



Opinion: N.J. state Sen. Richard Codey is up against the political machine

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By Times of Trenton guest opinion column

By Carl Golden

While most of the states leading Democratic figures were in Charlotte, N.C., awash in the enthusiasm and euphoria of the party's national convention, Essex County state Sen. Dick Codey (D-Livingston) brought them thumping back to Earth — some say reality — with his comment on the condition of the party in New Jersey:

"We've got to stop letting party bosses dictate our agenda and enabling Mr. Christie, when he's wrong, to succeed."

Codey loves to crack wise about people and politics, but when he turns serious, he chooses his words carefully, assesses their impact and anticipates a reaction.

There's not much political insight required to determine whom Codey had in mind when he spoke: South Jersey leader George Norcross, who masterminded Codey's ouster as Senate president; Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, who played a central role in deposing Codey in return for the selection of Assemblywoman Sheila Oliver — a county employee in the executive's office — as speaker; and Newark power player Steve Aduato Sr., whose close association with Gov. Christie has helped them both.

Codey is still smarting from his defeat at the hands of Gloucester County's Steve Sweeney, whose political career has been guided by Norcross. Both DiVincenzo and Aduato have delivered key votes in the Legislature for major elements of Christie's agenda, including those bitterly opposed by organized labor.

Codey's comment gave public voice to the just-below-the-surface grumbling of a number of legislative Democrats, namely that the party has failed to use its majority status to present a credible counterpoint to the governor, giving in instead to the party bosses, "whose primary interest is in solidifying a power sharing arrangement of sorts with



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Sen. Richard Codey (D-Essex) in a file photo.

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