daily on making InsiderNJ the Garden State's number one trusted source for political news. We will be out here on the streets of our cities, under the Gold Dome, and in the suburban town halls, fair grounds, marketplaces, county conventions and diner booths of political inquiry and intrigue. We will find our way into the conversation.



Max Pizarro

Editor-in-Chief

Max@InsiderNJ.com



Pete Oneglia

General Manager

Pete@InsiderNJ.com



John Van Vliet

Director of Operations

JohnVV@InsiderNJ.com

ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

Reach New Jersey's most influential political, business, and civic leaders with custom designed full page ads for maximum visibility, credibility, and impact.

Download our Insider NJ Advertising Kit to explore exclusive opportunities to promote your brand across our highly anticipated Top 100 Power Lists and other special-edition publications throughout 2026.



Michael Graham

CEO

John F.X. Graham

Publisher

Ryan Graham

Associate Publisher



P.O. BOX 66 | VERONA, NJ 07044 | INSIDERNJ@GMAIL.COM

INSIDERNJ.COM



ROUND WORLD
CONSULTING

is proud to support

INSIDERNJ

2026

**NONPARTISAN
MUNICIPAL EDITION**

Sean M. Darcy, President

PO Box 397, Belmar, NJ 07719 | 609-610-0543



NEWARK

Bogie at the end of *Casablanca* tells Ingrid Bergman, “We’ll always have Paris,” and however long Ras Baraka sticks around in Newark after this upcoming May election, he’ll always have poetry.

Poetry has always been as important as policy for Baraka. They’re one in the same, actually and what it really comes down to is this: while most politicians rehearse their speeches in front of mirrors before they present them to an audience, Baraka routinely sounds like he’s improvising. The muse takes possession and

the speech sounds more like an improvised soliloquy that connects with everyone’s inspired inner frequency, less than an outward, dramatic play to flatter or captivate. That’s the key to composition, according to Chopin, to land a melody seemingly invented right on the spot, the essence of jazz, obviously.

Whatever his future in politics a year after his second-place finish in the 2025 governor’s race, Baraka has enough ability to make it in the writing trade. All he has to do is type up what he says, and inevitably someone will receive it as

poetic. Of course, it's in the blood for the eldest son of the late Amiri Baraka, a Beat Generation icon.

But back to Newark and the contest there this year.

Is there a contest?

Well, yeah, kind of.

Actually, not.

Not really.

Not for mayor.

Now, a glib pronouncement like that will no doubt infuriate the other people running for that seat but the fact is they don't have the infrastructure. It's not happening. But by way of acknowledging the citywide contest, Jhamar Youngblood, Sheila Montague, Tanisha Garner and Noble Milton (among others) all want to pick off the incumbent.



"Politicians are only recognized by the things they do in the public," said Noble, lamenting

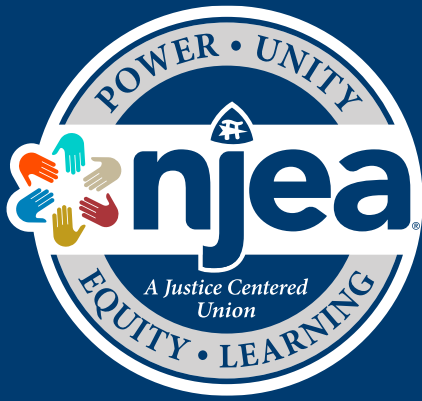
politicians who crassly do good when the cameras are rolling, just before Noble quite publicly, microphone in hand, launched into his own laundry list of all the good charitable work he's done.



Next, consider Montague, flattened 83-17% by Baraka four years ago in another mayoral bid.

"You say you hear the people," she said in a post directed at Baraka, "but you won't face the people. You can give speeches. You can go live. You can go on Instagram. You can control the message But you can't stand in a debate? Newark is paying attention. And Newark deserves answers."

