

# State Senate representation could change dramatically

**John W. Barry, Poughkeepsie Journal** Published 6:17 a.m. ET Nov. 1, 2018



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Two incumbent Republican state senators from the Hudson Valley are retiring and three other Republicans are facing challenges.

At the same time, regional demographics are changing in favor of Democrats while Republicans hold a one-seat majority in the [Senate](https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/state%20senate/) (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/state%20senate/>). On Tuesday, the Hudson Valley's representation in the state Senate could change radically.

So what will the regional impact be?

"With incumbents retiring," said Martin B. Shaffer, an associate professor of political science and dean of the School of Liberal Arts at [Marist College](https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Marist/) (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Marist/>) in the Town of Poughkeepsie, "it somewhat levels the playing field."

[Sen. William Larkin](https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Larkin/) (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Larkin/>), R-New Windsor, and [Sen. John Bonacic](https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Bonacic/) (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Bonacic/>), R-Mount Hope, are both retiring. Larkin represents the 39th state Senate District, which includes Plattekill and Marlborough in Ulster County. Bonacic represents the 42nd District, which includes New Paltz.

And [Sen. Sue Serino](https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Serino/), R-Hyde Park (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Serino/>), [Sen. George Amedore](https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Amedore/), R-Rotterdam (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Amedore/>) and [Sen. Terrence Murphy](https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Terrence%20Murphy/), R-Yorktown (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Terrence%20Murphy/>), are facing Democratic challengers.

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Speaking of the potential change in the state Senate, [Karen Smythe](https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/karen%20smythe/) (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/karen%20smythe/>), Serino's opponent, said, "I think that it says a lot about a concern that government may not be representing all of us. That certainly led me to want to step forward and put my hat in the ring."

Serino said maintaining the Republican majority in the Senate has been pivotal for keeping a check on Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Democrats who control the Assembly. Cuomo and assemblymembers also face elections on Tuesday.

"I'm hoping that people realize how critically important this is," she said.

Gerald Benjamin, director of the Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives at the [State University of New York at New Paltz](https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/SUNY%20New%20Paltz/) (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/SUNY%20New%20Paltz/>), said the Hudson Valley is a battleground, "among the most competitive regions in New York."

If Smythe wins and Democrats control the Senate, Benjamin said, her status as a novice would be unlikely to diminish her clout.

However, “The majority will want to nurture those members to insure its continuation in the majority,” Benjamin said, noting she would likely consequently receive funding for her district and future campaigns.

At the same time, Benjamin said, as Serino, Amedore and Murphy campaign, they enjoy the benefits of already holding the office for which they are competing.

“They are incumbents and they have been working hard to use their incumbency to establish themselves in their seats,” he said.

Shaffer said an influx of residents into the Hudson Valley from places like New York City has given Democrats an edge in enrollment. If Democrats win a majority of Senate races and that demographic trend continues, this year’s election could have a long-term impact, he said.

“If Democrats win now with the enrollment advantage, they will have the incumbent advantage,” he said.



State Assemblyman James Skoufis and Tom Basile (Photo: Courtesy photos)

### **39th District: Infrastructure, property taxes** **(/story/news/politics/elections/2018/10/30/votersguide-state-senate-39th-district/1772505002/)**

Republican Tom Basile (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/basile%20skoufis/>) wants to reduce government spending and programs. He said high property taxes are a big problem for residents and he proposed eliminating school taxes for seniors; making the property tax cap permanent; and requiring state officials to fund mandates on local government.

Assemblyman James Skoufis, D-Woodbury (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/basile%20skoufis/>), said Marlborough and Plattekill in the district have been overlooked by Albany. He promised to secure infrastructure and education aid; deliver tax relief; and work for ethics reform. He also wants to reform the property tax system and expand the Enhanced STAR program for senior citizens.



Terrence Murphy, left, Peter Harckham, right (Photo: Courtesy photos)

### **40th District: Business success, health care** **(/story/news/politics/elections/2018/10/30/voters-guide-harckham-murphy-contend-40th-state-senate-district/1788808002/)**

Democrat Peter Harckham (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Murphy%20Harckham/>) said Republican members of the state Senate are unable to perform basic legislative functions. He pledged to help business owners navigate red tape and help residents secure affordable health care. Also, schools need to be better funded and workers deserve a fair wage, he said.

Sen. Terrence Murphy, R-Yorktown (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Murphy%20Harckham/>), touted his accomplishments in office, including care for people with developmental disabilities; protections for first responders and senior citizens; and battling opioid addiction. Murphy said supporting victims of sexual and domestic abuse; and holding utility companies accountable for storm-related outages and aging infrastructure would remain priorities if he wins re-election.



State Sen. Sue Serino, R-Hyde Park, and Karen Smythe. (Photo: Courtesy photos)

## **41st Senate District: Changing how government works** **(/story/news/politics/elections/2018/10/29/voters-guide-serino-smythe-candidates-41st-senate-spot/1754741002/)**

Sen. Sue Serino, R-Hyde Park (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Sue%20Serino/>), said she is working to “shake things up” in the state capital, which she said exists in a “bubble.” She said she applies her experience as someone who spent time as a single mom and business owner who navigated through the recession. She also touted her independent voice; funding secured for schools, roads, bridges and water infrastructure; and work battling heroin and Lyme disease.

Democrat Karen Smythe (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Karen%20smythe/>) said state government “has not been working” for those who live in the Hudson Valley and she touted the business experience she gained running her family’s construction firm. She said the biggest challenges facing residents involve taxes, jobs, health care, women’s issues, schools and the environment.



Jen Metzger and Annie Rabbitt (Photo: Courtesy photos)

## **42nd District: Cost of living, cost of health care** **(/story/news/local/2018/10/26/voters-guide-metzger-rabbitt-aim-42nd-senate-district-seat/1754842002/)**

Democrat Jen Metzger (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Metzger%20Rabbitt/>) said insurance and prescription drug costs are too high and people are not getting the health care they need. She said property taxes are also too high and a balance must be struck to provide sufficient funding for schools and relief for taxpayers. Metzger also wants to see public transportation expanded to allow for easier access to locations where jobs are available.

Republican Annie Rabbitt (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/Metzger%20Rabbitt/>) said the cost of living is too high and it’s difficult to operate a business in the state; more must be done to combat drugs; and the public does not trust officials. Rabbitt said the number one problem facing New Yorkers is high taxes. She would work to allocate sports gaming revenue to offset school taxes; create a small business STAR rebate program; and double the current exemption on pension income for retirees and seniors.





From left, George Amedore and Pat Courtney Strong. (Photo: Courtesy photos)

## **46th District: School, addiction funding (/story/news/politics/elections/2018/10/30/voters-guide-amedore-strong- compete-state-senate-46th-district/1749156002/)**

Sen. George Amedore, R-Rotterdam (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/amedore%20strong/>), said he has delivered a record amount of school funding; restored property tax rebate checks; secured funding for infrastructure investment; and worked to bring prevention, treatment and recovery services for those struggling with addiction. He said the biggest challenges facing his constituents include affordability and a lack of opportunity.

Democrat Pat Courtney Strong (<https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/search/amedore%20strong/>), an environmental and energy consultant, said she would work to be a voice for small businesses. She also pledged not to raise taxes; secure equal funding for rural and urban schools; and battle climate change. She said the biggest challenges facing voters include access to affordable health care and broadband Internet service and more must be done to align employers and those looking for jobs.

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