

the
**POWER
ISSUE**

From the arts to politics,
these are the **101** most influential
people in the Garden State.

KEY



RISING STAR



DYNAMIC DUO

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STEVE ADUBATO SR.**CIVIC LEADER, POLITICAL BOSS**

Although he has announced his retirement, Adubato, 75, is still the man whose blessing Democrats seek when running in Newark. “Big Steve” has been wielding political power since he helped Kenneth Gibson become Newark’s first black mayor in 1970. These days, he prefers to discuss his social legacy, including the North Ward Education and Cultural Center, which provides preschool and adult day-care programs, and the Robert Treat Academy, a K-8 charter school whose students (98 percent Hispanic) are recruited by the top prep schools in the Northeast.—KS

ROBERT A. ALTENKIRCH**EDUCATOR**

Altenkirch, 60, has been a highly visible figure on the Newark political landscape since arriving as president of New Jersey Institute of Technology in 2002. He serves as chair of the Newark Downtown Core Redevelopment Corporation (which oversees projects like the Prudential Center) and is a leader in the Gateway Project, designed to remove physical and cultural barriers between the NJIT campus and the surrounding neighborhood. Entrepreneurs cite NJIT as a top source for young techies.—LGP


ZOD ARIFAI**RESTAURATEUR**

 Since launching Blu a little over three years ago, Arifai has become the New Jersey chef whose name is most on the lips of New York foodies, some of whom have actually ventured across the river to Montclair and discovered that the reports of brilliance at bargain prices aren’t hype. Fans of Arifai’s 40-seat BYO include several fellow Jersey chefs who show up on their days off. Arifai, 43, has almost unreal stamina, which, along with extremely efficient technique, allows him to meet his own withering standards day in and day out despite a small kitchen and crew. An Albanian from Kosovo who came to New Jersey as a teen, Arifai trained under eminences including David Bouley and Charlie Trotter. Blu is his baby, and he pours his heart into every dish.—EL


MICHAEL ARON**MEDIA**

As the longtime senior political correspondent for the New Jersey Network, Aron, 62, has covered news out of Trenton going back to the Kean administration. Since July, he has done double duty as interim director of news and public affairs, even as NJN struggles with staff cuts, management upheaval, and funding uncertainties. With Comcast pulling the plug on CN8’s news coverage, NJN takes on even greater weight as a statewide news organization. Aron, fully recovered from a 2006 bout with cancer, appears up to the task.—KS


BILL BARONI**STATE SENATOR**

 At the age of 14, Baroni got his first taste of politics when he volunteered for his local Congressman. In the years since, he went from being a chauffeur for the assembly speaker to serving as chief counsel for various New Jersey political big shots. When he turned 32, he decided to run for office himself. The Republican was elected assemblyman in a predominantly Democratic district, thanks in part to visiting 10,809 homes door to door. Colleagues say Baroni, now 37, is witty, exceedingly bright, and can be quite eloquent. A centrist, he’s made friends on both sides of the aisle.—CC

CURTIS BASHAW**DEVELOPER**

 Bashaw, 48, made a splash down the Shore when he took the old Congress Hall Hotel and turned it into the crown jewel of Cape May’s tourist industry. In August, his Cape Advisors scored again, opening the Chelsea, the first non-gaming boutique hotel to come to Atlantic City since the 1960s. Bashaw’s bet on non-gamblers could turn out to be a high-risk play if the economy doesn’t turn around.—JAM

JENNIFER BECK**STATE SENATOR**

 While growing up in Erie, Pennsylvania, Beck was told she could not compete in ice hockey with boys. She persevered and eventually played. During her first run for elected office in Red Bank in 1997, Beck knocked on ev-

ery door in town—but lost. Two years later, she knocked on every door twice and became the first Republican in twenty years to win a seat on the borough council. Beck, 42, joined the Assembly in 2006 and cemented her credentials as a new-generation Republican in 2007, when she ousted Democratic incumbent Ellen Karcher from the state Senate.—JB

JOEL BENENSON**POLLSTER, POLITICAL CONSULTANT**

The journalist-turned-pollster is not an official part of Barack Obama’s transition team, but Benenson is likely to be New Jersey’s closest connection to the new president. Benenson, 56, was an early member of the Obama inner circle, helping the candidate shape his message and contributing to vital debate-prep sessions. The *New Republic* recently put him on its list of “30 people who matter most in Obama’s Washington”—along with the likes of Hillary Clinton, Al Gore, Nancy Pelosi, and even French president Nicolas Sarkozy. Back home in Jersey, Benenson’s clients include senators Robert Menendez and Frank Lautenberg, and mayors Cory Booker (Newark), Jerramiah Healy (Jersey City), and Douglas Palmer (Trenton).—KS

DICK BENFIELD**MEDIA**

Benfield, 68, was editorial page editor of the *Record* for nearly twenty years. He championed preservation, came down hard on sleazy politicians, and had a hand in the demise of former governor Jim McGreevey. These days he opines on New Jersey issues for the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*.—JM

DENNIS BONE**PRESIDENT, VERIZON NEW JERSEY**

The product of a family farm in Dry Creek, West Virginia (population 300), Bone was a high school math and science teacher before switching to engineering. He joined Bell Atlantic as a systems engineer, working his way up to the top spot in New Jersey after the 2000 Bell Atlantic/GTE merger. Bone, 57, put the brakes on a Verizon move out of Newark after receiving tax breaks from the state.—JB

GLORIA BONILLA-SANTIAGO

EDUCATOR, ACTIVIST

With a lifelong focus on poor and minority families and children, this professor of urban studies at Rutgers-Camden's Graduate School of Social Work has made her mark through the Center for Strategic Urban Community Leadership, which she founded in 1992. Five years later, Bonilla-Santiago, 54, used her Center, and her influence in Trenton, to push for charter-school legislation that enabled her to open the LEAP Academy, a K-12 math and science charter school in downtown Camden that sends virtually all its 800-plus graduates onto higher education. The daughter of migrant workers, Bonilla-Santiago is now zeroing in on the birth-to-5-year-old set, raising \$3 million for an early-learning research academy.—JPC

CORY BOOKER

MAYOR OF NEWARK

"Brick City" residents remain both hopeful and skeptical when it comes to the 39-year-old leader of the state's largest metropolis. To his Rhodes Scholar rhetoric, some say "shut up and dig." But there's no denying what the hard-working son of civil rights activists has already accomplished: 40 percent crime reduction, \$40 million committed to parks and open space, and a new Inspector General to combat corruption. Booker is a rising national player. He co-chaired Barack Obama's New Jersey campaign and will star in an upcoming "docu-soap" series called *Brick City* on the Sundance Channel. Booker swears he'll finish his mission, despite a series of setbacks for his candidates in local elections. To this civic reformer halfway through his first term, Newark remains a city of promise and progress.—DS

