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Hand recount to start in contested 2d District race



By [Suzette Parmley, Inquirer Staff Writer](#)

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NORTHFIELD, N.J. A hand recount of 7,500 provisional and mail-in ballots will start Monday to determine the winner in the contested Second District Assembly race between Republican incumbent John Amodeo and Democratic challenger Vince Mazzeo.

Staff of the Atlantic County Clerk's Office, the county Board of Elections, and others completed comparing the last of roughly 63,000 Voting Authority signatures Friday afternoon with those in voting machines used in the Nov. 5 election.

The hand recount of the ballots will begin at 10 a.m., at the Board of Elections office in Mays Landing.

"We're confident that once the recount is completed, that Vince Mazzeo will once again win the election," said Democratic attorney Chris Orlando, who observed the three-day machine recheck and matching of signatures with other stakeholders inside a warehouse here.

Amodeo, 63, of Margate, who is in his third term in the Assembly, gave a victory speech on election night after finishing 379 votes ahead of Mazzeo.

But Mazzeo, 49, the mayor of Northfield, was certified the winner Nov. 19 by the county clerk and Board of Elections, after 22 hours of counting of provisional ballots and a decision by a Superior Court judge to open 115 provisional ballots that were challenged by Republicans as having been mishandled. Mazzeo came out on top by 40 votes.

Amodeo petitioned and was granted a recount two days later.

"We're hoping to have an accurate recount," Republican lawyer Randolph Lafferty said Friday.

Daniel J. Douglas, director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Richard Stockton College, said in an e-mail that election results in the Second District "pointed to the volatility of having two elections this fall, and the resulting lower-than-normal turnout in each of the races."

"Voters in Legislative District 2 showed a willingness to split their vote," he said. "They voted for Republican Chris Christie for governor, Democrat Jim Whelan for state Senate, Republican Chris Brown and Democrat Vincent Mazzeo for state Assembly (as of this writing). And, in Atlantic City, voted for Republican Don Guardian" as mayor.

"Even more than splitting their ballots," said Douglas, "voters zigged and zagged with their choices."

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