

# [***New Jersey first lady Tammy Murphy is suspending Senate campaign***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BMK-B0X1-JBSS-S003-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; New Jersey first lady Tammy Murphy is suspending her campaign for Bob Menendez's Senate seat, she announced Sunday.

"After many busy, invigorating, and yes, challenging months, I am suspending my Senate campaign today," she said in [*a video*](https://twitter.com/tammymurphynj/status/1771986039940247650?s=42&t=qoiR8yxbDtEgvIHq54P-Rg) posted on X. "I have been genuine and factual throughout, but it is clear to me that continuing in this race will involve waging a very divisive and negative campaign, which I am not willing to do."

"And with Donald Trump on the ballot and so much at stake for our nation, I will not in good conscience waste resources tearing down a fellow Democrat," she added.

Murphy's decision comes just days before [*a judge was expected to rule*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/24/politics/new-jersey-senate-democratic-primary/index.html) on a lawsuit aimed at kneecapping local bigwigs' influence over party primaries and the nominating process.

Democratic Rep. Andy Kim, who's vying for the Senate seat, had asked the court for a preliminary injunction banishing the [*so-called party line*](https://twitter.com/CNNThisMorning/status/1763240193530667373) - a ballot structure that allows county leaders to give preferential placement to their endorsed primary hopefuls - ahead of the June 4 primary.

But the judge in the case was concerned, and the defendants had argued, that the time frame was too tight to make such a change. With Murphy dropping out, however, the urgency to address the primary ballot design is gone - meaning "the line" could be in place for the coming primary election.

"We will continue our efforts to strengthen our democracy in New Jersey while we come together to stand up against the dangerous agenda pushed by Trump," Kim said in a statement Sunday, suggesting the lawsuit would continue. The congressman praised Murphy as "a voice for progress and public service in our state," adding, "I respect her decision to carry on that work as First Lady."

Advocates of changing the party-line system raised questions about Murphy's decision.

"This sudden change of heart on the part of Tammy Murphy, on the eve of the ruling of Judge (Zahid) Quraishi on the controversial New Jersey county line, seems more than suspicious," Yael Niv, president of the Good Government Coalition of New Jersey, said in a text message.

"The Good Government Coalition of New Jersey - and the whole grassroots community that has been fighting the line for years - wonder if this announcement is not a last ditch effort to save the county line. This just feels very Jersey. It seems like the party machine that was propping up the First Lady has asked her to take one for the team," Niv added.

Ezra Levin - the co-founder and co-executive director of Indivisible, which has backed Kim - dismissed criticism that the congressman's campaign is focused only on the ballot system. (Murphy said in her Sunday video, "Instead of talking about process and ***politics***, my campaign has been about solutions for families and a vision for the next generation.")

"Andy Kim's campaign wasn't focused on 'process.' It was focused on democracy. Democracy matters to voters. Democrats across the country should take note," Levin said. "Andy Kim is now on track to become a unique voice in the Senate."

Murphy, the wife of two-term Gov. Phil Murphy, [*entered the Democratic primary in November*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/15/politics/tammy-murphy-new-jersey-senate-menendez/index.html) as a first-time candidate with previous associations with GOP ***politics***. Her early endorsements in the primary, however, suggested she might get a plum spot on the ballot - and a potentially decisive advantage over Kim.

Under the party line system, party-backed candidates for a variety of offices appear in a single, prominent column on the ballot, whereas those who do not receive a place on "the line" are scattered across the ballot. Donald Trump's election in 2016, and the resulting grassroots progressive activism, helped accelerate resistance to the party-line system, but it took off in a major way once the Murphy-Kim primary started brewing.

Menendez, who is facing bribery and obstruction of justice charges, [*announced Thursday*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/21/politics/bob-menendez-reelection-plans/index.html) that he would not run for reelection in the Democratic primary but again left open the possibility of an independent bid this summer. The senator has forcefully denied the charges against him and has said that he will prove his innocence while claiming that he is being persecuted by prosecutors.

This story and headline have been updated.

By Gregory Krieg, CNN

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