BARBARA BUONO

STATE SENATOR

As chairwoman of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee, Buono, 55, is one of the most powerful members of the legislature and the first woman to hold the job. The post did not come without a fight. It was promised to her, but that was before a divisive political spat with Senate president Richard Codey. Buono—armed with her sharp intellect and strong will—prevailed. The Democrat from Middlesex began her legislative

career in the Assembly in 1994 and was the ranking Democrat on the Assembly Budget Committee before moving to the Senate in 2002.—CC


RAY CHAMBERS

PHILANTHROPIST

Chambers retired super-rich twenty years ago from his leveraged-buyout firm, Wesray Capital Corporation, to dedicate himself to helping those less fortunate. A native of Newark, Chambers, 66, has played a major role in the city's rebirth through his work with the Boys & Girls Club and NJPAC. The graduate of Rutgers-Newark also cofounded America's Promise Alliance with Colin Powell, and the National Mentoring Partnership. Since February, he has served as the United Nations' first-ever special envoy for malaria.—EF

CHRISTOPHER CHRISTIE

ATTORNEY, POLITICIAN

 Will he or won't he? At press time Christie, 46, had stepped down as U.S. Attorney and was deciding if he would challenge Governor Corzine for the top spot at Drumthwacket. Christie, a Republican, made a name for himself in his former role taking down some major government sleazeballs. The *Star-Ledger* reported that his conviction record was 130-0. You literally can't beat that. Democrats will have to dig deep to find any dirt on Christie—aside from his oft-cited role in picking his ex-boss John Ashcroft for a lucrative consulting gig.—JAM

RICHARD J. CODEY

SENATE PRESIDENT

The veteran lawmaker entered the state Legislature in 1974 and has been there


ever since. Codey, 62, was named Senate president in 2002, making him one of the most powerful men in Trenton, though that power was challenged last year when his pick for majority leader, Paul Sarlo of Bergen County, lost out to South Jersey lawmaker Stephen Sweeney. Still, the man known for his plain speaking continues to be a formidable force, sponsoring countless bills that become law. Lauded for his fight to improve the state's mental-health system, the West Orange Democrat once took a night job as an orderly at Marlboro Psychiatric Hospital to observe the conditions there. When his wife, Mary Jo, who suffers from depression, became the butt of a joke on New Jersey 101.5 FM, Codey went down to the station and threatened the radio host, Craig Carton. Codey was actually New Jersey's 53rd governor, filling in after Jim McGreevey's resignation in November 2004. He'd hoped to have the job longer but opted out of a costly nomination battle against multimillionaire governor-to-be Jon Corzine. But Codey, who is currently viewed more favorably than the governor, may try again.—CC

SUSAN COLE

EDUCATOR


Since her appointment as president of Montclair State University in 1998, Cole, 66, has been a zealous advocate for higher education in New Jersey, lobbying for increased state funding to help renovate and expand aging campuses to attract additional students. At MSU, she's presided over a construction boom that has more than doubled the square footage of campus building space. Detractors have criticized her authoritarian leadership, but even they agree she's helped to raise the profile of the state's second largest university.—LGP

POWER SOURCE

 To arrive at the Power 101, *New Jersey Monthly's* editors and writers informally polled sources from all the beats we cover. The goal was to identify the individuals with the most impact on the way we live in New Jersey. They are listed here, with separate profiles on a handful of individuals we found particularly interesting. NOTE: We excluded members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives; otherwise all were welcome.

BARBARA BELL COLEMAN AND CLAUDE COLEMAN

PHILANTHROPY, THE JUDICIARY

 Married since 1997, the couple staked a personal claim in Newark's revitalization by making their home there and supporting a glittering array of worthy causes. A minister's daughter, Barbara Bell Coleman, 58, is president of consulting firm BBC Associates and particularly devoted to NJPAC and the restoration of Branch Brook Park. Superior Court Judge Claude Coleman, 68, a beat cop during the 1967 riots and former fire director, is a vigorous supporter of Leadership Newark and St. Benedict's Prep. Rooted in service and giving, the couple shares a deep commitment to young people, the arts, and Newark's future.—DS

BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN

ASSEMBLYWOMAN

Coleman is on the short list of candidates who could be tapped to run for lieutenant governor when that office is voted on this year. A member of a powerful Trenton political family and popular in the city's African-American community, Watson Coleman, 63, has held her seat for ten years. In 2006, the Ewing Democrat was unanimously elected as majority leader of the Assembly, where she is respected for her work on family-rights issues, gang-violence control, and tax relief.—JPC

DOUGLAS R. CONANT

PRESIDENT/CEO, CAMPBELL SOUP
COMPANY

Conant, 57, took the helm at a stodgy Campbell Soup in 2001 and set about getting it back to mmm-hmmm good. He introduced pop-top soup cans and a low-sodium line with sea salt to make its goodness actually taste good. He pushed supermarkets to move his soups around—putting cream of mushroom in the cooking aisle, for instance—and distributed his soups to new markets in Russia and China. Three years ago, he made the decision to keep Campbell in Camden and now has plans to develop an office park near the Campbell headquarters—the first such development in a generation.—RS

JOSEPH F. CORADINO

DEVELOPER

With Coradino as chairman, the Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust

has injected new life into South Jersey's malls. Coradino, 57, brought Nordstrom to Cherry Hill, redefined the ailing Echelon Mall as Voorhees Town Center, and gave Moorestown Mall a facelift. In total, PREIT is redeveloping nearly 2.8 million square feet of shopping real estate in South Jersey. It could mean big bucks for the region's economy.—JAM

JON CORZINE

GOVERNOR

It's hard to imagine a governor more qualified to fix the state's finances and less able to get the job done. The 62-year-old former CEO of Goldman Sachs entered state government with his sleeves rolled up, ready to cut borrowing and spending and bolster the state's underfunded pension system. But with the awkwardness of a geek in a frat house, his attempts to explain his various revenue-raising plans, such as monetizing state highways and raising tolls, only raised the ire of voters. His first budget put him at loggerheads with a legislature worried about reelection and steadfastly against his plan to raise the sales tax. The showdown led to a closure of state government. Corzine was forced to compromise and learned a valuable lesson: Politics trumps financial savvy.

"He's not driven solely by a political calculus," says Bradley Abelow, Corzine's recently departed chief of staff. But sometimes one needs to be. With a popularity rating of less than 50 percent, some wonder whether Corzine can win reelection in 2009.