Baraka probably doesn't want to give his adversaries the broader attention they can't generate themselves. Incidentally, it so happens that the mayor excels at debate, as he proved last year whenever he sparred with his fellow statewide Democrats. The pragmatic attitude among Ras allies – without getting overly arrogant - can be summed up thus: "I think anytime you have been in office you wear down



The members of the
New Jersey Education Association
are proud advocates for our colleagues,
our students, and America's
**BEST PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

Pictured above (l-r):

Secretary-Treasurer Tina Dare, President Steve Beatty & Vice President Petal Robertson

on people. The problem is – for the challengers – is that other than the same people saying the same thing over and over again, it’s social media, which seems crazy.”

But back to the mayoral hopefuls, maybe foremost of whom stands the appropriately named Youngblood, who posted the following:

“Here is what I’ve been up to since returning to Newark in 2015 after attending grad school at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire:
2017: Built software for the City of Newark to protect women and teens from street attacks and domestic abuse.

2018: Partnered with Ray Chambers and his foundation and started working with West Side High School to build and design software that helped students stay connected with their mentors.

2019–2022: Partnered with the Newark Board of Education to scale the software to 15 public schools so students could stay connected with their mentors during the pandemic.

2023: Started planning my run for political office with the goal of modernizing our city systems and making our city more transparent.

2024: Launched my campaign on my own. Started working on our Newark30 plan.

2025: Ran my campaign on my own, earned 13% of the vote, and wrote a book to help others run for office without relying on the machine. Finished our Newark30 plan.

2026: Begin the first year of implementing our Newark30 plan.



Of the challengers, Youngblood has probably drawn the most attention. Charismatic, proactive, young and energetic, social media savvy, and homework-proficient, he looks impressive, like someone with a future in Newark politics – and absolutely no shot right now. Baraka himself, of course, got run over multiple times in the Sharpe James era before summoning citywide support. Cory Booker lost his first mayoral run against the late Mr. James. One line stands out from Youngblood’s self-proclaimed litany of accomplishments: his passion to “help others run for office without relying on the machine.”

That’s Ras Baraka Politics 101.

Remember, Baraka beat the machine to get to City Hall and ran against what remained of the machine when I tried last year to get to Drumthwacket.

Is Youngblood laying the groundwork for a citywide future?

Probably.



But there are others too aware of the larger dynamics around the sitting mayor and his own statewide aspirations. Here's the bigger picture: Everyone's aware of Donald Trump teetering horrifically toward the abyss right now and the only question at this point is whether the temper-tantrum-thrower-in-chief drags the rest of us with him. As he desperately attempts to strongarm the country into a police state and short-circuit elections to prevent Democrats from unleashing the Epstein Files and impeaching him, Democrats jockey for position ahead of 2028, among them U.S. Senator Cory Booker and New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill.

Newly elected, Sherrill might not have time immediately after the midterms (if Americans protect them) to turn around a presidential campaign. But she fits the profile of what Democrats want, namely a governor undefined by Inside-the-Beltway complacency and weakness. The timeline probably makes Sherrill a more likely vice-presidential candidate than candidate for president, and if she ends up on a winning national ticket (or in the cabinet of a new Democratic President) look for Baraka to spring for governor again in 2029. He's going for it. He came in second, after all, last time, and shows signs of improving infrastructure and relationships to take another shot.

Now if Baraka doesn't run again, look for South Was Councilman Pat Council to take a crack at mayor. At-Large Councilman Larry Criump also reportedly has an interest – and never count out North Ward Councilman Anibal Ramos. Other names? Assemblyman Chigozie Onyema.

Wait a minute. This is supposed to be a 2026 special election issue, not 2030. Understood. But absence (again) of a serious contender to Baraka inevitably summons these other dynamics. Critically, can Council avoid a runoff on May 12th in the South Ward? Probably not. Too many challengers, among them Newark diehard Trenton Jones and lawyer Asia Norton, another rising star, with a very impressive record. But if Council can beat all comers even on a second ballot, he can strengthen his case for the future. If Crump, for his part, can finish at or near the top of the big field of at-large contestants, he can lay his own claim to another citywide run, next time for the top spot (insiders say Crump and Council won't run against each other). Politics watchers too will watch the performance of the long-haired North Ward Democratic Committee to dipstick the organization's strength should Ramos decide to run for mayor next time. Don't forget the possibility of Surrogate Alturrick Kenney going, as well, but like Ramos, he will have to decide if he wants to run for mayor or Essex County Executive as incumbent C.E. Joe DiVincenzo is widely assumed this year to be running for a final term.

