



COLUMNIST

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In the 3 ½ years since the 1981 gubernatorial election — the closest in state history and the only contest for governor ever subjected to a recount — a narrative has emerged that had it not been for efforts to inform date voters and dampen turnout, the result would have been reversed.

In the absence of context and greater clarity, the content on that Republican Tom Kean would have lost to Democratic Congressman Jim Florio has been accepted in some quarters as genuine. In fact, it is highly problematic that the incumbent was the decisive factor in the outcome.

Those who are convinced of its validity and who periodically promote it are individuals who held a stake in the election — partisan or personal — and who, four decades later, cling to a belief that scores of voters in overwhelmingly Democratic urban areas were disenfranchised by a band of thugs dispatched on a mission to frighten them away from the polling place.

A review of turnout data as compiled by the
aforementioned context and clarity:

*In the gubernatorial elections since 1977, the 2,222,221 turnout
substantial margins.

*Only the 1983 contest drew a greater turnout in a contest driven by
enactment of Gov. Florio's 1% \$2. billion tax increase.

A deeper dive into the data over the same time span reveals that
much of the attention was later focused, the 222,154 turnout in 1983
and since.

This data is not offered as either justification for nor defense of a
National Committee scheme to create an entity called the Ballot

in heavily Democratic urban communities, presumably to challenge voters on legitimate questions of
residence, registration or valid identification.

Rather, it poses an effort -- even after all these years -- to focus objective scrutiny on a political ~~entity~~ It

