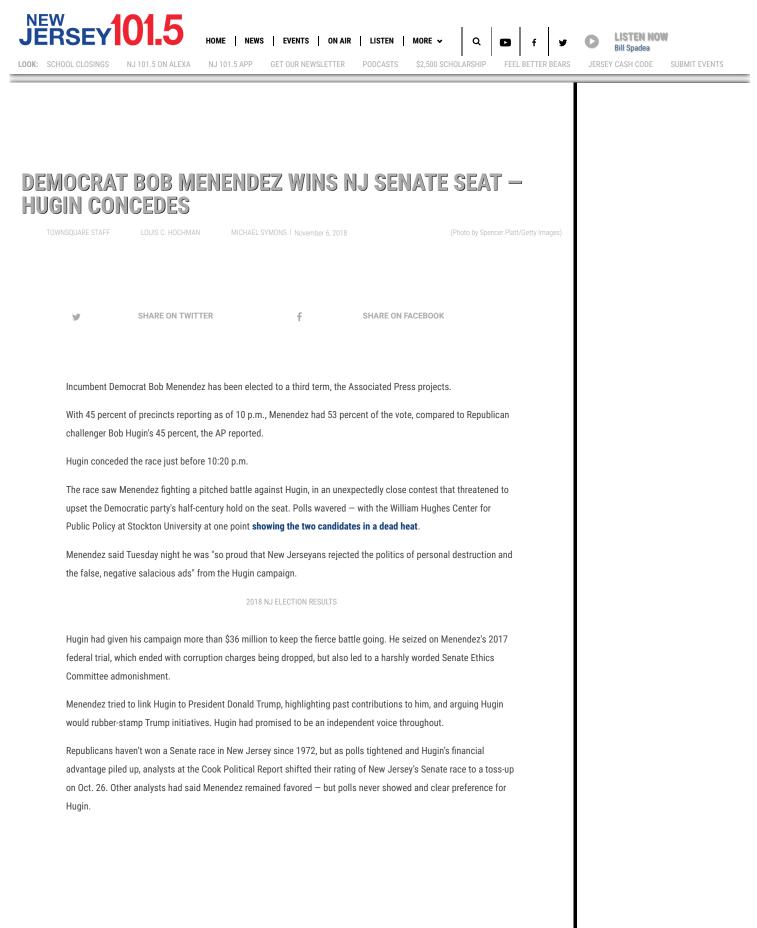
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Even so, the last four public polls of the race showed a growing lead for Menendez of 8 points to 15 points.

The final Quinnipiac University poll, released Monday, found Menendez with his largest lead since the spring, 15 points, at 55 percent to 40 percent.

Final results were not yet available Tuesday night, with several counties yet to report and many of nearly 600,000 mail-in ballots still out.

"This is a blue state where there are more Democrats than Republicans, and indications are that voters want to keep this Senate seat in New Jersey in the 'D' column," Polling analyst Mary Snow told New Jersey 101.5.

The vitriolic race and Menedez's own troubled past led the Star-Ledger, the state's largest newspaper, to offer only the most disdainful endorsement, telling voters "Choke it down, and vote for Menendez."

"Both candidates are slippery characters, even by Washington standards," the paper argued. It called Menendez's choice to stay in the race even after his trial "an act of profound narcissism," but argued he'd fight for New Jersey's interests and provide a check against Trump.

- With Associated Press reports, and prior reporting by Michael Symons

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