Baraka has held the city together with his unique brand of politics, prose, and, yes, poetry, but the combination of market rate development exploding all over the place, the perception of diminished city services, Roger Leon extravagance projecting tin-eared "let them eat cake" vibes, and spastic social media, coupled

EAS CARPENTERS

BUILT TO LAST - POWERED BY PEOPLE - UNION PROUD



PROUD SPONSOR OF INSIDER NJ

Under Executive Secretary-Treasurer William C. Sproule, the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters is part of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America. We represent over 42,000 highly skilled men and women, 2500 businesses, 15 regional offices, 25 Local Unions, 17 Training Centers and close to 4500 apprentices living, working, and operating in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Virginia and West Virginia.

Learn more at EASCarpenters.org or add us on socials @EASCARPENTERS



Eastern Atlantic States

REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS

with temptations in the mayor's inner sanctum to once again scale Everest, this time to conquer the mountain, have insiders whisperingly reminding Baraka that he can't command Brick City forever. Booker heard the rattling voices from the underground when he found his way to the opportunity of the United States Senate. Baraka is very closely watching the dynamics around president and how they might impact his old rival turned political ally, Governor Sherrill, whose departure to D.C. would create the pathway for Baraka to go again, and open the gates of Newark political aspiration. Those local politics junkies looking for another 2014 Baraka versus Shavar Jeffries this year, a repeat of the aftermath of when Booker left City Hall for the Senate, won't find it, but they could get it with a vacancy, if Sherrill goes and Baraka goes.

Bottom line for right now.

Baraka's going for a fourth term here against very fringe competition within a larger context, wherein he's already demonstrated an appetite for higher office if the book deals don't pay dividends. In fact, you'd have to call Baraka the early favorite in the 2029 Democratic Primary for Governor (in a field that would probably include state Senator Vin Gopal [D-11], and maybe Jersey City Mayor James Solomon, among others), if Governor Mikie Sherrill either A. Becomes the next President, B. Is the next vice president, or C. Goes to the cabinet of the next president.

It's never fun to crawl back to the town you come from after that moonshot fails, but in Baraka's case he had a stronger showing than any of the other losers and has some strong footing for another stab at the prize. So assured is Team Baraka of his reelection this year, his brother,

Middy – in a seeming effort to lay some Union County groundwork for Ras - is working as the campaign manager for Plainfield Mayor Adrian Mapp in the CD-12 Primary.

Most attention within the city focuses on the Central Ward, where incumbent Councilwoman Amina Bey (who took the seat formerly held by U.S. Rep. LaMonica McIver [D-10]) faces former Councilwoman Gayle Chaneyfield Jenkins. Bey has Baraka's apparatus of power behind her, while Chaneyfield Jenkins – an ally of the late Mayor Sharpe James – possesses substantial name ID and a record of running all-in campaigns. The at-large seat too will command some interest with the retirement this year of At-Large Councilman Carlos Gonzalez, and the West, too, could prove difficult for incumbent Councilman DoItAll Kelly.



One thing is true.

If Baraka always has poetry, Newark will - usually – have the Central Ward to fall back on in those years when the mayor's race looks less than competitive.

More later.



Spotlight News

**YOUR NJ
NEWS SOURCE**

Watch:

**NJ Spotlight News
with Briana Vannozi**
(M-F) 6:30pm, 7:30pm & 11pm

Log On:

NJSpotlightNews.org

Subscribe:

**[NJSpotlightnews.org/
newsletters](http://NJSpotlightnews.org/newsletters)**



Major funding for *NJ Spotlight News* and the *NJ Spotlight News with Briana Vannozi* newscast is provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the New Jersey Civic Info Consortium, the William Penn Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, PSEG Foundation, the Fund for New Jersey, RWJBarnabas Health, NJM Insurance Group, New Jersey Education Association, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ, the Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey, New Jersey Realtors, the Schumann Fund for New Jersey and Wyncote Foundation.



