## SMALL-TOWN MAYOR, GRAD STUDENT FIGHT DEMOCRATIC MACHINE IN 1ST DISTRICT

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Can Two Candidates with Virtually No Name Recognition Take On South Jersey's Most Entrenched Political Interests?



State Sen. Donald Norcross (D-Camden)



Democratic Congressional hopeful Frank Minor.



Democratic Congressional hopeful Frank Broomell.

But Norcross' name, campaign-finances war chest, backing by the party organization, and his status as the race's only candidate to ever hold state office, all arguably boost his chances for victory.

He ran unopposed in his two primary bids for state Senate, then beat the same Republican opponent twice in general elections by approximately 15 points.

The Rothenberg Political Report, together with Roll Call, places the 40 percent Democratic and 46 percent Independent

district in the "Safe Democratic" category

Policy at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. He's received numerous awards from community organizations, and he started his own foundation in 2011 to "promote the advantages of academic achievement to economically disadvantaged students."

Minor works as deputy executive director of the Delaware River and Bay Authority, which operates a bridge, two ferries, a police force, and four airports and an airline terminal in New Jersey and Delaware. He graduated with a B.A. in sociology from Syracuse University and is married.

## The district

As the New Jersey district closest to Philadelphia -- comprising most of Camden County and parts of Gloucester and Burlington counties - the 1st District is almost entirely urban and suburban. With the exception of the struggling post-industrial cities of Camden and Gloucester, much of the district houses white-collar bedroom communities and high-tech firms. One-third of the population holds a college degree or higher, and the average home is valued at more than \$222,000.

But that is not to overlook the reliably Democratic minority voters in the cities and the union workers in towns that line the Delaware River. As a union leader with strong ties to his older brother George and Senate President Steve Sweeney (D-Gloucester), union bosses themselves, Norcross curries strong favor with these blue-collar workers. However, with a Teamsters truck driver father, Broomell b. ears his own labor credentials, and Minor boasts a strong track record on jobs and economic growth.

But Broomell and Minor have not received any labor endorsements, while Norcross has picked up nearly 20.

## The issues

All three candidates profess a commitment to the working class and middle class. All promise to make job creation their top priority.

Minor, for his part, says his economic record in Logan Township speaks for itself: 60 new companies in the past five years (including two international leaders in the food-production industry); \$800 million in ratables in a township with a population that's less than 10,000; no long-term debt; no municipal layoffs; fully-funded pensions; a balanced budget, and the distinction of being one of the only localities in the state to operate with a surplus.

How does he do it?

"By keeping taxes low and my focus on infrastructure high," said the mayor, who began political life as a Republican before switching parties in 2007.

If elected to Congress, he said he hopes to continue to promote job growth by supporting bills that authorize funds to repair aging infrastructure and offer tax credits to companies that hire returning veterans and the long-term unemployed. He also believes public agencies should work region to region to identify the evolving skill sets within the workforce, then court prospective employers in related fields who may be looking for new places to locate or expand. Norcross can point to his own record on economic development. In addition to his support for businessincentive packages to lure companies to New Jersey and his fight to turn South Jersey into a hub for "eds-and-meds" educational and medical entities, he sponsored legislation to bolster small businesses by liberalizing laws that govern the state's beer, wine and liquor industries. As a congressman, he says he would favor tax credits for caregivers, a stronger emphasis on ports, domestic production of natural energy and fair-trade agreements to replenish some of the industrial revenue lost to overseas companies. "The best social program is a good job," he said. Broomell fears that a suppressed minimum wage, high federal student-loan interest rates and a lack of funding for vocational and trade training programs will keep workers from finding meaningful employment or hold them back from reaping its full benefits. He'd like to emphasize those economic issues in Washington and repeal the "Cadillac Tax" portion of the Affordable Care Act that will impose a 40 percent tax on many healthcare plans that cover union, public and middle-class workers beginning in 2018. "The hit to families will result in higher taxes or higher

deductibles," he said. Broomell supports equal rights for gay employees and couples. He said Congress needs representatives who personally understand the balancing act between national security, budget, veteran services and the risk to soldiers' lives posed by engaging in war or peacemaking missions. Smilarly, when it comes to police officers, fire fighters and teachers: he believes in valuing their contributions instead of undermining them, Finallym he says he supports educational policy that starts with meaningful dialogue with educators about their needs. "It's become popular in some circles to make public se