



2024



# LGBT

**OUT 100 Power List**



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## Welcome to InsiderNJ's 2024 OUT 100 Power List, a tribute to politically influential LGBTs in NJ. Politics.

The LGBT Power List in 2018 was intended as a one off. I was tempted to sign off with last year's list but let's be honest, it was a juicy year in NJ politics as reflected in the composition of this year's list. Since this is probably my swansong Power List, I was keen to include as many new names and faces and possible in this year's edition. So if you've been included multiple times but didn't appear this year, thanks for making room for this year's debutants. Since neither party is doing much to build a bench for the next generation of LGBT political

talent, this list is my contribution to building that bench.

There have been plenty of detractors over the years.

Garden State Equality's Christian Fuscarino took himself out of contention for this year's list on a recent Facebook post seeking nominations.

"I find the process by which it is created to be deeply problematic and harmful," Mr. Fuscarino said. "Your methodology frequently overlooks individuals who are

doing substantial work, particularly people of color and trans individuals.”

The truth is, I’ve always worked very hard to ensure a vibrant cross-section of names and faces. This year’s list, for example, includes 18 females in the Top 20, which is a first.

Diversity matters to me and that includes geographical diversity as well. That’s something we don’t take for granted down here in South Jersey.

And here’s a little secret about my methodology for this particular list: nominations are seriously considered and usually make it on the list. Ultimately, I hope that those who are included on this list, and previous years’ lists, and its’ readers at-large find it to be affirming and meaningful.

About twice a year I get a Google alert for an obituary that included a passage from a tribute I wrote. It’s utterly heartbreaking when it happens but I can scarcely imagine greater honor than that, as a writer or an activist.

The theme of this year’s list (“Tough Lesbians”) is dedicated to my late father, a conservative Trump-loving retired Marine who had this to say about gays in the military: “Son, when you go into battle, you’re gonna want to take some tough lesbians with you.”

RIP Dad. We couldn’t agree more.

*Sincerely,  
Jay Lassiter*

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**In the last two years, 22 states have banned or restricted abortion access.**

Continued attacks on reproductive freedom, birth control, gender-affirming care, and IVF threaten our bodies, our health, and our futures.

New Jersey has proudly supported reproductive health care access and bodily autonomy, but there are still critical protections New Jersey needs to meet this moment in a post-Roe health care landscape.

In the face of an uncertain future, New Jersey must act now to ensure that reproductive freedom is protected in our state for years to come.

**Pass the Reproductive Freedom and Health Equity Bill Package.**



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# I. NANCY SOLOMON



Nancy Solomon is the smartest, toughest, most ethical journalist in the game. The same was true 30 years ago when she began her remarkable journalism career on the West Coast. Since 2001, Jersey politics has been her beat and nowadays, you can often hear Nancy Solomon on WNYC, the largest, most influential public radio station in America. Her work also appears in Gothamist.

A senior reporter and founding managing editor of New Jersey Public Radio, Ms. Solomon won a 2014 Peabody Award (her

second) for *Chris Christie, White House Ambitions and the Abuse of Power*. Solomon also won a Peabody for producing “Mind the Gap: Why Good Schools are Failing Black Students.”

For the uninitiated, a Peabody is like an Olympic gold medal in journalism and Ms. Solomon’s trenchant examination of Chris Christie shredded the former Governor’s reputation to bits. It’s been over a decade and memories fade so let’s recall that Chris Christie was virtually unassailable during his first term.

As most Democratic party leaders cowered in fealty, Christie exuded a bulletproof aura that could often intimidate the press as well. But Nancy Solomon never gave an inch in her standoff with Chris Christie, one of the biggest bullies in NJ political history. In the end, Christie left office with an 18% approval rating and Nancy Solomon got her Peabody.

With Christie properly disposed, Ms. Solomon turned her attention to all the things that undermine public trust in New Jersey government: corruption, nepotism, bossism, and the shady ballot design known as “the line” that gives a huge advantage to those anointed by the political machines that overwhelmingly dominate NJ politics.

Her latest podcast *Dead End: A New Jersey Political Murder Mystery*, used a notorious, high profile double murder as a lens through which to examine NJ’s (mostly) rancid political culture. Not only

did her podcast completely upend a narrative that (at first) actually blamed the victims for their own death, but thanks to Ms. Solomon debunking the suicide myth, the victims she profiled can finally rest more peacefully. NJ's Attorney General has also reopened the investigation, a move prompted by Solomon's podcast that's long overdue. *That's power.*

Nancy's podcast also helped set the table for a raft of corruption indictments for George Norcross, NJ's most powerful unelected political boss.

Nancy Solomon's press colleagues were effusive with praise for her decades-long career speaking truth to power.

Matt Katz, an award-winning journalist and radio/podcast presenter, had this to say:

*"Nancy is a multi-tool journalist whose best asset is the strongest bullshit detector in New Jersey. In her written radio features, on-air analysis and live interviews, it sometimes feels as though she's a one-*

*woman blockade against governmental and political corruption, injustice and incompetence. But she's more than that: Behind the scenes for more than a decade, she has secured the resources to keep fact-based journalism alive in New Jersey. The beating heart of that journalism is Nancy herself. That's why the best professional decision I ever made was when I said 'hell yeah' after Nancy came up to me in the statehouse 11 years ago to ask if I wanted to join her in public radio, bringing New Jersey news to listeners throughout the state and over to the other side of the George Washington Bridge."*

Charles Stile whose remarkable journalistic career has spanned generations, echoed Mr. Katz's praise:

*"Nancy is fearless and calmly ferocious," Mr. Stile told InsiderNJ. "In each richly reported segment, Nancy imparts the shock and dismay from each new discovery of New Jersey's rotting political system – that voters are largely shut out of the candidate selection process, that unelected*

*county chairmen wield enormous power without any accountability or that a powerbroker like George Norcross can operate so long with impunity. Just beneath the surface of her even-handed, mild-mannered voice is a sense of urgency. She is a special talent, and I'm honored to work alongside her."*

Eugene Sonn overlapped with Ms. Solomon in Trenton. They collaborated on "Ask Governor Murphy" when Mr. Sonn was news director at WHYY in Philly.

*"Nancy has the rare ability to both dig in on the day-to-day stories of New Jersey and take a step back and comb over things we all thought have been covered to death," Mr. Sonn told InsiderNJ. "She finds things others have missed and also connects the dots to craft a narrative people want to listen to."*

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## 2. LUANNE PETERPAUL

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY JESS ALAIMO*



Trailblazer. History-maker. Pioneer. These are just a few words that describe the imitable Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul. The newly-elected Assemblywoman recently became the first out lesbian in the history of the New

Jersey legislature when she flipped the 11th district – home to the Queer Capital of New Jersey, Asbury Park. Luanne is no stranger to making New Jersey LGBTQ+ history. Previously, she was the first woman to be appointed

Municipal Judge in Long Branch. Before that, she served as the Board Chair of Garden State Equality for over twelve years. During her tenure as chair, Luanne co-authored the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights that was signed into law by then-Governor Chris Christie.

Luanne's list of accomplishments is no doubt impressive, but it's her ability to operate with such kindness that has taken NJ politics by storm. It's rare that such a political virtuoso is also so accessible, friendly, and gracious.

Inspiring future generations is important, but it's Luanne's innate ability to guide these future generations step-by-step that makes her unique. As Assemblywoman Peterpaul continues to make history, she also leaves behind the tools that future queer women in politics will need. Luanne's ability to connect with others is what guarantees her legacy will live forever in New Jersey politics.



### 3. JEANNINE FRISBY LARUE & MAGGIE MORAN

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY PEARL GABEL*



Jeannine Frisby LaRue and Maggie Moran are names that echo with authority and influence throughout the Garden State. Close friends for over 20 years, these icons in communications, policy, politics, and advocacy have become pivotal figures within the LGBTQIA+ community. Their work has left an indelible mark on New Jersey and beyond. This year, Jeannine and Maggie turbocharged

their collaborative spirit, assembling a dynamic team of extraordinary and diverse practitioners to launch Moxie Strategies. This groundbreaking venture is shattering norms and injecting bold, fresh perspectives into strategy, public affairs, advertising, and issue advocacy.

With Moxie, they're not just extending their impressive legacy—they're revolutionizing it.

From amplifying vital voices to spearheading innovative campaigns and pioneering new business models, Jeannine and Maggie are pushing the envelope and driving progress. Their combined expertise and fearless approach promise to shake up the industry. Moxie Strategies isn't just a firm; it's a testament to their unwavering commitment to impact and their relentless pursuit of excellence. Here's to Jeannine and Maggie—two powerhouse leaders who are setting new standards and blazing new trails.



## 4. REED GUSCIORA



The two-term mayor of Trenton, NJ's capital city, Reed Gusciora has twice set atop the InsiderNJ OUT 100, a tribute to politically influential voices in New Jersey politics. Elected mayor in an absolute squeaker in 2017, Mr. Gusciora's reelection campaign 2021 was a blowout with Mr. Gusciora deftly routing the competition.



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## 5. MARSHA SHAPIRO & LOUISE WALPIN

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY RAY LESNIAK



Marsha Shapiro and Louise Walpin, I call them Thelma and Louise, were in the forefront of the fight for LGBT rights in New Jersey from the get-go.