BAYONNE

People here in this peninsular maritime town usually get more than just their feelings hurt. Not that everyone ends up floating face down, but Bayonne plays politics hard. A lot of people in New Jersey politics came up out of Bayonne, inside game players you might associate with other parts of the state who quite suddenly show a streak of Hudson County ruthlessness that could only be traced back to one place.

Someone once told InsiderNJ a story about a guy picking up trash on all fours outside city

hall. Gripped by the shoulders and pointed out a window, this young fledgling politico heard a crusty voice say, in reference to the hapless individual crawling around outside, “That’s one of the losers from the last election,” a political lesson – Bayonne style. So, when a vacancy in the local front office comes up, naturally it’s katy bar the door over here, and when former Mayor Jimmy Davis assumed the oath earlier this year to become Hudson County Sheriff, that could mean only one thing:

A contest for mayor.

First, some context:

Polishing off Mayor Mark Smith, a former cop, Davis was a cop who became mayor and then sheriff of Hudson County and left the city in the care of a cop, Acting Mayor Robert Kupert, an ex-cop, who's not running for mayor, but Loyad Booker, a former cop, is, as is former Council President Sharon Nadrowski, whose brother and husband were cops, and Mary Jane Desmond, a third candidate for mayor, who grew up on the same block as Davis, who would grow up to be a cop.



Bayonne, where the intersection of law enforcement and politics creates old west bucking bronco style collisions for the top job, with apparently someone slamming a locker in the past, dropping a graveyard shift, misplacing evidence so someone else took the demotion, or getting stiffed for lieutenant or detective, somehow the unspoken cause of bad blood, the need for an election to settle matters short of throwing fists, and May 12th, in this case, as a stand-in for mayhem or Armageddon.

Okay, that's somewhat of an exaggeration (maybe), but you get the picture.

Thirty years ago, you could break Bayonne politics into very rough thirds: Irish, Italian, Polish, basically stage a reenactment of the Battle of Anzio, and call it a day, but without first – in advance - getting a special dispensation from the Pope.

Now, a splurge of population growth makes the city more complex – kind of - and certainly more diverse. The long and the short of it is: A. No one knows who will win this election, and B. Everyone will presumably try to furnish him or herself as a change agent, even as he or she carries a personalized history with Bayonne that goes back, back to the beginning, in fact, and carries all the usual aforementioned associations.

When she went up against Jimmy Davis four years ago, Ashe Nadrowski came within 200 votes of picking him off, so the laziest analysis makes her “the favorite” in her tilt with Booker (no relation to the U.S. Senator) and Desmond (no relation to the sax player) for the mayoral vacancy. More sources supply the following take, which seems to make more sense, which is that in a three-way contest no one will get to 50% plus one on a first ballot and there will be a runoff, probably decided by whichever loser throws his or her weight behind one of the two remaining contenders.

There was some resentment last time around about the county coming in and – in the words of one insider – “saving Jimmy’s ass,” a dynamic that won’t exist this time as the Hudson County Democratic Organization (HCDO) will leave its fat thumb off the local scale. Will Jimmy

CLB | PARTNERS

The
Bridge
Between
Business &
Government

Strategy. Access. Results.



Jon Bombardieri
Managing Partner



Jonathan Boguchwal
Partner



Karen Kominsky
Partner



David Glass
Partner



Michael DeLamater
Partner

YOUR VOICE IN TRENTON



130 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608 | (609) 392-2332 | CLBNJ.com

himself get involved? Who knows. Will it matter? Tough to say. The candidates are well defined, with real assets. Sources talk about the team Booker put together. It's good. Varied. But if he's supposed to be change, they gripe that three out of the five work for the county, the same repository, after all, for Jimmy. Nadrowski ran against Jimmy. So, she must be the change agent everyone's looking for, right? Well, not really. She was there as council president when City Hall was supposed to land a ferry to Bayonne, which still isn't there. Is she totally to blame? Of course not. Will her rivals take her to task for it as a member of the team that didn't get it done? Probably. But Desmond – that change agent you're looking for – is actually the business administrator and the School Board prez. So again, it's, as they say, complicated, as everyone tries to apparently eradicate the ghost of Jimmy Davis (who hasn't shown up at anyone's events).



