



To: Interested Parties
From: Alex Ball, Campaign Manager, Mikie Sherrill for Governor
Date: November 11, 2025
Subject: Mikie Sherrill's Battle Plan: How We Won New Jersey

Mikie Sherrill has broken barriers her entire life — and after Tuesday's resounding victory, she adds another series to the list: the first New Jersey Democrat to win a gubernatorial election in a third consecutive term since the 1960s; New Jersey's first Democratic woman governor; the first woman veteran to be elected governor anywhere.

Over the course of the last 50 weeks, Mikie and our team built a campaign focused on voters, driving down costs, and delivering a better future for all of New Jersey. The results of that dedicated, disciplined effort are resounding. Mikie Sherrill wiped the notion of a Democratic backslide in New Jersey off the map. She not only reclaimed ground, she conquered new territory, building a coalition that spanned the political spectrum in communities across the state.

The Navy veteran will enter office with wind in her sails. With a 14-point margin of victory, Mikie Sherrill emerges from Election Day with a mandate — and a mission to deliver for you, NJ.

Campaign Strategy: The Overview

Maybe it was her Naval Academy training, but Mikie Sherrill understood from the start that this was the first campaign of the '26 cycle — not the last campaign of the '24 cycle. She directed her campaign to think differently and look forward. That resulted in a sharper understanding of the electorate, the issues, and the mood. It stood in stark contrast to her more traditional opponent's "fight the last battle" effort, as Jack Ciattarelli and his flock of MAGA "influencers" breathlessly and futilely chased a Trump electorate that wasn't there. And, it merits pointing out, Mikie's understanding of the electorate and approach to this campaign were sharper than the opinions of many pundits, pollsters, and members of the press.

One of the very tangible results of that approach was a distinct and self-assured sense of timing of operations: the deployment of paid media, disruptive community and creator-driven digital content, along with massive grassroots outreach and voter contact. This resulted in the campaign's cadence and momentum peaking at the right moment. That rhythm, unswayed by paint-by-numbers approaches and observers' opinions, culminated in huge victories in both the primary and general elections.

Mikie won where other Democrats struggled both geographically and demographically. She turned Red counties Blue — think Morris or Cumberland — reengaged Black and Latino communities, and ran up huge majorities with women and younger voters. Mikie connected with traditional Democratic constituencies and forged bonds with new ones. In other words, Mikie is at the leading edge of building the next Democratic Party.

While much of what the campaign accomplished is a roadmap for future success, Mikie's unique background and ability to cut through to a cynical and skeptical electorate are what set her apart. While some may say that it was simply a good year to run as a Democrat — and it was — only Mikie had the broad appeal of her singular combination of strength, empathy, and integrity. The results speak for themselves.

I. The message and the messenger

- **Mikie centered her campaign on costs, kids, and accountability.** From [Day One](#), Mikie promised New Jerseyans that her campaign would be grounded in the issues that matter most to residents — making New Jersey more affordable, taking care of our kids, and making government work for working families. As pundits debated whether national Democrats had any answers at all to the cost crisis, Mikie offered groundbreaking policy initiatives like her [State of Emergency on Utility Costs](#) and her [Online Safety Agenda](#), as well as bold leadership like [taking on landlords who collude to raise rents](#).
- **When communicating about affordability, Mikie didn't talk like a typical Democrat.** Mikie's affordability message was rooted in the no-nonsense, military ethos of finding a way or making one, vowing to take on anyone on her mission to drive costs down. She talked about not just holding others accountable, but challenged New Jerseyans to hold *her* [accountable](#) as governor.
- **Mikie's background as a mom and military veteran gave her unique credibility with voters, helping her win on attributes often associated with Republicans, like costs and strength.** Her experiences proved that she would not only be a strong leader voters could trust to deliver on her promises, but also that she understood their lives. Voters intuitively assumed, because of her background, that she was not another extreme politician who would put their party or self first — their biggest complaint with “typical politicians.” Poll after poll showed she was the [more trustworthy and honest candidate in the race](#), and voters felt [she understood them better than Ciattarelli did](#). This helped her message of driving down costs — and building up her credibility as someone who would deliver on the promises she made. Even a [Fox News poll](#) showed voters trusted Mikie more than Ciattarelli on energy costs, taxes, and the cost of living.
- **Mikie's life of service and accomplishment inherently rebutted the personal, ideological, and misleading attacks — they never gained traction.** Voters understood Mikie's record of selfless service made the attacks fundamentally not credible. Because Mikie has a background that is far from typical, typical political attacks fell flat. Simply put, trying to smear a Navy helicopter pilot and former federal prosecutor as weak or extreme was seen by voters as desperate rather than devastating.
- **She proved she has what it takes to stand up to Trump to protect New Jersey.** Her experience as a Navy helicopter pilot signaled her strength to voters — demonstrating that she is a fighter who would never back down from a challenge. Voters believed she would take on Trump to defend New Jersey because she's taken on tough fights before, and stood up to Trump when she was in Congress to fight for lower costs and get the Gateway Tunnel project funded. Mikie proved in this cycle that Democrats can both relentlessly

drive an economic message *and* stand up to the chaos and cruelty coming out of Washington that is driving up costs on everyday goods and shredding the Constitution.

