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FEATURED

2nd District GOP Senate primary to create plenty of buzz

Michelle Brunetti Post
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2nd District state Senate candidates Vince Polistina, left, and Seth Grossman

Press photos

Michelle Brunetti Post

Egg Harbor Township Mayor Paul W. Hodson

There are few contested primary races for state offices this year in southeastern New Jersey, but the Republican primary for state Senate in the 2nd Legislative District is likely to create enough buzz for the whole state.

The hot primary in the 2nd District, between Republicans Vince Polistina, of Egg Harbor Township, and Seth Grossman, of Atlantic City, will be among the state's most interesting, one political analyst predicted.

"Normally I would go with the organization candidate (winning), because of the built-in advantages that go with it," said John Froonjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University. "This is going to be a little different."

Those advantages include greater access to campaign infrastructure, the help of party activists and the ability to raise money, Froonjian said.

The party committee is supporting Polistina, who will run as an "Atlantic County Regular Republican."

Monday was the deadline for filing petitions to run, and the state Division of Elections listed the **unofficial candidates** for state offices Tuesday.

County and local unofficial office seekers will likely be listed online Friday, according to Michael Sommers of the Atlantic County Clerk's Office. In the race for clerk, Sommers said Democrat Lisa Jiampetti, the mayor of Egg Harbor City, filed on time. So did Democrats Mico Lucide, of Hamilton Township, and Darlene Samuel, of Atlantic City.

Republican candidate for Atlantic County Clerk Joe Giraldo, of Hammonton, also filed his paperwork to run.

The Hughes Center has invited Polistina and Grossman to a debate 7 p.m. May 11, Froonjian said. It also has invited the Democratic candidates for clerk to a candidates forum 7 p.m. April 27.

Grossman probably has better name recognition than Polistina, Froonjian said. And he has a strong network of local and nationwide supporters who are likely to donate to his campaign.



Political briefs: Bugdon reappointed Atlantic County superintendent of elections

“You can’t underestimate that in an election. Polistina hasn’t run in 10 years, and Grossman ran in an extremely high-profile congressional race just three years ago.”

Grossman won the 2nd Congressional District Republican primary in 2018 but was defeated by a smaller margin than expected by then-Democrat Jeff Van Drew, who later changed parties to Republican after voting against impeaching President Donald Trump in the House of Representatives.

Grossman also runs a conservative organization called Liberty and Prosperity, and is a well-known lawyer.

“It may come down to how Trumpy has the Republican Party in Atlantic County become,” Froonjian said. “This will be interesting to see.”

Grossman, whose campaign slogan is “The Real Republican Fighting ‘Woke’ Democrats,” ran in the Republican primary for Congress in 2018 as a pro-Trump Republican.



Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small files slander suit against Craig Callaway

Hirsh Singh, of Linwood, is again running in the Republican gubernatorial primary. He faces frontrunner Jack Ciattarelli, of Hillsborough in Somerset County; Brian Levine, of Franklin in Somerset County; and Philip Rizzo, of New Vernon in Harding Township, Morris County.

“The only way (Singh, Levine and Rizzo) can compete with Jack Ciattarelli is if they come in with a lot of money,” Froonjian said. “The party organization is strongly behind Ciattarelli, who has statewide name recognition, having run for governor before.”

Singh ran unsuccessfully in the 2020 Republican primary for U.S. Senate, in the 2018 GOP primary for Congress (losing to Grossman) and in the 2017 Republican primary for governor.

All of the offices he has sought may be hurting him, Froonjian said.

“I just saw a news article that referred to Singh as a “perennial candidate,” Froonjian said. “That’s not how you want to be described.”

Toms River attorney denies Guardian allegations in whistleblower lawsuit

Former Ocean County Republican Chair George Gilmore is raising money for Rizzo, **NJ.com** recently reported.

Gilmore was convicted in 2019 of failure to pay payroll taxes and making false statements, and was pardoned by Trump early this year.

It’s not likely Gilmore will be successful going up against the state party, Froonjian said. And Rizzo presents some problems.

“Phil Rizzo has, among other things, said masks make you sick,” Froonjian said. “New Jersey is not a state that has bought into the culture war over masks.”

He said New Jerseyans of both parties have taken the pandemic seriously and have overwhelmingly supported and adhered to wearing masks, according to a recent Stockton poll.

On the Democratic side, incumbent Gov. Phil Murphy has one opponent in the primary, Roger Bacon of Phillipsburg, Warren County.

“Roger Bacon, whose slogan is ‘Make New Jersey Great Again,’” Froonjian said. “Anyone who adopts a Trumpist, MAGA-style slogan as a Democrat had better be prepared for disappointment.”

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Grossman

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State office candidates in southeastern N.J.

Here is the list of candidates who met the Monday cutoff for filing:

Governor

Incumbent Gov. Phil Murphy, of Trenton, and challenger Roger Bacon, of Phillipsburg, for the Democrats.

Jack Ciattarelli, of Hillsborough; Brian D. Levine, of Franklin; Hirsh Singh, of Linwood; and Philip Rizzo, of New Vernon, for the Republicans.

State Senate

1st Legislative District (all of Cape May, parts of Cumberland and Atlantic counties): Yolanda E. Garcia Balicki, of Millville, for the Democrats and incumbent Michael Testa, of Vineland, for the Republicans.

2nd Legislative District (most of Atlantic County): Assemblyman Vince Mazzeo, of Northfield, for the Democrats and a contested race between Seth Grossman, of Atlantic City, and Vince Polistina, of Egg Harbor Township, for the Republicans.

3rd Legislative District (all of Salem and parts of Cumberland and Gloucester counties): State Senate President Steve Sweeney, of West Deptford, for the Democrats, and Edward Durr, of Swedesboro, for the Republicans.

8th Legislative District (parts of Atlantic, Burlington and Camden counties): Incumbent Sen. Dawn Marie Addiego, of Marlton, for the Democrats and Jean Stanfield, of Westampton, for the Republicans.

9th Legislative District (parts of Atlantic, Burlington and Ocean counties): David T. Wright, of West Creek, for the Democrats and incumbent state Sen. Christopher J. Connors, of Forked River, for the Republicans.

State Assembly

1st Legislative District: John P. Capizola Jr., of Vineland, and Christopher C. Wilson, of Vineland, for the Democrats; and incumbents Erik Simonsen, of Cape May, and Antwan McClellan, of Ocean City, for the Republicans.

2nd Legislative District: Atlantic County Commissioner Caren Fitzpatrick, of Linwood, and incumbent John Armato, of Buena Vista Township, for the Democrats; and Donald Guardian, of Atlantic City, and Claire Swift, of Margate, for the Republicans.

3rd Legislative District: In a contested primary, bracketed together are incumbents John Burzichelli, of Paulsboro, and Adam Taliaferro, of Woolwich Township, as well as challenger Arman Michael Noori, of Bridgeton. For the Republicans is Nicholas J. Sereday, of Franklinville.

8th Legislative District: Mark Natale, of Evesham, and Allison Eckel, of Medford, for the Democrats; and Michael Torrissi Jr., of Hammonton, and Brandon Umba, of Medford, for the Republicans.

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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.