Close state elections show that everyone's vote matters, says
Sharon Schulman
Sharon Schulman For The Press
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The next general election is less than three months away. For those who choose a mailin ballot, it is a lot less
than that. They will be able to vote about seven weeks from now, if they choose to do so. It is critical to
remember not only the importance of it being a presidential year, but also all the other candidates and issues
on the ballot. All are critical to the wellbeing of this area. People should learn about the pros and cons and stay
engaged.
It is frightening how often I hear people of all ages and all walks of life make comments such as, "My vote really
doesn't count," or "I don't like either of the candidates for president so I'm just not going to vote." This thinking is
just plain wrong.
Hughes Center Senior Research Associate John Froonjian published an analysis of some of the 2011 legislative
races and in the 1st District that year, about 1,000 votes separated the winning and losing Assembly
candidates. Unfortunately, 3,0000 people who actually went into the voting booth and voted in other races
did not vote for the Assembly race. Had they voted for an Assembly candidate, the election outcome could have
been changed.
A similar voting phenomenon whereby people entered the voting booth but did not vote for an Assembly
candidate occurred in Burlington County's 7th District that year, where nearly 3,700 of the people who went into
the voting booths did not cast a vote for an Assembly candidate. The final tally was only about 1,260 votes apart
and the effect was a change from Republican to Democratic control.
Three other Assembly races and one Senate race that year all could have been changed by voters who went to
the polls but did not cast a vote in those specific races.
Think back to the gubernatorial race of 1993 between incumbent Gov. James Florio and challenger Christine
Todd Whitman. The final tally was a mere 1 percent apart and New Jersey had a new governor.
The city of Vineland requires that the winner of the mayoral race be the person who gets the majority of votes.
Usually, many candidates run for the position and no one gets that 50 percent plus one vote number and they
then have a runoff election. In 2012, more than 21,000 people voted in the initial election, but only 9,430
showed up for the runoff election and affected the final result. This year is a mayorcouncil election and may
well need a runoff election. It is important that Vineland's electorate makes its votes count both times.
On this year's ballot, one of the public questions will be a constitutional amendment about casino expansion and
whether to allow casino gaming in northern New Jersey. Remember how this played out in 1974 when New
Jerseyans were first deciding on whether to allow casino gaming? Approximately 1.2 million N.J. residents voted

against the referendum to allow casino gaming statewide and 800,000 voted for it. A mere two years later in
1976, the referendum was again on the ballot, but to allow casinos only in Atlantic City. This time, of the 2.7
million votes cast, approximately 1.2 million still voted against casino gaming, however, more than 1.5 million
voted in favor.
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