

OPINION: DOES SECURING DEMOCRATIC MACHINE GUARANTEE MURPHY THE SPOT?

CARL GOLDEN | DECEMBER 5, 2016

Murphy is the esê



C

so called county line, a much sought after ballot position that is as close to a guarantee of victory as is possible to attain.

Issues are secondary, relegated for the most part to rallies, speeches, debates, and mailers.

At this relatively early stage, Murphy and Wisniewski share many of the same traditional left of center Democratic positions.

Both support an increase in the minimum wage, increased state aid to local school districts, greater infrastructure spending, a strengthened and more stable public pension system, support for higher education, and programs to stimulate the economy and job creation. Both can also be counted on to spend plenty of time laying blame on the Christie administration for failing to address the state's problems and, of course, for the Bridgegate scandal.

Seeking to draw on one of Sanders' principal arguments, Wisniewski has railed against Wall Street and big money, a catchall argument designed to highlight the growing income disparity produced by a government that favors the wealthiest few while abandoning the more modestly situated many.

It is, also, a not so subtle reminder that Murphy spent his private sector career and amassed his considerable personal wealth at Goldman Sachs, the epitome, for many, of Wall Street greed.

While Murphy left the firm 10 years ago, his success there has enabled him to draw on his personal resources to fund his campaign, a reality that — combined with his organizational support — immediately installed him as the frontrunner for the nomination.

He owns the inside track because he bought it. State chairman John Currie, credited with convincing his county chair colleagues to join the coalition in backing Murphy, may have been blinded by the glare from his chosen candidate's checkbook.

He is, though, enough of a realist and sufficiently schooled in the ways of practical New Jersey politics to understand and appreciate that Murphy's willingness to spend his own money gives him an enormous advantage not only in the gubernatorial race but also down ballot as well in the legislative, county, and municipal contests.

Wisniewski, much like the other potential candidates, understands he's unable to compete with Murphy financially or organizationally. Unlike them, though, he wasn't deterred and seems determined to remain in the race.

He can be expected to remind Democrats that, at some risk to himself, he stood with Sanders — the only New Jersey Democrat of note to do so — and that he's committed to the kind of institutional and political reforms the Senator espoused.

Whether that same restiveness still exists or whether it was spent with Clinton's nomination and eventual loss to Donald Trump is open to debate. Wisniewski is, obviously, hoping that it does and that it will be powerful enough and lasting enough to overcome the challenges he faces.

Legendary newsman Damon Runyon once observed: "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; but, that's the way to bet."

It's certainly where Murphy's laid down his wager.

Carl Golden served as press secretary for Republican Gov. Thomas Kean for eight years and as communications director for Republican Gov. Christie Whitman for three years. He is currently a senior contributing analyst with the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.