It all leads back to one thing:

“Definitely a runoff,” a source croaked from a bar stool.

He added:

“Sharon has a good ticket, which includes a retired fireman and local handyman that everyone knows and a Coptic Christian reflecting demographics in the town. She put together a good base. Labor unions on her side.”

Said someone else: “Jimmy did one of these ‘you’re with me, you’re with me, you’re not with, me keeping track of family tree.’ The city is at a crossroads with the spurt of development and how that translates into financial stability, integration, etc.”

Booker?

“Good guy. The challenge for him is going to be a political apparatus. Will [Third Ward Councilman] Gary [LaPelusa] get him some votes over there in the Third? Maybe. Maybe. Good ally, Gary. So is Neil.” That’s Neil Carroll III, First Ward Councilman and another Booker ally, with great, intergenerational name ID in Bayonne.

Desmond?

“Keep an eye on her. She’s been underestimated before. Her brother [Pat] knows what he’s doing around election time. Good name ID.” But to be honest, a third source, unaffiliated with the three candidates, said he favors Booker and Ashe Nadrowski in the runoff.

In power for 12 years, could Jimmy Davis play? He could. Probably not for Ashe-Nadrowski, though. Too much bad blood. Relatives canned. Jobs promised. Undelivered. The wrong people ended up empowered. Disrespect shown. Loose elbows thrown. That kind of stuff. Murky.

Like other Jersey towns and cities in this nonpartisan election cycle, Bayonne faces money trouble, a deficit, cleanliness issues, and complaints about inadequate city responsiveness. More than a few people pointed at Union City and Wood-Ridge as examples of fitter localities – “great-looking towns.” “Well, they have senators who serve as mayors, so they get the money for the goodies, I get it,” a Bayonne source grumbled.

In this case, you’ve got three strong Bayonne names, a police officer among them who would be Bayonne’s first African American mayor. Does Bayonne really want another cop as mayor, though, for the third time in a row?

Or would it stand for anything less than a cop?

Ashe Nadrowski – sister of a cop and wife of one – but an educator by trade, can probably offer the best of both worlds on that front. Not a cop but knows the business, the life, the sacrifice. Will it be enough? We’ll see on May 12th. Between now and then, expect a donnybrook, and probably after then, which is when it will really intensify, because in Bayonne, politics, like police work, never really ends.



Building *Careers.* Building *Community.* Building **New Jersey.**

ABC New Jersey's **Apprenticeship Education & Training Fund** is proud to promote, support, and train individuals from all backgrounds and neighborhoods in their pathway to a career in construction through one of 26 US-DOL programs.

These are the individuals in your communities, building your communities, and strengthening our state.

We ***Train the Best and Build the Best***, regardless of labor affiliation.

abcnjc.org



New Jersey's craft leaders start here.





PATERSON

To paraphrase Al Abdelaziz, it all gets back to Paterson. Jersey City might have something to say about that, as it vies with Silk City for the title of least parochial New Jersey town. Paterson's history (not to mention its folklore) probably gives it the edge, and not just because the people here allegedly slew the Jersey Devil when he flapped outside his Pine Barrens natural habitat, only to meet his demise above -where else - the Great Falls.

When a town claims to have stared down the Garden State's most notorious resident, people

sit up and pay attention, and this case, with an election coming scheduled next month, proves no different.

The city right now has the benefit of a mayor – pursuing a history-making third term in office - whose manic, encyclopedic curiosity about all things Paterson, makes him, at least intellectually, far more than the usual City Hall denizen. Sayegh's love of his home city, the only home he has ever known, and his home city's pride in its history, drove him in this last term to finish the renovation of Hinchliffe Stadium.