Marsha and Louise were partners for more than 20 years and brought four

children into their relationship. Two had significant disabilities. They were religiously married by a Rabbi and entered into a domestic partnership and then a civil union to obtain legal protection and suffered serious financial consequences because

their employers did not offer health benefits for civil union families.

In *What's Love Got To Do With It? The Case For Same Sex Marriage*, written by Loretta Weinberg and me, Louise wrote, "Our family has

suffered enough unfairness. I implore you, we implore you, to provide us with our civil rights and legal protection that we need. Please vote for full marriage equality.” That was on January 7, 2010.

The Senate vote was 20-14 against Marriage Equality but Marsha and Louise had just begun to fight.

Because of their fierce advocacy for LGBT rights, Lambda Legal asked Marsha and Louise to be plaintiffs in *Garden State Equality v. Dow* which in 2013 held that same sex couples were guaranteed marriage under the New Jersey Constitution.

With that decision in hand, my beloved wife, Salena, a fierce LGBT advocate herself, asked Marsha and Louise if they would give

us the honor of having the first same sex marriage in New Jersey at our home in Elizabeth. Of course they said yes. We timed it so they would take their marriage vows at 12:01 am, October 21, 2013. Garden State Equality Founder and iconic LGBT champion Stephen Goldstein, a rabbinical student, blessed the marriage.

Marsha and Louise didn't rest on their laurels having championed Marriage Equality. Seeing the right-wing book banning attacks focusing on the LGBT community, Louise joined SWEEP NJ and serves as its Director of Advocacy and Organizing. In this role, Louise has worked with various communities to organize and publicize calls to action when New Jersey Department of Education Policy 5756 which aims to

help school administrators create inclusive environments for transgender and gender nonconforming students has been at risk of being repealed at various school districts.

SWEEP NJ has also been actively promoting S2421/A3446 The Freedom To Read Act which requires boards of education and governing boards of public libraries to include diverse and inclusive material within their respective libraries. Students are to be able to reserve, check out, or access any age- and grade-appropriate library material, including diverse and inclusive materials.

Marsha Shapiro and Louise Walpin have earned their standing to be named number five on Insider NJ's LGBT POWER LIST.

## 6. JENNIFER WILLIAMS

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY MICAH RASMUSSEN



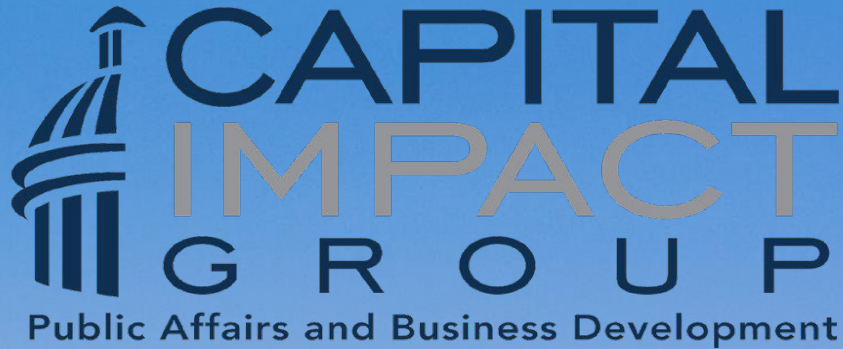
Were it up to both of the state's major political parties, Jennifer Williams would never have been elected to public office at all. The fact that she won *in spite of them* says everything about her resolve and commitment to serving the city in which she grew up. That's right—the state's first transgender elected official is a member of the city council of Trenton. And a Republican.

Although Trenton's elections are non-partisan, Democratic leaders would prefer to see a party faithful in Jennifer's North Ward council seat. Unfortunately, Republican leaders have routinely denied her resources, too. But that's not to say Jennifer is without allies. She's managed to develop close working relationships with Mayor Reed Gusciora and her council colleagues.

They respect her effective determination to listen to her constituents and represent their concerns. After just two years on council, Jennifer has a lot to show for it: the dedication of a portion of local cannabis tax revenue for urban health disparities, a camera ordinance to make the areas surrounding the city's bars safer, more than 700 broken street light calls responded to, and a memorial of the families affected by Trenton's racial riots of 1968, helping her city come to terms with some of its less celebrated history.

Jennifer won her runoff election two years ago by a single vote, so she is taking nothing for granted as she runs for reelection this year. The outcome is important to all of us who value Jennifer's critical voice of conscience within her party and New Jersey for the dignity and rights of LGBT and trans people everywhere.

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## 7. REBECCA WILLIAMS



A true matriarch and elder stateswoman of New Jersey politics, Union County Commissioner Rebecca Williams is one of the highest-ranking LGBT elected officials in the state. A past chair of the Board of Commissioners in NJ's 7th most populous county, Ms. Williams' most influential post is her role as long time college professor and educator.

## 8. CATHY RENNA



For over 3 decades, Cathy Renna's fingerprints have been on every morsel of LGBT progress in America.

When Matthew Sheppard was brutally murdered in 1994, Cathy Renna was deft and diligent, working to ensure the media narrative surrounding this ghastly crime worked in service to LGBT liberty. Previously, media coverage of anti-LGBT crimes dehumanized the victims and often went to great lengths to cast a sympathetic light on perpetrators of anti-gay violence. Ms. Renna, who now calls Montclair NJ home, made sure that Mr. Sheppard's death broke that cycle and, in the

end, one horrific incident in Laramie, WY, galvanized public support of LGBT rights.

Ms. Renna hasn't stopped since.

Currently the Communications Director at the National LGBTQ Task Force, Ms. Renna is still driving the debate. She was also in Chicago for the DNC which shaped up to be the most LGBT-affirming political convention in American history showcasing a who's who of LGBT politico mojo.



## 9. JEN SCIORTINO

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY VALERIE HUTTLE



Few people love or embody Jersey more than Jen Sciortino. She comes from pizza family royalty with a journalism degree from Rutgers, our state university. What more could you want in a Jersey spokesperson?

I first met Jen when she joined the Assembly Majority Office as Deputy

Comms Director and she quickly became my go-to voice — despite telling me no more often than yes, but sometimes that's what you need in a spokesperson.

After serving both houses of the legislature, I was sad — but not surprised — when the Murphy Administration scooped her up to serve as Treasury's

Comms Director. She went on to serve as a senior comms advisor for the Governor, before returning to Treasury recently, much to Liz Muoio's delight, I'm sure.

It's no surprise lawmakers and reporters alike have flocked to her for years. In 2021, so did Bordentown City voters who elected her as their first openly LGBTQ+ mayor — one of only a few in the state.

Under her leadership, Bordentown has hosted one of Burlington County's only Pride events for the last four years. This fall she is slated to marry her longtime partner Molly in what I'm told is "a very Bordentown wedding."

*(Note: Bordentown Township (population 12k) and Bordentown City (pop. 4k) are neighboring municipalities in the Philly suburbs of Burlington County.)*

## 10. LAURA BUSTAMANTE



Laura Bustamante is the Statewide Political Director for Andy Kim's winning campaign for US Senate. That makes her one of Congressman Kim's top lieutenants in what's shaping up to be the most consequential senate race in New Jersey history. If successful, Mr. Kim would

be the first US Senator from South Jersey\* in most of our lifetimes.

"I am excited to welcome Laura to our team to help restore integrity and trust to New Jersey," said Congressman Andy Kim. "We're building a movement to make sure that people

have a voice and to help Democrats up and down the ballot win this November. Laura's experience will be a critical part of making sure we succeed."

Prior to her work with the Kim Campaign, Ms. Bustamante was the Vice President at Tonio Burgos & Associates, one of New Jersey's most influential lobby firms. She also has an impressive roster of campaigns she's worked on (and won) including Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill, Jersey City Councilman James Solomon, Patterson Mayor Andre Sayegh, and Dover Alderwomen Karol Ruiz.

A native of Colombia, Ms. Bustamante recently worked with the Union County Democratic Committee to help organize and improve Latino voter turnout, a fast-growing and increasingly powerful voter demographic.

*(\*The last US Senator from South Jersey was Robert Clymer Hendrickson of Woodbury who left office in 1955.)*

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## 11. REGINALD “REGGIE” BLEDSOE



Reggie Bledsoe is the executive director of the Essex County Office of LGBTQ Affairs, an organization whose mission is to support the LBGTQ community and provide a platform to address issues, advocate for reforms and raise awareness.

Born and raised in Newark, Mr. Bledsoe is no stranger to Essex County politics. He graduated from Essex County Newark Tech, was elected as the youngest Democratic District Leader in District 5 of Newark’s Central Ward and served as a member of the Newark Board

of Education from 2017 to 2020. He also received the Essex County Pride Award from Essex Co Executive Joseph DiVincenzo in 2017.

A bridge-builder by nature, Mr. Bledsoe skillfully manages to find consensus among NJ’s diverse and opinionated political community. That’s just one reason Reggie Bledsoe would make a terrific replacement on Newark City Council for Congresswoman LaMonica McIver, who recently gave up her seat to (successfully) run for Congress.

## 12. DON GUARDIAN & SAM PARKER



A second-term Assemblyman from Atlantic County, Don Guardian was the first openly gay Republican state lawmaker in New Jersey history. Along with Luanne Peterpaul (NJ's first openly lesbian state lawmaker) Mr. Guardian comprises half of Trenton's Assembly LGBT caucus. Astonishingly, it's a caucus of just two.

