

Seventh Annual Message
ALFRED E. DRISCOLL
GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY

To the Legislature
January 12, 1954



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SEVENTH ANNUAL MESSAGE

OF

ALFRED E. DRISCOLL

GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY

TO THE ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHTH
LEGISLATURE

JANUARY 12, 1954



SEVENTH ANNUAL MESSAGE

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Senate and General Assembly, my Fellow Jersey Men and Women:

Many of you, as legislators, have been participants during the past seven years in events of considerable importance. Our mutual concern has been the welfare of the State and all of its citizens. While my present tasks are nearly done, those of this new Legislature have just begun.

History teaches us that leaders, like those whom they would lead, are frequently carried by the tide of events and ideas which are larger and more important than any individual. It is in this broad perspective that I wish to address you on this, my last official opportunity as Chief Executive of our historic and beloved State.

It was my privilege seven years ago to present to you a philosophy of government and an action program of considerable magnitude. As a Nation, we then had only recently emerged from the most terrible war in history. As a State, it was our function to play our part in the reconstruction of a peaceful way of life, the re-establishment of homes and families and the dedication of government to the service of mankind.

Ever since that day, seven years ago, the world has been in a turmoil of conflicting national interests and social readjustment. National insecurity and the threat of further war has continued to dominate the international scene. Domestic problems of veterans' readjustment, housing shortages, inflationary prices, labor disputes, educational facilities inadequate for increasing populations, motor vehicle traffic choking our streets and highways built for an earlier age, and a sizeable post-war crime wave have been

experiences we shared with almost every State in the Nation.

All of these problems, and many others that must come to your mind, were made the more difficult of solution by the deficiencies in the form and structure of a government designed to meet the needs of our citizens in a time when the pace of America was measured by the horse and buggy. The growth of our State Government between 1844 and 1947 was as disorganized as it was undisciplined. There was, in 1947, a monumental reconstruction job that had to be done. These and other problems were upon us so rapidly and with such urgency that, were it not for an excellent spirit of co-operation and legislative leadership, which we had then and continued to have during my administration, it would have been impossible to establish the gratifying record of achievement to which we can now jointly refer.

This co-operative attitude between the Legislature and the Executive Branch of our government brought untold benefits to the people of our State. It fostered the common spirit of public interest before partisan interest with which we began and continued our efforts. I would like, if I may, to repeat my words of seven years ago because the course of events has justified their text even more, I dare say, than I foresaw at the time. On that day when I first took the oath of this great office, I said:

“The broader implications of our present position are clear. They stem from a conception of our Republican form of government as a composite of group interests. While we operate through the mechanics of majority rule, we must not indulge in majority excesses. Our philosophy of government recognizes that today’s majorities may be nothing more than a coalition of yesterday’s minorities. Over and above any provincial view of party responsibility, we must be moved by a nation-wide recognition that effective government requires the effective expression of all the group interests which make up our society. Political exploita-

tion of any one group has been repudiated. But this does not mean, as some would have us believe, that group interests have been repudiated. We would be well advised to recognize that an effective private enterprise system is not keyed to the welfare of any one group in our society and in fact demands for its survival a strong government which can and will prevent any group from dominating the others. It is our mandate to restore balance, to reconcile group interests, to avoid group domination and to implement a better way of life for all our people.”

I submit that we have carried out that self-imposed mandate. Against this background of our philosophy of government, which I hope you will continue, we have enjoyed a complete cycle of Legislative, Executive and Judicial progress. The record is so full that I prefer to forego the normal inclination to review it in detail at this time. Instead, I should like to recall with you the single accomplishment of each year which, in my present perspective, has come to mean most without dimming the luster of any of the others.

1947—This was a year for the architects of the future government of our State. The inspiration, planning and successful conclusion of the Constitutional Convention of 1947, held on the campus of the State University, not only dominated that year but each succeeding year as well. It provided the basic groundwork for the management of the fiscal affairs of the State—management which resulted in balanced budgets and the avoidance of new taxes that have plagued our sister states.

1948—This was a year of transition. The monumental task of clearing away the old structure of government and the outmoded ways of doing things to make way for the improvements of the new Constitution was the pressing influence upon this year. This included the reduction of 70 departments to 14 and the founding of a real merit system

in the civil service. Beyond all else, the organization of our new Judicial system, under the administration of our pre-eminent Chief Justice, was, to my mind, the work of the year in this State and, perhaps, in any State in this Nation. Second only to Judicial reform was the development and adoption of our Temporary Sickness Benefits Law, which now protects almost 2,000,000 of our fellow working people and under which New Jersey remains today as one of only four States that provide such security against off-the-job sickness and accident.

1949—This was a year of consolidation of our gains in the protection of civil rights and civil liberties. The watchword was human welfare. Housing, employment security and an institutional building program for the wards of our State were the marks of progress. Together with broad increases in benefits and coverage of our unemployment compensation and workmen's compensation systems, and extensive programs of veterans' benefits, these programs have meant a continuing attack upon the causes of human suffering.