II. Mobilizing the base: Mikie's juggernaut campaign to win back Black, Latino, & AAPI voters

- **Mikie stood up comprehensive base programs on the coordinated campaign.**
Coming out of the primary, Mikie knew it was critical to listen to the concerns of communities in New Jersey, and organize in them. Each base program ran independently to mobilize [AAPI](#), [Black](#), and [Latino](#) voters, and utilized surrogates and validators from each community to meet voters where they were.
- **Mikie built a campaign that looks like New Jersey, organizing in traditional and non-traditional base towns.** Mikie hired a diverse staff for the coordinated program and empowered them to organize in the communities they know best. Each base program invested significantly and aligned with its unique community. She organized in Jersey City, Trenton, Atlantic City, Pleasantville, Elizabeth, Newark, Irvington, East Orange, Dover, Franklin Township, Paterson, Hackensack, Teaneck, Englewood, Edison, Perth Amboy, Vineland, Millville, Bridgeton, New Brunswick, Piscataway, and more. Mikie also stood up base programs in places where Democrats have not traditionally operated programs like this, including Burlington City, Passaic City, Elmwood Park, Ewing, Garfield, Livingston, Lodi, Hamilton, North Bergen, Morristown, and Parsippany-Troy Hills.
 - **Mikie drove record turnout with Black voters.** Across majority-Black towns, Mikie received 85% or greater support. In Essex County, with a heavily Black electorate, she performed 8 points better than Harris. In Newark, a city with low turnout in previous cycles, she brought out more than 40,000 votes — turnout not seen since 2005.
 - **Latino voters turned out in overwhelming force for Mikie, including in Passaic County, which swung 20 points to the right in 2024.** Across majority-Latino towns, Mikie received 65% or greater support. In Hudson, with the greatest Latino population in NJ, she won by 50 points (20 points better than Harris). She won back heavily Latino Passaic County by 15 points after Trump won it by 3, an 18-point swing.

New Jersey municipalities: 60%+ Hispanic			
City	2025	2024	2021
Union City	Sherrill +69	Harris +17	Murphy +70
Perth Amboy	Sherrill +56	Harris +9	Murphy +49
West New York	Sherrill +57	Harris +13	Murphy +49
Passaic	Sherrill +26	Trump +7	Murphy +38
Guttenberg	Sherrill +52	Harris +20	Murphy +55
North Bergen	Sherrill +35	Harris +6	Murphy +45
Prospect Park	Sherrill +55	Harris +16	Murphy +41
East Newark	Sherrill +37	Harris +6	Murphy +26
Paterson	Sherrill +71	Harris +28	Murphy +70

[via Steve Kornacki](#)

III. Building the largest ground game in New Jersey history — and then executing a flawless get-out-the-vote operation

- **Team Mikie ran the largest volunteer field operation NJ has ever seen.** Over 6,639 individual volunteers completed more than 15,119 volunteer shifts across 321 locations in all 21 counties. Those volunteers made 19.4 million voter contact attempts, including 1.5 million doors knocked, 5.5 million calls made, and over 11.8 million texts sent.
- **We ran a data-driven operation to turn out every type of voter.** Team Mikie invested early in high-quality modeling data to make informed decisions about turnout and vote-share. We then executed a plan to drive turnout upwards — even amongst low propensity Unaffiliated voters, and to “lose better” in places Republicans have historically performed well in New Jersey — and in some cases, straight up winning those GOP areas.
- **We are rewriting the playbook on how to win vote-by-mail and early vote.** We recognized that vote-by-mail ballots were key to our victory, and aggressively chased them by phone, text, and canvass, which resulted in a firewall of over 300,000 votes by Election Day, eclipsing the Democratic firewall in 2021. We then drove our early in-person voting advantage with Democrats, particularly low propensity voters to grow the electorate, while also converting reliable Democratic voters to the polls. This two-pronged approach to early voting resulted in a 46,000-vote advantage among in-person voters and a total 346,000 early-vote margin heading into Election Day.