Remember that the next time someone tells you how LGBT-friendly New Jersey is.



Sam Parker (she/her) currently serves as Chief of Staff to Lt. Governor Tahesha Way. Ms. Parker is also the Director of Appointments for Governor Phil Murphy. She's one of Governor Murphy's closest advisers and confidants.

## 13. CJ GRIFFIN



NJ's most credible voice for government transparency, CJ Griffin fought tooth and nail to protect NJ's Open Public Records laws from a legislature in Trenton that's increasingly hell-bent on doing their business opaquely and out-of-sight.

In the end, there was no stopping the power-hungry Trenton Democrats from watering down NJ's Open Public Records laws. Their insatiable desire to hoard power at the expense of NJ residents proved too inexorable a force to resist. For Gov Murphy, who fancies himself a durable ally on LGBT issues, to sign legislation gutting ORPA suggests the limits of his allyship to marginalized communities.

When she's not defending democracy in NJ and showing Trenton what integrity and tenacity look like, CJ Griffin is Partner and Director of the Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden, one of NJ's most politically influential law firms.



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# 14. SHAWN LATOURETTE, SUE FULTON, and ALLISON CHRIS MYERS



Shawn LaTourette is Commissioner of New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection, Sue Fulton is the former head of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, and Allison Chris Myers is the Chair and CEO of the New Jersey Civil Service Commission. Together they help to comprise the Queerest cabinets in America, and surely the most diverse cabinet in the history of New Jersey.



# 15. MARIE COTTRELL & OUT MONTCLAIR

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY COMMISSIONER BRENDAN GILL*



With her expansive history in grassroots organizing, advocacy and activism, Marie Cottrell has distinguished herself as the driver of positive change for marginalized groups not just in Montclair, but throughout the state of New Jersey. As Executive Director of Out Montclair, she has been a visionary and innovative leader dedicated to the power of community engagement and collaboration. Under her guidance, Out Montclair has expanded its reach and impact, offering vital support services, educational programs and advocacy initiatives to empower LGBTQ+

individuals and their allies. With Marie at the helm, Out Montclair has emerged as a powerful voice and engine of progress for the LGBTQ+ community.

## **Montclair Pride Festival/ Out Montclair**

In its few short years in existence, Out Montclair's Pride celebration has emerged as the premiere Pride event in the state as well as one of the most spectacular overall community events in our region. It is a joyful and joy-filled celebration of unity, community, and the power of inclusivity to strengthen our communities, and

notably the main event of a month-long program of educational, artistic and cultural activities offered for families, children, teens, seniors and adults. Featuring world-class entertainment and attracting thousands of visitors, it's also a master class in organization and execution. Out Montclair runs this event with military precision, ensuring a safe and welcoming experience for all. Montclair could not be prouder or more grateful to be the host of this event, and for the immeasurable contributions Out Montclair makes to our community.

## 16. JEANNE LoCICERO

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY Yael Bromberg*



A double Rutgers alumna of Douglass College and Rutgers Law, and decades-long mover and shaker in the state, Jeanne LoCicero is the Legal Director of the ACLU of New Jersey where she heads its litigation department and related advocacy efforts and has trained generations of civil rights lawyers. LoCicero has litigated and advocated in a wide range of civil rights

and civil liberties cases in the Garden State, with a focus on prison conditions, racial equity, LGBTQ rights, women's rights, and reproductive rights.

LoCicero recently helped launch ACLU-NJ's Clemency Project, which will allow expedited review and eventual release of incarcerated survivors of domestic violence and

those serving sentences impacted by extreme trial penalties. A trustee of the Association of the Federal Bar of New Jersey, she serves on other legal and policy committees across the state.

Perhaps most importantly, LoCicero is well regarded by her colleagues and mentees for her professionalism and her brilliant, savvy, clear-headed legal analysis and litigation strategy in furtherance of the public interest. It's no wonder she was recently awarded the Hollenbeck Award by the NJ Commission on Professionalism in the Law, which honors a lawyer who has served the state's legal community with diligence, competence, and dedication.

## 17. LIZ SCHEDL



It was another banner year for Elizabeth “Liz” Schedl, executive director of Hudson County Pride Center which unveiled its HQ in the heart of Journal Square, Jersey City. This state-of-the-art 2500 ft.<sup>2</sup> easy-to-access community center was the culmination of Ms. Schedl’s longstanding vision to create a vibrant home for the region’s LGBT community.

Under Ms. Schedl’s leadership, Hudson Pride Center provides mental health support, training, and clinical support for K-12 schools in Hudson County beginning in the fall of 2023.

A tribute to its political clout under Ms. Schedl’s leadership, the Hudson County Pride Center quickly became a must-see destination for anyone running for higher office in Hudson County

## 18. FRANCELINE EHRET



Franceline Ehret is one of the most powerful and influential Union Labor leaders in New Jersey history. Currently the state director for Communications Workers of America (CWA) NJ represents about 40,000 state workers, 15,000 county and local government workers, and over 70,000 families in the Garden State.

Earlier this year, Ms. Ehret was Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill’s guest at President Biden’s State of the Union address.

“Unions built the American middle class and today, organized labor continues to make New Jersey a great place to live, work, and raise a family,” Congresswoman Sherrill said at the time.

“As State Director, Fran is a powerhouse labor leader fighting for collective bargaining protections and stronger benefits for New Jersey families. As the granddaughter of a union worker, I am honored to have Fran as my guest at this year’s SOTU to hear from President Biden, the most pro-union president in U.S. history, and to highlight the pivotal role unions play in bolstering the economic potential for workers and their families.”



Pictured above:  
**Sean M. Spiller**, President (center)  
**Steve Beatty**, Vice President (left)  
**Petal Robertson**, Secretary-Treasurer (right)

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## 19. PETRA GASKINS

**A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY ED DEVEAUX**



New Brunswick Councilwoman Petra Gaskins distinguishes herself from the crowd for many reasons. She carries herself with confidence, not cockiness. She can wear a smile as easily as she wears her “let’s get down to business” glare. She is never standoffish, but one learns quickly you must come to her correct. And it’s when she speaks that you get the whole picture. When Petra speaks, it’s an “E.F. Hutton” moment. It was this past June during Middlesex County’s Pride Flag Raising Ceremony that was one of those moments for many. Petra publicly and proudly shared that she is bisexual. All of a sudden, her work as an LGBTQIA+ liaison for the Murphy administration, and her work in the legislature – especially around protections for the Freedom to Read – became clear.

I, for one, discovered yet another reason to admire her leadership.

## 20. STEVEN GOLDSTEIN

**A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY LORETTA AND FRANCINE WEINBERG  
TO MARK GARDEN STATE EQUALITY’S 20TH ANNIVERSARY.**



In 2004, Steven founded Garden State Equality in New Jersey and served as executive director for its first 10 years. GSE was the leading advocate during that time for the passage of LGBTQ civil rights in New Jersey. It reflected Steven’s deep commitment and passion and took many tries until Marriage Equality was finally passed in the State Senate in 2012. The 2007 documentary “Freeheld” chronicled Steven’s work at Garden State Equality and won the Academy Award for Best Short Documentary. Hollywood turned “Freeheld” into a feature film in 2015. Steven was played by Steve Carell.

Steven’s HarperCollins book, *“The Turn-On: How the Powerful Make Us Like Them,”* received wide accolades, including from Porchlight Book Awards as one of the top 5 marketing books of the year. While Steven will always be a “Jersey Boy”, his latest job has taken him to New Haven Connecticut where he is the Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater New Haven.

## 21. ED WENGRYN



Edward Wengryn is New Jersey’s Secretary of Agriculture. A longtime presence in Trenton’s halls of power, Mr. Wengryn was the unanimous pick of the New Jersey Board of Agriculture.

Mr. Wengryn’s elevation to lead NJ’s Department of Agriculture came after a decades-long stint at the New Jersey Farm Bureau.

“As the grandson of Ukrainian immigrants who settled here in New Jersey as farmers, I am humbled and honored to be able to lead an agency that has been critical to the success of not only my family, but all the farming families in New

Jersey. I look forward to ensuring the Department succeeds in its multifaceted missions and to serving the citizens of our great Garden State,” Mr. Wengryn said.

## 22. JEREMY FEIGENBAUM



A stalwart from NJ’s Office of Attorney General, Jeremy Feigenbaum is our State Solicitor General, the top appellate advocate in New Jersey. That means he argues on behalf of the Attorney General on issues before the U.S. Supreme Court, federal circuit courts, and the New Jersey Supreme Court.

It’s Mr. Feigenbaum’s signature on the letter from the AG refusing to defend NJ’s retrograde ballot design (aka the line). That set the table for a major ballot redesign, an earth-shattering repudiation of the powerful political machines who use tricks like unfair ballot designs to hoard power and loyalty.

Wading fiercely and unapologetically into the culture wars, this past years, Mr. Feigenbaum led the appeals in cases where the Attorney General’s office challenged four school boards who wanted to forcibly “out” transgender students.

## 23. TERRENCE MCDONALD



One of the best journalists in the game, Terrence McDonald is the Editor at the *New Jersey Monitor*, a non-partisan, non-profit news site/watchdog. Mr. McDonald modestly waited until he had nearly 50 journalism awards before occasionally serving up some very opinionated OpEds. And that's a good thing because New Jersey is better served when Terrence McDonald's strong opinions are echoing in Trenton's halls of Power.

