



# NJPSA Legislative Conference

March 29, 2019

## Biographies

### Keynote Presenters



#### **Steve Sweeney, Senate President**

Senate President Steve Sweeney represents the Third Legislative District, which includes portions of Gloucester and Cumberland counties and all of Salem County.

Steve Sweeney entered public service after his daughter was born with Down syndrome. Horrified at the manner in which individuals with disabilities were treated, he vowed to make a difference in not just his daughter's life, but in the lives of those in his community.

He served on the Gloucester County Board of Chosen Freeholders from 1997 to 2010 and was Freeholder Director from 1998 until 2010. First elected to the New Jersey Senate in 2001, he has been re-elected five times. He was chosen by the Democratic Majority to lead the Senate in 2009 and was selected by his Senate Democratic colleagues to maintain his leadership position again in 2013 and 2017.

An ironworker by trade, Senator Sweeney has sponsored laws to raise New Jersey's minimum wage, and has advocated for legislation to protect unemployment funds and to create New Jersey's Paid Family Leave program.

As Senate President, he has taken a leading role in promoting property tax relief, replenishing the Transportation Trust Fund, sweeping reforms to the public employee pension and health benefits systems that will save taxpayers over \$120 billion and crafting the state's two-percent property tax cap. He established a bipartisan panel of legislators and economic experts to develop reforms that address the state's most challenging fiscal problems. The Economic and Fiscal Policy Workgroup issued a series of far-reaching recommendations that will help to avert crisis conditions, maintain fiscal stability, reduce the costs of government and allow the state to support vital needs and services.

The Senate President has also fought for full and fair funding with "The School Funding Reform Act" and the "Vocational Education Bond Act" to provide vocational job training and to increase school security. He successfully advocated for a Corporate Business Tax to relieve some of the pressure on individual homeowners in New Jersey who no longer can deduct the full amount of their local taxes after the passage of the Trump tax cuts.

Senator Sweeney sponsored legislation to establish marriage equality for all New Jersey residents. He has also sponsored bills to provide equal pay for women, for a "Sexual Assault Bill of Rights" for victims of assault and to expand Paid Family Leave.

Senator Sweeney also has sponsored numerous laws to strengthen the ability of law enforcement to protect children from sex offenders, protect the families of police officers, firefighters and emergency services personnel killed in the line of duty and create a statewide

network of Child Advocacy Centers that provide safe places for abused children. To ensure that all people in New Jersey are treated equally in the criminal justice system, he sponsored legislation that requires the state Attorney General to oversee all investigations into fatal police shootings.

The Senate President sponsored a law that expands the development of offshore wind energy, making New Jersey a leader in the development of this alternative energy source and paving the way for the state to become the nation's wind-energy manufacturing hub. He fought to ban the hazardous gasoline additive MTBE and is a strong supporter of farmland and open space preservation. He also authored the bill to ban smoking on New Jersey's beaches.

Senator Sweeney was born on June 11, 1959 in Camden.



**Dr. Lamont Repollet**  
Commissioner, New Jersey  
Department of Education

Dr. Lamont O. Repollet was appointed Acting Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education by the New Jersey State Board of Education on January 29, 2018. After receiving unanimous Senate confirmation, he was sworn in by Governor Philip D. Murphy on June 19, 2018 as New Jersey's Commissioner of Education.

As Commissioner, Dr. Repollet has worked to redesign the Department of Education to what he calls "DOE 2.0." He is transitioning the agency to become a model organization that strengthens teaching, leading and learning, and increases educational equity for students across New Jersey. During his tenure, Dr. Repollet has worked to move the Department of Education toward the next generation of assessments, proactively soliciting input from stakeholders around the state. In addition, he and his team have worked to expand early childhood education; promote a school culture that embraces social and emotional learning; and strengthen STEM opportunities for students, including a focus on "Computer Science for All," which has led to 29 schools across the state receiving \$29 million in state funding.

From 2014 to 2018, Dr. Repollet served as superintendent of the Asbury Park School District. As a transformational leader, he implemented new instructional and organizational approaches in the district including the introduction of a pre-K to grade 12 Literacy Intervention and Leadership Development Initiative. Setting a culture of high expectations for the district, this, along with other innovative programs, helped increase the graduation rate by 30 percent.

Throughout his career in education, Dr. Repollet has earned honors and recognition from numerous civic and charitable organizations. Most recently Dr. Repollet was recognized as the 2018 Educator of the Year by the Chi Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. Additionally, he was bestowed with an Annual Leadership Award by The New Jersey Chapter of the National Black MBA Association and a Community Service Award by Second Baptist Church of Asbury Park.

Dr. Repollet earned his doctorate in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. He received his Master's in Educational Administration from Kean University, and his Bachelor's in communications from The College of New Jersey. He is a proud member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated, and serves as a mentor for their Sigma Beta Club. He lives in Somerset with his wife and two daughters.

