



## Newsletter - Winter 2023



Typically in this space, we discuss accomplishments at the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy or preview upcoming events. And there's plenty to talk about for Spring 2023: our work with retired Judge Julio Mendez, research by the Stockton Polling Institute, and the Hughes Center's expanding commitment to student development at Stockton.

But today, the spotlight shines on someone who has had a huge positive impact on our center: Edward Salmon, founding chair of the Hughes Center Steering Committee. Dr. Salmon recently stepped down as chair, a position he held since the board was established in 2008. The Hughes Center honored him with a reception Dec. 1 for his years of dedication to the Center and Stockton University.

It's hard to overstate Ed's contributions. There might not even be a Hughes Center if not for his efforts to convince Stockton to host it – and convince Ambassador Hughes to lend his name to it. Ed has raised tens of thousands of dollars supporting the Hughes Center Honors, and he and Marilyn have donated generously. He has guided the Center with expert advice gleaned from years of experience in the business and political worlds. And he still plays basketball every morning as he has for 50 years!

Personally, he has been a mentor and a friend since I took over as director, always supportive and doing whatever it took to ensure success. We are grateful that he remains on the Steering Committee as Emeritus Founding Chair. I know he will be a great resource for new Chair Richard Tolson and Vice Chair Kim Shalek Downes.

Dr. Ed Salmon, thank you for everything you do to carry on the legacy of Ambassador Bill Hughes.

Dr. John Froonjian, Executive Director

## In this issue:

- Read about the changes in the Steering Committee leadership
- Review the latest Hughes Center poll results
- Learn about the District 2 debate the center sponsored in Fall 2022
- Welcome Judge Julio Mendez, our new Senior Contributing Analyst
- Center co-sponsored Constitution Day 2022 with Mary Ziegler
- Hughes Center supports student engagement

### Hughes Center Steering Committee Leadership Updates

At the beginning of this year, new officers took on leadership roles on the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy advisory board at Stockton University. New Jersey labor leader and consultant Richard Tolson, of Margate, was elected chair of the Hughes Center Steering Committee. Kim Schalek Downes, CEO and president of Salmon Ventures Limited, of Millville, was elected vice chair.

Tolson served in leadership positions with the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers for 30 years beginning in 1990. He was vice president of the N.J. State Building Trades Association and a member of the N.J. State AFL-CIO Executive Board, both from 2006 to 2020. Tolson also served on the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority. Currently, Tolson serves as a labor consultant at Tolson Consulting.



Schalek Downes co-founded Salmon Ventures as its CEO in 2003 and has served as president since 2016. Previously, she was vice president and executive coordinator of AUS Pathways from 1997 to 2003. AUS is a worldwide market research and consulting company with corporate headquarters in Moorestown. Also, from 1992 to 1997, Downes served as Chief of Staff to then Commissioner Edward H. Salmon on the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities.



An original Steering Committee member, Tolson succeeds Dr. Edward Salmon as the longtime chair of the advisory board. Salmon, co-founder and chair of Salmon Ventures, was a state assemblyman and president of the N.J. Board of Public Utilities. He served as Steering Committee chair from the board's establishment in 2008 through 2022. Salmon remains a board member and was elected "Emeritus Founding Chair." On Dec. 1, 2022, following the last Steering Committee meeting of the year, a reception was held on Stockton's Galloway campus to honor Dr. Edward H. Salmon for his many contributions.



View more photos of the event [here](#).

Also, recently the Board of Directors of Regatta Point Villas in St Thomas USVI voted unanimously to name its tennis, pickle ball and basketball courts in honor of Dr. Edward Salmon for his many years of leadership as Chairman of the RPV Board. These outdoor courts are now known as "COACH ED'S COURT."



## Latest Hughes Center Poll Results on Issues of Local News Coverage, Higher Costs of Recreational Activities and GOP Voter Attitudes

Throughout the Fall 2022 semester, under the supervision of research associate Alyssa Maurice, the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy conducted three polls on the decline in local news coverage, higher costs in holiday spending and travel, and attitudes among voters in the midterm elections.



In a poll released in December, about half (51%) of New Jersey residents said there is not enough news coverage to help make informed decisions in state and local elections, while about one in three said the same about national elections. Many news outlets struggling against circulation and ad revenue losses, as well as competition on the internet, have reduced staff, and fewer reporters are covering municipal and county news as a result. About one in three (34%) New Jersey adults said none of the news sources they consume provide any information about the local area where they live, the poll of 559 adult New Jersey residents found. Listen to an audio podcast of Alyssa Maurice discussing the poll results with Stockton Journalism faculty members Toby Rosenthal and Erin O'Hanlon [here](#).

In a poll that came out in November, two-thirds of New Jersey adults surveyed said inflation was impacting their holiday spending a great deal or somewhat, and almost half said they are spending less on everyday expenses to save more money for holiday shopping. In addition, one in three said they have had to forego recreational plans because of the higher costs.

In another November poll, New Jersey voters, especially Republicans, were enthusiastic about voting in the midterm elections in which the economy was the clear choice as the election's top issue, named by 25% of the poll's 707 respondents. More than half were very enthusiastic about voting in the midterms, and 21% were somewhat enthusiastic. But more Republicans said they were eager to vote; 70% were very enthusiastic compared to 54% of Democrats and 55% of independents.

Half of the voters, and 63% of women, said a candidate's views on abortion would impact their vote greatly, and 25% said it would impact their vote somewhat. There was a similar gender gap on the generic congressional ballot question, with 55% of women saying they would vote Democratic compared to 40% of men.