## 24. SHARONDA WHEELER



Sharonda Wheeler is one of the most influential and well-respected LGBT activists in the game. The outgoing President of the Board Of Directors at Newark Pride Inc., Ms. Wheeler has long overseen one of the largest Pride events on the East Coast in Newark.



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## 25. ELOY DELGADO



Eloy Delgado is the Associate Director of Government Affairs at the New Jersey Education Association making him one of the top lobbyists for NJ's most powerful Union.

Mr. Delgado's strategic efforts have been crucial in winning key school board races against extremist candidates in Somerset, Sussex, Passaic, and Hunterdon counties. These

victories are a testament to his ability to partner with NJEA governance leaders to mobilize NJEA members and champion inclusive, equitable policies. They were able to win board races in areas where it would seem impossible to do so. These wins have been a victory for NJEA members and students alike as they deal with extremist groups trying to take over our school boards.

Beyond these local board successes, Mr. Delgado focused on building and maintaining strong relationships with a wide range of stakeholders across the state, which has been vital in advocating for NJEA's legislative agenda. His work has also made a significant impact on legislative races, including the LD16 race, where his organizing strategies helped elect Senator Zwicker, Assemblywoman Durlis, and Assemblyman Freiman. Delgado's relationships with legislators across the aisle have also assisted in getting certain legislators to understand how some of their proposed bills would do tremendous harm to LGBTQIA students in our schools.

Mr. Delgado maintains his strong political and community ties to Linden, NJ, where he previously served as the local union president. These ties continue to serve him in his current role at NJEA.

## 26. JULIA FAHL & KARI OSMOND



Kari Osmond is the Chief of Staff for NJ Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, one of surprisingly few Lesbians on the Hill to hold that position. Julia Fahl is Director of Public Affairs for Archer Public Affairs, making her one of the region's top lobbyists.

Together, Julia and Kari comprise one of NJ's premier political power couples.

## 27. ROB WEST



Rob West is the Campaign Manager for Sue Altman's race in NJ's 7th Congressional district. With control of the US House of Representatives on the line, Mr. West is running the most consequential Congressional race in modern NJ history. As an added inducement, Mr. West is leading Ms. Altman's campaign against a man named Tom Kean Jr. who voted against gay marriage three times during his time as a state lawmaker.

## 28. FRANK FILIPEK, JR.



Frank Filipek Jr. directs the Department of Events and Community Outreach for Camden County where he leads the County government on issues like gun safety, mental health, addiction/fentanyl awareness, and LGBTQ health.

Frank is also a longtime political operative for the Camden County Democratic Committee where he helped to spearhead the very best (by far) Vote-by-Mail program in the state.

## 29. DR. JESSELY DE LA CRUZ

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY DR. PATRICIA CAMPOS MEDINA*



There is a popular empowerment motto that says, “Our future is Latina,” which simply means that smart and compassionate women are leading change in our society. One of those impactful leaders is Dr. De La Cruz, a visionary and grit-smart leader whose tenure as the Executive Director of the Latino Action Network Foundation has led to innovative and impactful research and policy addressing the needs of NJ Latinos. From leading the efforts to end school segregation of Latino children in NJ public schools, to partnering up with organizations like Latina Civic to educate women on reproductive healthcare justice, to leading campaigns that demand municipalities across NJ enact LGBTQ+ inclusive language to comply with the NJ Marriage Equality law, the “Good Doctor,” Dr. De la Cruz, has become the “to-go-person” to understand the impact policy is having on the 21% of NJ population who are Latinos/Latinx.

Daily, her work ethic and vision for an inclusive NJ supports and empowers Latino, BIPOC and LGTB+ youth and families to build their dreams, our community, our state and our country. Gracias, Doctora!



## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE LGBTQ+ POWER LIST HONOREES

LGBTQ+ Americans have long been on the front lines in the fight for a fairer, more just society – you all have continued that tradition. We celebrate that legacy and uplift the work being done by all of you to ensure our country lives up to our ideals.

I have been proud to stand by these trailblazers in the fight to ensure marriage equality, combat hate crimes, honor LGBTQ+ veterans, and expand healthcare access. Together, we will continue making progress for all LGBTQ+ Americans.

Congratulations to Nancy Solomon, Laura Bustamante, Ricky Suta, and the other honorees who are doing courageous work across the state for the community and all residents.

In Solidarity,

**ANDY**

PAID FOR BY ANDY KIM FOR NEW JERSEY

## 30. DAVE PARANO



One of the most respected and successful political campaigners in New Jersey, Dave Parano is the Principal at Parano & Associates. Mr. Parano's close relationship with Governor Murphy and the state Democratic Party, make him one of the most sought-after campaigners in the Garden State.

Mr. Parano was a delegate for Kamala Harris at the recent DNC in Chicago.

## 31. TOM PROL



Thomas H. "Tom" Prol is the chairman of the NJ Election Enforcement Commission which is tasked with regulating elections in NJ. Mr. Prol was appointed by Governor Murphy for the post. A lawyer by trade, previously, Mr. Prol worked with the NJ's Office of Attorney General to purge over 125 infractions that were still on the books against dozens of bars who lost their liquor license simply for hosting and serving Queer people.

The historical contrition was from the same NJ Office of Attorney General that, until 1967, made it illegal in New Jersey to serve alcohol to an LGBTQ person. NJ's Alcohol Beverage Commission (ABC) was explicit, routinely harassing and shuttering bars that "allowed, permitted and suffered female impersonators and persons who appeared to be homosexuals (to) ... congregate in large numbers ... in a manner offensive to common decency and public morals."

Thanks to Mr. Prol, those vestiges of institutional homophobia are dead and gone.

## 32. JACKIE CORNELL



The Executive Director of Planned Parenthood Action Fund of NJ, Jackie Cornell is one of the most respected, seasoned politicians in the Garden State. With the abortion debate taking center stage in a post-Roe world, Ms. Cornell has ensured that New Jersey remains a national leader for reproductive rights.

Previously, Ms. Cornell helped to expand and improve New Jersey's medical marijuana program. In doing so, she continued a long (and often forgotten) tradition of Queer people fixing America's backwards cannabis laws.

## 33. KATE TRIGGIANO

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY ITZEL HERNANDEZ*



Kate Triggiano wears many hats: devoted mom, mentor, Democratic Chair, volunteer firefighter, and activist, but it's her ability to combine and weave together all her roles that sets her apart.

She spearheaded Red Bank's now annual Pride Fest, NJ's first Police Department volunteer translator program, and brought on board P.U.L.S.S.E's bilingual social worker team to support the Red Bank Police Department and the borough's most vulnerable residents by connecting them to services and resources. This July, Kate facilitated the use of borough facilities (also a first) for the Mexican Consulate to provide vital services to hundreds of residents, prompting a visit by Mexico's Chief Officer of North America at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Kate is a doer, with strong public policy skills and an uncanny ability to connect the dots and problem-solve. She masterfully creates a tapestry of responsive, accessible, and transparent local government—one that genuinely cares for all residents. In an era where trust in government wavers, she stands firm. As Deputy Mayor, she embodies the best of public service by being a remarkable community builder. Keep your eyes on her; she's the change we need in our government.

## 34. KATHY AHEARN-O'BRIEN & AXEL TORRES MARRERO



Kathy Ahearn-O'Brien is the Executive Director at Hyacinth, NJ's largest HIV/AIDS service provider. Alex Torres Marrero is Hyacinth's Senior Director of Policy, Prevention & Harm Reduction. They are two of the most influential HIV activists in NJ history. Ms. Ahearn-O'Brien and Mr. Torres Marrero are often in Trenton reminding NJ policymakers that the best lobbyists are the ones who do it as a matter of principle.

## 35. ELVIN MONTERO



Elvin Montero is one of the highest-ranking out LGBTQ and Latino executives on West State Street, serving as Deputy Executive Director of the Chemistry Council of New Jersey which represents the state's \$16 billion chemical sector. Recently re-elected Vice Chair of the Capital City Redevelopment Corporation, Montero was nominated by Governor Murphy on May 16, 2024, to join the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission, pending State Senate confirmation. He played a key behind-the-scenes role in Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora's re-election and record-breaking fundraising campaign. Additionally, Mr. Montero advises and supports local LGBTQ elected officials, serves on the executive board of the Mercer County Democratic Committee, and is Vice Chair of the NJ LGBT Democratic Caucus of Mercer County.



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## 36. MARIA RODRIGUEZ-GREGG



A former two-term Assemblywoman from Burlington County, Maria Rodriguez-Gregg is currently Director of Government Relations and Community Affairs at Montclair State University. Ms. Rodriguez-Gregg is one of the most vocal and influential advocates fighting domestic violence in New Jersey.

## 37. DANIELA MENDEZ

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY LAURA BUSTAMANTE*



Daniela Mendez shattered a cement ceiling by becoming the first transgender woman elected to the Dover Board of Education and in the state of New Jersey. She's not only known for her advocacy and leadership as School Board President but across the Morris County through her work at Edge NJ which provides accessible health care to the LGBTQ+ community.

## 38. ALONZO S. BLALOCK



Alonzo S. Blalock (better known as Prince Derek Doll) is a Newark-based LGBTQ activist, performing artist, multi-media personality, journalist, and entrepreneur. As this went to press, we learned that Mr. Blalock is the heir apparent to succeed Sharonda Wheeler as President of Newark Pride. Congratulations!

