

# POLITIFAX™

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

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## Passaic County: the Tipping Point

### What's Hot

#### *The Muslim "Ban"*

The Muslim ban that isn't a Muslim ban reverberated throughout the state. The Governor criticized the roll-out of President Trump's order while crediting him for scaling back his campaign pledge to prevent all Muslims from coming into the country until "we can figure out what the hell is going on." Others have not been so kind. Jersey City formally became a sanctuary city. Cory Booker and Phil Murphy warned that crime will increase if undocumented residents fear calling the police. Bill Pascrell criticized Chris Porrino for not joining the constitutional challenge to the executive order. And Bob Gordon and Loretta Weinberg joined with New York legislators to get the Port Authority to resist the order. Stay tuned.

#### *Quote of the Week*

One of our wags observed of the national scene: "*No-body knows what that they are doing in DC, including most of the people doing it.*"

**THE STATUS QUO ANTE.** In the 1980s there were only Frank Graves and Ed Englehardt, who between them divided -- and defined -- Passaic County. The Democratic Paterson Mayor and Senator ruled unchallenged over his city, while the Republican Sheriff commanded the allegiance of the suburban and exurban areas, and, as these things often go, they lived by a non-aggression pact for more than a decade.

**THE CHANGES.** The first crack in that arrangement came when Graves had a heart attack and died in March 1990. His Assembly district mates divided his two offices, with John Girgenti moving to the Senate and Bill Pascrell winning the mayoral election over three other candidates. Also in 1990, Pascrell resigned as County Chairman and turned the reins over to John Currie. The next change occurred when Congressman Bob Roe decided not to seek a 12th full term in 1992. Pascrell considered running for Roe's seat but demurred because he was so new to the mayoralty. The Democratic nomination went instead to former Assemblyman Herb Klein, who beat Senator Joe Bubba handily to keep the seat in Democratic hands. That lasted only one term, because the 1994 election, which featured Newt Gingrich's Contract with America, cost the Democrats 34 seats, including Klein's. His successor, who won by slightly more than 1 percent, was Clifton Councilman and Freeholder Bill Martini. But *his* tenure also lasted only one term -- and that's where our tale turns.

**THE 1996 ELECTION.** The historical fulcrum on which Passaic County political history turned was Bill Pascrell's victory over Bill Martini in the 1996 Congressional election. The Democrat took slightly more than 50 percent of the vote to the Republican's almost 48 percent, but unlike most House races in New Jersey, this one had far reaching effects.

**THE LOCAL IMPACT.** Until 1996, the Republicans had controlled the Freeholder Board for as long as anyone could remember. In fact, going into that year's election, the Democrats didn't hold a single seat. Five years later, they had completely reversed that and in 2001 held a 7-0 shutout on the Board, but more of that next week.

*To be continued next week.*

## Around the State

### Atlantic

**FOILED.** The Casino Control Commission ruled that Glenn Straub must get a casino license even though he'll lease the gaming operation at Revel to a group called TEN. Straub says he'll contest the decision in court and insists he'll reopen the property, with or without a license, on February 20.

**ROILED.** Remember the good old days when nobody showed up at Freeholder meetings? John Carman does, and the second meeting after he uttered his now infamous "home-in-time-to-cook-dinner" joke about the Women's March on Washington devolved into a debate on the role of women in society, humor, and the successes and failures of President Trump. The February 7 meeting has been cancelled.

### Essex

**UNSPOILED.** East Orange Mayor Lester Taylor, who beat 16-year incumbent Bob Bowser in the 2013 primary, won't run again. Taylor told NJ Advance Media that, in the past four years, there hasn't been a night his children didn't ask whether he'd be home at bedtime, take them to the park, or go on a school trip.

### Monmouth

**WELL-OILED.** David Brown, the County Democratic party's treasurer, was elected Chairman to fill out the rest of Vin Gopal's term, which ends in June.

