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2024 SPECIAL EDITION

# Gaming Sports and Entertainment





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# INTRODUCTION



Football hero Aaron Rodgers' less than auspicious New York Jets debut in the 2023-24 season ensured rock and roll poet Bruce Springsteen's Meadowlands dominance for at least another year. Now, after months of nursing back to health a torn Achilles Tendon, Rodgers claims he can play and start for the Jets at quarterback as the New York media insists the perennial hard luck team can at least take a stab at its first Superbowl appearance since 1969.

It's a heavy lift, let's face it, for the 40-year-old Rodgers, whose flaky off-field energy coupled with Jets organization obsequiousness around the

sports legend conspire to give the look of prolonged agony more than Lombardi Trophy ecstasy. We'll see.

As that drama plays out, some of the wharf rats who grew up listening to Springsteen rage about his politics. Hurling along with the rest of the country toward a November 5th presidential date with destiny, The Boss hasn't changed his opinion about The Donald since he said this back in 2019, "It's frightening. We're living in a frightening time. The stewardship of the nation has been thrown away to someone who doesn't have a clue about what that means. We have someone



who doesn't have a grasp on what it means to be an American." The only difference between then and now is Trump's a convicted felon who in 2021 exhorted a mob to lay siege to the United States Capitol to disrupt the peaceful transfer of presidential power.

Unable to untangle ourselves from the inevitable roil of politics (of course, as noted in our Labor Special Edition this year, Trump bailed on NJ casino workers, so there's a critical history here), we nonetheless also want to highlight the Garden State's vital role in the culture

of our great country, especially in the areas of sport, entertainment, and gaming. To that end, in the following pages you will find 50 NJ influencers in those key areas, including everyone from high-rolling hotel and casino owners, to the lobbyists intricately involved in the legal protocols of sports betting, to the boxers who lace up the gloves, the football jocks who shoulder the pads, and the indefatigable entertainers who put their passions under the lights.

Who will be New Jersey's next ingenues and purveyors of the blues?

In the words of Debbie Harry of Hawthorne, frontwoman of Blondie, "A neo-nebular from under the sun/ I was forming, some say I had my chance..." For now, how will a future Hall of Famer drive the football in the Meadowlands? Will American politics move the chains or get disastrously sacked? Whatever the outcomes, as ever, in the words of Harry, "long live innocence."



*Max Pizarro*  
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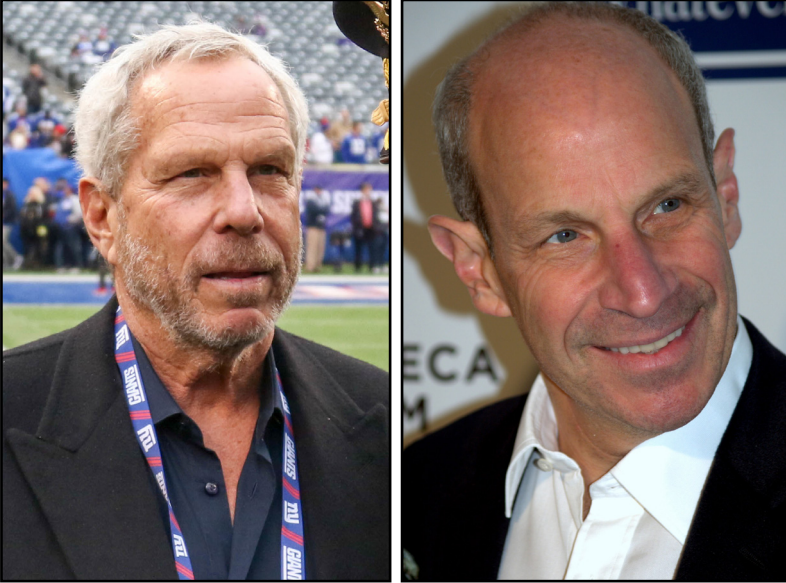
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# **1. Steve Tisch & Jonathan Tisch**

## **Owners of the New York Giants**



The New Jersey-born billionaire brothers (Jonathan Atlantic City and Steve Lakewood) co-own Big Blue with New Yorker John Mara. They also own a piece of MetLife Stadium and worked with their partners to help secure New Jersey as a host for the 2026 World Cup.

