http: //www.pressofatlanticcity.com/opinion/commentary/expected-democratic-control-of-state-government-prompts-battle-to-lead/article_19d1e128-7d8e-55c8-b4 22-613f7c53dc05.html

Expected Democratic control of state gov ernment prompts battle to l ead Assembly , says Carl Golden

Carl Golden For The Press 9 hrs ago

With maintaining their majorities in the Legislature assured , Democrats have turned their attention, political maneuvering and deal-making skills

to the selection of leadership for the 2018 session.

Senate President Steve Sweeney guaranteed another term for himself when , after rumors of an impending challenge began to circulate, he

released a statement from a n early unanimous Democratic caucus pledging support .

Assembly Sp eaker Vincent Prieto , D-Hudson, hasn’t been so lucky.

He faces an insurgency allegedly masterminded by Sweeney and South Jersey political power George Norcross, who convinced little knor

He has enjoyed a close relationship with the governor , an association that has paid o韚� handsomely in the form of tax breaks and economic

incentives for the city of Camden in particula r .

If Coug hlin succeeds in h is challenge to Prieto , it will greatly strengthen Norcross’ hand, giving him close allies in the presiding oퟙ�cers of both

houses of the Legi slature .

Should Democratic gubernatorial nominee Phil Murphy succeed in November , his legislative and policy agenda will rest in the hands of Sweeney

and Coughlin and — by ex tensi on — Norcross .

As presiding oퟙ�cers , Sweeney and Coughlin (if elected) would control the 埌�ow of legislation to the 埌�oors of their respective chambers and it

would be necessary for Murphy , as governor, to deal with Norcross on issues of major import to assure a favorable reaction.

Such an outcome would enhance Norcross’ position as a statewide powerbroker and expand his sphere of in埌�uen ce .

The mov e on Prieto is not without risk , however. Should he turn aside the challenge from Coughlin, he’ll emerge a far more formidable ퟌ�gure.

He would be able to consolidate his power and make it clear tha t neith er he nor the chamber he leads will automati cal ly fall in line with the

wishes of S weeney or the Sen ate .

Hi storically , the jockeying for leadership positions doesn’t begin in earnest until the outcome of the general election.

The unprecedented early and highly public challenge to the speaker is an indication of the staken llen’t begiken llhe

Thelslles ofo sll ll

ral an d poli cy power orsir .

s reigtion iken ퟌ�ogun er and e Pri