Despite his struggles, residents seem to trust the bearded man from Wall Street and believe he wants to do the right thing. Elizabeth Holtzman, who worked with Corzine when she was New York City comptroller, says the most striking thing about him is his sense of decency. "If we had a bailout and Jon Corzine were secretary of the Treasury, we wouldn't only be focusing on Wall Street," Holtzman says.—CC

ANTHONY COSCIA

CHAIRMAN, PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW
YORK AND NEW JERSEY

Since his appointment in 2003, Coscia has been responsible for the New Jersey/New York area's bridges, tunnels, airports, and seaports. Oh, and did we mention the World Trade Center redevelop-

ment project? Coscia, 49, is an attorney by profession (with a law degree from Rutgers). A former chairman of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, he wields a huge budget for capital projects like airport expansion and the construction of a new rail tunnel under the Hudson River.—KS

LUCILLE DAVY

COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Despite some controversies and a pending lawsuit by the state's school superintendents, Davy, 53, probably wields more influence now than when she was appointed commissioner in 2005, thanks to a new law giving her authority (which she's since drawn on) to set regulations involving school budgets. She's also taken on the thorny issue of state testing, raising the minimum passing score for middle school students and working to revamp high school tests. Under the former math teacher's watch, nearly two-thirds of New Jersey's schools showed improved scores on state math tests in 2007.—LGP

CHARLOTTE DeFILIPPO

POLITICAL BOSS

Dubbed "the Queen of King Street" for wielding considerable power from her Hillside living room, the Union County Democratic chairwoman, 64, can make or break candidates with a single tap of her Pall Mall. Ruthless to some, a savvy powerhouse to others, DeFilippo is a potent force in a county where Democrats have ruled since 1997. Until last year, the unelected ringleader also served as legislative aide to Assemblyman Neil Cohen, who resigned amid child-pornography allegations. In 2007, state investigators subpoenaed DeFilippo, who is also executive director of the Union County Improvement Authority, for documents relating to her public and private dealings, sparking rumors that her reign may be coming to an end.—DS

JOSEPH V. DORIA

CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Doria, 62, used to run mock elections for his social studies students at Holy Family Academy in Bayonne. He later won real ones, working his way up from the board

of education to the local mayor's office, the Assembly (where he was minority leader and speaker), and the state Senate. In January 2008, Governor Corzine named Doria to his current job as head of the DCA, which deals with quality-of-life issues. DCA accomplishments over the past year include enforcement of stringent amusement-park-ride safety regulations and facilitating the creation of affordable housing for working families.—**JB**

WALLY EDGE

MEDIA

Wally Edge is the Spiderman of Garden State political insiders. The identity of the politickernj.com editor, whose pen name pays tribute to a former state governor and senator, is one of the hottest topics in political circles. That's because the anonymously operated website gets the scoop on virtually everything that occurs in Jersey politics. Republicans say he's a Democrat, while Democrats are convinced he's a member of the GOP. One thing is for sure: The website has become required reading for political junkies across New Jersey.—**PD**

PAUL FADER

ATTORNEY, LOBBYIST

After a run as mayor of Englewood and chief counsel to governors McGreevey and Codey, Fader, 49, wields clout as a partner in former governor Jim Florio's law firm, Florio, Perrucci, Steinhardt & Fader. Big-time clients include United Water, Cablevision, the Newark Downtown Redevelopment Authority, and the South Jersey Transportation Authority.—**JAM**

ZULIMA FARBER

ATTORNEY, LOBBYIST

This Cuban-American trial lawyer gained prominence when Governor Corzine named her attorney general in Jan-

uary 2006, making Farber, 64, the first Hispanic woman in a governor's cabinet. A long string of traffic tickets and bench warrants didn't stop her from getting the AG job, but intervening when her long-time boyfriend was stopped for driving an unregistered vehicle did force her to resign just seven months after getting the post. Today she is reinventing herself as a key member of Issues Management, a Princeton-based lobbying firm affiliated with her old law firm, Lowenstein Sandler PC, where she is still a partner. As a lobbyist, she focuses on employment, immigration, and health care.—**JPC**

GARY FISCH

WINE MERCHANT

Amazing to think that twenty years ago, liquor stores in New Jersey mainly sold, well, liquor, and a token amount of wine. Fisch, the 51-year-old CEO of Gary's Wine & Marketplace, largely changed that. Opening his first store in Madison in 1987, he combined the New York idea of the wine superstore with the European idea of the upscale wine-and-food emporium, developing an almost \$45 million-a-year business (after adding stores in Bernardsville and Wayne). His down-to-earth style has made him a Food Network regular, an oft-quoted wine commentator, and an informative lecturer. Over the last twenty years, his annual Grand Tasting has contributed \$250,000 to Morristown and area charities.—**EL**

DALE FLORIO

LOBBYIST

Florio's lobbying firm, Princeton Public Affairs Group, one of the highest paid in the state, has clients from both sides of the aisle despite Florio's role as the longtime chairman of the Republican party in Somerset County. It testifies to his effectiveness and credibility. A strong fundraiser and political organizer, Florio, 53, has made Somerset a key Republican stronghold. His hands-on involvement helped him deliver the county to Leonard Lance, the Republican who just won the congressional seat in Florio's district.—**CC**

ROBERT FRANKS

LOBBYIST

As the president of the HealthCare Institute of New Jersey, Franks, 57, lobbies for

22 pharmaceutical companies in the state. A longtime Republican politico, he started in the state Assembly in 1979 before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1993. He left the House for an unsuccessful U.S. Senate race against Jon Corzine in 2000, then lost the Republican gubernatorial primary the next year. Franks claims no further political ambitions, but that could change if Corzine stumbles on the way to reelection.—**RS**

JIM GEARHART

MEDIA

The morning-drive host at New Jersey radio station 101.5 FM delights in lobbing verbal stink bombs at whatever political party is in power. A self-styled watchdog for the people, Gearhart rallies listeners to tackle incumbents and protest everything from high taxes to gas prices. Some liken the crusading broadcaster to an on-air car crash—they hate his shtick but just can't turn away. The veteran talkmeister ranked number 64 on *Talkers* magazine's annual "Heavy Hundred" list of top talk-show hosts.—**DS**

TOM GILMORE

ACTIVIST


As president of the New Jersey Audubon Society for the past 25 years, Gilmore, 62, expanded NJAS into ten staffed centers with international recognition. He played an integral role in the passage of New Jersey's stringent 1987 Wetlands Law and helped the Highlands Coalition secure full protection of the Pequannock River Watershed. Other Gilmore initiatives include the Cape May Bird Observatory and the Weis Ecology Center in Ringwood.—**LW**

HAZEL GLUCK

LOBBYIST

Once the head of the Department of Transportation and the Department of Insurance, Gluck, 74, is now a powerful Republican lobbyist with an impressive roster of clients. A close friend of former governor Christie Todd Whitman, Gluck has become an informal advisor to Governor Corzine. In 2007, he named her to the New Jersey Public Officers Salary Review Commission, which eyes compensation for the governor and cabinet members, among others.—**JM**