# **2. Paul Juliano**

## **Chairman, Sports and Exposition Authority**



Overseer of the operation of the MetLife Sports Complex – a particularly commanding perch ahead of the 2026 World Cup – Juliano also serves as chairman of the Bergen County Democratic Organization (BCDO). He will play an instrumental role in his party’s selection of a 2025 candidate for governor.



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## 3. Bruce Springsteen

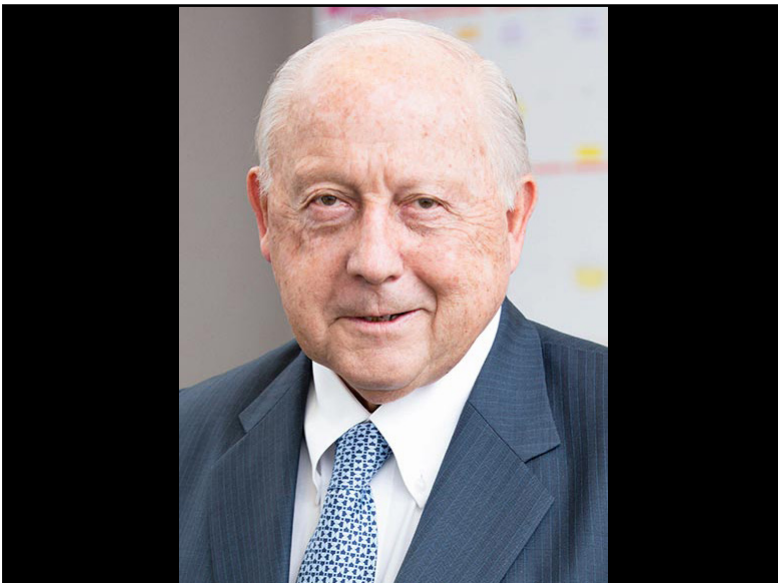
### Rock and Roll Poet



The Freehold-born Boss in his first five albums assembled some of the best musical art to ever take shape out of his home state. The rest of his career is good, too, highlighted by gems like *Western Stars*. The New Jersey Baudelaire of the working man and woman, the always thoughtful Springsteen remains an ardent critic of Donald Trump.

## 4. Jon Hanson

### Chairman and Founder of The Hampshire Companies



Billionaire real estate tycoon, Hanson helped negotiate the New York Jets' migration to the Meadowlands. Former chairman and commissioner of the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority. Served under Governor Chris Christie as head of the New Jersey Gaming, Sports and Entertainment Advisory Commission. Chairman of the New Jersey Hall of Fame.





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

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## **5. Matt Platkin**

**Attorney General for the State of New Jersey**



As New Jersey's top cop, Platkin oversees the Division of Gaming Enforcement (DGE), the law enforcement agency and investigative arm of the casino regulatory system responsible for enforcing the Casino Control Act.

## **6. David Blitzer**

**Prudential Center/New Jersey Devils co-owner**



Co-owner with Josh Harris of the storied National Hockey League Franchise and the Rock, billionaire Blitzer was born and raised in Scotch Plains.



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## 7. Aaron Rodgers

Quarterback, New York Jets



To paraphrase the late Jets owner Leon Hess of Asbury Park, “I’m 80 years old. I want results now.” At 40, Rodgers is half that age, and trying to win a Superbowl in the twilight of his Hall of Fame pro-football career.

## 8. Woody and Christopher Johnson

Jets Co-owners



Scions of a football family, generals of a troubled, hard luck franchise, the Johnsons think they finally have a deep playoff run in store this year and maybe even a Superbowl with future Hall of Famer Aaron Rodgers running the offense.



## 9. Shakur Stevenson

### Professional Boxer



The WBC lightweight world champion fights out of his hometown of Newark. A twitchy technician who makes his rivals look bad, Stevenson has Hall of Fame-level talent if he can just manage to not scare away opposition.