IV. Speaking to every voter, in every medium, to drive our message and turnout

- **Overwhelming force in the final weeks on TV.** While our opponent burned funds early, we were highly disciplined and understood the rhythms of the electorate's attention to the race. We strategically reserved resources for much of the summer and fall, allowing us to unleash them to dominant advantage across general market broadcast, cable, digital, and direct mail during the critical closing weeks of the campaign, as most voters were making their decision. On broadcast, alone, we carried a 2:1 advantage in both the NYC and Philadelphia media markets in the final week. This blunt force was bolstered with precisely-targeted, constituency-specific media across those same platforms, as well as local [Black](#), [Latino](#), and [Jewish](#) outlets known and [trusted](#) by targeted communities.
- **A surround sound digital advertising strategy.** The campaign invested heavily in digital so we could talk to a broad universe of voters, and reinforce our broader message across channels from broadcast television to YouTube to social media. We ran unique content to targeted audiences — iterative testimonials to Black audiences on key issues, parents talking about Mikie's Online Safety Agenda, and hyper-localized social media boosts (particularly in South Jersey) to show Mikie out in their communities and listening to New Jerseyans. Our digital program was not only our sword, but our shield — we were ready to respond to any attacks online with digital-only validator content. When our opponent's campaign ally obtained Mikie's illegally released, unredacted military records that included her Social Security number and information about her parents, we were ready to share the stories of those who served with her.

- **We were the only campaign targeting Latino voters in both English and Spanish on [broadcast, cable, digital, and radio advertising](#).** The Latino paid media campaign launched shortly after Labor Day and stayed up through Election Day. The message to Latino voters was consistent with the general market message: affordability. We drew a clear contrast between Mikie and Jack's proposals on the economy and ensured voters in New Jersey understood that Jack would be in lockstep with Trump's harmful policies — and voters heard that message loud and clear.
- **Leveraging the power of radio with Black voters.** Recognizing the importance of meeting voters where they are, the campaign made a six-figure investment in radio to reach Black voters across NJ. Over eight weeks, we took our message directly to the community through a sustained ad campaign — outspending the Ciattarelli campaign 7 to 1 on stations that over-index with Black listeners. Our ads featured the [authentic voices](#) of everyday voters, speaking to the needs of their communities across [generations](#) — and [highlighting](#) how Mikie's proven record on issues like maternal mortality and healthcare affordability makes her the candidate we can trust to fight for all New Jerseyans.
- **The campaign identified early that direct mail was one of the most effective tools for voter mobilization, and in an off-year election, vital to shaping the electorate.** Through the coordinated campaign and some partnerships, we built an aggressive program to turn out voters in October. We chased every single vote-by-mail ballot from a Democrat or Mikie supporter with multiple waves of mail. We sent voter information mail to almost 500,000 low-propensity voters. We then layered an additional set of "motivation mail" to those same voters. For Latino voters, we made sure to communicate bilingually. In addition to mobilization, the campaign was laser focused on a persuasion campaign to the most moveable voters. Our targets skewed heavily towards unaffiliated voters, who we knew would decide the election and give Mikie the mandate she ended up having.

V. Digital Dominance

- **Mikie invested in a content megaphone to reach voters organically online.** We grew our followership by 401,000 (418% growth) over the course of the campaign. Our content was viewed more than 155 million times and by millions of unique users — 6.5 million unique accounts on Instagram, 3.4 million on Facebook, and 2.5 million on TikTok.
- **Our content broke out of the echo chamber.** 60-80% of views on our content came from non-followers. We invested in compelling content that voters actually wanted to see, reaching not only our strong supporters and politically engaged New Jerseyans, but also persuadable and less politically active voters.
- **This team understood that creators, podcasters, and YouTubers are key members of the new press corps — and we treated them as such.** We offered special creator access at major events, held briefings and calls with creators, communicated with national creators for amplification, and advised Mikie's schedule so creators could attend and even participate in press gaggles.
- **Mikie went anywhere and everywhere, appearing on dozens of platforms to reach New Jersey voters.** She did everything from a Reddit AMA to Instagram Lives to pop culture podcasts to a South Jersey digital weather channel. [A review by Edison Podcast Metrics](#) found she appeared on podcasts reaching 4.1 million Americans 18+ weekly.

- **We built communities of amplifiers, creators, and validators, including a flagship community of 32 New Jersey creators with a combined reach of more than 4.3 million on TikTok alone.** They generated tens of millions of views, over a million engagements, and close to 1,000 videos.

