



By Colleen O'Dea, October 17 in

He's the most powerful Democrat in Trenton but helped shepherd Gov. Chris Christie's benefits overhaul through the Senate last spring. He's a long-time incumbent from a heavily Democratic district where support for the governor is solid. He's a union organizer without the support of two key unions.

Whether because of or in spite of all that, Steven Sweeney holds a commanding lead in his latest bid for Senate from the 3rd District, which covers large areas of Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem counties. A recent Richard Stockton College/Zogby Poll of likely voters found 48 percent leaning

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place like home' in the 3rd Center for Public Policy, which commissioned the poll.

Mulligan, a Salem County attorney making his first run for office, acknowledged as much. "I'm probably a long-shot," he said. "But I have a problem finding anyone here who says they like Sweeney.... My candidacy is being very well-received."

employees.

The motto on Mulligan's campaign website seems to play off that anger, stating: "The State Senate is no place to give preferences to Political Bosses at the expense of the taxpayers and hardworking public employees!"

However, the Democratic assembly candidates have polling leads almost as commanding as Sweeney's. Of those polled, 44 percent said they would vote for Riley and 43 percent for Burzichelli, while DiCicco got the support of 29 percent and Villare, 28 percent.

Burzichelli, the deputy speaker of the assembly, first took office in 2002. He also chairs the Assembly Regulatory Oversight and Gaming Committee. Riley is the first woman to represent the 3rd District, and the first woman from Cumberland County to serve in the Legislature.

Villare is a surgeon at The Memorial Hospital of Salem County. In 2009, he won a contested Republican