## Presenters



**Dr. Peter Chen**

Peter Chen is policy counsel at Advocates for Children of New Jersey. His work includes coordinating non-profit and community-based organizations on Census outreach in 2020. In addition to Census work, Peter is responsible for policy analysis and advocacy at the state and local level, in areas such as childhood lead poisoning prevention, chronic absenteeism and paid family leave. Peter began working at ACNJ as a 2014 Skadden Fellow. Prior to joining ACNJ in 2014, Peter clerked for Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson of the Wisconsin Supreme Court and taught high school English in Chicago. He received his J.D. from Yale Law School, and his B.A. from Indiana University-Bloomington.



**Linda P. Eno, Ed.D.**  
Assistant Commissioner for the  
Division of Teaching and Learning  
at the NJDOE

Dr. Linda Eno is the Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Teaching and Learning at the New Jersey Department of Education. She has been with the Department for just over 3 years and has served in various roles in a variety of offices. Prior to coming to the Department she worked for the Monmouth County Vocational School District, first as a CTE teacher and then as the Principal of Biotechnology High School. As a part of her current role, Linda is the interim State Director of CTE.

Her educational preparation began with an Associate Degree from Brookdale Community College. That degree prepared her to be licensed as a Registered Nurse: a field she served in for 5 years before pivoting to education. In December, 2011 she was awarded her Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Seton Hall. On a personal note, she and her husband are proud to be celebrating the personal, educational and professional accomplishments of their two grown children and delighted to have welcomed their first grandchild into the family.

## Legislative Panel

### Assembly Education Committee



**Senator Patrick Diegnan (D18)**

Senator Patrick Diegnan represents the 18th Legislative District in Middlesex County. Born in South Plainfield, NJ, as the youngest of seven children, he

worked his way through Seton Hall University and Seton Hall Law School to become an attorney in private practice. Senator Diegnan was first elected to the General Assembly in 2002, serving seven consecutive terms (2002-2016) and holding the leadership positions of Deputy Speaker (2008-16) and Parliamentarian (2006-2016). As Chairman of the Assembly Education Committee, Diegnan sponsored significant legislation impacting our schools including the TEACH NJ Act involving revisions to the evaluation and tenure process, and school security legislation. In 2016, Diegnan was sworn in as State Senator to fill the vacancy left by the confirmation of Senator Peter Barnes as a Superior Court Judge. Currently, Senator Diegnan serves as Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee and is a member of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee and the Joint Com-

mittee on Public Schools. The greatest joy in Senator Diegnan's life is his family. He and his wife Anita have been married for 42 years, and have two children and four grandchildren.



**Assemblywoman Serena DiMaso, Esq. (R13)**

Assemblywoman Serena DiMaso, Esq. was sworn in as an Assemblywoman for New Jersey's 13th Legislative District on January 9th, 2018. She sits on the Assembly Education Committee, Assembly Law & Public Safety Committee, and the Assembly Human Services Committee. As well as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission and the Special Task Force on Volunteer Retention and Recruitment.

Dedicated to bettering Monmouth County, and her community, Assemblywoman DiMaso served three terms on the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders; acting as Deputy Director in 2016, 2015, and 2013. Prior to becoming a Freeholder, Serena DiMaso served on the Holmdel Township committee for ten years. She served as mayor from 2006 to 2010 and deputy mayor in 2011.

While on the township governing body, she chaired the Public Safety and Administration committees, co-chaired the Public Works committee and was a member of the township Planning Board. While serving Holmdel, DiMaso supported the preservation of open space in the township. She has also been an advocate for expanding shared services and responsible budgeting.

She currently serves as Chairwoman of the Bayshore Hospital Foundation and as an active member of the Holmdel First Aid Squad. Some of her other community involvement activities have included President of Village School Parent School Association and the William R. Satz School Parent Support Group, league president of the Holmdel Youth Athletic Association and teaching C. C. D. at St. Catharine's Roman Catholic Church.

Assemblywoman DiMaso is an active Board member of the National Foundation for Women Legislators where she serves as Chair.

Assemblywoman DiMaso has received recognition for her efforts as a county freeholder, including being honored with a 2015 Girl Scouts of the Jersey Shore Women of Distinction Award and nominated for the 2016 Athena Award. In 2015, Freeholder DiMaso was named Woman of the Year by the New Jersey Federation of Republican Woman.

Serena DiMaso holds a Juris Doctorate degree from St. John's University School of Law and is a member of the New York State Bar. She is also a graduate of St. John's University, College of Business Administration with a B.S. in management with minor concentrations in economics and marketing. She is also a 2004 graduate of the Christine Todd Whitman Excellence in Public Service Series.

Assemblywoman DiMaso lives in Holmdel with her husband, Dr. Gerald DiMaso; they have four children.



### **Assemblywoman Mila Jasey (D27)**

Assemblywoman Mila Jasey has served in the New Jersey General Assembly since 2007, where she represents the 27th Legislative District which includes

parts of Essex County. The Assemblywoman serves on the Assembly Education Committee as Vice Chair, the Assembly Higher Education Committee as Chair, the Joint Committee on the Public Schools as Co-Chair, the Housing and Community Development Committee, and the Joint Committee on Housing Affordability. She has been the Deputy Speaker for her caucus since 2016.

