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### **Republicans hope to gain seats in three key South Jersey races /Newsworks**

As he runs for reelection, New Jersey's Senate President [Steve Sweeney](#) has several factors in his favor: He's the most powerful elected Democrat in the state; he hails from a district that favors his party by a 2-to-1 margin; and he enjoys a friendly public relationship with popular Republican Gov. Chris Christie.

Still, those advantages haven't stopped Senate Minority Leader [Tom Kean Jr.](#) from targeting Sweeney in an effort to pick up the five additional seats he needs to secure a Republican majority in the upper chamber in Trenton.

Republican strategists are counting on Christie's coattails to help pull Republicans who are lower on the ticket into office.

But [Sweeney and his running mates](#) say they don't believe that Christie's high marks with voters will derail their reelection plans -- and neither do independent pollsters. Instead, Sweeney and his incumbent 3rd District running mates, Assembly members John Burzichelli and Celeste Riley, believe their own bipartisan efforts, combined with their voting records, will see them safely back into office.

Kean is doing everything he can to make sure that doesn't happen.

Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean Jr. has recruited Republican attorney and former Deputy Chief of Staff of the State Comptroller's Office Niki Trunk to challenge the Senate president.

Not only has Kean contributed at least \$8,500 to Trunk's campaign, he also released a memo earlier this year naming Sweeney's seat as among the most winnable in the state. "With the successful re-election of our 16 Senate Republicans, these five seats alone (1, 2, 3, 14 and 38) are enough to build a new majority," he wrote. "These are districts that, even in non-gubernatorial years, should remain realistic targets for Republicans with enough campaign resources." Districts 1, 2, and 3 are in South Jersey, where Sweeney has consolidated his power in a district that covers large parts of residential and agricultural Gloucester, Salem, and Cumberland counties.

The memo reportedly infuriated Sweeney, who told NJ Spotlight, "I don't see it. If he's honest with his polling, I don't see him picking up any seats, including mine."

His claim may be bolstered by the severe criticism of Trunk by the Republican mayor of her hometown, who shared a ticket with her when she ran successfully for deputy mayor. This summer, Harrison Township Mayor Louis Manzo persuaded the five-member, all-Republican township committee to endorse Sweeney over Trunk, who served as township committeewoman from 2008 to 2010. Manzo cited Sweeney's bipartisanship and criticized Trunk's lack of experience and attempt to block the construction of a highway bypass he supported while she was on the committee.

"To put an inexperienced person in that spot, I don't care who it is, it's a mistake," Manzo said in published news accounts. "[Trunk was] a roadblock to real local progress and reform, putting her own ambitions and personal preferences before the good of Harrison's residents."

Trunk told a local newspaper that she cast the lone vote against the roadway because it wasn't in best interest of the township. "After I left the committee, the roadway was complete and they chose to name it after Steve Sweeney. I think that's pretty telling as to the motivations behind this endorsement," she said. "I do have the support of my district, county, and local GOP parties, which is what matters -- not one man in another district."

Harrison Township joined the 5th di

America declined to endorse Sweeney, who is a union organizer, as well as his District 3 team for backing a bill that stripped public employees of the right to collectively bargain for health benefits. This year, the three unions have endorsed Sweeney and his running mates.

The democrats are also being supported by the union-funded Fund for Jobs, Growth and Security, a Washington, D.C., Super PAC affiliated with powe



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reader said...

Everyone is bitching about changing out all these career politicians like sweeney and company, but that is all it will amount to is complaining no action, personally I don't think the voters have the backbone to vote all incumbents out and put all new people in. Senator sweeney is on track to be governor after christie and is backed by his good friend george norcross, and as we all know in NJ money talks and can buy power and position, remember jon corzine. So good luck Mr. Kean, I would not vote for Sen. Sweeney due to an issue I've been trying to get taken care of in his district that has become a public safety issue yet all I ever get from his office is buck passing to the state and county if he was such a powerful senator he would step in to get things moving before something horrific happens. I'm talking about a dam in desperate need of reconstruction, the money is there but the engineers' report isn't from Salem County. So that is why I wouldn't vote for him or any other incumbent.

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