## 10. Edward B. Pitoniak

### Chief Executive Officer of Vici Properties



Tycoon of a \$50 billion gaming, hospitality and entertainment real estate investment trust, Pitoniak helms a company that owns Harrah's, Borgata, and Caesar's, historically some of the better run casinos in Atlantic City.



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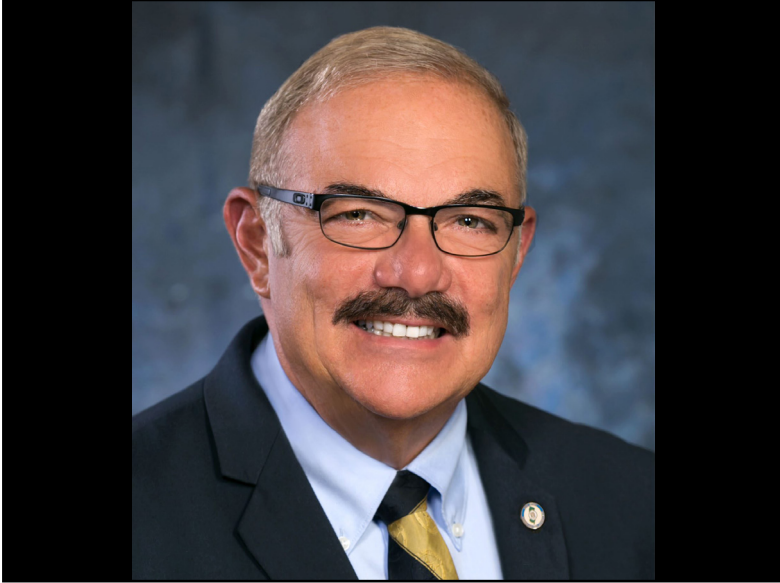


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## **11. James T. Plousis**

### **Chairman, Casino Control Commission**



Veteran law enforcement professional prides himself as an expert in identifying and implementing efficiencies. Former chairman of the State Parole Board, former United States Marshal for New Jersey, and six-term sheriff of Cape May County.

## **12. Bart Blatstein**

### **Owner, Showboat Atlantic City Hotel**



The Philly-based developer and investor opened the Island Waterpark at Showboat in Atlantic City on June 30, 2023. The world's largest indoor beachfront waterpark, it covers 120,000 square feet, holds over 317,000 gallons of water, features 11 slides, a surf simulator, retractable roof, and adult-focused areas like lounges and bars.

## **13. Peg Schaffer**

**Commissioner, New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority**



Schaffer also serves as the chair of the Somerset County Democratic Committee, an organization she built from perennial fringe contender into political powerhouse. Principal attorney at Shain Schaffer, Schaffer served as a young lawyer with the Cosmos soccer team, invaluable experience in advance of the 2026 World Cup.

## **14. William Moen**

**Chair, Assembly Tourism, Gaming and the Arts Committee**



The South Jersey-based assemblyman has a lot on his desk to consider, among them bills allowing horse racetracks to be available for placing wagers at casinos in Atlantic City using the Internet; penalties for accepting wagers on prohibited sports events; a “County Tourism Incentive Grant Fund” within the Department of Treasury to provide funding for grants to counties to support tourism advertising and promotion; and authorization of the Division of Travel and Tourism to accept gifts and grants to promote NJ tourism.





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## **15. Bill Pascrell III**

**Lobbyist, Princeton Public Affairs**



Helped pioneer New Jersey's Online Gaming Act, which legalizes horse racing betting, online poker and other games. Son of the late great U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-9), BP3 advises other state governments on gaming industry issues.

## **16. Modia Butler**

**Board Chairman, Casino Redevelopment Authority**



A politically connected principal at Mercury Public Affairs, Butler served as state director for U.S. Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and then-Mayor Booker's chief-of-staff in Newark.



## **17. James Beach**

**Chairman, Senate State Government, Wagering,  
Tourism & Historic Preservation**



Veteran South Jersey lawmaker Beach, a Democrat serving the 6th District, has spent his political career forging trust across the aisle.