Recently the work of our Polling Institute was recognized by RealClearPolitics, a reputable political news website that compiled a [2020 ranking](#) based on overall polling error, which named Stockton University as the best state pollster, with a 0.5-point error.

[Learn more about the Stockton Polling Institute and its latest polls.](#)

## 2022 N.J. Legislative District 2 Debate

The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University and The Press of Atlantic City cosponsored a debate on Oct. 19 between candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives in South Jersey's 2nd Congressional District. The major party candidates, Democratic challenger Tim Alexander and Rep. Jeff Van Drew, the Republican incumbent, participated in a one-hour debate in the Campus Center Theatre on the Galloway campus. John Froonjian, executive director of the Hughes Center, moderated the event.

The candidates faced questions on a wide variety of topics, including renewable energy, climate change, voting integrity, the 2020 election results, immigration, abortion, crime, inflation, decriminalizing marijuana at the federal level, and other concerns critical to 2<sup>nd</sup> district voters, such as coastal flooding and higher poverty and unemployment rates.

The debate was broadcast live on the Hughes Center and Press websites, and a video recording was archived on [the Hughes Center site](#).

### 2nd Congressional District Debate



Tim Alexander (D)



Jeff Van Drew (R)

## Retired Judge Julio Mendez joins the Hughes Center as Senior Contributing Analyst

In September 2022, Julio L. Mendez, a retired assignment judge of the N.J. Superior Court, joined the Hughes Center as a Senior Contributing Analyst to engage students and participate in public programming centered around the law.

"The most important part of this for me is to work with and to inspire Stockton students," said Mendez, who retired March 1 as assignment judge for the Atlantic-Cape May County vicinage. "I want them to see how legal issues affect so many areas of the lives and careers of people, and not just lawyers."



Judge Mendez's judicial career began in 2002 with his appointment as a Superior Court judge in Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties. In June 2005, he was named Presiding Judge of the Family Part for that vicinage, which is a judicial district. He has the distinction of serving as a judge in all court divisions and handling all dockets, with 11 of his trial court opinions approved for publication. N.J. Supreme Court Chief Justice Stuart Rabner designated Mendez as Assignment Judge, the top position in a court vicinage, in Atlantic and Cape May counties in November 2011. He served in that capacity until his retirement. The many court committees on which Judge Mendez served worked on issues including domestic violence, drug courts, municipal court reform, and children and family issues. Judicial recognitions he has received include the New Jersey State Bar Thurgood Marshall Award. Judge Mendez received his Juris Doctor degree from Rutgers School of Law-Camden. He became a member of the New Jersey Bar in 1981.

In his new role, Judge Mende has presented at multiple conferences, participated in the center's events, led discussions with groups of students and produced written analyses and columns about various judicial issues that have appeared in numerous New Jersey news outlets and are archived on the [center's website](#).

This spring, Judge Mendez will also participate in public programs and panel discussions aimed at educating students, faculty and South Jersey residents about trends and issues affecting government, the law and society.

Working with the judge is appropriate for the Hughes Center because its namesake, the late Congressman and Ambassador William J. Hughes, was a lawyer and served as a prosecutor in Cape May County, said John Fronjian, director of the center.

## Constitution Day 2022 features Mary Ziegler



The 2022 Constitution Day guest speaker was Constitutional scholar Mary Ziegler, a professor at the University of California, Davis School of Law, who studied and wrote four books on the evolution of the anti-abortion debate. Ziegler highlighted case law and political and social strategies that brought the anti-abortion movement to the present day, a partisan debate that centers on fetal personhood.

"Let's look at how we got to the moment we find ourselves in now," Ziegler told an audience of several hundred students, faculty and community members. "Where we are going next is uncertain." Referring to the recent Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* decision in June, which stripped away federal protection for the right to an abortion, Ziegler said, "This court is intent on ignoring the popular opinion when it comes to shaping its interpretation of the Constitution."

Ziegler's most recent book, "Dollars for Life: The Anti-Abortion Movement and the Fall of the Republican Establishment," traces how the battle to reverse Roe v. Wade changed the rules of campaign finance, doomed the GOP establishment, and made fundamental changes to American democracy.

The annual Constitution Day event is sponsored by the Political Engagement Project/American Democracy Project, the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy, the Office of Service-Learning and the Office of the Provost.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the event.

## The Hughes Center Supports Student Engagement

The Hughes Center is proud to sponsor research conducted by Stockton students. The Hughes Center established a student research internship in Fall 2019. Each semester, at least one student intern researches a public policy issue and produces a paper on that topic. The full list of student research papers can be found [here](#).

The latest student researcher was Alexis Meroney, a Stockton University political science major who graduated in December. Alexis, a resident of Lakehurst, worked on the research throughout the Fall 2022 semester, and her paper, *A Current Assessment for New Jersey Property Taxes in the 2020-2022 Real Estate Market*, was published by the Center on Jan. 26.

The Hughes Center also continues to financially support Stockton University students in the Washington Internship Program, which provides work experience through internships in government, business and nonprofits for participants in the nation's capital. Stockton has participated in the program since the mid-1970s, and more than 1,300 students have spent a semester living, working, and studying in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

During the Fall 2023 semester, the Center awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to Adil Akram, a Stockton University senior majoring in Communications. Adil, a resident of Somers Point, attended Atlantic City High School, during which time he was a member of both the Atlantic City men's soccer team and the Atlantic City men's crew team. He has work experience in a variety of fields and various capacities, including in retail sales and the hospitality industry.