Over the last 8 years Mr. Blalock has passionately served his community as a board member of Newark Pride, Inc. and has led the organization's improvement plan as Executive Vice President since 2020.

Since taking office, he has spearheaded production for the annual Newark LGBTQ Pride Festival for 3 consecutive years, expanded community-led programming, increased volunteer retention by 260%, secured the organization's first 5-figure

sponsorship deal with Mars Wrigley, and recently procured a 6-figure grant in partnership with Newark Alliance and New Jersey Economic Development Authority. In 2022 he was awarded the Equality Leadership Award by Garden State Equality and subsequently represented the City of Newark in Washington DC at the Black History Month briefing to BIPOC delegates representing the LGBTQI+ community hosted by the Biden-Harris Administration in 2023.

Mr. Blalock is a former Leadership Newark Fellow, Dr. Ron L. Simmons Leadership Institute Fellow, and Victoria Emerging Leaders Program participant. He is a distinguished member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc and anticipates a lifetime of dedicated service to the communities he represents.

## 39. DR. PERRY HALKITIS



The dean of the Rutgers School of Public Health, Perry Halkitis is one of NJ's preeminent experts on mental health, COVID, and HIV/AIDS. As long as those issues are stigmatized and politicized, the media-savvy Dr. Halkitis will always have a place on this list.


## 40. TAMARA V. CHAMBERS



Tamara V. Chambers is the Director and Assistant Prosecutor at the Essex County Prosecutor's Office

Tamara Chambers found her life's calling when she joined the Essex County Prosecutor's Office as a paralegal specialist writing motions for the Adult Trial Section. During her two decades long career, Tamara has become a valuable member of the Office and has served on various initiatives to combat narcotics, gun violence, and gangs. Currently filling the role of Pre-Indictment Unit Director, Tamara has become a teacher and mentor to new prosecutors as they learn to handle cases. Tamara has worked with the Beyond Diversity Resource Center outside the office to foster diversity and cultural understanding. She has utilized her legal acumen to develop our next generation of prosecutors, keeping members

of the LGBTQ+ community safe in Essex County, and championing diversity in our community.



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## 41. CHRISTOPHER HILLMANN



Longtime NJ politico Christopher Hillman is the Legislative Affairs Director at the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission. If you appreciate doing most MVC business online instead of in person, you might want to send Chris a note of thanks.

A longtime Bergen County Democratic stalwart, Mr. Hillman served multiple terms on town council in Hasbrouck Heights.

## 42. TERRY WEST



Terry West chairs the NJ LGBT Democratic Caucus of Mercer County.

Mr. West is also a key player in Trenton politics, having successfully managed the campaigns for local council candidates in Trenton and in Mercer County. He also serves as a community development specialist to Mercer County Executive Dan Benson.

## 43. JO MILLER



Councilperson Jo Miller, an out-transgender leader, grew up in South Jersey and became the first known transgender person to serve in elected office in SJ history. As Deputy Executive Director of the Camden County Democratic Committee, Jo maintains the county party's political operations and has pushed internal changes to permit nonbinary people to seek committee seats.

## 44. BRIAN R. HACKETT



Brian Hackett is the Director of Government Relations at Associated Humane Societies, New Jersey's largest animal sheltering system. Mr. Hackett is one of the most well-regarded animal rights advocates in New Jersey. Mr. Hackett gets bonus points for long cultivating meaningful relationships on both sides of the aisle, a rare trait in today's polarized times.

## 45. ALANA BURMAN



Alana Burman, M.Ed Psych, is a public policy expert and community advocate on social issues ranging from restorative justice in public schools and Holocaust curriculum reform to strengthening senior and mental health services to combating bias and hate in our communities. With a background in the fine arts and education, Alana is known for her innovative and creative, solutions-oriented mindset that achieves positive results on any project or campaign she touches. While raised in New Jersey from an early age, Alana uses her formative experiences in Mississippi, the Midwest, and Europe to keep a finger on the pulse of the nation and beyond.

A natural organizer, she has had leadership positions in many organizations such as the New Jersey Federation of Democratic Women, the New Jersey State Democratic Committee Jewish Caucus, New Jersey Young Democrats, and the Essex LGBTQIA Advisory Board, among others.

Currently Alana lives in Newark and works for the Jewish federation of Northern New Jersey.



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**Congratulations to everyone on the Insider NJ Out 100 LGBTQ Power List! It's been an honor to know and work with so many fellow leaders as we fight for representation and the liberties and freedoms of LGBTQ New Jerseyans.**



**To our NJ Legislature:  
Let's pass a bill protecting  
transgender healthcare for  
all New Jerseyans and their  
healthcare providers for  
Governor Murphy to sign  
by December 31st!**





## 46. DANNI NEWBURY



Danni Newbury runs Union County's Office of LGBTQ Affairs. Ms. Newbury is from Rahway, the largest, bluest town in NJ's 7th Congressional District, home to an ultra-competitive race between Sue Altman and Tom Kean. It's a race that might determine which party controls the US House of Representatives. Turnout there is key to victory for Ms. Altman in the Congressional race. Rahway Dems municipal Chair Danni Newbury has emerged as an organizing force: launching canvasses and rallying residents from across her diverse town. She is close to Rahway Mayor Giacobbe and together they are building a resilient Democratic stronghold in a strategically important and perennially underrated city.

## 47. KIM TAYLOR



A top lieutenant for Steve Fulop's campaign for Governor, Kim Taylor was also recently appointed to the Disciplinary Oversight Committee by NJ Jersey Supreme Court Chief Justice Rabner. A Trenton native, Ms. Taylor is renowned for her work ethic, her brand of sunny moderation, and her problem-solving skills. Just don't call it pork roll.

## 48. CURTIS BASHAW



New Jersey's GOP candidate to replace disgraced Senator Bob Menendez, Curtis Bashaw would be the first openly gay male United States senator in American history. Mr. Bashaw beat back a MAGA-fueled primary to get the GOP nod for November's election against Andy Kim.

## 49. EILEEN DELLA VOLLE

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY GRACE STORM POWER*



Eileen is a recognized Business Executive and Community Leader and maintains one of the most extensive political networks in the state. Known as someone who shows up as her authentic self in every aspect of her personal and professional life, she readily and vociferously employs her impressive Rolodex to advance inclusion and equality efforts. A member of the Women's Political Caucus of New Jersey Board and the Brick Board of Adjustment, Eileen is a force in Ocean County Democratic and Statewide politics and will serve as a Delegate at the 2024 Democratic National Convention. Eileen has been named as one of the "Top 50 Women in Business" by NJBIZ Magazine and was recently named an "Outstanding Woman" by the Women's Building Council in recognition of her commitment to maximizing contracting opportunities for women and minority owned firms.

## 50. JEREMY LENTZ

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY LORETTA + FRANCINE WEINBERG.*



Jeremy Lentz is an activist who leads with his heart. Several years ago, he petitioned Teaneck to raise the Pride flag to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Stonewall. Despite some local opposition, this resulted in an annual Teaneck Pride celebration. He also organized the “Pride Shabbat” service held each June at Temple Emeth in Teaneck, which is attended by many in the community. Aside from being a Film and Broadway Producer, Jeremy is the Executive Director of the Teaneck International Film Festival. TIFF has been a champion of LGBTQ+ rights from the beginning, showcasing films that raised awareness for the bullying bill of rights, marriage equality, protections for transgender youth, HIV/AIDS advocacy, women’s reproductive rights and gun reform. The internationally respected film festival attracts thousands of film goers virtually and in person. If one were to sum up Jeremy in a few words, they would be: caring, involved, activist.

## 51. JOE FORTE



One of the good guys of NJ politics, Joe Forte is a democratic stalwart and leader from Mercer County. He currently serves as Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief Diversity Officer at the New Jersey Department of State. Mr. Forte’s role encompasses overseeing various departments, facilitating communication strategies, and nurturing a culture of inclusivity.

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## 52. ORVILLE MORALES



Orville Morales is CEO of Morales & Associates LLC where he's dedicated to helping create change for social good. Mr. Morales recently led Dr. Patricia Campos Medina's impressive US Senate campaign, helping Campos Medina notch an impressive 2nd place finish behind Andy Kim. In doing so, Mr. Morales helped to create some of the most enduring images of the campaign, namely the iconic image of Campos Medina staring down 5 burly machine gatekeepers.

With 15+ years of experience creating and propelling social and political progress, Mr. Morales is one of the most knowledgeable and inspiring change agents in New Jersey.

## 53. SEAN HIGGINS



Sean Higgins is a Senior Advisor to Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill, one of New Jersey's most promising political stars. Look for Mr. Higgins to assume a prominent role in 2025 when Congresswoman Sherrill's widely-expected run for New Jersey Governor kicks off.

## 54. JASON DEALESSI



Jason DeAlessi is the managing director of the Fuerze Strategy Group, a digital political communication and consulting firm working with candidates, special interest groups, nonprofits and businesses. A triathlete and hockey player in his spare time, Mr. DeAlessi is one of the most well-respected political campaigners in New Jersey.

## 55. BRIAN K. EVERETT



Brian Everett began his career in politics by exposing a state lawmaker who was campaigning on the public dime. Since then, he's unapologetically demanded higher ethical standards for government officials.

