

COMFORT TV

WATCHING WELL-INTENDED PEOPLE DO THEIR JOBS WELL ON “THE PITT,” “HIGHJACK” AND “SURVIVOR” IS A COMFORTING BALM FOR OUR TROUBLED TIMES. **F2**

Sunday

South Jersey TIMES



STATEHOUSE

Sherrill to take office after long road to Trenton



Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill addresses supporters on election night at the campaign headquarters in the Hilton East Brunswick. “You guys just screamed from the rooftops,” she said of the results. *Jeff Rhode, for South Jersey Times*

She’ll start the job with a number of promises, as well as potential challenges.

Brent Johnson *For South Jersey Times*

Mikie Sherrill will officially become New Jersey’s next governor Tuesday. And in case you missed the blizzard of campaign ads in last year’s huge gubernatorial election, her new job is the latest entry in a lengthy bio that also includes time as a Navy helicopter pilot, federal prosecutor, mother of four and member of Congress.

Sherrill, a Democrat, is now set to assume the top job in Garden State government a day after she turns 54. (Yes, Monday is her birthday). She comes armed with a number of promises (such as freezing sky-high electric prices) and facing a number of challenges (such as warnings about the state budget and working with President Donald Trump, a frequent foe).

Here’s a closer look what you need to know about your next governor as she prepares to be sworn in.

1. SHE WON BIG LAST YEAR

Sherrill was one of six Democrats — all notable names in Jersey politics — who sought their party’s nomination to succeed term-limited Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy. It was an especially heated primary and was

“Sherrill campaigned on two big things: freezing electricity prices and opposing Trump. She’s pretty much got to do something, at least symbolically, on both points right away.”

Dan Cassino, executive director of Fairleigh Dickinson University’s poll.

expected to be a close race. But Sherrill won by 13 percentage points.

Then, she waged a fierce campaign against Republican Jack Ciattarelli in the general election, four years after Ciattarelli nearly upset Murphy in the 2021 governor’s race. The rivals traded vicious verbal attacks all summer and fall, and several polls showed Sherrill with a single-digit lead or the race a dead heat right up to Election Day.

In the end, Sherrill won by 14 percentage points, notching 56.9% of the vote.

Now, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton poll, she enters office with 40% of Jerseyans seeing her favorably, 22% unfavorably, 32% having no opinion, and 6% saying they don’t know who she is.

Ashley Koning, the poll’s director, said the fact many people are undecided about Sherrill could work in her favor as she arrives, “suggesting many residents are open to what she brings to the table.”

2. SHE’S MAKING HISTORY

Not only will Sherrill become Jersey’s 57th governor, she’ll be just the second woman to hold the job in state history — after Republican Christie Whitman in the 1990s.

Whitman endorsed Sherrill last year, calling her “the total package.”

On top of that, Sherrill’s victory marked the first time one party will hold the Jersey governor’s office for three straight terms since 1961. That was the year Russia’s Yuri Gagarin became the first person in space.

Plus, her running mate was Dale Caldwell, Centenary University’s first Black president — who will now be the first man to serve as the state’s lieutenant governor.

3. HER LAST JOB WAS IN CONGRESS

The Essex County Democrat broke onto the state’s political scene in 2018, when she flipped the U.S. House seat in North

SEE GOVERNOR-ELECT, A3

CAMDEN COUNTY

Former coach, left off sex offender registry, arrested again

The former South Jersey gymnastics coach was charged with various sex crimes.

Keith Sargeant and Matthew Stanmyre
For South Jersey Times

A South Jersey man who was the focus of an NJ Advance Media investigation last year after he was mistakenly left off New Jersey’s sex offender registry was arrested Friday for a fourth time on charges of endangering children.

Joseph Catrambone, a former gymnastics coach and a three-time convicted sex offender, attempted to meet with an underage boy to engage in sexual conduct after chatting online, Camden County Prosecutor Grace C. MacAulay said Friday.

Catrambone, 38, was charged on Jan. 7 with first-degree attempted manufacturing of child sexual abuse material.

He also faces second-degree charges of attempted luring of a child and attempted sexual assault of a minor, third-degree charges of attempted child endangerment and attempting to send obscene material to a minor and a fourth-degree charge of attempted criminal sexual contact with a minor.

Catrambone intended to sexually assault someone he thought was a 14-year-old boy after chatting online, authorities said.

Catrambone was the focus of an NJ Advance Media investigation last year after reporters discovered his name did not appear in the state’s public sex offenders registry until June 4. That day, his name appeared as a Tier 2, moderate risk offender, after nearly a dozen inquiries about his status were made to state police and county officials by NJ Advance Media.

In June, Gloucester County Prosecutor’s Office chief of detectives Thomas Gilbert, who also serves as the office’s spokesman, said that “subsequent to [NJ Advance Media’s] inquiry regarding this individual ... we were able to identify a data entry error that resulted in him not appearing on

SEE JOSEPH CATRAMBONE, A3



Joseph Catrambone, of Deptford, N.J., was arrested and charged on Jan. 7 for attempting to meet with an underage boy to engage in sexual conduct after chatting online, according to Camden County Prosecutor Grace C. MacAulay.
Camden County Prosecutor’s Office

TRANSPORTATION

New \$45 TSA fee

Starting Feb. 1, 2026, those who don’t show a REAL ID, passport or other form of identification at a TSA security checkpoint will have to pay a \$45 fee. **A2**

ATLANTIC CITY

Charges withdrawn

Prosecutors are seeking to dismiss indictments against Schools Superintendent La’Quetta Small and Principal Constance Days-Chapman. **A7**

OCEAN COUNTY

Ex-N.J. cop gets probation in violent break-in

She forfeited her job as part of her plea agreement last year.

Nicolas Fernandes *For South Jersey Times*

A former Toms River police officer has been sentenced to probation after a violent break-in at her ex-boyfriend’s house last year.

Rebecca Sayegh, 33, of Toms River, received a three-year probationary sentence on Friday, the Ocean County Prosecutor’s Office said in a statement.

As part of the sentence, she has also been ordered to pay restitution, is prohibited from contacting the victims and can no longer seek public employment in New Jersey.

She pleaded guilty to burglary, criminal mischief and simple assault in November. As part of the plea deal, she immediately forfeited her position with the Toms River Police Department.

Sayegh was off-duty when she used a baton to smash the glass on the front door and enter the home of her ex-boyfriend on April 25 at about 11:20 p.m. as he and his new girlfriend sat in the living room, prosecutors said.

Sayegh once lived in the home, located in the Bayville section of Berkeley, with her former boyfriend, whom she dated for five years, according to her attorney Terrance Turnbach.

Sayegh began arguing with the pair after entering, and the verbal dispute turned physical when she began pushing and shov-

ing both victims, according to Assistant Prosecutor Isabella Young.

The woman suffered swelling to the eye when Sayegh poked her with her fingernail, Young said.

Sayegh threw a plant back into the living room and then went upstairs to break items and rip pictures off the wall as her ex-boyfriend and the other woman retreated to the backyard to call 911, Young said.

She also scratched the hood of one of the victims’ vehicles, authorities said.

Sayegh also tried to fight with responding officers and physically resisted being arrested, authorities said. She was also accused of threatening to burn the house down as police walked her down the driveway.

SEE REBECCA SAYEGH, A3