



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on September 24, 2018

## New Jersey Democrat Senator Menendez's Reelection Campaign Is in Trouble

Liberal Democrat Senator Bob Menendez (shown) has been a fixture in New Jersey politics for at least a quarter of a century, and his reelection to the Senate in November appeared to be locked up. His constituents, unconcerned over either his history of corruption or his unconstitutional votes in the Senate, anted up \$6 million following the announcement in January by the Trump Department of Justice that it wouldn't seek a retrial. Menendez and his "good friend" Salomon Melgen faced 18 charges of corruption, self-dealing, and failures to report income, but Menendez's trial ended with a hung jury.



Democrats need to gain two Senate seats in November to wrest majority control from Republicans. A loss to a Republican in New Jersey, which hasn't sent one to Washington since 1972, would almost be a fatal blow to that hope.

The depth and breadth of Menendez's corruption was summarized by *The New American*:

There were trips to the Dominican Republic provided by Melgen to Menendez on his private jet, which Menendez failed to report properly. There was political pressure and influence that Menendez brought to bear that indirectly benefitted Melgen. The 68-page indictment against Menendez looked persuasive, alleging that Menendez had attempted, on Melgen's behalf, to influence a State Department official in a dispute involving one of Melgen's business interests in the Dominican Republic; that Menendez tried to help Melgen "resolve" a dispute the doctor was having with Medicare over billing fraud; and that Menendez had ordered his staff to secure visas for several of Melgen's prostitutes.

While Menendez somehow managed to escape the hangman's noose, his "good friend" Melgen wasn't so lucky. He is now serving 17 years in a federal prison for bilking Medicare out of \$100 million. Menendez received a slap on the wrist from the Senate Ethics Commission, but he hoped that New Jersey voters would forgive and forget.

Enter Republican Bob Hugin, executive chairman of Celgene, a biopharmaceutical company, who saw an opportunity to challenge the weakened and discredited senior senator. In February Hugin announced his candidacy for Menendez's seat, initially funding the campaign with a \$7.5 million personal loan. In April he showed up in the polling by Monmouth, trailing Menendez by 21 percentage points.

[The latest poll from Quinnipiac](#) released on Friday show him trailing Menendez by just six points. Two previous polls showed an even tighter race.



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Hugin's campaign, now enjoying insertions of another \$8 million of his own money and some considerable help from Republicans who see a chance to send Menendez packing, has focused primarily on the incumbent's ethical "problems" with ads titled "Guilty," "Screwed," and "Dead Last."

Hugin's campaign is being helped along by the state of New Jersey's economy as well. Calling himself a fiscal conservative, Hugin opposes the higher taxes that are scheduled to begin in October. The Tax Foundation rates New Jersey as having the worst tax climate for business, and the highest property taxes, in the entire country. Said Hugin, "The affordability crisis in our state continues to get worse. We're losing millennials at the highest rate in the nation, and Trenton politicians just made things worse by raising taxes another \$1.6 billion."

Mendendez is trying to play catch-up ball as Hugin's early money has essentially defined the political conversation: It's all about Mendendez's corruption and New Jersey's awful tax climate.

Hugin is no jewel. A graduate of Princeton, he enjoyed a 14-year stint as a managing director at J.P. Morgan before joining Celgene. Hugin is a social liberal, supporting abortion rights, gay marriage, and a pathway to citizenship for illegals. But at least, if he wins in November, he won't have been indicted by the federal government or sanctioned ("severely admonished" is the term used against Mendendez) by the Senate Ethics Committee. And there is a fair chance that his voting record as measured by the John Birch Society's Freedom Index would be better than Menendez's dismal 18 out of 100.

*Photo: AP Images*

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