A longtime critic of the Camden Machine's penchant for treating government like it's their candy store, Mr. Everett is currently challenging a pair of first-term democrats in the Assembly whose vote to kill NJ's open public records law prompted Mr. Everett to launch a primary bid. He'll be running under the Fulop for Governor banner.

"New Jersey needs fresh ideas and new perspectives in state government to confront the major challenges facing our communities," Everett said. "I'm so excited to run for State Assembly alongside

a truly inspiring leader in Steve Fulop who is fighting to deliver the change we need. As an educator, a union member and someone dedicated to solutions I'm ready to share my vision with the people of the 4th district."

## 56. GUS PENARANDA



Gus Penaranda is the Executive Director for the NJ Pride Chamber of Commerce, New Jersey's premier LGBT business organization dedicated to strengthening LGBT businesses in the New Jersey tri-state area. In addition to his efforts to expand business opportunities for LGBT-owned companies, Mr. Penaranda's lobbying/government affairs efforts are noteworthy. Just this past year, Mr. Penaranda led the effort to codify into law an executive order that puts LGBTQ-owned businesses on an equal playing field when taxpayer funded state contracts are awarded. This legislation also makes it easier for LGBTQ people to identify companies that share our values. Because LGBTQ purchasing power is a powerful weapon in the battle for equality, this law would make it easier for LGBTQs (and allies) who are mindful where they spend their money.

## 57. WESLEY MCWHITE



Wesley McWhite III is Director of Diversity and Inclusion at New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission, the agency that governs NJ's medical- and recreational cannabis marketplace.

It's Mr. McWhite's job to ensure the lucrative spoils of cannabis legalization find their way into neighborhoods that were disproportionately harmed by the War on Drugs.

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## 58. JESSE BURNS



A powerful voice for open governance and election transparency, Jesse Burns is the longtime executive director of League of Women Voters of New Jersey. She's held a leadership position at LoWVNJ since 2007.

During her tenure, the League has strengthened its position as a critical, influential, and trusted voting rights and civic engagement organization. They've hundreds of thousands of voters about important elections and advancing equitable policy reforms. Under Ms. Burn's leadership, League of Women Voters of New Jersey has also added several new chapters, tripled its staff, and has been instrumental in passing several pieces of voting rights legislation including online voter registration, automatic voter registration, an end to prison-based gerrymandering, in-person early voting, and rights restoration for people on parole and probation.

## 59. PAMELA RENEE



Monmouth County stalwart Pamela Renee is a longtime Neptune City Town Councilmember. Her years-long service on the Neptune City Alliance to Prevent Alcohol and Drug Abuse is a timely reminder that LGBTQs Americans are up to 3x more susceptible to drug and alcohol dependency. One of the most well-respected leaders in the state and a fixture on InsiderNJ's OUT 100 Power List, Councilwoman Renee is also one of the most popular names with a dozen nominations to this year's edition.

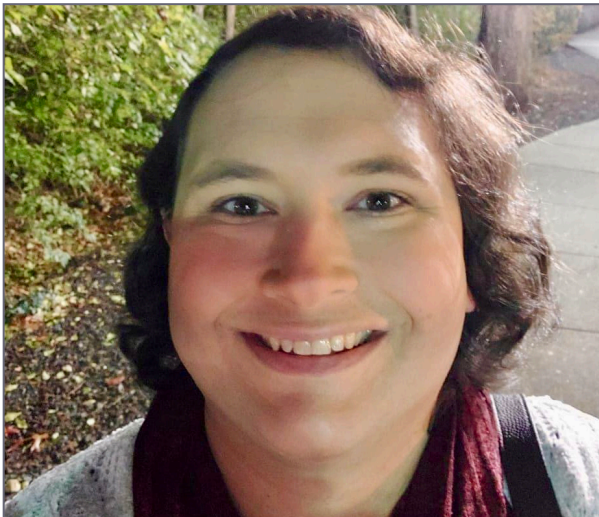
## 60. MEG COLUMBIA WALSH



Meg Columbia-Walsh, a recently elected official in Morris Township, has fought tirelessly for years for LGBTQ+ civil rights. She is a relentless fund raiser for major state and federal Democratic races. Ms. Columbia-Walsh was recently elected to the Morris Township Democratic Committee as well as the Economic Development Authority (EDAC). She served on the NJ and LGBTQ+ finance committee for Hillary Clinton, and currently helps support Congresswoman Miki Sherrill. Ms. Columbia-Walsh received the US Congressional Hero award in 2022. Ms. Columbia-Walsh has served on the boards of our leading nonprofits including Family Equality, Lambda Legal, LPAC, and locally as a Trustee for Rider University. She has taught as a faculty member at The Stevens Institute of Technology, Rutgers, and FIT. Ms. Columbia-Walsh is also a distinguished

fellow at Columbia University's HITLAB and a business school Executive Advisor for Digital Health, distinguished fellow at Columbia University's HITLAB and a business school Executive Advisor for Digital Health.

## 61. JOEIGH PERELLA



Joeigh Perella is a candidate for Cumberland County Commissioner. She was also a delegate at the DNC where she helped Governor Murphy with NJ's rollcall vote. An Emerge NJ Class of 2023 alum, Ms. Perella is quickly becoming one of the most influential and well-respected transgender advocates in New Jersey.

## 62. ROSIE DRISCOLL



A lifelong New Jerseyan, Rosie Driscoll is currently the Director of Policy, Legislative Services, and Constituent Relations at the New Jersey Department of Health. One of NJ's premier healthcare policy experts, Ms. Driscoll cut her political chops at Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey.

## 63. MICHELLE KIDD



Michele Kidd, the Chair Emeritus of the Somerset County LGBTQ+ Advisory Board, is the owner of Avalanche Workshop, a political consulting & fundraising firm. A proud member of the Somerset County LGBTQ+ Democratic Caucus (the first-ever in the state of NJ), as well as the NJ Democratic State Committee LGBTQ+ Caucus, she works across caucuses to help support the needs of our diverse population.

A proud bisexual woman, Ms. Kidd recently repped New Jersey as a Kamala Harris delegate at the DNC in Chicago.

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Foundation**

## 64. RICKY SUTA



Ricky Suta is the Research Manager for the Andy Kim for Senate campaign. As part of the Kim Campaign, Mr. Suta has helped to upend the Machine-heavy *status quo* that's long dominated New Jersey Politics. Mr. Suta is also an alum at SKDK, one of the top political comms firms in America.

## 65. JOE ROBERTS



An 11-term Assemblyman from Camden County, Joseph Roberts served as Speaker of the New Jersey General Assembly from 2007-2010. During his tenure, NJ's legalized medical cannabis and ended the death penalty. Mr. Roberts currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors with Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.

## 66. LAUREN WRIGHT



Lauren Wright is the South Jersey field director for Congressman Andy Kim's campaign for US Senate. That means Ms. Wright runs the South Jersey ground game covered for one of the most exciting and consequential elections in NJ political history.

## 67. IAN MOSLEY



Ian Mosley chairs the Camden County Democratic Committee's LGBTQIA Caucus and repped Kamala Harris at the recent DNC presidential nominating convention in Chicago. Previously, Mr. Mosley was the recipient of the King Freedom Medal, presented to county residents who have selflessly contributed their time and effort to better their community in conjunction with the goals of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## 68. LARRY TRAYLOR



An up-and-comer with boundless potential, Larry Traylor is an elected school board member in Trenton. He's also co-chair of the NJ Young Dems LGBTQ caucus.

Traylor represents a new crop of LGBTQ activists making their presence known and their voices heard in New Jersey politics. A long-time aide and confidante to Mercer Commissioner Samuel Frisby, Mr. Traylor previously helped usher in a new era on Trenton City council this year, replacing multiple anti-gay municipal lawmakers with LGBT (or gay-friendly) candidates.

## 69. R.I.P.



This list would look very different without AIDS, a deadly plague that decimated our community barely a generation ago. We'll always reserve a spot on this list as a tribute to reflect on all those brilliant, beautiful, talented queers who perished from AIDS.

Spare a thought for our government's feeble response to HIV/AIDS, the existential crisis that forced the LGBTQ community to organize and find its political mojo.

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## 70. REUBENA SPENCE & MADELINE GALE



Both are Board Members and Co-founders of Out Montclair (with Peter Yacobellis, Peter Holm & Bill Courson), Co-Chairs of NJPAC LGBTQ+ Advisory Council (with Bishop Kevin Taylor & Prince Johnson), the first out LGBTQ+ Montclair Civil Rights Commissioners, members of the founding committee of the Newark LGBTQ Film Festival, on the Garden State Equality Older Adults Advisory Council, and received the first Essex County LGBTQ+ Award that was initiated last year by the Essex County Commissioners.

## 71. SHANNON CUTTLE



A former South Orange/Maplewood school board member, Shannon Cuttle is one of the first (possibly the first) transgender candidate elected to office in New Jersey history. No one works harder to ensure safe schools for trans kids than Shannon Cuttle. Still a groundbreaking presence, Cuttle was in Chicago recently as part of the NJ delegation to nominate Kamala Harris for president.

## 72. CHRIS CANELLA



A longtime educator and labor leader, Chris Cannella is the first Vice President of the Essex County Education Association. Mr. Cannella is one of the most politically influential LGBT people at the NJEA, New Jersey's immensely powerful union representing teachers and educational professionals.