Built in the Great Depression, opened in 1932 and condemned in 1997, Hinchliffe served as the home of two Negro League Baseball Teams before the integration of Major League Baseball, and holds the memories of 20 Hall of Fame Baseball Players, including the great Larry Doby of Eastside High School, the first African-American ballplayer in the American League, just 11 weeks after Jackie Robinson joined the National League.



“Legends played here,” said Sayegh, proud of Paterson serving as the sports home of heroes when other stadiums closed their doors. “This is the real Field of Dreams. Iowa is just a movie set compared to this. Hinchliffe is a victory for history.”

Sayegh said that in 2023, and now, three years later and running for reelection, he hopes voters remember and see with a similar vision when they look to the great sports temple on the hill above the Falls, in the heart of the 2nd Ward. It’s a complicated city, of course, like all towns in New Jersey, only this one perhaps more so given its population and tremendous diversity

of populations, dismissed occasionally as “ungovernable,” making Sayegh’s attempt to land a third term even more politically extraordinary. Somehow the streetwise, sports-loving Sayegh leads here, with a combination of humor, toughness, intelligence, and artful touch with people, delicate care in relationship-building that maybe uniquely arises from a Patersonian who refuses small-group-think clichés as replacement for truly getting to know someone or for the higher stimulations of a superior education.

In the not-too-distant background, politics watchers note the presence of state Senator Benjie Wimberly (D-35), head of the city recreation department and a legendary local football and baseball coach, victor in a rivalry with slate mate former Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter for the senate seat. Occupant of the city’s Trenton bully policy pulpit with deep and real roots in Paterson, Wimberly has his own inimitable Silk City story, in a city where authenticity ultimately serves as the basis for successful human connectivity. Wimberly does not occupy the ballot in the May 12th election. But he looms. More on that in a minute.

Being complicated, Paterson has real elections, including this one upcoming, where Sayegh must contend with longtime rival Third Ward Councilman Alex Mendez, First Ward Councilman Mike Jackson, and former Second Ward Councilman Mohammed Akhtaruzzaman. Now, there’s no 50% plus one rule here, so the top vote-getter wins and that puts Sayegh in a good position, especially considering the weakened condition of Mendez and Jackson. Both faced allegations of voter fraud in unresolved cases, until a judge tossed

DECOTIIS

DeCotiis, FitzPatrick, Cole & Giblin, LLP

Straightforward Solutions *To complex legal problems*

Areas of Expertise

Labor Law • Real Estate • Banking and Bankruptcy
Litigation • Environmental Law • Public Finance • Tax • Municipal Law
Government and Regulatory Affairs • Healthcare Law • Corporate Law
White Collar, Investigations, and Compliance

DeCotiis Headquarters

61 South Paramus Road, Suite 250
Paramus, NJ 07652

Tel: (201) 928-1100

Fax: (201) 928-0588

www.decotiislaw.com

Mendez's case, freeing him to run unhindered against his old persecutor, the mayor. Still, Mendez has little financial support for them, even as he – and Jackson – adopt a dogged Nietzschean (or Kelly Clarkson depending on your philosophical preference) whatever-doesn't-kill-me-makes-me-stronger attitude.

Sayegh's relationship-building prowess aligns him on a reelection ticket with Council President Lilisa Mimms and Council Vice President Maritza Davila, supposedly the Clytemnestra and Electra of Paterson politics, who in defiance of all the tabloid chatter refer to each other as "sister" and waft the word "love" around in each other's presence. It's legit, they say. Having weathered past rivalries, they're dedicated allies – at least through Election Day. The other council people back Sayegh (and the councilwomen) too, some with greater force than others (Council people Cotton, Omar, and Khalique all showed up at an April rally at Bocatidos to lend vociferous support) everyone, really, except Jackson and Mendez, the odd men out who solider on citywide with their off-year ward seats – for the moment – protected.