FEEDBACK

 You probably have your own ideas about who should and should not be included on this Power list. Post your comments at: njmonthly.com/power

CARL GOLDBERG**DEVELOPER**

As cofounder and president of Roseland Property, Goldberg, 57, is changing the face of a large chunk of New Jersey's Hudson River waterfront with the ambitious Port Imperial development of 200 acres of residences and office and retail space. Goldberg, known for his political ties with statewide powers like Senator Robert Menendez, wears a second hat as chairman of the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority, which operates the Meadowlands Sports Complex and oversees its ambitious football stadium and Xanadu construction projects.—**AS**

LAWRENCE GOLDMAN**PRESIDENT AND CEO, NJPAC**

In addition to fostering a world-class arts scene, Goldman, 63, aims to revitalize the city of Newark, a goal that stems from his background in urban redevelopment. To those ends, he has assembled a "who's who" board of directors and raked in \$171 million toward a \$180 million fundraising goal. Next step: A redevelopment effort that would turn NJPAC's adjacent courtyard into the city's "town square," at the center of residential towers and street-level cafés, shops, and restaurants—reflecting Goldman's view that a city needs the arts, but the arts need a vibrant city.—**JK**

STEVE GOLDSTEIN**ACTIVIST**

As chairman of Garden State Equality, New Jersey's most active gay advocacy group, Goldstein, 45, has been out front on most issues affecting the LGBT community, from playing a key role in securing passage of the state's civil-union law to challenging Ocean Grove for prohibiting those civil unions from being held on the Boardwalk. Goldstein—who married his partner in Canada in 2002—is now pushing for marriage-equality legislation in New Jersey. Having managed Jon Corzine's 2000 Senate campaign, Goldstein is also seen as an effective fundraiser.—**JPC**

DAVID GRANT**PHILANTHROPIST**

Last September, more than 19,000 poetry fans attended the twelfth biennial Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival at the old

Waterloo Village site in Sussex County. The man behind the poetry pow-wow is 58-year-old Dodge Foundation president and CEO Grant. Since taking over the executive leadership of the foundation in 1998, the aptly named Grant has raised the organization's profile in four areas of giving: education, the arts, animal welfare, and local Morris County projects. On the side, he tours in a one-man show as Mark Twain.—**PD**

NICHOLAS HARARY**RESTAURATEUR**

All successful restaurants get something right—maybe even several things. Cuisine, service, decor, wine list, bar menu, dessert, parking, price—the list goes on. What is unique about Harary, the 35-year-old chef/co-owner of Restaurant Nicholas in Red Bank, is that he got everything right (and keeps working to make everything better). Even before the Ryland Inn closed, Restaurant Nicholas had become the standard of excellence in the state, a total dining experience as exquisite as anything in Manhattan, yet relaxed, comfortable, and reasonably priced. How does he do it? "You could be smarter than me, you could be a better chef than me, you could be a better businessman than me," Harary told this magazine in 2007. "But at some point, sheer hard work is going to be involved, and there's no way you're going to outwork me."—**EL**

FRED HASSAN**CEO, SCHERING-PLOUGH**

When Hassan, 62, took over at Schering-Plough in 2003, the pharmaceutical giant was clearly at its nadir. Sales had dropped 20 percent in a year and were threatened with more downside, since the company's star drug, the allergy medication Claritin, had gone off patent. Hassan has replaced much of management with allies from his former company, Pharmacia, and stepped up research, but has yet to come up with a new Claritin-like blockbuster. He has been the most politically involved of the state's pharma chiefs, serving on Governor Corzine's transition team and Economic Growth Council.—**RS**

JERRAMIAH HEALY**MAYOR OF JERSEY CITY**

Being the mayor of the second largest

city in New Jersey gives Healy, 59, substantial clout. As Jersey City's population and stature grow, so, too, does Healy's influence. It doesn't hurt that this former assistant county prosecutor and municipal court chief judge also chairs the Hudson County Democratic machine, one of the most important county organizations in the state. Not even a conviction in 2007 for obstructing justice and resisting arrest after a clash with a police officer, or being photographed on his porch nude after a night of drinking back when he was a councilman, were able to derail his political career. That's staying power.—**CC**

MITCHELL HERSH**REAL ESTATE**

As president and CEO of Mack-Cali Realty Corporation, Hersh, 57, is the state's biggest landlord. Mack-Cali owns or has interest in 179 properties in New Jersey comprising 23.4 million square feet of mostly commercial space in communities such as Cranford, Jersey City, Moorestown, Parsippany, Princeton, and Totowa. As might be expected, the company's stock has been battered this year, slipping from a twelve-month high of \$43 to below \$20 amid concerns about the commercial real estate market. Mack-Cali got a vote of confidence in October when, despite the credit squeeze, it obtained a \$240 million mortgage on one of its Jersey City waterfront properties.—**KS**

HAROLD HODES**LOBBYIST**

Hodes, 66, began his career as executive assistant to Newark mayor Ken Gibson and went on to serve as Governor Brendan Byrne's chief of staff. Viewed as grounded, pragmatic, and armed with good instincts, Hodes was invaluable to Richard Codey when he was interim governor. Public Strategies Impact, the lobbying firm Hodes runs with Roger Bodman, a veteran of the Kean administration, claims to be the best in Trenton. Unfortunately, among the names associated with Hodes are state Senator Joseph Coniglio, who faces federal corruption charges, and Hillary Clinton, whom Hodes advised on her failed presidential run.—**CC**

JAMES HUGHES AND JOSEPH SENECA

EDUCATORS, ECONOMISTS

 When Hughes and Seneca speak, legislators, politicians, business leaders, and the media listen, often with trepidation. Hughes, 65, dean of the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, has been a longtime advisor on demographic and economic issues to leaders in Trenton and Washington. Seneca, 66, a professor at the Bloustein School, was for many years chairman of the New Jersey Council of Economic Advisors. But the pair may wield their greatest influence with their Rutgers Regional Report, in which they deliver unflinching assessments on economic and demographic issues. They've proved prescient at times, as in a 2005 report in which they warned that "real problems may be imminent" in the housing market.—LGP


RALPH IZZO

CEO, PUBLIC SERVICE ENTERPRISE GROUP

The former college baseball player has won kudos from environmentalists for making PSEG greener, even though they want the company to shut down its large coal-fired plants in Trenton and Jersey City. Izzo, 51, joined PSEG in 1992 and began climbing the corporate ladder, developing a reputation for strong people skills. That knack will be needed as PSEG faces major challenges in coming months, including development of the first state energy master plan in more than ten years.—JB

LISA JACKSON

GOVERNOR'S CHIEF OF STAFF

 As New Jersey's environmental commissioner, Jackson, 46, received accolades from developers and activists alike for her ability to manage economic development while protecting the environment. But it is her intellect, keen listening skills, and ability to cut through bureaucratic morass to get things done that compelled Governor Corzine to pluck up this Princeton engineering alumna in October and make her his chief of staff. The question is whether President-elect Barack Obama plans to enlist her as well. Jackson is rumored to be on a short list for Christie Whitman's old job as head of the Environmental Protection Agency.—CC
UPDATE: After deadline, president-elect Barack Obama chose Jackson to head the EPA.