## 73. MATT FISCH



Matt Fisch is the finance director for Sue Altman's Congressional campaign. It's Mr. Fisch's job to ensure the Altman campaign has the resources it needs to flip this seat and win back the House of Representatives. Mr. Fisch is currently running the most prolific fundraising operation in the region.

## 74. NATE HOWARD



Nate Howard is the President of College Democrats of New Jersey. And while it's tempting to call him "the future," Nate Howard is also the "here and now." During the hotly contested Democratic primary to replace Bob Menendez, Mr. Howard's memorable tussle with state party officials went viral and revealed 1) his tenacity and 2) his ability to pick a winner. Mr. Howard's efforts turbocharged Andy Kim's run for senate at a time when Kim was most definitely still an underdog. In the end, Kim romped to victory, vanquishing NJ's unfair ballot design (aka "the line") in the process. Mr. Howard's efforts leading the College Democrats of New Jersey helped set the table for Kim's history-making run.

## 75. SAWYER MORGAN



Sawyer Morgan, PhD, is a researcher at the NJ Board of Public Utilities where he leads BPU's Solar Energy Program. He also helps to promote the development of solar facilities that provide access to clean energy and utility savings to New Jersey residents.

A former two-time Jeopardy champ. Mr. Morgan is one of the brightest intellects in New Jersey politics.

# 76. JESS ALAIMO



Jess Alaimo is an accomplished nonprofit professional and community leader from Asbury Park, New Jersey. Currently Jess is the Executive Director of Murray Grove Association, a nonprofit that focuses on social justice.

Jess co-founded the AP Women’s Convention, an organization which helps women, specifically those from underserved communities, become more involved politically. Jess has also served on various municipal boards and commissions. Currently a Tinton Falls resident, Jess serves on the Democratic municipal committee. As a proud Jewish woman, she is also a member of the NJ Democratic State Committee Jewish Caucus. An accomplished writer, her column “Rainbow Room” appears weekly in TriCityNews. Additionally, Jess is a talented and award-winning standup comedian.



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## 77. ERIC HOLLIDAY

**A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY LGBTQ+ VICTORY FUND**

**WHO ENDORSED MR. HOLLIDAY'S REELECTION EFFORTS.**



Eric Holliday is an out and proud Gay Democratic Councilman of Bordentown Township and a retired Sergeant from the New Jersey Department of Corrections, where he dedicated 25 years of service. His career began at East Jersey State Prison and evolved through roles as a Hostage Negotiator, Emergency Management Coordinator, and instructor at the Correctional Officer Academy. He also held leadership positions in the New Jersey Law Enforcement Supervisors Association, including President.

Eric has broken barriers as becoming the first LGBTQ+ Committeeman in Bordentown Township, NJ. A Bordentown Township resident for 24 years, Eric has served on the Township Committee from 2015 to 2024, including two terms as Deputy Mayor. Passionate about community service, he enjoys exercising, mountain biking, camping, skiing, and playing softball. He is also an active member of the Bordentown Rotary Club.

Eric's decision to run for the committee stems from his commitment to maintaining and improving Bordentown's services, infrastructure, and community spirit. He believes in accessible and transparent local government and is dedicated to making long-term investments in the township's future. He is particularly focused on keeping taxes stable and preserving open spaces for residents to enjoy.

Eric envisions Bordentown Township as a thriving community with well-maintained parks, efficient public services, and an affordable tax rate. He is proud of his contributions to stabilizing taxes and enhancing the township's emergency management capabilities, ensuring a bright future for Bordentown's residents.

*(Note: Bordentown Township (population 12k) and Bordentown City (pop. 4k) are neighboring municipalities in the Philly suburbs of Burlington County.)*



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## 78. EDDIE FREEMAN



Eddie Freeman is a councilman from Evesham, Burlington County's most populous town and home to 50,000 people. His hometown of Evesham, pivotal in local politics, will be the springboard for his run for the NJ General Assembly next year.

The BurlCo-centric 8th Legislative District is the only district in NJ with a split Assembly lineup. Democrat Andrea Katz has been rock-solid on LGBT issues and Republican Michael Torrissi isn't. Running on the Fulop for Governor ticket, Mr. Freeman will have the resources he needs to compete and to replace Mr. Torrissi and join Ms. Katz, a durable straight ally, in the General Assembly.

## 79. IRIS BROMBERG

*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY HER SISTER YAEL BROMBERG*



Iris Bromberg helps lead affirmative enforcement for the NJ Division on Civil Rights, with an emphasis on anti-discrimination, including LGBTQ matters and investigations. She sits on a range of DCR's task forces and teams, including the reproductive rights, wealth disparity, and home appraisal task forces. Ms. Bromberg served as lead legal specialist on the precedential Trident settlement concerning allegations of race-based redlining and lending practices in the Camden area and was part of the team that brought successful challenges to local school boards seeking to out LGBTQ youth. Ms. Bromberg was awarded by the National LGBT Bar Association as Best 40 LGBT Lawyers Under 40 nationally in 2020, for distinguishing herself in the legal profession in the advancement of LGBTQ+ equality. She was previously a senior staff attorney at Legal Services of New York's LGBTQ and HIV Advocacy unit.

## 80. JUDAH DORRINGTON



Judah Dorrington is an activist, musician, and head of Atlantic City Pride. One of the most influential LGBT political voices in Atlantic County, Judah is also Atlantic City's first Liaison and Coordinator of LGBTQ Services.

## 81. CARA PARMIGIANI



A volunteer attorney for Unchained at Last, the only nonprofit in the U.S. dedicated to assisting women seeking to leave or avoid arranged/forced marriages, Cara Parmigiani is a lawyer and activist based in Morris County.

Ms. Parmigiani is also the founding Co-Chair of Morris County Pride and the founding chair of the Morris County Democratic LGBTQ+ Caucus.





# Congratulations

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## 82. PERRY FARHAT



Perry is Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset. He's also the Administrative Director of the Babs Siperstein PROUD Center.

The Babs Siperstein PROUD Center is the first primary care center in New Jersey dedicated to the specialized health care needs of the LGBTQ community. During Mr. Farhat's tenure, the Babs Siperstein PROUD Center has been recognized as a "Leader in LGBTQ Healthcare Equality" by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation, received The NJBIZ "Innovation" in Healthcare Award, and was honored as the National Association of Social Worker's New Jersey Organization of the Year.

Prior to joining RWJBarnabas Health, Perry served as an Assistant United States Attorney at the United States Attorney's Office for the District of New Jersey.

## 83. DANIELLE EARLE



For over a decade, Danielle Earle has been a dedicated LGBTQ+ advocate and educator, uplifting queer voices and creating safe spaces for marginalized youth. As a filmmaking teacher at Orange High School, she empowers students to use storytelling as a tool for change. This year, her commitment earned her the NJEA Equality Champion Award, presented by NEA SOGI. At this year's NJEA Convention, her students premiered *Breaking Boundaries*, a documentary celebrating LGBTQ+ support in the arts. Through her company, PL Entertainment LLC, Earle produces films that create opportunities for BIPOC and LGBTQ youth in the industry. Recently featured in *Out in NJ Magazine* and *NJEA Review*, Earle continues to expand her impact with *Mighty Voices: Trailblazers of LGBTQ+ Advocacy*, a docuseries sponsored by SunServe that highlights LGBTQ+ leaders in South Florida.

## 84. CINDI STERNFELD



Cindi Sternfeld is a longtime political organizer for Indivisible Lambertville/New Hope. An organization working to restore, preserve and extend democratic rights, Indivisible Lambertville/New Hope also works to provide communities with the resources, power, and opportunities that encourage engagement in all levels of democracy.

## 85. GILLETTE HARRIS



Gillette Harris is a model, runway instructor, educator and HIV/AIDS activist. As manager of LGBTQ services for Hyacinth Foundation, she works with young gay men and transgender individuals to promote sexual health and encourage them to be the best versions of themselves.

As the founding mother of the House of Nina Oricci she was recently nominated by her peers as a Ballroom Trailblazer. She has competed on HBO's Season of Legendary. Gillette uses her passion for the ballroom community and working with youth and young adults to help eliminate HIV and STIs in NJ.

## 86. MICHAEL MATTHEWS



Part of the next wave of LGBT activists, Ocean County's Michael Matthews is a dogged warrior in the battle to protect LGBT students and teachers from the wrath of angry bigots. By showing up and recording Toms River council meetings, Mr. Matthews has exposed the ethical rot that long ago afflicted the Toms River GOP.

## 87. ROBERT CHARKOWSKI



Robert Charkowski helps lead the County of Union Office of LGBTQ Affairs. Mr. Charkowski is the 2024 recipient of Sauer Service Award for his leadership and commitment to community engagement including the organization of County wide Pride events and monthly queer empowerment hours. For his day job, Mr. Charkowski is the strategic project coordinator for Union County, managing all of the county web sites.