Sayegh started his career in ward politics by forging political relationships with the Dominican community and he will lean on those old ties again, as well as on Bengali connections in 2nd Ward, with Khalique. Khalique defeated Akhtaruzzaman by a razor thin margin for the 2nd Ward seat back in 2020 and will want to generate strong support for Sayegh just in case his old rival looks to make a ward-wide comeback two years from now. Haitian. Colombian. Puerto Rican. Palestinian. African American. And not in that order. Not in any order. All equally important. All vital to the life of the city. This is the stuff of Paterson politics.



Now, for all that, Mendez, it must be said, in the words of one source "is a beast" when it comes to campaigning. "You can't sleep on Alex," he added. And Jackson has undertaken a series of barbershop talks already generating some buzz - sorry – for their effectiveness. A former pro quarterback, knowledgeable about government as a first ward steward, Jackson – even wounded, like Mendez – is no joke. But the Mimms (Third Ward) and Ruby (former Mayor) Cotton alliance with Sayegh help give the incumbent a stronger presence in the African American community. The

EDUCATION | RESOURCES | ADVOCACY | NETWORKING | EVENTS



NJAA is Home to New Jersey!

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.



www.njaa.com

Bocatidos event burnished the backing of some Dominicans who – in the words of one Sayegh ally – “used to be with Alex.” In short, Sayegh “started off two laps ahead” in an election cycle wherein the turnout will probably be bigger than usual with 16 people contending for the at-large seats.



But the garbage collection situation, the fallout from three major storms, and a much-covered water main break, and the impression of critics that massive development has yet to trickle down to longtime residents, provide the mayor’s rivals with talking points to chip away at him as Sayegh tries to gain traction from some obvious accomplishments, probably most significantly Hinchliffe Stadium.

Longer term implications of this race invariably include the 9th District Congressional seat currently occupied by U.S. Rep. Nellie Pou, who succeeded the late Bill Pascrell. Just as in Newark, where Baraka’s less than full-strength opposition makes people think about the mayor’s political future, Sayegh looks like a future congressman should the highly respected Pou decide to retire. Should that happen, look for Sayegh to contend with state

