



*MacArthur stands with the owners of Radwell International in Lumberton during a press conference earlier today*

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steeply against her or because, [as some have argued](#), she's simply running a bad campaign) will have to admit that things seem to be heating up. That's the diagnosis of Monmouth University pollster Patrick Murray, who told PolitickerNJ this week's developments point to the possibility of a real horse race between the candidates.

Like MacArthur's camp, Murray doesn't place much weight on the poll numbers either -- congressional polling in the third district is difficult to do, he says -- but he does see significance elsewhere.

"I think the more telling thing is that way the campaigns have been behaving," Murray said. "The number of joint debates that they're willing to hold, the fact that they're attacking each other, suggests that their own internal polling numbers are showing that this could be closer than many of us thought it might be."

He notes the attack ads, though negative, place Belgard's face prominently on screen and in front of voters -- a move not voluntarily undertaken, unless by a campaign that feels threatened.

"People don't vote for congress based on who's running for senate," he said. "They might turn out to vote because of who's at the top of the ticket and then just go down the line, but they don't say, 'oh because you're affiliated with Booker, then I'm going to vote for you.'"

But MacArthur's campaign maintains they've seen nothing in this race that's made them rethink their strategy. MacArthur is running his campaign just as aggressively as he was when he was in the ring with former Bogota mayor Steve Lonegan during this year's primary, Luna said, and will continue to do so up until the polls close.

"Through the primary and now into the general, we have been running this race like we are ten votes behind and will do so until 8PM on Election Day," Luna said, adding that "the DCCC is so concerned about Belgard's mess of a campaign that they were forced to leak a poll that showed her losing in order to defend her viability. That's what happens when a Democrat in a competitive district gets shut out of major trades union endorsements and the support they provide."

"We feel extremely confident with the state of this campaign and Tom's ability as a candidate," he added.