



In his post-election media tour, Gov. Phil Murphy explained his narrow re-election victory margin and the unanticipated small showings of Democrats generally with another of his seemingly endless supply of clichés: “There’s a lot of hurt out there.”

Hurt. Maybe. An ever Democratic ally.

His less than three-month margin over Republican challenger Jack Ciattarelli wasn’t assured until tens of thousands of mail-in ballots were tabulated and turned the race from a potential close contest to an uncomfortably narrow escape in a reliably blue state.

The outcome, the governor suggested, would have been worse had it not been for his Administration’s first term accomplishments — raising the minimum wage, imposing a tax increase on millionaires, and expanding pre-K education and child care services.

Flitting through his thesaurus of clichés, Murphy offered up “there’s a lot of kitchen tables” to connect with, although he didn’t elaborate just what would be discussed over coffee and croissants to ameliorate the hurt.

Reading from the same volume, Murphy promised to “move forward, not backward” in his second term, a meaningless phrase since there’s no record of any candidate for any office leading to “move backward, not forward.”

An ever-invariable de rive is always a driving motivation in elections, an emotion that inevitably results in voters focusing on the wrath of those political and governmental leadership roles — in this case, President Biden and his Democratic colleagues.

The Biden Administration’s free fall in public approval, driven largely by out-of-control inflationary pressures, contributed to Murphy’s close call and arguably turned the governor’s race in Virginia into a Republican victory.

In many cases, essential everyday commodity prices from a gallon of gasoline to a gallon of milk have risen by double-digit percentages, with out-of-control costs and imposing additional financial burdens on American families.

Andemic-weary Americans have endured nearly two years of lockdowns, school closures, business failures, travel and public gathering restrictions, commodity shortages, and volatile arguments over mask wearing and vaccinations turned sour on an Administration whose responses were too often in conflict and contradictory.

Voter reaction was driven also by the perception that the White House appeared bereft of any ideas to ease inflation or to unclog a slowing chocking supply chain while abandoning moderate centrists in favor of the fringe left demands.

The issues close to the hearts of Congressional representatives — defunding police while violent crimes on the rise, opening borders, massive and enormously costly social welfare expansions — proved to be drawn to Democrats and filtered down to state and local races, including Murphy’s.



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