## **18. Francis (Fran) O'Connor**

**Commissioner of the New Jersey Department  
of Transportation**



In his role as chair of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, O'Connor has oversight of the turnpike-owned PNC Bank Arts Center, managed by Live Nation Entertainment. The PNC Bank Arts Center is one of the top five most successful entertainment amphitheaters in the country, and one of two major outdoor arenas in the New York Metropolitan Area.

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## **19. Vince Polistina**

**State Senator, LD-2**



An engineer by trade, the Atlantic County Republican stalwart has a sophisticated understanding of government and politics.

## **20. Mary Jo Flaherty**

**Interim Director, Division of Gaming Enforcement**



Starting with the Division in May 1980, Flaherty - according to the state's Gaming Enforcement website - became a supervising attorney in 1986 and primarily managed casino licensing and employee licensing.

## 21. Debbie Harry

**Punk Icon**



Andy Warhol Aphrodite of the Avant Garde, with the voice of an angel to go with it, the Hawthorne-reared Harry specialized in La Dolce Vita lyrics mostly deadpanned over Desti synth and Stein guitar. An inveterate New Yorker, she frequently frontend-loaded her inner angst-ridden New Jerseyan.

## 22. Tiki Barber

**WFAN Host**



Running Back Barber played ten seasons with the New York Giants and hosts the afternoon drive program on the flagship station for New York sports.





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## **23. Clinton Calabrese**

### **Vice-Chair Assembly Tourism, Gaming and the Arts**



Scion of a Bergen County political family, Assemblyman Calabrese's (D-36) name floated as a possible successor to the late U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell, before Bergen, Hudson, and Passaic agreed on state Senator Nellie Pou (D-35).

## **24. Jeff Gural**

### **CEO and Chairman of New Meadowlands Racetrack LLC**



Horseracing isn't what it was even just 40 years ago in New Jersey, but it still possesses a dedicated following who thrive on the Meadowlands' equine culture.



## **25. Armando Fontoura**

**Essex County Sheriff**



Retiring this year from his countywide law enforcement job, the former Ironbound beat cop remains in place as a commissioner on the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority.

## **26. Chuck Wepner**

**Retired Boxer**



Rugged contender Wepner knocked down heavyweight world champion Muhammad Ali in their legendary 1975 fight before “The Bayonne Bleeder” succumbed in the 15th round.

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## **27. Sparky Lyle**

**Manager Emeritus, Somerset Patriots**



The Somerset Patriots' recruitment of the Casey-at-the-bat-mustachioed retired Yankee relief pitcher gave the organization instant credibility back in 1998. If you're lucky, you might run into him in the stadium at one of the Pats' Bridgewater home games.

## **28. Lou Stellato**

**Commissioner, New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority**



Former mayor of Lyndhurst and former Bergen County Democratic Organization (BCDO) chairman, where his respected leadership style put the once vaunted countywide political operation more than back on course, the old school Stellato remains a trusted North Jersey figure and a man of integrity.

## **29. Benjie Wimberly**

**Assemblyman, 35th District**



Based in his home city of Paterson, Wimberly is a sports legend in Silk City, veteran coach of numerous winning football and baseball teams, and the drill sergeant who structured the lives of many future stars, among them New York Giants wide receiver Victor Cruz.

## **30. Gail Gordon**

**Commissioner, New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority**



Attorney. Celebrated New Jersey Republican presence. Began her law career with Florio, Perrucci, Steinhardt & Fader. Savvy inside game operator.

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## 31. Alisa Cooper

### Casino Control Commissioner



Former Atlantic County Commissioner. Atlantic City native. Veteran of the music and entertainment business. Played piano at the famous “500 Club” and opened Resorts International Casino Hotel in 1978.