Prior to being elected to the General Assembly, Mila served on the consolidated South Orange/Maplewood Board of Education for three terms. She also served as a member of the Essex Regional Services Commission, Essex County School Boards Association, and the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Assemblywoman Jasey brings a unique perspective to the Legislature, as one of only two nurses in the Legislature. Jasey holds a BA degree in History from Barnard College and an MS in Nursing from Pace University. She is a thirty-year resident of South Orange. She and her husband Neil are the parents of three adult children and three grandchildren.



### **Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi (R39)**

Holly Schepisi has been an Assemblywoman since 2012. Assemblywoman Schepisi represents the 39th Legislative

District, which includes portions of Bergen and Passaic County. Ms. Schepisi earned Bachelor's degrees in politics and psychology in 1993 from Catholic University of America and a law degree from Fordham University Law School in 1997.

Beginning April 1st, Ms. Schepisi will begin a new career as Vice President of Holy Name Medical Center and President of its Foundation. Prior to this new role, she was special counsel at the law firm of Huntington Bailey, LLP, where she practiced governmental law, corporate law, land use, employment matters, criminal defense, and structured finance.

Experienced in public issues, she served as the public defender for the Borough of Oakland from 2012 to 2014, and was the township attorney for River Vale from 2007 to 2011. She is president of the New Jersey chapter of the Fordham Law Alumni Association, and a board member of the Bergen Community College Foundation. She also serves as an advisory board member of SB One Bank.

Assemblywoman Schepisi serves as the Assistant Republican Leader for her caucus, and serves as a member of the Assembly Education Committee, Health and Senior Services Committee, Housing and Community Development Committee, Joint Committee on Housing Affordability, Joint Committee on Economic Justice and Equal Employment Opportunities Committee, and the New Jersey Legislative Select Oversight Committee.

The Assemblywoman resides in River Vale with her husband and two children.



### **Senator Sam Thompson (R12)**

Senator Samuel D. Thompson has served in the New Jersey Senate since January 2012, representing the 12th Legislative district, which includes parts of Burlington,

Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean counties. Prior to re-districting in 2011, he served in the General Assembly from 1998, representing the 13th district. He currently resides in Old Bridge Township, New Jersey and is married to the former Jacqueline P. Haycock. In addition to serving on the Senate Education Committee, the Senator serves on the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, the Budget and Appropriations Committee, and the State Government, Wagering, Tourism & Historic Preservation Committee. Senator Thompson was born in Mobile, Alabama and attended public schools in Alabama, Louisiana, and Arkansas. He reached the rank of Specialist Third Class while serving in the U.S. Army from 1955 through 1957. He received a B.S. in 1960 from the University of Arkansas – Little Rock in chemistry and mathematics and was awarded a Ph.D. in 1965 from Louisiana State University in physical

chemistry. The Senator worked as a research chemist at duPont and J.P. Stevens and Company and was employed by the New Jersey Department of Health from 1972-1994 as a Research Scientist and director of Clinical Laboratory Improvement service. He served on the US Armed Forces Epidemiological Board from 1983-1990. He was appointed by Governor Whitman to serve on the Governor's Education Task Force in 1994 as Co-Chair. He served on the NJ Turnpike Authority from 1994-1997 as Director of Planning, Analysis, Government Relations and subsequently as communications. Thompson has served on the New Jersey Advisory Council on Elder Care since 1998, the Continuing Care Advisory Council from 1998-2002 and on the New Jersey State Council for Adult Literacy Services from 2000-2002.



**John Mooney (Moderator)**  
Education Writer, Chief Executive  
Officer and Founding Editor for NJ  
Spotlight

Before founding NJ Spotlight in 2009, John Mooney covered education in New Jersey for 15 years as a reporter for The Newark Star-Ledger and The Bergen Record and as a contributing writer for The New York Times. He has won numerous state and national awards, including honors from the Education Writers Association and the American Society of News Editors. John also has spoken at conferences and other events regarding school issues facing New Jersey and the role of education journalism. He lives in Montclair, N.J.



**Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker  
(D16)**

Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker is a physicist at the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, and a member of the New

Jersey General Assembly representing the 16th Legislative District, which includes parts of Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset counties.

Assemblyman Zwicker received his Ph.D. in physics from Johns Hopkins University in 1992. He has been the head of the Science Education Department of the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory since 2003, where his work is focused on creating innovative opportunities for students of all backgrounds to engage in scientific inquiry.

At Princeton University, Assemblyman Zwicker is a part-time lecturer in the Writing Program and a faculty advisor for freshmen and sophomores in Rockefeller College. The American Association of Physics Teachers has named him to its list of 75 leading contributors to physics education.

Assemblyman Zwicker was elected to the New Jersey General Assembly in 2016 and is the first plasma physicist to be elected to the State Legislature. He currently is Chair of the newly formed Science, Innovation and Technology and sits on the Assembly Education Committee, and Assembly Regulated Professions Committee.

A lifelong resident of New Jersey, Assemblyman Zwicker resides in the Kingston area of South Brunswick Township with his wife, Barbara, who teaches second grade in Hillsborough Township, along with their family, and their rescue pitbull-boxer mix, Rocky.