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## 88. SIMONE KRAUS

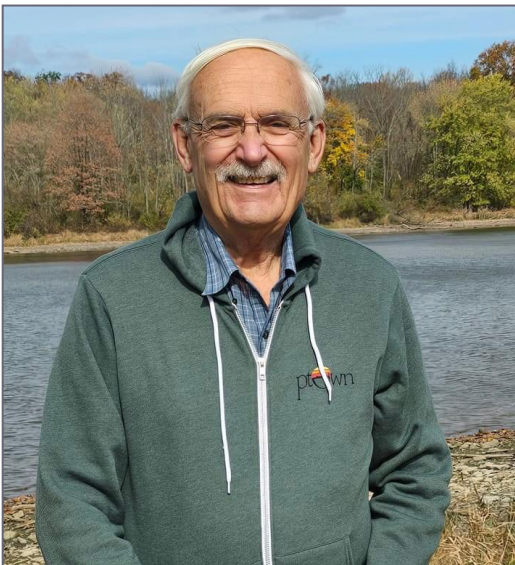
*A SPECIAL TRIBUTE BY LOUISE WALPIN*



Despite transitioning late in life, Simone Kraus has become a powerhouse advocate for the transgender community. She is the former VP of Triversity Pride Center in PA, co-founder of Homewardsussex.org, a Board Member of Out Montclair and one of the first members of Friends and Allies of Babs Siperstein (FAB). Ms. Kraus has been in numerous panels on Gender Equality and led Transgender Day of Remembrance in PA.

Most recently she published a book, “Just a Different Wrapping” which details the journey of her transition. She has worked with legislators to introduce a bill to designate November as Transgender Awareness Month in NJ and is actively involved in lobbying to make this bill a law. Her ethics and are consistent with her lifelong love of the martial arts: She is neither a bully nor a victim but will always fight to protect those who are vulnerable. Babs Siperstein would be so proud to know Simone is here to carry on her work.

## 89. GORDON SAUER



The longtime president if the Gay Activist Alliance in Morris County, Godon Sauer has devoted his retirement to ensuring our LGBT elders can live happy and full lives during their golden years. Older LGBTs often endure discrimination in housing and in healthcare settings. Mr. Sauer’s efforts a SAGE help ensure LGBTs aren’t forced back into the closet as we age.

## 90. VICTOR RIVERA



Victor Rivera is Executive Director of Beyond Ballot, a Gen Z-led movement that mobilizes political power of America's youth to deliver progressive policies. Mr. Rivera represents a new generation of fearless Queer activists ready to snatch the baton and lead.

## 91. KYLER DINEEN



An up-and-comer with boundless potential, Kyler Dineen was a Kamala Harris delegate at the recent DNC in Chicago. Kyler was also on hand at this year's White House Pride picnic earlier this summer where he held court with US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg.

## 92. T.C. MCCOURT



T.C. McCourt is the president of the Morris County Young Democrats and a candidate for the Dover School Board. Mr. McCourt was recently in Chicago as part of the New Jersey delegation that nominated Kamala Harris to be the Democratic candidate for President.

## 93. AIDAN DIMARCO



Aidan DiMarco is the National Membership Director of College Democrats of America. A Collingswood native, Mr. DiMarco is also currently the President of the Rowan University Dems. Mr. DiMarco's leadership galvanized the College Dems to support Andy Kim and his longshot run for Congress, giving the Kim Campaign momentum at a pivotal time in the race.

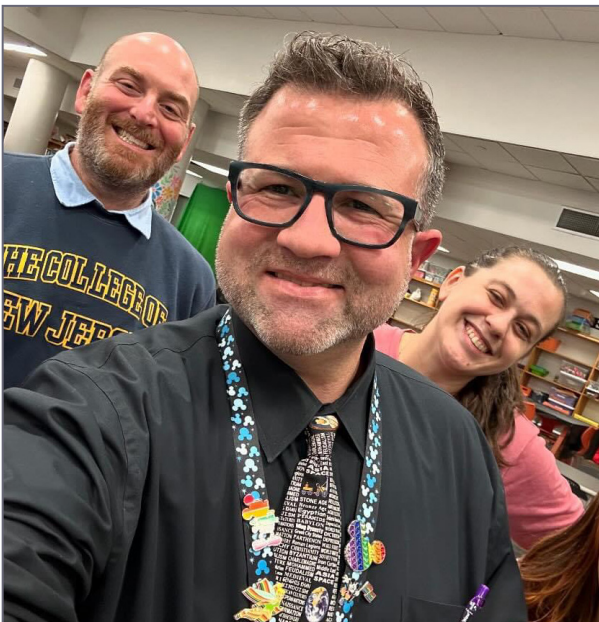


## 94. KADJA MANUEL



A man of many talents, Kadja Manuel is a writer and activist based in Trenton where he was born and raised. Mr. Manuel was part of the first generation of military recruits able to serve openly after the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell.

## 95. STEVE KOUMOULIS



Steve Koumoulis is the recipient of this year's NJEA's Equality Champion award. A longtime educator, Mr. Koumoulis serves on the board of directors at GLSEN Central NJ.



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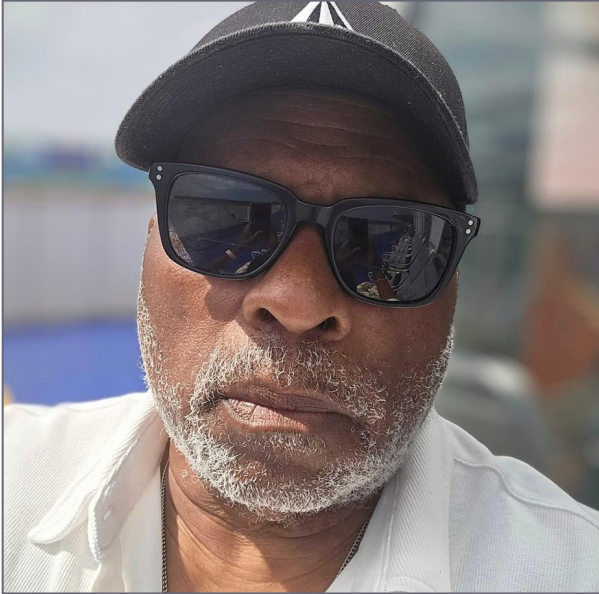
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## 96. WILLIAM CRADLE



A venerable and truly iconic LGBT advocate, William Cradle is a living legend in the region surrounding NJ's seaside gambling mecca. As this went to press, Mr. Cradle was recognized by the NAACP Atlantic City as a freedom fighter for LGBTQIA + Atlantic City's people of color.

## 97. RYAN RUGGIERO



Ryan Ruggiero is the Senior Director of DEI for the NBCU News Group for CNBC. He is also the chapter president of NLGJA for the NY/NJ region with over 1000 members. He chairs the OUT@NBC employee resource group and started the official first pride flag raising ceremony in Englewood.

## 98. JULIO CEASAR ROMAN III



When Jersey-native Julio Cesar Roman III decamped for Southern California earlier this year, New Jersey's activist community was lesser for it. A longtime HIV/AIDS advocate and award-winning author, Mr. Roman is now the Executive Director for the Pacific Pride Foundation in Santa Barbara, California. Previously, Mr. Roman was Director of Latinx Gay and Bi Men's Initiatives at the Latino Commission on AIDS. He also directed LGBTQIA+ capacity building at the National Harm Reduction Coalition. We don't usually include people from Santa Barbara on the list, but Mr. Roman spent half the year in NNJ, so we're honored to grandfather him as a tribute to his decades of stigma-busting AIDS activism.

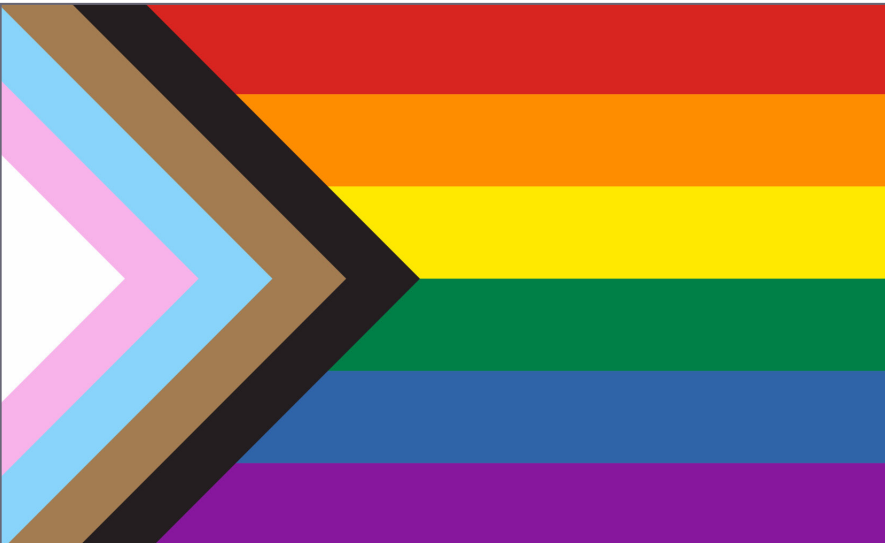
## 99. AMIE MARIA BABISCHKIN



Maria Babischkin is an ER nurse who spent the past year helping NJ's healthcare system better incorporate sexual orientation and gender identity data into their treatment repertoire to better serve the healthcare needs of LGBT patients.

A native of Cumberland County, Ms. Babischkin's promotion of LGBT candidates for office often puts her at odds with a South Jersey Democratic political machine that far too often treats LGBTs like hood ornaments and ATM machines.

## 100. ANYONE CLOSETED



The closet is a lonely, damaging place. With all the recent advances in LGBT rights, it's easy to forget that anti-LGBT stigma is still real. If everyone in NJ politics came out of the closet, this list would look very different. I hate to be a downer, but it's important to bear witness to that loneliness.

We do that here.