## 32. Andre Sayegh

### Mayor of Paterson



Sayegh delivered on a longtime Patersonian dream when he closed on the magnificent \$100 million resurrection of Hinchliffe Stadium. Built in the Great Depression, opened in 1932 and condemned in 1997, Hinchliffe served as the home of two Negro League Baseball Teams before the integration of Major League Baseball, and holds the II Players, including the great Larry Doby of Eastside High School, the

first African-American ballplayer in the American League, just 11 weeks after Jackie Robinson joined the National League. “Legends played here,” Sayegh told InsiderNJ in 2023, proud of Paterson’s history as the home of heroes at a time when other stadiums closed their doors. “This is the real *Field of Dreams*. Iowa is just a movie set compared to this. Hinchliffe is a victory for history.”

## **33. John McKeon**

**State Senator, 27th District, Vice Chairman, Senate State Government, Wagering, Tourism & Historic Preservation**



McKeon built a reputation in the Assembly as one of the most competent lawmakers in New Jersey, before moving to the senate last year upon the retirement of Senator (and former Governor) Richard J. Codey.

## **34. Al Dorso**

**Owner, New Jersey Jackals**



The revitalization of Hinchliffe Stadium gained a vital edge as the home to the Jackals, a professional baseball team in the Frontier League, owned by New Jersey's own Dorso.





# Congratulations Bill Pascrell, III (BP3)

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## **35. Richard Codey**

**Former Governor**



Lifelong jock – and winning basketball coach – Codey of Essex County not only oversaw more state funding for mental health but also for sports programs. In addition, as governor (2004-2006) he negotiated for MetLife Stadium, constructed jointly by the Giants and Jets.

## **36. Joe DiVincenzo**

**Essex County Executive**



Once a New York Jets quarterback prospect, DiVincenzo built and christened the Richard J. Codey Arena in West Orange.

## **37. Janice Kovach**

**Commissioner, NJ Motion Picture and Television Commission**



The politically savvy mayor of Clinton Twp. In her role as a Phil Murphy-appointed commissioner assists filmmakers with all their needs -- financial incentives, permits, regulations, production services, site selection and clearance.

## **38. Frank Storino**

**Owner of Jenkinson's**



An annual trip to the shore with young adventurers would not be complete without the waterslides of the storied Jenkinson's at Point Pleasant Beach.



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# 39. The Stabile-Benson Family

**Owner of Wild West City**



If you ever dreamed of riding a stagecoach into Dodge and getting in a gunfight with some desperadoes, you can do so at Wild West City, a theme park in Stanhope.

# 40. Jon Bon Jovi

**Rock Star**



The Sayreville-born frontman of Bon Jovi (now based out of Middletown) worked with then-Governor Chris Christie to rewrite the law to protect victims of drug overdoses, and counts Governor Phil Murphy among his friends.

# 41. Curtis Bashaw

**Hotel Entrepreneur**



Bellhop turned renovationist, businessman Bashaw led the restoration of Cape May landmarks Congress Hall and the Virginia Hotel. The 2024 Republican nominee for the United States Senate.