REGINALD T. JACKSON

MINISTER, ACTIVIST

The pastor at Orange's St. Matthew African Methodist Episcopal Church for nearly three decades, Jackson, 54, has never held public office, but is considered the most influential African-American in New Jersey. As executive director of the Black Ministers' Council of New Jersey, his reach stretches to more than 600 black churches, and for years he has placed himself at the center of some of the most divisive issues affecting the black community. He notably pushed the state to label racial profiling a crime, and has fought for Abbott school district funding and needle-exchange programs for drug addicts, and against predatory lending in the inner city. His next focus will be health care. "Reggie is a conscience," Ron DeMauro, CEO of Saint Barnabas Health Care System, says. "He's a voice for the black community, no question, but I see him as a voice for all the citizens of New Jersey."—JPC


WOODY JOHNSON

OWNER, NEW YORK JETS

A native of New Brunswick, Johnson, 61, has made the New York Jets enticingly New Jerseyan. An heir to the Johnson & Johnson fortune and a noted philanthropist, Johnson jumped at the chance to buy the team in 2000. In 2008, he moved the team's training grounds from Long Island to Florham Park, and has watched the team go through a turnaround season, all while a new Meadowlands stadium is in the works. Johnson is ecstatic about the training-facility move. In addition to new jobs and about \$10 million in annual tax revenue for the area, the local real estate market and businesses stand to benefit from the influx of high-earning players. And the team's charitable organization, the Jets Foundation, is prepared to reach out. "Part of our team philosophy is that everyone is expected to give back to the community," Johnson says.—BS

THOMAS KEAN JR. AND THOMAS KEAN SR.

STATE SENATOR, EX-GOVERNOR

 Kean Jr. is low-key as politicians go. He is the last to brag about his family's illustrious history, which includes politically minded ancestors dating back to the Continental Congress. Kean Jr., 40,

learned his political chops working for U.S. representative Bob Franks and at the Environmental Protection Agency during the administration of George H.W. Bush. He joined the state Senate in 2003 and became minority leader four years later. He hit a bump in the road in 2005 when he lost his bid for the U.S. Senate to Robert Menendez; in the state Senate, his push to reform New Jersey's pay-to-play practices has not proven to be a winner for Republicans. The senior Kean, 73, is a respected GOP elder, considered the last of the moderate Rockefeller Republicans. He served as governor from 1982 to 1990 and then as president of Drew University, where he endeared himself to students by occasionally eating lunch in the cafeteria. They dubbed him "TK." Kean also served as chairman of the 9/11 Commission and remains in the public eye through his weekly sparring in the *Star-Ledger* with his gubernatorial predecessor and good buddy, Brendan Byrne.—JB


ORIN KRAMER

CHAIRMAN, STATE INVESTMENT COUNCIL

After assuming his current job in 2002, Kramer re-balanced the state's stock-heavy pension-fund portfolio with alternative investments such as hedge funds—a strategy that mimics well-known pension funds such as Harvard University's. Now that some of the investments have gone seriously sour, Kramer has become a lightning rod for critics. The state also invested \$700 million in preferred stock deals with Merrill Lynch and Citigroup and doled out another \$180 million to now-defunct Lehman Brothers. Wall Street's subsequent meltdown gutted New Jersey's pension fund, causing losses of nearly \$16 billion in recent months—with \$9 billion lost in October alone. Still, Kramer defends his decisions, saying the state's investment performance surpasses its peers. Kramer, 63, who is also head of Boston Provident LP, was a major fundraiser for the Obama campaign.—JB

KRIS KOLLURI

CEO, SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

 The state's highest ranking Indian-American, Kolluri has been one of Governor Corzine's most trusted advisers since he was named to helm the Department of Transportation in 2006. The following year, the governor expanded his

influence by making him chairman of the Turnpike Authority and the Atlantic City Expressway (he was already chairman of NJ Transit). Most recently, the 40-year-old Rutgers graduate took over the controversial School Development Authority, overseeing up to \$30 billion in school construction projects.—JPC

BRAD LAWRENCE AND STEVE DEMICCO

POLITICAL CONSULTANTS

 The partners in consultancy Message & Media are hardly brand names among New Jersey voters, but they are credited as the strategic architects behind victories for such Democratic names as McGreevey, Corzine, Menendez, and Lautenberg. Despite setbacks in some recent state Senate races, Lawrence, 53, and DeMicco, 56, are “still the guys you want on your team,” says one Democratic insider.—KS

RAYMOND LESNIAK

STATE SENATOR

Lesniak's legislative career dates back to Jimmy Carter's presidency. From his Union office, Lesniak, 62, has championed legislation ranging from protecting minors from secondhand smoke in motor vehicles to a measure requiring licensing of mortgage solicitors. He also chairs the Senate's Economic Growth Committee, which has some serious work to do. Any Democrat running in New Jersey would like to have Lesniak's blessing.—PD

STEVE LONEGAN

POLITICIAN

The state's most vocal conservative is the first candidate to officially announce for the 2009 gubernatorial race. The former mayor of Bogota's strong antitax and anti-immigration stands have gained him statewide and even national recognition. The head of the Jersey chapter of Americans for Prosperity, an antitax group, Lonegan, 52, recently has taken on Governor Corzine's ethics-reform plan, calling it an assault on the freedoms of speech and assembly. (He even managed to get himself arrested on trespassing charges at a town hall meeting held by the governor.) An increasingly tax-weary populace provides Lonegan a base for his gubernatorial run.—JPC

EMILY MANN

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, MCCARTER THEATRE

Now in her nineteenth season as the artistic director and playwright in residence at Princeton's McCarter Theatre, Mann has brought fame and notoriety (and even a Tony Award) to the university theater program. Mann, 56, has overseen 90 productions at McCarter—including shows from playwrights such as Edward Albee, Joyce Carol Oates, and Nilo Cruz—featuring such stage and screen luminaries as Jimmy Smits and Frances McDormand. Mann's own plays include an adaptation of *Having Our Say*, the story of the Delany Sisters, which went on to Broadway, and *A Seagull in the Hamptons*, which had its premiere at McCarter last spring.—JPC