VI. A blowout performance: There are simply too many records smashed for one memo

- **Mikie drove record turnout in the primary and general elections.** A whopping 840,000 Democrats turned out in the primary, which Mikie won convincingly with 34% percent of the vote. Not to be outdone (by herself), she beat that record again in November, with over 3.2 million voters projected to turn out when all the ballots are counted — the largest gubernatorial election turnout in New Jersey state history.
- **Mikie shifted every single county in New Jersey blue.** Whether in ruby red Ocean or bright blue Essex, Mikie blew Democrats' 2024 performance [in all 21 counties](#).
- **Mikie erased any gains Republicans made in 2024 in swing counties.** In the five counties Trump flipped (Passaic, Gloucester, Atlantic, Morris, Cumberland), Mikie mobilized Democrats and persuaded independents and Republicans. That included suburban and working-class counties like Morris, Gloucester, Cumberland, and Atlantic, as well as diverse urban areas like Passaic.
- **Mikie took historically GOP Morris County, which no other Democrat would have been able to accomplish.** No Democrat has won Morris County in a gubernatorial election since 1973. In 2021, Jack Ciattarelli won Morris by 11 points. But Morris County voters know Mikie Sherrill — they know her record of delivering for their communities, and they, in turn, delivered the county to her.
- **Mikie increased turnout with young voters.** In another '24 reversal, Mikie galvanized young voters to engage in the 2025 cycle through her message of making New Jersey a place where they can afford to raise a family and stand up for their rights. At this point, we are tracking an 11.17% turnout among voters 18-29, which is 3% higher than the normal turnout for this cohort in a gubernatorial election.

VII. Mikie Sherrill's victory extended coattails for Democrats up and down New Jersey

- **Mikie helped flip four legislative seats (so far).** In LD-8, Anthony Angelozzi won in a historically Republican swing district, and Mikie helped smash the GOP hold in LD-21, flipping both assembly seats to blue with Andrew Macurdy and Vinnie Kearney. In LD-25, Mikie's coattails extended into a seat not held by Democrats since the 1970s with Marisa Sweeney's win. With two assembly races still too close to call in LD-2, that number could increase even further by the time all ballots are counted.
- **Mikie helped flip historically Republican and swing areas across the state.** Mikie's strength in Cumberland County helped John Capizola, Jr., win a commissioner seat as the top vote getter, the first time in multiple cycles Democrats have won at the county level. In swing Somerset County, Democrats flipped three township committee seats in Bridgewater and gained control of the township committee. In Hillsborough, Democrats picked up a township committee seat. In white, working-class Manville, Democrats flipped two borough council seats. In suburban Westfield, Democrats swept with the mayoral and

all four council seats. In Hunterdon County, Democrats flipped a total of five local seats and are currently ahead in a sixth potential flip when all ballots are counted.

- **Mikie won towns where Democratic elected officials endorsed against her, proving that her appeal extends beyond traditional political support.** [As was the case in the primary](#), Mikie won in places where she did not have traditional institutional support. In North Bergen, where Mayor Sacco and his entire team endorsed her opponent, Mikie carried every precinct except one and won with roughly 67% of the vote, with a margin of 35%. In Garfield, a non-partisan town, the Democratic Mayor switched parties and endorsed her opponent, yet Mikie won with over 65% of the vote. In Dover, a town that Mikie has represented in Congress since 2022, the embattled Mayor endorsed her opponent, and Mikie won the town with 69% of the vote and a margin of nearly 40%.

VIII. Advice for campaigns heading into the 2026 midterms

- **Follow our roadmap.** Lean into a modern approach to campaigning that competes everywhere, for every voter, with a message relentlessly focused on the issues voters care about. When you understand who your electorate is, and you communicate with them, they respond. That is the key to winning in 2026 and beyond.
- **Go boldly.** Challenges your voters face not fitting neatly into the status-quo lawmaking or policy processes of the day? Get outside that stale box with creative, groundbreaking solutions like Mikie Sherrill's Day One Declaration of a State of Emergency on Utility Costs — a solution no previous American governor has attempted with her executive powers. Voters demand change in endlessly challenging times — so be that change.
- **Find that nexus where your background and your plans meet.** It's true not every Democrat can campaign as a former Navy helicopter pilot who's sworn oaths to put country above self since she was eighteen. But every Democrat is well served to find that unique personal quality or character element or life experience that says to voters, "This is a candidate who defies the norm, someone I may have reason to pay attention to and could even learn to trust in." As negative as our politics have become, voters are still humans — and humans love an aspirational backstory.
- **Do not let the press and pundits write last year's news without a challenge.** At every juncture of this campaign, Mikie Sherrill was underestimated, even after she won by a whopping 14 points in her primary election. Narratives quickly ossified into prebaked and circular headlines like "can she connect with Latino voters" or "why are Democrats nervous about New Jersey." Recognize it, beat it back, but do not fall for it. Point to the historic wins in special elections, the 2025 general elections, and engage voters everywhere, on your terms. Campaign with confidence.
- **Campaigns must contend and compete with the right-wing online ecosystem.** A constant drumbeat from right-wing accounts shaped press and political-observer attitudes toward this race, even when the early-vote data indicated a cresting blue wave. Campaigns must invest in their online presence and be unafraid to shout, "Twitter is not real life" to all those who live their lives scrolling.