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Reverend clergy, governors -- past, acting, and temporary -- Dina, and my Mom and Dad, fellow New Jerseyans.



**Governor James E.  
McGreevey**  
Inaugural Address  
January 15, 2002

Today, we are facing a moment unlike any other in the history of our state or nation. We have witnessed in real time an attack that shattered our domestic tranquility and threatened us all. Our neighbors died. Our buildings fell.

Not since the assassination of President John F. Kennedy 38 years ago have we mourned so collectively as a nation, as a people. But in the wake of this horrendous attack, we have revealed our better angels. Police and emergency workers waded into Ground Zero searching for survivors. Families lit candles and prayed for neighbors they had never met, nor would ever know. Firemen climbed blazing stairwells and emerged at heaven's gate.

Out of this catastrophe, we have come together. From Ground Zero, we have found common ground. We were reminded that what we do together as a community is as important as what we do one by one, or family by family. Our shared loss became our shared resolve.

Today, our state faces a new set of challenges -- the challenge of keeping our families and streets safe from further acts of terror and violence, the challenge of living within our means in the face of a national recession, and, our most important challenge, making our schools work so that we prepare our children for their future, for their challenges.

These are difficult tasks. But we already have witnessed the key to their solution. If we come together as Americans -- as New Jerseyans -- in the same way we came together in the wake of September 11th, there is no challenge we cannot meet, no problem we cannot solve. We need only draw upon that spirit of community -- upon that same sense of passion and resolve.

So this is my call to action. In the days ahead, each citizen of New Jersey should demand more of me. That is your right. But you also must ask more of yourselves. That is your responsibility.

In the winter of 1861, on his way to his first inauguration, Abraham Lincoln came through New Jersey, at a time when our country was on the verge of its greatest crisis. Lincoln stopped here, in Trenton, and in a speech to the state Senate, he talked about the struggle for liberty during the Revolutionary War.

Lincoln remembered as a boy reading about the Battle of Trenton -- the crossing of the Delaware, Washington's battle with the Hessians, and the great hardships endured by the continental army here in New Jersey. As Lincoln said, "There must have been something more than common that those men struggled for ... something that held out a great promise to all the people of the world for all time to come."

Lincoln knew America had confronted obstacles and endured because our nation rests on a few basic principles. Liberty. Democracy. Community. Responsibility. These ideas were extraordinarily powerful then. And they will fortify us again

today.

I have promised that my Administration will change the way Trenton does business -- and working together, we will.

Today is the time and this is the place to begin a new era of community, responsibility, and common purpose to face the three immediate challenges before us. First, our nation's borders are no longer as safe as we once thought they were. For the first time in memory, we are vulnerable at home. To strengthen our security, we must be proactive. We must support law enforcement and work to improve cooperation between agencies. We must do more to ensure that our ports are inviolable, and our communities and homes safe. And if, God forbid, our emergency response forces should be called upon, they will once again be sharp, tough, and ready to go.

Our second challenge is to live within our means. The days of irresponsible borrowing and runaway spending are over. We will end waste and mismanagement, beginning today. Just as a family cannot live beyond its means, New Jersey cannot borrow and spend without regard for the consequences. Like any family, we have to tighten our belts -- not harden our hearts, but tighten our belts and live within our means.

The third challenge, and I leave it for last only because it is the most important, is educating our children. Through education we transmit our American values and we prepare our children to be responsible citizens. For our democracy to flourish, we require an educated citizenry. That is why it is intolerable that 30% of third grade students in hundreds of grammar schools across New Jersey are not reading at grade level. We must provide schools where every third grader knows how to read, so each child has the fundamental skills to learn.

It is intolerable that certain schools fail to establish basic standards, basic discipline, and clear levels of accountability. Our schools must also provide a compass to our youngsters, to help them navigate between right and wrong, between fact and fiction, between faithful and false. For as Dr. Martin Luther King, whose birthday it is today, reflected, it ought to be "the content of one's character" that is the yardstick by which we are measured.

Let's be clear. We as citizens of this community must know that the education of our children is not someone else's task. Nor is it simply a burden which falls only on teachers and parents. The responsibility for educating our children and developing their character rests with us all. For the education of our children is about our future, our passing of knowledge and values from one generation to another. Ultimately, it's about building a community based on the same principle cited in the Declaration of Independence -- the principle of sharing "our fates and our fortunes." To achieve our common good, we have no other choice.

Those are our immediate challenges. They cannot be ignored. Yet, we have other tasks. Today, we see a rapidly changing New Jersey. The manufacturing economy is being replaced by an innovation and information-driven marketplace. The new economy demands highly educated, skilled workers, while those without education are in danger of being left behind. Business and labor, universities, and the state must work together to teach the skills that prepare our children for the new economy.

New Jersey can prosper in this changing economy, with some of the world's greatest research scientists and engineers, with thriving ports, a strategic location, and no shortage of ideas and entrepreneurs. I ask you today to join with me in forging a new paradigm, creating partnerships within and outside government,

bringing new voices to bear on old challenges.

We need to change the way we think about our problems and change the way we solve them. We need universities actively engaged in the priorities of the state. We need public-private partnerships that transcend the old barriers. We need cooperation between labor and business, between Republicans and Democrats, between cities and suburbs. We must commit to our quality of life, preserving our open space, to reinvesting in our cities, and making sure that in our state that invents the world's medicines, our citizens have access to quality, affordable health care.

In a tender poem six years before the Civil War, it was the American poet Longfellow who wrote, "All your strength is in your union, all your danger is in your discord." In the years ahead we must come together and find the strength in our vision and union, just as we did after that terrible attack on our native soil. We must persuade our citizens to participate in our democracy, to accept responsibility, to answer our challenges.

In the years ahead, we must build our community from common values. We must draw our strength from our diversity. We must forge our future from common aspirations. Together we must commit our hearts and our minds to recapture that Spirit of Trenton which Lincoln observed. If we can do that, no terrorists will prevail against us. No challenge will discourage us. No legitimate disagreement will cause us to be disagreeable. No citizen, however humble, will be ignored. As for me and for my family, I ask for your prayers.

As he concluded his address in Trenton on that winter day of 1861, Lincoln said, "I shall be most happy indeed if I shall be a humble instrument in the hands of the almighty, and of this, his almost chosen people, for perpetuating the object of that great struggle." I too pray that I will be given the strength and wisdom by the Almighty to do what needs to be done for the people of New Jersey, always remembering the admonition of the Prophet Micah "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

My friends, I thank you for this joyful burden.

Together, let us today take these first steps toward a new era of community and meet our challenges, comforted by the convictions of our forefathers in the promise of freedom, strengthened by the commitment of our people to accept responsibility for one another, and inspired by a belief in our future and a determination that has triumphed in America for more than 200 years.

My friends, I thank you for joining with me in answering these challenges. May God bless this great nation, our state, and the people of New Jersey. Now, let's get to work.