# 42. Katelynn Gaumer

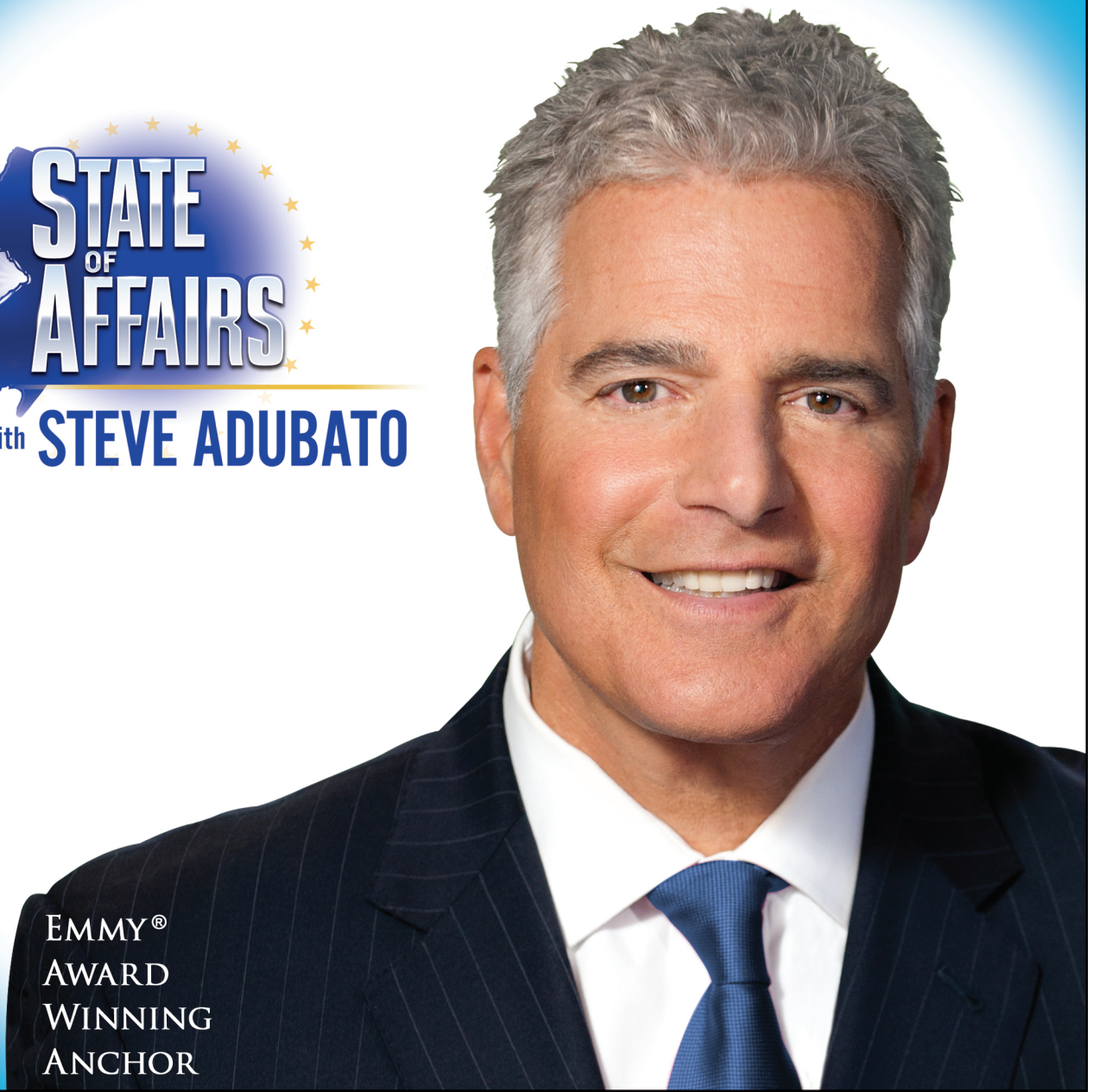
**Marbles Champ**



The Cumberland County girl this summer became a National Marbles Tournament champion at the annual contest in Wildwood.



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## **43. Jerry Walker**

### **Hudson County Commissioner**



A former Jersey City Councilman and former Seton Hall Pirates Basketball star, Walker runs Team Walker, which provides academic and athletic afterschool and summer programs for over 500 boys and girls through STEM learning, recreational activities and access to positive role models. A 2025 candidate for Jersey City Mayor.

## **44. Joyce Mollineaux**

### **Casino Control Commissioner**



Appointed by Governor Phil Murphy in June 2021. Longtime resident of Atlantic City, Mollineaux served as a member of the Atlantic City Council, and worked in the accounting department of the former Sands Hotel and Casino.

## **45. Jonathan and Josh Kalafer**

### **Somerset Patriots Owners**



While the debate rages over whether Central Jersey actually exists, the Somerset Patriots provide ample evidence of a serious national pastime footprint in Bridgewater.

## **46. Patti Smith**

### **Rock and Roll Icon of Deptford**



Is there another New Jerseyan who's ever been named Commander of the Order des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture?



