

Right-wing Democrat Mikie Sherrill struggles in New Jersey gubernatorial race

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The improper release of Democratic Representative Mikie Sherrill's entire US Navy record by the administration of fascistic President Donald Trump has thrown the gubernatorial race in New Jersey into turmoil. News of the release broke hours after a poll indicated that the race between Sherrill and Republican candidate Jack Ciattarelli was in a dead heat.

The distribution of mostly unredacted documents has the earmarks of an attempt to sabotage the campaign of Sherrill, who was first elected to Congress in 2018 as one of more than a dozen military-intelligence operatives who won seats that year, a group identified by the WSWWS as the CIA Democrats.

In response to a request from an ally of Ciattarelli, the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) at the National Archives in Washington D.C., released Sherrill's entire Navy record. The documents contain sensitive information such as Sherrill's Social Security number, home address, life insurance information, performance evaluations and the nondisclosure agreement between her and the US government to safeguard classified information.

The employee who released the files did not follow standard operating procedures, according to the NPRC. No explanation has been given for this ostensible mistake. The release may constitute a violation of the Privacy Act of 1974 and run afoul of the exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act.

Sherrill, who has centered her gubernatorial campaign on her Navy career, now faces questions about what role she played in a cheating scandal that erupted at the US Naval Academy in the 1990s. More than 100 midshipmen were implicated in cheating on the final electrical engineering exam, which is notoriously difficult and required for all third-year students who are not engineering majors.

Sherrill did not participate in her Naval Academy graduation ceremony in 1994 but nevertheless received a commission and served in the Navy for nine years. She left the Navy at the rank of lieutenant in December 2003, before going to law school and becoming a federal prosecutor. Sherrill has said that she was not allowed to walk at graduation because she did not inform on classmates who cheated on the exam. She herself has not been accused of cheating. The documents released by the NPRC do not suggest Sherrill played any direct role in the cheating scandal.

Consistent with the focus of her campaign and her political orientation to the military, Sherrill has presented the release of documents as an attack on the armed forces. In a statement to CBS, Sherrill said, "That Jack Ciattarelli and the Trump administration are illegally weaponizing my records for political gain is a violation of anyone who has ever served our country. No veteran's record is safe." Sherrill has not decried the release of documents as interference in the gubernatorial election or an attack on democratic rights, including the right to privacy, or connected it in any way with the larger Trump administration assault on democracy.

Ciattarelli has demanded that Sherrill release her full Naval Academy records, including her disciplinary files. "She could clear this all up by approving the release of her disciplinary records, but she won't," he told Fox News.

Sherrill and Ciattarelli represent equally repugnant factions of the American ruling class. During her Navy career, Sherrill was a Russian policy officer and flew missions in Europe and the Middle East. In the US House of Representatives, she unfailingly supported Biden's agenda of austerity and war. A staunch backer of the NATO proxy war against Russia, Sherrill met

and was photographed with members of the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion in September 2022. During the recent gubernatorial debate, it took Sherrill only nine seconds before she mentioned her Navy career.

Ciattarelli served in the New Jersey Assembly from 2011 to 2018 and ran unsuccessfully for governor in 2021. Having initially called Trump a “charlatan,” he later cast aside any scruples and supported Trump’s reelection in 2020. Moreover, he headlined a “Stop the Steal” rally, thus helping to promote the lie that the election had been rigged in favor of Democrat Joe Biden. Ciattarelli urges full cooperation between local police departments and Immigration and Customs Enforcement and opposes equal rights for sexual and gender minorities.

The release of Sherrill’s Navy records and the questions about her role in the cheating scandal of the ’90s recall the Swift boat smear campaign against Senator John Kerry in 2004. During that year’s presidential campaign, a group called Swift Boat Veterans for Truth publicly accused Kerry, a Navy veteran who was the Democratic candidate, of misrepresenting his conduct during the Vietnam War. Kerry commanded combat missions in the Mekong Delta region of southern Vietnam and became a prominent opponent of the war after his return to the US.

Trump has already intervened in New Jersey’s gubernatorial race. He has endorsed Ciattarelli (who had assiduously sought Trump’s blessing) and said that “New Jersey is ready to pop out of that blue horror show.”

As the federal government shut down, White House budget director Russell Vought announced that the administration would withhold billions of dollars from the Gateway Hudson Tunnel Project. The project, which was unveiled in 2011, is intended to rehabilitate a tunnel between Newark, New Jersey, and New York City that dates from 1910. Trump’s withholding of funds, for this and other initiatives nationwide, is intended to punish the Democrats for opposing his budget. Ciattarelli has blamed Sherrill for Trump’s action.

On social media, Trump also has called Sherrill “close to incompetent.” Trump’s involvement in the improper release of Sherrill’s Navy record cannot be ruled out, especially considering his threats to withhold

funding from New York City if Democratic candidate and Democratic Socialists of America member Zohran Mamdani wins the mayoral election.

While Mamdani has effusively endorsed Sherrill, the former Navy helicopter pilot has not returned the favor, joining Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries in declining to take a position on the New York City mayoral race. Sherrill has not cited any specific political differences with Mamdani, hiding behind the claim that she is “too busy” with the New Jersey campaign to take a position on the mayoral race next door.

In practice, Sherrill has largely sought to avoid broader political issues and focus exclusively on issues of “affordability,” particularly in relation to housing costs. In that she apes Mamdani, although with even less of the slight tinge of left-talking criticism of big business espoused by the mayoral candidate.

Far from representing an alternative to the Republicans, the Democrats defend the interests of Wall Street, the military and the intelligence agencies. This is being demonstrated in the most glaring fashion in the only two major statewide contests this year, the governor’s races in New Jersey and Virginia, states with a combined population of nearly 19 million people.

The Democratic Party has nominated two of the original 2018 class of “CIA Democrats” in these races. Sherrill, the former Navy pilot with close ties to the NATO command structure, is running in New Jersey. Abigail Spanberger, a former career Central Intelligence Agency agent, is running for governor of Virginia. Both are favored in the polls, Sherrill narrowly, and Spanberger by a comfortable margin over fascist Republican lieutenant governor Winsome Earle-Spears, whose campaign is so dismal that Trump has declined to appear on her behalf.



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