JOHN K. MARA

OWNER, NEW YORK GIANTS

The majority owner, president, and chief executive officer of the defending world champion New York Giants has been with the franchise for nearly twenty seasons. Mara, 54, took the reins of the team after the passing of his father, Wellington Mara, in 2005. The franchise is said to be worth about \$900 million. With a Super Bowl championship under his belt and a new \$800 million stadium being erected in the Meadowlands, Mara can take pride in the Giants' achievements under his leadership. The team is poised to make a serious run this year at defending its title, a feat that would buoy New Jersey spirits (and pack the sports bars).—BS

JOSH MARGOLIN

MEDIA

The *Star-Ledger* statehouse reporter chose to stay put rather than take a buyout from New Jersey's dominant newspaper last fall, cementing a career capped in 2005 by a shared staff Pulitzer for “comprehensive, clear-headed coverage” of Governor Jim McGreevey's fall from grace. Margolin, 38, keeps a steady bead on Jersey politics via phenomenal sources and ruthless reporting. Colleagues have dubbed him a “lawnmower on jet fuel.”—DS

WILLIAM J. MARINO

PRESIDENT AND CEO, HORIZON BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF NEW JERSEY

If Marino has his way, New Jersey's largest health insurer will gain for-profit

status—a move that could generate a \$1 billion windfall for the state. The Newark-based company has flirted with the switch before, but Marino's leadership could give it a better shot this go-round, industry observers say. Critics charge the move would be bad for consumers. Marino, 66, isn't afraid of controversy. Early in 2008, he took plenty of flak for backing Governor Corzine's toll-hike plan.—CJP

ED McBRIDE

CHIEF COUNSEL TO THE GOVERNOR

He was passed over for chief of staff when Governor Corzine gave the job to Lisa Jackson. But don't expect him to fade away. McBride, 49, is still a key member of Corzine's inner circle and has held previous positions with governors Jim McGreevey, Richard Codey, and Jim Florio. And if Jackson leaves to work for the Environmental Protection Agency, McBride could be a contender again.—JAM

UPDATE: After deadline, Governor Corzine chose McBride to replace Lisa Jackson as his chief of staff.

C. ROBERT McDEVITT

LABOR LEADER

As president of Local 54 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union since 1996, McDevitt represents some 15,000 workers in Atlantic City casinos. As chairman of the Atlantic City Democratic Committee, he is consolidating even more power, especially since the state legislature recently lifted the ban on casino employees holding elective office as of 2009. McDevitt is credited with taking Local 54 from its mob-influenced past to its current profile as a service- and training-oriented organization. Only 46, McDevitt could have a future in elective office or may prefer to stay behind the scenes, à la George Norcross in Camden County.—RS

JIM McQUEENY

LOBBYIST, COMMENTATOR

McQueeny, 59, runs Winning Strategies, an influential lobbying firm with strong ties to the Democratic Party. He was chief of staff for Senator Frank Lautenberg, with whom he is still close. But this big-deal political operative (and ex-*Star-Ledger* reporter) also has his own political-affairs TV show, *Power and Poli-*

tics, on News 12. Some observers wonder if this creates a conflict when he questions guests without revealing his Democratic links.—JM


GUALBERTO “GIL” MEDINA

REAL ESTATE

Nobody knows how to make business feel at-home in New Jersey like Gil Medina. As commerce secretary under Governor Christie Todd Whitman, Medina helped pass business-friendly economic-development legislation and spearheaded complex negotiations to bring major relocations and expansions to New Jersey, including such heavy hitters as AT&T Laboratories, Barnes & Noble, and Hewlett-Packard. Today, as executive managing director of real estate giant Cushman & Wakefield of New Jersey, the 55-year-old Medina is courting more blue chips for the Garden State.—CJP

ANNE MILGRAM

STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL

 Since taking over as the state's top law enforcer in 2007, this former counselor to Governor Corzine has walked a bipartisan line, joining forces with possible Corzine challenger Christopher Christie to take on tough issues and crack down on corrupt politicians. At 37, she has been described by the *Star-Ledger* as the state's most powerful woman.—JAM

ROBERT MINNITI

RESTAURATEUR

Minniti, 35, chef-owner of Bacio Italian Cuisine in Cinnaminson, serves as president of the South Jersey Independent Restaurant Association, a group of nearly 50 establishments that together are ridding the local scene of its diners-and-chain-restaurant reputation. Through restaurant weeks, farm-to-fork menu specials, and charity events, association members not only have filled their dining rooms, but also have forged partnerships with local farmers to buy fresh for your plate.—JAM

SOHAIL MOHAMMED


ACTIVIST, ATTORNEY

Mohammed is a leading voice in New Jersey's Muslim community. From his closet-size office in Clifton, the 45-year-old immigration lawyer has represented

more than 30 detainees from New Jersey who have faced deportation since the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in 2001. Mohammed has also spent the last seven years conducting “sensitivity enhancement” workshops about Muslim culture and the Islamic faith for more than 10,000 people, including FBI and Secret Service agents, and judges from all over the United States. You can catch him almost any night on CNN, Fox, or MSNBC offering insights into the nuances of the Islamic world.—PD

WILL AND JACK MOREY

AMUSEMENT PARK OWNERS

 Jack, 47, and his brother Will, 51, fight for a lot in the Wildwoods, but then they ought to, because their businesses are the face of the island. They run the boardwalk's two amusement piers and water parks. They own a half-dozen hotels and various buildings that house restaurants and entertainment venues. They serve on just about every civic and charitable board in the area, and Jack, the more vocal of the two, is the spearhead of the Doo Wop Preservation League, which seeks to preserve the architecture and spirit of the mid-twentieth century. “In Wildwood, we have proven that it is okay to be different, that it is okay to be wacky and not so tasteful,” he says. “We can't be Cape May or Ocean City, but as long as we are clean and businesslike, we can be what we are.”—RS


GARY MOTTOLA

DEVELOPER

When the economy began to downshift in 2007, the redevelopers of Asbury Park switched their focus from luxury condos to revitalizing this oceanfront resort's long-neglected boardwalk. The 61-year-old Mottola's retail real estate investment firm, Madison Marquette, was brought in to jumpstart the renaissance. Working with the city's master developer, Asbury Partners, the Bergen County native, who serves as president of the firm, has accomplished more in the last year than others did in two decades, overseeing everything from the multimillion-dollar renovation of the historic Convention Hall to the new shops now occupying the boardwalk's previously rundown pavilions.—JPC


TRICIA MUELLER

LABOR ORGANIZER, POLITICAL OPERATIVE

 The choice of Mueller, 34, to head Barack Obama's New Jersey campaign signaled her emergence as a statewide player. Mueller established herself in South Jersey as a carpenters union leader and by working on political issues with Camden County Democratic Organization co-chair Donald Norcross. She has also put in time on the Corzine, McGreevey, Lautenberg, and Menendez gubernatorial campaigns.—JAM

