

TOP STORY

New legislative district map may shore up GOP in South Jersey

Michelle Brunetti Post

Mar 1, 2022

State Sen. Vince Polistina is happy with the new state legislative district map, which includes redrawn boundaries for the 40 districts that elect state senators and Assembly members.

“I’m excited to have Galloway and Port Republic back because I grew up in Galloway and there are many reasons why it’s natural for them to be part of the district,” Polistina, R-Atlantic, said Friday. “I’m disappointed to lose some great Atlantic County towns but will still treat it as (if) I am the senator ... representing all towns in (Atlantic) County.”

Galloway Township and Port Republic are moving back to the 2nd Legislative District after 10 years in the 9th District, which covers portions of southern Ocean and Burlington counties.

The map, based on 2020 Census data, will be used from 2023 through 2030 and was recently agreed to by a bipartisan Apportionment Commission.

John Froonjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University, said the new map likely benefits Republicans overall.

“Certainly the Republican reaction was that there are more competitive districts now,” Froonjian said. “So any map that creates more competitive districts is a plus for Republicans, who have been toiling in an overwhelmingly Democratic map for quite some time.”

Sen. Michael Testa, R-Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic, agreed the result is more competitive and that will help Republicans.

“It’s a truly fair map,” Testa said of the commission’s product. “There were some really good people on both sides engaged in intellectual honesty about the map.”

His 1st District, covering all of Cape May County and parts of Cumberland and Atlantic, picks up Democratic Bridgeton from the 3rd, and gives up several smaller Republican towns to the 3rd.

“That probably helps Republicans in the 3rd,” Froomjian said, by having a big Democratic area leave. “The 1st has been Republican so long it can absorb Bridgeton (without being threatened).”

The 3rd District is where longtime Senate President Steve Sweeney got voted out in November, in favor of newcomer Republican Ed Durr.

More competitive districts drive up voter turnout and make it more interesting for voters, Froomjian said.

“It gives voters more of a reason to participate,” he said.

Galloway is a large township with lots of Republican voters, Froomjian said. So its addition to the 2nd will shore up the GOP there.

Polistina and his running mates, Assemblyman Don Guardian and Assemblywoman Claire Swift, both R-Atlantic, defeated the Democratic team of two incumbents and a county commissioner, but it was a hard fought race.

The new map moves Mullica Township, Egg Harbor City and Folsom from the 2nd to the 8th District, which covers parts of Burlington, Camden and Atlantic counties. For the past decade, the only Atlantic County town in the 8th was Hammonton.

It also moves Buena Vista Township and Buena Borough out of the 2nd, into the 4th covering Camden, Gloucester and now Atlantic counties.

“We will continue to serve people living there and help in any way we can,” said Swift of the towns that are leaving the district but helped elect her and her team.



GOP gains top a year of change in New Jersey politics

She recommended people in need of help with unemployment or other issues call the office at 609-677-8266.

The Apportionment Commission made history by coming to a bipartisan agreement on a new map, Froonjian said, rather than having to rely on an appointed tiebreaker.

“I can’t overemphasize how unusual that is,” Froonjian said. “Maybe civility in government might have a chance after all.”

The congressional redistricting commission for New Jersey required a tiebreaker to come up with its new map this year. Even Atlantic County’s commission has asked for a tiebreaker to help decide a map for county commissioner districts.

The new map created more problematic changes in North Jersey, where new boundaries put incumbent Democrats into the same districts, forcing them to run against each other in 2023.

“It made quite a mess up in Hudson County and Essex County,” Froonjian said.



Political Briefs: 2019 election pointed to this year's red wave, report says

The affected incumbent Democrats will have to duke it out or retire, he said.

Sen. Nick Sacco has already announced he will retire rather than run against Sen. Brian Stack (both D-Hudson).

State Sens. Nia Gill and Richard Codey, both D-Essex, will likely face off against one another in a 2023 Democratic primary.

Democrats control both chambers of the Legislature but lost six seats in the Assembly last year, while Republicans netted one new seat in the Senate.

The full Legislature is up again in 2023, the first year the new maps will be used. Assembly people go through elections every two years. State senators start each decade with a two-year term, followed by two four-year terms.

“This wasn’t Earth-shattering in South Jersey. It wasn’t massive, but it helps the Republicans,” Froomjian said. “When combined with the congressional redistricting map, it shows the strength of the Republican Party right now in South Jersey.”



Red wave driven by GOP turnout, but will it last?

Congressional redistricting gave the more Republican parts of U.S. Rep. Andy Kim’s 3rd District to the 2nd, which is represented by U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd.

“We may see Republicans do well the next decade in South Jersey,” Froomjian said.



Polistina

MATTHEW STRABUK, FOR THE PRESS

REPORTER: Michelle Brunetti Post

609-841-2895

mpost@pressofac.com

By Michelle Brunetti Post

Staff Writer

In my first job after college got paid to read the New York Times and summarize articles for an early online data base. First reporting job was with The Daily Record in Parsippany. I have also worked in nonprofits, and have been with The Press since 1990.
