

POLITIFAX™

A Weekly Electronic Newsletter on Politics in **NEW JERSEY**

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Off and Running

Who's Hot

Cory Booker

The Senator's unprecedented testimony against Jeff Sessions's nomination to be Attorney General has made him either a pariah in the Senate or a leading candidate for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination. Whichever it turns out to be, he's bound to get lots of press attention in the next four years.

Quote of the Week

One of our wags expressed frustration with those who dismissed the Governor's plans to combat drug addiction as political: *"Of course it's political. Everything every Governor does is political, but what they're missing is that it was also politically brilliant. He's taking on the insurance companies, the medical establishment, and big pharma. What Democrat is going to argue him on that? Even Loretta Weinberg admitted that the Legislature should get it done in his suggested 30 days and then move on to other issues."*

GOVERNOR GOP. Kim Guadagno is in it -- to the surprise of nobody. What did surprise everyone was Jack Ciattarelli's announcement that he's undergoing treatment for cancer, which will temporarily curtail his campaign activities. We haven't heard much from Nutley Commissioner Steve Rogers or Donald Trump supporter and Ocean County activist Rudy Rullo, who also say they are in the race.

GOVERNOR DEM. John Wisniewski is preaching that the cure for the cycle of contributions to county parties leading to endorsements by chairmen is debates. Accordingly, he's calling on each of the 21 County Chairs to host a debate "and stop shilling for one wealthy candidate." Wiz has been quick out of the gate, making public appearances in several counties. (In return, Phil Murphy's campaign called him a "Trenton insider.") Ray Lesniak labeled Murphy the "establishment" candidate. (This primary presents us with a marvelous anomaly. The two candidates with extensive legislative experience, Lesniak and Wisniewski, are running as outsiders, while Murphy, who has never been elected to anything, has the support of most of the party hierarchy and is taking flak for being the candidate of the establishment.) Also, former U.S. Treasury Department Undersecretary Jim Johnson is making a bid to be taken more seriously than as a fringe candidate. He hasn't had to file with ELEC yet, but he says he has raised the \$430,000 necessary to qualify for matching funds. He has also hired a campaign staff that includes veterans of Barack Obama's, Hillary Clinton's and Elizabeth Warren's campaigns.

LD 13. Middletown Mayor Gerry Scharfenberger and Freeholder Serena DiMaso announced that they're running for the seats currently held by Declan O'Scanlon and Amy Handlin. (Atlantic Highlands Councilman Peter Doyle says he won't get into the fight.) This is a tangled web, because it remains to be seen whether the two Assembly members will be allowed to screen for both the job they want and the one they have. If they aren't permitted to do so, one of them may abandon the Senate race, and that would leave Scharfenberger and DiMaso with a decision about whether to go up against an incumbent.

Continued on Page 3.

Around the State

Atlantic

ATLANTIC CITY. Council President Marty Small, boasting support from three Council colleagues and unspecified county and state figures, announced he's running for Mayor. In the Democratic primary he'll face Councilman Frank Gilliam, who has favored bankruptcy for the city and who has called Small "Don Guardian's water boy." The winner will run against Guardian in November.

Essex

ORANGE. In an expansion of an investigation that began with a raid on the public library last summer, the feds dropped an expansive subpoena on City Hall. The search encompassed the computers used by Mayor Dwayne Warren, the business administrator, and several directors. The feds are never very forthcoming about what they are looking for, but Warren closed the building to allow agents from the FBI, the IRS, and HUD to do what they had to do without interference.

Hudson

JERSEY CITY. The other shoe everybody has been anticipating hit the floor. The 12 police officers under investigation were assigned to non-law enforcement duties and surrendered their guns. The FBI has been looking into whether they abused a program that allows officers to work security details for private companies but only if they do so through the city.

Mercer

FRIENDS OF MERCER COUNTY PARK. Park Commission Executive Director Aaron Watson formal-

ly dissolved the nonprofit that had been raising money for county parks. The agency, its former ED Kevin Bannon, and Bannon's brother Terry have been the subject of a state investigation into the disposition of funds raised ostensibly for the parks but allegedly used for lavish parties at the shore and a trip to Las Vegas.

Ocean

FREEHOLDER BOARD. Here's one for you. The Turnpike Authority doesn't have a single member who lives below Wall. That leaves the Parkway without a commissioner who lives along the road's southernmost 90 miles. The Freeholders, therefore, will pass a resolution asking the Governor to fill a vacancy on the Authority road with someone from Ocean County, which is the location of 40 Parkway miles, the longest portion of the road in any county.

Passaic

PATERSON. Chauncey Brown III is running for Mayor. Ordinarily we wouldn't pay much attention to announcements like his, but this is noteworthy because Brown did 21 months in prison for taking a \$13,000 bribe when he was on the Board of Education. Caught in the storied 2007 federal sting, Brown pleaded guilty and blamed "a lapse in judgment" that resulted from drug use. Now he says that he is "grandfathered in" to eligibility to run because the law that prohibits felons from holding office was passed after his transgression. And, just to keep the record straight, Joey Torres says he's running for reelection.