MICHAEL MURPHY AND BRIAN HUGHES

POLITICS

 The son and stepson of the late Governor and state Supreme Court chief justice Richard Hughes, these half-brothers are part of a Kennedy-like political dynasty. A former Morris County prosecutor, Murphy, 59, ran for governor in 1997 but was defeated in the Democratic primary by Jim McGreevey. Hughes, 52, has served as Mercer County executive since 2003. During the last election cycle, the brothers found themselves on opposite sides of the Obama-Clinton and Lautenberg-Andrews's races. With election season over, Hughes' name has been bandied about as a possible gubernatorial replacement if Governor Corzine were to join the Obama administration.—JPC

GEORGE NORCROSS III

BUSINESSMAN, POLITICAL BOSS

Norcross, 51, backed Rob Andrews's failed Senate bid, but that has not taken any clout from this South Jersey political giant and former chairman of the Camden County Democratic Party (now led by his brother, Donald). Norcross, who made millions in insurance and banking, has never held elective office. But his fundraising prowess alone, not to mention his close ties to Assembly speaker Joe Roberts, makes him a state powerhouse. It also helps that he is exceptionally smart and notoriously ruthless. Want something done? Get Norcross behind it.—JAM

RAY POCINO


LABOR LEADER

As vice president of the Laborers International Union, Pocino can mobilize 25,000

New Jersey workers to support the Democratic candidate of his choice. A longtime New Jersey Turnpike Authority commissioner, he's also on the board of the Port Authority, served on the Corzine transition team, and was part of a committee that tried to help sell the governor's toll-hike plan to the public.—KS

CLEMENT PRICE & MARY SUE SWEENEY PRICE

EDUCATION, THE ARTS

 He has been described as “what passeth for God” in Newark, she has been called one of the most respected and admired museum leaders in the country. Clement, 63, is a historian and distinguished professor at Rutgers University's Newark campus, and Mary Sue, 57, is executive director of the Newark Museum. The two have been married for twenty years, and although they shy away from the term “power couple,” they certainly hold sway in this ever-changing city, and for good reason. In addition to bringing world-class art, educational excellence, civic dialogue, and historical appreciation to Newark through the plethora of roles they play, they have stuck with the country's third oldest city through some of its most difficult times—Clement arriving one year after the riots of 1967, and Mary Sue joining the museum's public relations office in 1975. “This city rewards people who dig in and try to contribute to the general public good,” says Clement. “That might be an aspect of what we would call, not power, but civic prowess. No one would question our fealty to the city.”—JK

STUART J. RABNER

CHIEF JUSTICE, STATE SUPREME COURT

Not long after Rabner's chance meeting with Governor Corzine while volunteering at a Newark soup kitchen, the Passaic-bred attorney began a dizzying rise to the top. Within nineteen months, Rabner had served as Corzine's chief counsel, the state's attorney general, and finally, chief justice of the state Supreme Court. That might sound like the résumé of a slick political player, but Rabner is highly regarded on both sides of the aisle for his integrity, solid judgment, and keen intellect. He will likely leave a solid impression on the bench: If he serves until re-

tirement, the 48-year-old will have the longest tenure of any New Jersey chief justice.—CJP

HAROLD RAVECHÉ

EDUCATOR

In his twenty-year tenure as president of Stevens Institute of Technology, Raveché, 65, has been a catalyst for change, attracting substantial donations that have helped fuel investment in research, new buildings, and a broadened curriculum. He was also the focus of a 2005 audit that raised questions about an undisclosed operating deficit and several low-interest personal loans he received from the Hoboken-based school. Still, Raveché, whose contract was recently extended, may ultimately be remembered more for his part in the development of Technogenesis, a trademarked entrepreneurial process whereby Stevens students and faculty work with industry to generate new technologies—a program that could prove an important engine of innovation for the school and the state.—LGP

JOSEPH F. RIGGS

DEVELOPER

The construction business is in Riggs's blood. The Newtown native got his start working for his family's golf course development business. He ventured into residential construction and joined K. Hovnanian Enterprises—the state's largest builder—in 1993. Six years later, Riggs was promoted to his current position of group president, assuming responsibility for the company's operations in New Jersey and seven other states. Like all builders, Riggs faces the challenge of anticipating future housing demands through the prism of today's depressed market.—JB

JOSEPH J. ROBERTS

ASSEMBLY SPEAKER

His ability to corral seventeen votes from South Jersey lawmakers whenever he needed them gave Roberts, 56, enough support to loosen the stranglehold North Jersey held on the Democratic party. After nearly wrestling the speaker's post away from Joseph V. Doria in 2001, he finally got the job in 2006. He then flexed his muscles in the very first budget by taking on Governor Corzine and his one-cent sales tax increase. Roberts brought the government to a stand-

still for seven days until Corzine agreed to put half the revenues toward property-tax relief. Viewed as an arm of the George Norcross political machine, Roberts has shown he is no one's puppet.—CC


DENNIS ROBINSON

PRESIDENT AND CEO, NEW JERSEY SPORTS AND EXPOSITION AUTHORITY

As chief executive of NJSEA, Robinson, 51, has \$4 billion in development projects currently under way. Key among them is the new football stadium at the Meadowlands Sports Complex, which will house the Giants and Jets. In addition to the new stadium, the NJSEA is building the Xanadu Entertainment and Retail Complex, nine upscale off-track wagering facilities, and a state-of-the-art rail spur and terminal to service the expanding Meadowlands complex.—BS

JULIE ROGINSKY

POLITICAL CONSULTANT

 The telegenic Roginsky, 35, has built a high profile for herself jawing about Jersey politics on Fox, CNN, and MSNBC. Valued by the state's Democrats as a media and campaign strategist, she served as spokeswoman for Senator Frank Lautenberg's recent reelection campaign. Other clients have included representatives Albio Sires, Steven Rothman, and Frank Pallone Jr.—KS

TODD SCHMIDT

MANAGING DIRECTOR, GEORGE STREET PLAYHOUSE

Schmidt, 49, signed on with GSP in November 2007 after leading Wisconsin's Peninsula Players Theatre and is already hitting his stride at the center of New Brunswick's burgeoning arts scene. In addition to bringing focus to the theater's management, Schmidt has taken artistic risks (last fall's *Toxic Avenger*) and hosted world premieres (this spring's *New Year's Eve*). The city has plans for a new cultural arts center, which will give the theater more space and educational opportunities.—JK

STEPHEN STARR

RESTAURATEUR

Starr could not cook up a more appropriate last name than the one he already has. With a dozen restaurants in his native

Philadelphia, two in New York, and now four in Atlantic City, Starr, 52, is one of the area's most successful restaurant moguls, one who imbues every project with his own brand of "Starrdust"—dramatic, fun, sexy. As a boy he spent summers on the Jersey Shore, and in the last two years his Starr Restaurant Organization established more than a beachhead in Atlantic City, making it a more exciting restaurant town and raising the bar for everyone else.—EL