## 47. Victor Cruz

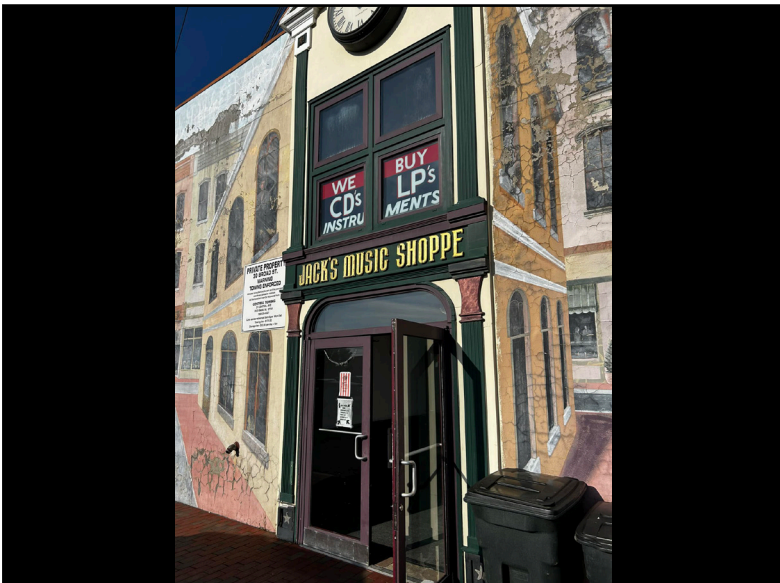
### Retired New York Giants Wide Receiver



Jets fans like to say, “Well, we’ll always have Namath.” But Broadway Joe was from Beaver Falls, Pa., not Jersey. Cruz, though, raised and born in Paterson, leaves behind the legacy of a Superbowl touchdown salsa dance to go along with the ring.

## 48. Jack Anderson

### Owner, Jack’s Music Shoppe



It was cool back in the 1970's to shop for records at Jack's in Red Bank, knowing at any moment you might run into Springsteen, whose career was morphing from the backstreets to the big lights. The store's still there, still fun – and you still might run into Springsteen.

# 49. Floyd Vivino

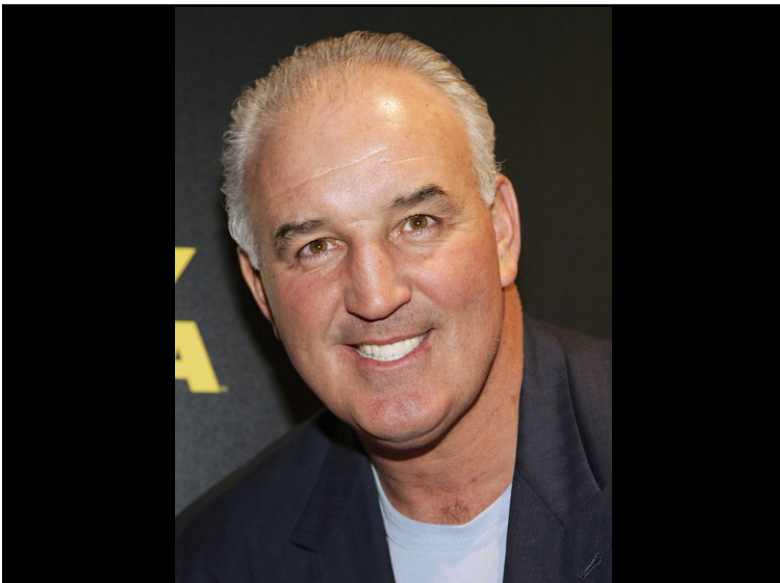
**Entertainer**



Born in Paterson (where else?), son of a jazz trumpeter Uncle Floyd had his own comedy-variety TV show from 1974 to 1998, and remains a porkpie hat legend, along with ubiquitous sidekick Oogie.

# 50. Gerry Cooney

**Contender**



A former heavyweight prizefighter who twice contended for the crown (against Larry Holmes and Michael Spinks), Cooney went down fighting with a pair of the heaviest hands the ruthlessly hard-punching George Foreman said he every encountered.