

## Candidates: Legislative District 3

Sweeney commands South Jersey district with incumbent Assembly members fighting for seats

By Joe Tyrrell , November 4 in

In the 3rd District, a citadel of Democratic Party power, there simply aren't enough legislative seats to go around.

Through the magic of re-districting, first-term Republican Assemblyman Domenick DiCicco found himself transported to a place already represented by incumbent Democrats John Burzichelli, the deputy speaker, and Celeste Riley, the first woman from Cumberland County to serve in the Legislature.

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In a year in which most races are bland, the 3rd District appears to be a place that has gone through the looking glass. Democrat Sweeney is a former union organizer who pushed Republican Gov. Chris Christie's public worker pension and health benefits cuts through the Legislature, with the help of Burzichelli and Riley, a teacher who supported the reductions.

Meanwhile, Republican Mulligan, whose parents are teachers, had doubts about the cuts, and calls tenure "necessary." Despite high-volume rhetoric on the issue, much from his party, he said, "I see no evidence that student test scores are going to be better" by getting rid of tenure.

While he leans toward conservatism and considers Christie as "absolutely necessary" to curtail the state budget, Mulligan emphasized his willingness to follow his own judgment.

"I am not a garden variety, lockstep Republican," he said.

DiCicco has been a loyal Christie foot soldier, but is in no hurry to congratulate the district incumbents for providing the votes to get the pension and benefit cuts past strong opposition from unions and traditional Democrats.

Sweeney and Burzichelli "were part of the regime that increased taxes 115 times over the last decade," DiCicco said. "It took Republican leadership to steady the boat and achieve reform, such as the historic pension and healthcare law that will save taxpayers \$120 billion over 30 years."

DiCicco also reaches beyond partisan boilerplate, promoting such policies as efficient land use in a heavily developed state, and protecting water supplies and other natural resources.

A lawyer and executive of a court-reporting and litigation services company, DiCicco said he has worked with small businesses on a jobs plan in an effort to boost the economy.



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