CHARLES STILE

MEDIA

He's only been writing his column in the *Record* for a year and a half, but Stile, 48, has already made a name for himself in political circles. He covered Trenton for the *Record* and the *Trenton Times* for nearly two decades. He's not afraid to go after anyone: Over the summer, Stile broke the story that Frank Lautenberg's reelection campaign had used the senator's connections to buy tickets to a Bruce Springsteen concert and was reselling them as a fundraiser.—JM

STEPHEN SWEENEY

STATE SENATOR

Sweeney made eyes roll when he won his Gloucester County state Senate seat in 2001, spending a then-record \$1.8 million to unseat longtime incumbent Ray Zane. His primary backer was his boyhood Pennsauken friend, South Jersey Democratic power broker George Norcross, whose Commerce Capital Markets only four months later won a no-bid contract to refinance Gloucester County bonds worth \$15.7 million. Norcross or no, Sweeney, 49, is a triple-threat on his own now—Democratic majority leader in the state Senate, freeholder-director since 2006 in Gloucester County, and business representative of Ironworkers Local 399.—RS

JOSEPH TAYLOR

DEVELOPER

When Taylor joined Matrix Development Group in 1981, there was not much going on around Exit 8A of the New Jersey Turnpike. The company helped transform the Central Jersey area into a hub of business activity with the development of CenterPoint at 8A, a 500-acre business park that is home to companies such as Sony, Lenox, and Volkswagen. Taylor, 50, became president in 1987 and diversified

Matrix into residential, golf, and hospitality properties, making it one of the area's principal developers.—JB

SHIRLEY TILGHMAN

EDUCATOR, SCIENTIST

Tilghman has not been averse to shaking things up as she shepherded Princeton University into the 21st century. As the school's first female president, she has made it a mission to keep gender bias out of the hiring process. As a scientist (molecular geneticist, to be specific), she has worked to change the way science is taught at the undergraduate level. As an administrator, she has supported investment in fields such as neuroscience and climatology that are likely to prove critical to the school, the state, and the world. Supporters and critics agree that Tilghman's tenure is likely to leave a significant mark on the august institution, and she dismisses suggestions that change is bad for the campus culture. "The notion that the culture will be frozen in place at a university, which should always be pressing forward into the future, is, I think, just wrong," she says.—LGP

JEFF TITTEL

ACTIVIST

Is Tittel a powerful environmental lobbyist or a quote machine? Depends who you ask. Tittel, 51, took over as executive director of the state's Sierra Club chapter in 1998, turning a nature group into a lobbying force, and himself into a walking soundbite.—JAM

JEFF VANDERBEEK

OWNER, NEW JERSEY DEVILS

With new venues sprouting all around them, Vanderbeek's New Jersey Devils invested \$156 million to help build a home for themselves in Newark. The Prudential Center (aka the Rock) is intended as a cornerstone in a hoped-for renaissance that will bring condos, restaurants, theme bars, and retailers to the city's entertainment district. But it's not all fun and games for the 50-year-old Vanderbeek, a former Lehman Brothers executive, and his development partner, the Newark Housing Authority. The latter claims the franchise owes millions in rent resulting from construction delays caused by the team; the team claims the delays were a product of the authority's aberrant construction schedule. The dispute is heading toward arbitration.—BS

GARY VAYNERCHUK

WINE MERCHANT

Professionals spit wine out after tasting it as naturally as night follows day. But who wants to watch them do it? If the spitter is Wine Library director of operations Gary Vaynerchuk, the answer is about 80,000 people a day. They don't log onto tv.winelibrary.com segments for the expectation but with the expectation that he will rant and rave like a gonzo Bacchus (and Jets fanatic), praising or debunking wine in often hilariously earthy terms. But behind the shtick are knowledge, passion, and a fine palate. All of the above have earned the 33-year-old Vaynerchuk guest shots with Conan O'Brien, Ellen DeGeneres, and fellow motormouth Jim Cramer of *Mad Money*—and, oh yes, helped him sell a ton of wine at his Springfield store.—EL

JOSEPH VITALE

STATE SENATOR

A state senator since 1998, the Democratic lawmaker's name has become synonymous with health care. Deputy majority leader and chairman of the Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee, Vitale, 54, has sponsored bills creating the state's KidCare and FamilyCare health care coverage programs, as well as a bill requiring nursing aides to undergo certified criminal background checks. His well-articulated defense of the state's most vulnerable populations usually makes reelection a cinch, but that has not stopped Vitale from being one of the hardest-working members of the legislature.—CC

LORETTA WEINBERG


STATE SENATOR

A former PTA mom who did not enter politics until she was in her fifties, Weinberg, 73, is known as one of the state's most influential players. This Democrat from Teaneck was behind bills to ban indoor smoking in New Jersey and to require insurance companies to pay for 48 hours of aftercare for new moms, which have become models for other states. She toppled one of the most formidable party bosses in the state, Joseph Ferriero, when no one else was willing to take him on, reflecting the hardball political tactician behind her unassuming grandmotherly exterior. "She's extremely honest, with deep convictions,"

says Eleanore Nissley of Ridgewood, a longtime friend of Weinberg's who is also a Republican committeewoman in Bergen County. "The Republicans regard her with respect as a good legislator, and the Democrats think they can't get away with anything as long as she's around."—**JM**

TED & NINA WELLS

POLITICS, LAW

 They met in Washington, D.C., while in high school, and married at Christmas dinner when they were both 21. More than three decades later, this Livingston couple is hitting their stride. Ted is partner and co-chair of the litigation department for Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, and is often cited as one of the best criminal defense lawyers in the country (he was named Lawyer of the Year by the National Law Journal in 2006). A fundraising pro, he served as treasurer for Senator Bill Bradley's presidential run and campaign finance chairman for Representative Donald Payne. Nina is New Jersey's secretary of state, overseeing a broad range of state programs, including the arts, history, culture, travel, and tourism, as well as the Division of Elections. Her term—which expires in January 2010—has not always been smooth sailing: State budget cuts have knocked her departments squarely in the jaw. As for what's next, Ted can't talk about new clients, and Nina is focused on devoting herself completely to New Jersey. "I only have this position for four years and want to make the most of it," she says.—**JAM**

CHARLES WOWKANECH

LABOR LEADER

As president of the New Jersey AFL-CIO, Wowkanech, 54, is the principal labor lobbyist in the state. Under his leadership, the AFL-CIO, the state's biggest labor group, has aggressively pushed political training for its members and claims to have grabbed nearly 400 elected posts. But Wowkanech, long allied with the Democratic Party, made what observers considered a misstep in 2007 when he threw his weight behind two Republican candidates. Both lost—and Wowkanech apparently jeopardized his stature with his traditional political allies.—**KS**