



In Senate, 'go blue' vs. 'stay balanced'



Yancey Roy

yancey.roy@newsday.com

Blue wave vs. one-party control.

The battle for the New York State Senate might not have the cachet of races for governor or Congress, but it could be the hottest in the state in November.

And it rides on two overarching arguments, or slogans, put forth by either side.

The pitch from Republicans, who hold a 32-31 Senate advantage: State government shouldn't be controlled by one party and shouldn't be dominated by New York City lawmakers.

The Democrats counter: New York is an overwhelmingly progressive state that's been held back by a gerrymandered Senate for too long and it's time to send a message about opposing the Trump agenda.

Versions of the exchange are playing out in a series of key Senate races on Long Island and elsewhere.

For years, Republicans have been able to hold on to the one branch of state government they control, the Senate, by maximizing the "balanced government" argument, analysts said.

Democrats hold the Executive Mansion, the comptroller and attorney general offices and the state's two U.S. Senate seats. None of those seats are projected, at this point, to flip to Republican. And the state Assembly is overwhelmingly Democratic.



AP / HANS PENNING

The Senate is the only GOP-run branch of state government.

The question, one analyst said: Does the argument still resonate or is **President Donald Trump** a much bigger element in this year's election?

"It's been a reliable issue [for Republicans] but will its currency be so valuable if the issue is 'Trump?'" said **Eric Lane**, a Hofstra University Law School professor and former State Senate staff attorney.

Democrats, from Gov. **Andrew M. Cuomo** to all the way down the ticket, have sought to make Trump a central issue.

"The fear of Trump is real," Cuomo said in a theme that unites many Democrats.

Presidents can loom over many elections, especially those for Congress. But this time, the occupant of the White House matters "more so than usual," said **Sen. Michael Gia-**

naris (D-Astoria), who leads the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee.

A Republican campaign consultant, who asked to remain anonymous, said Trump's unpopularity in New York is a factor.

"Is there a concern because of what's going on in Washington? Yes," said the consultant, who is encouraging candidates to address the subject by saying: "But this isn't about that. This is about balance in government."

If Trump is the Democrats' bogeyman, the Republican version is New York City Mayor **Bill de Blasio**.

"Long Island can't afford the de Blasio agenda," Republican **Jeff Pravato**, who is running against Sen. **John Brooks** (D-Seaford), says in his first campaign ad, which equates de Blasio with higher taxes.

SPINCYCLE

GUIDE TO POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

Bellone touts tax petition

Suffolk County Executive **Steve Bellone** made a robo-call last week asking voters to go to his website and sign a petition to oppose a new federal tax law that bars homeowners from taking deductions for their property and state income taxes.

His robocall trumpets Gov. **Andrew M. Cuomo's** efforts to create legislation that would allow New Yorkers to take advantage of the deduction through a charitable trust. The Internal Revenue Service, however, has proposed to make such actions illegal.

"We are fighting back, but we need your help. Comments are due to the IRS by Oct. 11," Bellone said in his taped message, urging people to sign the petition on his website Facebook.com/stevebellone.

The calls were made to 200,000 homes last Monday and during a second round on Wednesday. Bellone's phone blitz is costing \$14,000 and is being paid out of his campaign fund.

Meanwhile, a second anti-

Bellone mailing, with a banner, "Report from the Right," has gone out. It attacks the county executive as a "liberal Democrat," with a "secret left wing agenda" and "radical friends."

The mailing has one picture of Bellone, who is up for re-election next year, looking jowly, and a montage on the back pictures him with House Minority Leader **Nancy Pelosi** and New York City Mayor **Bill de Blasio**.

Last month, a direct mail blitz attacked Bellone as a "liberal" with "free spending ways" who has imposed \$100 million in new fees since taking office.

The mailing, also headlined "Report from the Right Suffolk County Edition," does not identify its source and lists only a Hauppauge post office box. Noel DiGerolamo, Suffolk Police Benevolent Association president, had warned before Labor Day that an anti-Bellone ad blitz was on the way but he didn't comment further on the mailing. — *Rick Brand*

Fight on judicial ballot line

Republican Surrogate Court judge candidate **Tara Scully** is making a last-ditch effort to keep her Democratic opponent, **Theresa Bryant Whelan**, from getting the Conservative Party ballot line.

Scully and **Richard Kaufman**, a Conservative committee member from Mount Sinai, filed a lawsuit, objecting to the minor party's move to install Whelan to replace Conservative **Deborah Poulos**. Poulos left the Surrogate's race last month to run for state Supreme Court justice.

The suit originally said the Suffolk Conservative executive committee did not have the authority to make the switch, which occurred after the party's Sept. 12 primary and before the recent party convention where a newly elected executive committee was installed.

Vincent Messina, the par-

ty's lawyer, said the party's old executive committee was "absolutely authorized" to act, given a minimum four-day deadline to make the replacement so the party would not be without a candidate. However, the newly elected party executive committee also took action, naming Whelan as their candidate last Tuesday. Messina said it was the last day to act under a separate provision of state election law which sets a 14-day deadline.

Stephen Martir, attorney for Scully and Kaufman, said the old executive panel did not have the power to act and the nomination filed by the new committee is "untimely."

While the case was scheduled to be heard Thursday in Riverhead before state Supreme Court Justice **David Reilly**, the hearing was postponed until Monday.

— *Rick Brand*