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By Carl Golden | July 1, 2022, 11:58 am | [columnist \(https://www.insidernj.com/category/columnist/\)](https://www.insidernj.com/category/columnist/)

In 1977, just over two years into his first term as New Jersey Governor, Brendan Byrne was nicknamed TB — the Term Byrne.

It was quintessential New Jersey — a streetwise, instantly recognizable political dart that will live forever, laying out the shorthand version of the then widely popular Track Bettin parlors.

By that point, Byrne's job performance rating had slipped to under 3 percent and fellow Democrats were jumping on the line to challenge him in the 1977 primary election.

Forty-six years later and just shy of two years into his first term, President Joe Biden risks snatching the TB crown from Byrne.

Like Byrne, his public approval has plummeted into the low 30s (net negative even in NJ (<https://morningconsult.com/2022/07/18/biden-approval-rating-all-50-states/>)) and Democrats are publicly discussing ways to persuade him to forego seeking a second term or, in the extreme, mount a primary challenge.

Byrne had won a landslide victory in 1973, rolling up a 63 percent margin and a plurality of 738,000 votes — both records at the time and stood until Gov. Thomas H. Kean won reelection in 1985 with 70 percent of the vote and a plurality of 700,000.

It all came crashing down for Byrne in 1977 when he muscled through the Legislature New Jersey's first income tax after leading his campaign that he saw no need for such a tax "in the foreseeable future," a phrase that became an indelible part of the state's political lore.

When he sought a second term in 1977, Byrne faced 10 opponents in the primary, including, among others, a sitting Congressman, incumbent and former state senators and former members of his own cabinet. With 30 percent of the vote, Byrne was re-nominated.

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closed until a constitutional fund mechanism, i.e., an income tax, was enacted. The court order, of course, came in August when schools were shut for summer vacation.

Byrne also deftly forced his opponent onto the defensive by demanding he propose a plan of his own to avert a school funding crisis, a demand largely ignored and ultimately met with a hastily cobbled together plan so hazardous and unworkable that it actually damaged the Republican.

The countermeasure, however, was the Byrne homestead rebate program which used income tax revenue to send checks — signed by Byrne — three weeks prior to election day to every