### Morris

**UNCOILED.** Morristown Councilwoman Michelle Harris sent out a fundraising email that announced her

intention to primary Mayor Tim Dougherty. Four years ago, she ran on Dougherty's ticket. Dougherty picked up the endorsement of Cory Booker.

### The Election Watch

**DEM GOVERNOR.** Although polls -- especially general election polls -- this far out are minimally useful, we feel duty bound to report that a Quinnipiac survey puts Phil Murphy ahead of Kim Guadagno, 45-29. Bob Hoatson sued the Bergen Democrats for "fraudulently, prejudicially, and unfairly," endorsing Murphy, because they didn't invite him and other candidates to take part in their convention and because he "bought the top of the ticket." Courts are loath to interfere in party politics, so this won't go anywhere. Murphy also continued to kick the guy on a lower rung of the ladder. His campaign called out John Wisniewski, whose law firm was barred from working for Keyport, where it earned \$14,000 last year, because it made a \$1,000 contribution to the Monmouth Democrats. National Nurses United, the largest nurses union in the country, endorsed Wiz. And Ray Lesniak continued his "unconventional campaign" with a report that he led the charge against the Governor's book deal and the challenges to the Exxon settlement and the Statehouse renovation. He also got Steve Goldstein's endorsement.

**GOP GOVERNOR.** Right after Jack Ciattarelli listed 61 endorsements, Kim Guadagno released the names of 100 supporters. Included among them are Diane Allen, Jen Beck, Bob Singer, Sam Thompson, seven Assembly members, and 11 County Chairs. The Assemblyman countered with *SilentKim.com*, a web site designed to highlight the LG's non-response to his call for a debate in every county. The so far unreported bad news for the LG is that she still doesn't have a Finance Chair for her campaign.

**LD 2.** The Democrats' first theme against Chris Brown emerged. Former Atlantic Chairman Ron Ruff wondered which version of the Assemblyman announced for the Senate, the one who voted for the gas tax hike in June of last year or the one who voted for it just a few months later. That's right. he accused Brown of flip-flopping, and for good measure he threw in the assertion that the Republican is "a career politician." We really need some new terms of political opprobrium. Vince Mazzeo did his best to level the playing



**Editor and Publisher**  
Nicholas Acocella  
**Associate Editor**  
Reneé Creange

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field, though. He posted a meme joke about “illegal immigrants training for the Trump Wall” and brought down a firestorm on his head for it. How many times do we have to say it: “Dying is easy; comedy is hard.”

**LD 8.** Herb Conaway may be making phone calls to see if he can muster support for the Democratic nomination for the seat Diane Allen is vacating, but Troy Singleton is the odds-on favorite for that spot. Both parties have long wondered about the capacity of the Republicans to hold onto the seat should Allen not run. (In fact, no Republican has come forward so far to seek the seat.) A Democratic victory would not only change the party balance in the Senate but would also give South Jersey another Democrat and change the balance of power in the party’s intramural battle to control its Senate caucus.

**LD 8.** The Democrats’ new Assembly candidate looks to be Carol Murphy, a Gabriela Mosquera staffer who used to be Diane Greenstein’s Chief of Staff and communications director at the Schools Development Authority. She is married to Democratic campaign consultant Mike Muller, the go-to guy in South Jersey, and was planning to run against Diane Allen.

**LD 11.** Vin Gopal took the attack to Jen Beck, criticizing her for endorsing Kim Guadagno for Governor and, thereby implicitly endorsing the the Lieutenant

Governor’s silence on what he perceives as the faults of the Administration.

**LD 20.** Joe Cryan picked up his most impressive endorsement so far -- Cory Booker’s.

**LD 31.** *The Hudson Reporter* says there was a poll checking Sandy Cunningham’s popularity and attributed the survey to George Norcross. Cunningham is a Steve Sweeney ally. The Senate President would like to be able to rely on her support for reelection. And he and Norcross would be inclined to help her in a primary should Nick Sacco or others look to take her out, which is a rumor that has been going around for years.

**LD 38.** Fernando Alonso appears poised to challenge Bob Gordon, who beat him for the Senate seat by only 1,600 votes in 2013.