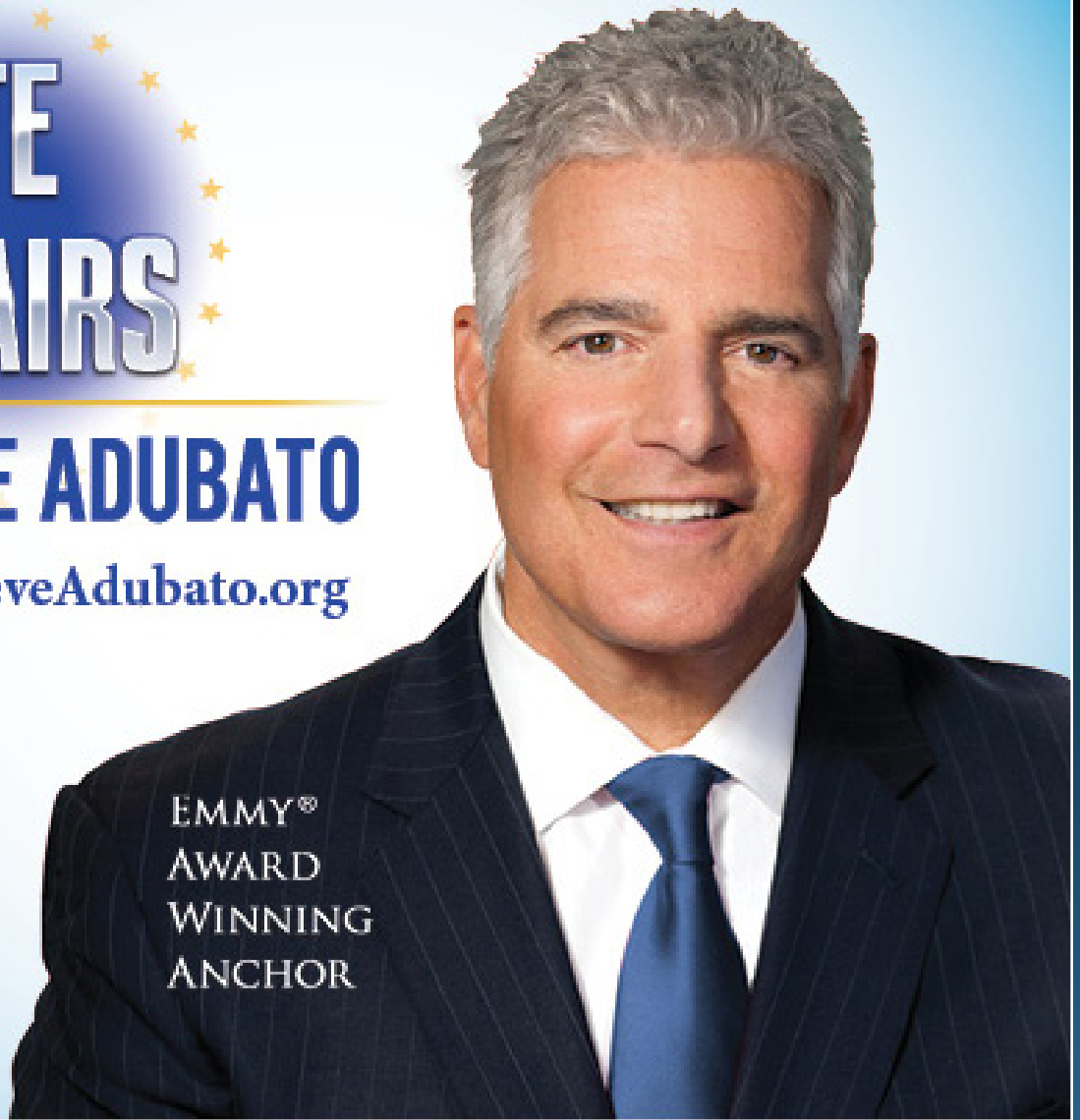
Senator Wimberly for the seat in the ultimate octagonal Paterson fracas, two Paterson-centric politicians forced to wrestle the Jersey Devil for supremacy. Of course, they could avoid that if one goes for congress and the other runs for governor, but Passaic County – smaller and less politically self-sufficient on the statewide stage than Godzilla sized building blocks like Essex, Middlesex, Bergen, and Hudson, requires precision needle-threading beyond its borders to sustain a larger scale candidate. Then again, no one else out there has had to contend with Paterson, not this way. That political distinction belongs – in one manner or another – to everyone above, all of them Patersonians, already trained in the art of the political showdown.





with **STEVE ADUBATO**

SteveAdubato.org



EMMY®
AWARD
WINNING
ANCHOR

THIRTEEN

NJ  **PBS**

 **YouTube**

nj.com
True
Jersey

news12+

nj.com/SteveAdubato



New Jersey's
cleanenergy
program

DEVCO NEW BRUNSWICK
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION
A CITY IS NEVER FINISHED

**ENGLEWOOD
HEALTH**

rwjf

Rowan 
University

**THE BURKE
FOUNDATION**

OTHERS TO KEEP AN EYE ON

HUDSON COUNTY • ESSEX COUNTY • MONMOUTH COUNTY • UNION CITY
WEEHAWKEN • LONG BRANCH • BELLEVILLE • IRVINGTON • ORANGE



No one will be biting any nails on Election Night in Union City, where Brian P. Stack has served as mayor for 26 years. Same goes for Weehawken, where Mayor Richard Turner has served since 1990.

In Long Branch, incumbent Mayor John Pallone will seek a third term, with no opposition.

In Belleville, incumbent Mayor Michael Melham faces a challenge from Councilman Frank Velez. Melham is running with Deputy Mayor Naomi DePeña and newcomer Yolanda Luna. Velez is running with Danyale Wells and Michelle Rodríguez.

Also in Essex County, Irvington Mayor Tony Vauss faces a challenge from longtime rival Paul Inman. Finally, the City of Orange is home this year to ward races in the East, West, North and South.