



MONTHLY MUSINGS

BY SAM WEINSTEIN

NEW JERSEY'S GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION HEATS UP AFTER LABOR DAY

New Jersey voters will head to the polls on November 4, 2025, in a high-stakes gubernatorial contest that has already captured both state and national attention. With Governor Phil Murphy term-limited and preparing to leave office in January 2026, the race marks the state's first open-seat contest in eight years. The winner will be sworn in on January 20, 2026, and with no incumbent advantage, both parties are treating the campaign as a critical test of their strength heading into the next decade.

On the Democratic ticket, Representative Mikie Sherrill secured her party's nomination after outlasting a field of big-city mayors in a competitive primary. A Navy helicopter pilot, former federal prosecutor, and four-term congresswoman from New Jersey's 11th District, Sherrill has built her reputation as a pragmatic progressive with appeal in suburban swing areas. To round out her ticket, she selected Dale Caldwell, the president of Centenary University and a prominent voice in workforce development, signaling a campaign message focused on education, economic mobility, and cost-of-living relief. Together, they are aiming to present a forward-looking vision that balances progressive priorities with practical solutions.

Republican nominee Jack Ciattarelli is no stranger to the statewide stage, having come within three points of unseating Murphy in 2021. A former state assemblyman, Ciattarelli is once again leaning into a message of fiscal discipline, lower taxes, and reining in Trenton's spending culture. His running mate, Morris County Sheriff Jim Gannon, bolsters the campaign's law-and-order credentials and highlights an emphasis on public safety alongside financial reform. Backed by consolidated GOP support, strong

name recognition, and the endorsement of President Donald Trump, Ciattarelli enters the general election with a fired-up base and a strategy aimed at pulling in moderates disenchanted with Democratic leadership.

Polling so far gives Sherrill a modest edge, but one that is hardly secure. A late-July Fairleigh Dickinson University poll showed her leading Ciattarelli 45 percent to 37 percent, with 16 percent undecided. A Rutgers-Eagleton survey released in late August painted a similar picture, showing Sherrill ahead 44 to 35 percent, with 17 percent unsure; when leaners were included, the spread held at 47 to 37. Both polls suggest a race that is competitive and fluid, with a significant bloc of undecided voters who could swing the outcome.

Now that Labor Day has passed, the campaign is expected to shift into overdrive. The gubernatorial contest coincides with elections for all 80 seats in the General Assembly, ensuring that both parties will coordinate their strategies, expand their ground games, and pour resources into key battlegrounds. Advertising, surrogate appearances, and voter-mobilization drives will intensify as candidates sharpen their contrasts and fight for every undecided vote. With legislative control and the governor's office on the line, New Jersey is bracing for an all-out sprint to November in what is shaping up to be one of the most consequential elections in recent memory.

THE 19TH ANNUAL NEW JERSEY LIQUOR STORE HOLIDAY TRADE SHOW

The 19th Annual New Jersey Liquor Store Holiday Trade Show is set for Wednesday, October 29, 2025, from 4 pm to 8 pm at the NJ Convention & Exposition Center, 97 Sunfield Avenue, Edison, New Jersey. This signature event for New Jersey's alcohol industry brings together retailers, whole-

salers, suppliers, and vendors in one lively forum to highlight products, showcase new innovations, and connect with influential voices across the marketplace.

In addition to the exhibits, the evening offers unmatched opportunities to network, exchange ideas, and build relationships that drive the industry forward. Attendees will enjoy sampling new products, engaging directly with brand representatives, and hearing perspectives on the challenges and opportunities shaping New Jersey's beverage landscape. Participation isn't just about walking the floor—it's about being part of the collective success of the state's retail and supply community. Make plans now to join us for an evening of innovation, collaboration, and celebration that reflects the energy and passion of New Jersey's liquor industry. ■

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