**LD 40.** Paul DiGaetano made it official that he’ll challenge Kristin Corrado for the GOP Senate nomination. And a full ticket may be assembling behind him. Norm Robertson -- now there’s a blast from the past -- told the Bergen County Republicans that he’s running for the Assembly, and Alyana Alfaro of *observer.com* says Joe Bubba, Jr., the son of the guy Robertson beat for a Senate seat in 1997, wants the other seat. Corrado’s runningmates are Kevin Rooney and former Wyckoff Mayor Chris DePhillips.

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Phone (201) 792-4204  
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 E-Mail: PolitifaxNJ@gmail.com

## News Roundup

### *Tidbits*

**The Next Big Thing:** The Governor will deliver the Budget Speech on February 28. We don't pretend to know what surprises he'll offer. But we do know that the current situation hasn't existed in 28 years. It's axiomatic that office holders seeking reelection would rather avoid drama in the budget process. Well, this is the first gubernatorial election since 1989 in which we have a two-term lame duck Governor. So, the Governor is free to propose all manner of controversial measures -- and, knowing Chris Christie, he probably will -- when all 120 legislators are looking for a quiet few months.

**Loss of the Week:** Diane Allen has demonstrated wit and grace in her time in the Senate. We'll miss that as she joins the parade of veteran Senators not returning next year. But we'll also miss her passionate commitment to causes she believes in -- shelters for battered women, pay equality, anti-bullying, opposition to the death penalty, marriage equality, and mandatory sentencing for sexual assault of children. The winners are her grandchildren in Houston, who will see her more often. The losers are the rest of us.

**Must Read of the Week:** In "What about property taxes?" a shocking analysis in an op ed in the *Asbury Park Press*, Tom Byrne maintains that we don't ask candidates the right questions.

**Libertarian Story of the Week:** Murray Sabrin declined to reprise his 1997 candidacy for Governor, but he did provide what would have been his acceptance speech. You can read it at [murraysabrin.com](http://murraysabrin.com). It might have been fun.

**Poll Story of the Week:** In the Quinnipiac Poll we mentioned earlier, the Governor has an upside down job rating of 17-78; Donald Trump is also upside down at 36-55, but Cory Booker (58-31) and Bob Menendez (51-32) are just fine.

**Fundraiser of the Week:** The Assembly Republican Victory Kickoff Breakfast will take place on February 13 from 8:30 to 10:30 at the New Jersey State Museum. Bring your checks for \$600 (or \$2,500 if you want to be a sponsor).

## Winners and Losers

### **Winners: Paul Sarlo and Steve Oroho**

The Tax Foundation honored the Senators with its "outstanding Achievement in State Tax Reform" award for their roles in passing the TTF package.

### **Winner: Steve Fulop**

The Government Records Council (who even knew there is such a thing?) ruled that the Jersey City Mayor can keep his meetings calendar private.

### **Winner: Lizette Delgado-Polanco**

The former Executive Director of the SEIU New Jersey State Council (and State Democratic Vice Chair) joined the Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters as state Deputy Political Director.

### **Winner: John Holub**

The head of the Retail Merchants Association joined Public Strategies Impact. He'll continue as president and CEO of the Retail Merchants and as Executive Director of the New Jersey Council of Chain Drug Stores, which will come under the PSI umbrella, and serve a few other clients as well.

### **Winner: Matt Mowers**

The former Christie staffer ended up on the staff of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

### **Winner: State Chamber of Commerce**

It might have been enough that the Governor will address the dinner after the Walk to Washington train ride, but that was eclipsed by the announcement that Joseph Cardinal Tobin, the newly installed Newark Archbishop, will ride the train. Archbishops McCarrick and Myers took the train in the past, but, as Tom Bracken pointed out, "This is the first cardinal."

### **Loser: Kevin Williamson**

Everybody knows you're not supposed to take government owned cars home, but most people do it with impunity. Unfortunately for the Jersey City Recreation Director, his city Ford Explorer was stolen when he parked it overnight near his home.