

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy Vote on June 7

06/07/2022

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Taking a break from his morning jog with First Lady Tammy Murphy, Gov. Phil Murphy voted in New Jersey's Democratic primary today from his polling location in Middletown. After voting, the governor promoted the virtues of voting amid low turnout and a bevy of uncontested and uncompetitive races around the state.

"It was outstanding, really outstanding," Murphy said of the voting process. "These machines are first class, the process was easy-peasy. The only issue is turnout. We were told that we were the fourth and fifth people in our district to be voting today, and they've been open for a while."

The Murphys arrived at 8:20 a.m., greeting the site's poll workers before casting their votes on the state's new voting machines. With the school day beginning around when they voted, the entrance to the polling site hummed with parents, teachers, and students - but few voters.

The governor's own ballot featured no contested races whatsoever. His congressman, Rep. Frank Pallone (D-Long Branch), drew no primary opponents (three Republicans are running for the right to take him on), while Monmouth Democrats have two candidates for two county commissioner seats and didn't field a candidate for sheriff.

But Murphy said that even when those on the ballot don't have opponents, it's important to participate in democracy all the same.

"I'll pick Frank Pallone as an example, who's our congressman and is outstanding," he said. "When someone's doing an outstanding job in public service, I think you've got to stand up and be counted... And that's what we did."

This year is an unusual election year in that there are no statewide contests, something that happens once every 12 years in New Jersey. With no top-of-the-ticket pull to bring voters to the polls, turnout has thus far been low.

As of this morning, 266,852 votes had already been cast in New Jersey, including 246,622 returned absentee ballots and 20,230 early in-person votes cast over the weekend. So far, the primary electorate is 71% Democratic and just 23% Republican, though that gap is sure to narrow as Election Day-oriented Republicans cast their votes throughout the day.

Despite the low number of early in-person voters, Murphy said that the state's early voting infrastructure, which debuted in last year's general election, was worth the investment.

"I suspect that part of the reason why turnout is low [so far today] is that people have voted by mail or early voted," he said. "I think giving people as many options to vote as possible is good for democracy."

Joey Fox

New Jersey Globe

PHOTO

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