Union

ROSELLE. It all started over a disagreement over whether to build a \$56 million community center complete with a pool, a library, and classrooms. Jamel Holly conceived the project when he was Mayor, but Christine Danserau, who succeeded him, changed her mind about it. That's the policy argument, which quickly deteriorated into a mud fight. Danserau says Holly harassed her with obscene phone calls; Holly says he never called her the names she alleges. (The prosecutor in Clark, where the trial was moved, added that, even if Holly did call her the names alleged, it may not rise to the level of a crime. He sought to have the case dismissed, but the municipal court judge declined.) And that's not all. A Councilman accused Danserau of harassing *him* only to have the case dis-

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missed for lack of probable cause. Then, the Council voted no confidence in Danserau, but she says it's the Council that won't cooperate with her, not the other way 'round. And, *then*, the Mayor revealed that someone had thrown a brick at her home in the second such attack, which she suspects was politically motivated.

The Gubernatorial Watch

THE BRIDGE MESS. Bergen County Assignment Judge Bonnie Mizdol reversed Municipal Court Presiding Judge Roy McGeady's determination that there was probable cause that the Governor knew of what was going on with the lane diversions at the George Washington Bridge and did nothing to stop them. Mizdol ruled that McGeady's refusal to allow the Governor's lawyers to participate in the hearing violated his rights, and she also remanded the case back to the lower court. That's the reportorial jargon we use to say that the circus will continue for at least one more round.

The Congressional Watch

CD 3. Tom MacArthur was one of only nine Republicans who voted against the House resolution that is a preface to repealing Obamacare. He said, "I think we're going too fast" in repealing the law without a clear plan to replace it. Fair enough, but there's a political angle to everything, and the Congressman may already have one eye on the 2021 gubernatorial election.

CD 5. Every freshman Congressman's reelection campaign begins the day he or she gets sworn in. Josh Gottheimer is no exception. Just about his first act as a member of the House of Representatives was to vote for a bill that would give Congress additional power to undo regulations enacted in the last four years. (Only three other Democrats voted for the measure, but, hey, it's a conservative district!) Then, he voted for a bill that closely resembled one Garrett had sponsored in the last Congress. (Only eight other Democrats supported the measure to roll back some SEC regulations, which Gottheimer agrees are suppressing growth. And, hey, it's a conservative district.) And, now, after having spent \$4.6 million to get elected, some \$300,000 more than Scott Garrett and more than eight other incumbents as well, he'll hold the first fundraiser for his reelection campaign. The date is January 23, the time is 8 AM to 9:30, the venue is the Sills Cummis Newark office, and the host is Vic Herlinsky.

CD 12. Bonnie Watson Coleman is one of the almost four dozen House Democrats who plan to boycott Donald Trump's inauguration.

Off and Running, continued

LD 20. Phil Murphy, Steve Sweeney, Nick Scutari, LIUNA, and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 825 endorsed Joe Cryan -- and he doesn't even have an opponent yet.

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News Roundup

Tidbits

Coincidence of the Week: The Governor was at Integrity House in Newark yesterday at 11:30 AM to sign an executive order declaring opioid addiction a state health emergency. That's exactly a half hour after Kim Guadagno announced her gubernatorial candidacy at a Keansburg restaurant that was severely damaged in Superstorm Sandy and that she helped get back up and running.

Bob Menendez Development of the Week: Five former general counsels to the House of Representatives filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of the Senator's contention that questioning his motives for assisting Salomon Melgen "is precisely what the Speech or Debate Clause generally forecloses from executive and judicial inquiry."

Best Deal of the Week: Late last year, the Civil War Trust bought almost all of the 15 acres of the Battle of Princeton battlefield owned by the Institute for Advanced Studies and foreclosed any further development of the property.

Best New Organization of the Week: The Gateway Development Corporation elected Rich Bagger chairman at its first meeting. The entity will oversee the construction of two new rail tunnels under the Hudson River at a cost estimated at \$23 billion, half to be paid by the feds and half to be divided equally between New Jersey and New York.

The Next Big Thing of the Week: Steve Sweeney formed a Special Committee on School Funding, which passed unanimously, that will hold hearings around the state. Vinny Prieto scheduled an Education Committee meeting on his very different plan. And the Governor has his own solution. Stay tuned

Fundraiser of the Week: The Camden County Democrats will hold their annual \$1,500-per bash on January 23 at Caffè Aldo Lamberti in Cherry Hill.

Correction of the Week: James Barberio is running for reelection of Parsippany, not Morris-town as we erroneously said last week.

Winners and Losers

Winner: Bill Pascrell

The Congressman was named the ranking Democrat on the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade.

Winner: Michael Aron

Last weekend's *On the Record* -- which featured Joe Kryillos, Kevin O'Toole, and Jim Whelan discussing why they are leaving the Legislature and how that body has changed in the years they have been members -- was a gem.

Winner: Julie Acton

The former Salem Freeholder landed squarely on her feet -- as Executive Director of the county Improvement Authority -- after resigning her elected post in anticipation of a reduction in the number of freeholders.

Winner: Barbara Buono

The former Senator and gubernatorial candidate joined the staff of Ted Wheeler, the new mayor of Portland, Oregon, her current home.

Winner: Eugene Caldwell

The Gloucester County Jail Warden was sworn in as the 2017 president of the New Jersey Association of County Jail Wardens.

?: The Port Authority

On the one hand, the New York-New Jersey bi-state agency agreed to pay the SEC a \$400,000 fine for not telling investors in a bond issue that it might be illegal to use PA money to refurbish the Pulaski Skyway. The week's big revelation -- from *The New Jersey Law Journal* -- is that "there was an internal memo that said there was 'no clear legislative authority to undertake such projects.'" On the other hand, the PA probably spends more than \$400,000 on printer ink and no investor lost money on the deal. Besides, a federal judge dismissed a suit brought by AAA that claimed the last round of toll hikes violated the Commerce Clause and the federal Highway Act.