



The Gibbons Government & Regulatory Affairs Group's 2023 General Election Recap

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Many political pundits predicted that the 2023 General Election would mirror the 2021 vote, when Republicans picked up seats in the State Legislature by defeating incumbent legislators. A historical repeat seemed possible since the Legislature was running in new districts under a "consensus" map agreed to by both parties, recent polling data has indicated that President Biden has become less popular in New Jersey, and the issues at the forefront created opportunities for the minority party. The most closely watched legislative districts were Districts 3 and 4 in the southern part of the state, Districts 11 and 16 in the central region, and District 38 in northern New Jersey.

It was the Democrats, however, who flipped the script from 2021 and ended up gaining five seats in the State House by holding off challengers and defeating incumbent and favored Republican candidates:

- In Legislative District 3 (Gloucester/Salem/Cumberland Counties), incumbent Republican Senator Ed Durr lost to former State Assemblyman John Burzichelli. Senator-elect Burzichelli's running mates for the Assembly, Heather Simmons and Dave Bailey, appear on track to defeat incumbent Republican Assemblywoman Bethanne McCarthy Patrick and Thomas Tedesco. These results will flip the Third District from Republican to Democrat.
- With three open seats in Legislative District 4 (Camden/Gloucester Counties), incumbent Assemblyman Paul Moriarty won an open Senate seat caused by the retirement of longtime State Senator Fred Madden. Senator-elect Moriarty's running mates for the Assembly, Dan Hutchison and Cody Miller, were also successful in their election bids. This kept the Fourth District in Democratic control.

- Legislative District 11 (Monmouth County) had been the only split district in the State, with Democratic Senator Vin Gopal and two Republican Assemblywomen, Marilyn Piperno and Kim Eulner. Not only did Senator Gopal defeat his Republican challenger, but Democratic challengers Margie Donlon and Luanne Peterpaul defeated the incumbent Republicans in the Assembly to make the Eleventh District completely Democratic.
- Democrats were able to hold all three seats in Legislative District 16 (Hunterdon/Somerset/Mercer/Middlesex Counties), with the incumbents, Senator Andrew Zwicker and Assemblyman Roy Freiman, winning re-election and Democrat Michelle Drulis winning an open seat for Assembly.
- The incumbent Democrats in Legislative District 38 (Bergen County), Senator Joe Lagana, Assemblywoman Lisa Swain, and Assemblyman Chris Tully, were able to defeat their Republican challengers and maintain control of the district.

A race that did not get as much attention but has major implications for governance is Legislative District 30 (Monmouth/Ocean), where Democrats picked up an Assembly seat. Democrat Avi Schnall earned the second-highest number of votes behind incumbent Republican Assemblyman Sean Kean, which caused the defeat of incumbent Republican Assemblyman Edward Thomson.

With these results, Democrats will maintain control of both the Senate and Assembly by margins of 25–15 and 51–29, respectively. It is widely expected that Senate President Nick Scutari of Union County and Speaker Craig Coughlin of Middlesex County will retain their leadership positions.

Although Democrats and Republicans held the status quo in the other legislative districts, there will be many new members of the Senate and Assembly across the state. The Senate will have nine new members, including Senators-elect Burzichelli and Moriarty. There will be 26 new members of the General Assembly, inclusive of the new legislators in Districts 3, 4, 11, and 30. In all, 35 seats will be occupied by a new person after the legislative reorganization in

January 2024. For 29 of the new legislators, this will be their first time serving in the State Legislature.

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