1950—This was the year we turned to home rule and the improvement of local government. It saw the adoption of the Optional Municipal Charter Law and the installation of the New Jersey Civil Defense Plan, with its emphasis on municipal responsibility. Together with major increases in State aid for schools, the first effective program of State aid for municipal streets ever adopted in this State, and new provision for consolidated local health districts, these programs have spelled opportunities for stronger and better local self-government.

1951—This was a year of achievement and planning for vast new public improvements, when our dreams of the 118-mile New Jersey Turnpike became a reality. By this time, we had spent more on improving New Jersey highways in the few years since 1947 than had been spent for that purpose in the entire period of thirty years between 1917 and 1947.

Meanwhile, a fresh approach to the development of long-sought water resources was made this year; and the ground was broken for far-reaching development of the South Jersey area by creation of the Delaware River Port Authority pursuant to an interstate compact with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. By compacts such as these with Delaware, Pennsylvania and New York, we have set in motion tremendous programs for the improvement of one of the great areas of the entire world.

During these busy years, we have been proving that one answer to the proponents of big government in Washington is co-operation among the States led by men and women aware of the needs of their fellow citizens and determined to meet those needs.

1952—This year we renewed our attention to the problems of want, disease and delinquency. Upon approval by the voters of the necessary bond issues, we increased the previous 25 million dollar program to a 50 million dollar program for the modernization and expansion of our State institutional facilities. This has resulted in 82 projects under way in 21 institutions, which are adding thousands of beds and vital improvements in all types of facilities. It was in this year also that we made a basic approach to the problems of crime and delinquency in the creation of the Law Enforcement Council. Meanwhile, the services of our Department of Law and Public Safety were immeasurably strengthened. Our policing agencies are today larger, better staffed and better trained than at any other time in the history of the State, and when judged against the perspective of history, will be found to have done one of the best jobs in the country.

1953—This has been a final year when we consolidated our gains and completed many long-term projects of the years before. It saw the opening of new freeways; the completion of plans to speed the construction of the 165-mile Garden State Parkway; the acquisition of the Phipps Estate, that unique natural preserve known as Island Beach, unlike any

other along the entire eastern seaboard; and the successful conclusion of a major phase of the program to bring critically needed additional water supplies to our State. As the year closed, we finally concluded arrangements for acquiring the Wharton Tract, a rich source of water resources and reserves for the future.

Perhaps more dramatic than all else, this year our attack on organized crime culminated in the establishment of the Water-front Commission of New York Harbor. The result of painstaking investigation which started in 1951, this new weapon in the battle against crime on the water front was forged in an interstate compact with the State of New York. It was a pioneering effort to pool the police power of two great States to rid the commerce of the Port of New York of the tribute of organized crime.

Throughout all these seven years, there has been one highlight which has not fitted into any one year more than another—I mean the success of our program of financial prudence. Costs of government, like the costs of the market-basket, have risen steadily since the close of the war. We have been able, nevertheless, to carry out these large-scale ventures, without either a sales tax or income tax, one or the other of which burdens the residents of all of our neighboring States and the great majority of all the States in the Nation. This is especially notable in the light of the fact that repeal of the 16 million dollar State property tax was effective in the first year of our administration.

Despite the lack of those taxes, we have paid substantial increases in compensation to our State employees, commensurate with the increased cost of living, and have placed public employees' pension funds on a sound actuarial basis.

When we compare the kind and quality of governmental services that the people of New Jersey enjoy, I am sure many of us will be surprised that we have been able to do so well with so few tax dollars. Back of all these achievements has been legislative action, the kind of legislative cooperation to which I made reference at the very outset.

All these achievements, I may add, have not been gained at the price of any ruthless disregard of dissenters on the one hand or without incurring substantial enemies on the other. As for the dissenters it has been my hope, and not infrequently my experience, that they would sooner or later join in worthy objectives. As for the enemies, we have frankly followed the course that it is just as well to be known by the enemies you make as by less subtle means.

It is with a sense of satisfaction and, if you will permit me, some pride, that I review the past seven years in our mutual accomplishments. New Jersey has plainly come a long way in that time—and it is, of course, my earnest hope that it will remain on the same road. There are those who would see in every delay a sign of weakness, in every setback a fatal loss. The art of government by the consent of the governed calls for sterner stuff, greater patience and deeper understanding.

During these years we have not hesitated to assert the paramount interests of the public in disputes between labor and management by recognizing and protecting the rights of each of the contestants. We have at all times been mindful of the fact that the public interest must be protected. So now, mindful of the fact that rival political parties will be exercising leadership in the Legislative and Executive Branches of our government, I bespeak your continued mutual co-operation and make bold to remind you that the public interest is once again paramount. It was this interest that motivated the men and women who attended the Constitutional Convention. It was this interest that carried us through the constructive years of implementation.

There is nothing so difficult as to look back over an exciting period of years and to appraise its meaning, except possibly to look ahead and predict the course of future events. Of one thing I am sure, however, and that is the great debt of gratitude that I owe to those who have helped loyally and tirelessly to achieve the record that has been made. I am happy to acknowledge such a debt to the legis-

lative leaders and members of the Legislature of the past seven years.

Government is a large enterprise, and its successful administration requires a large variety of talents. It is my pleasure to carry away with me the memory of the contribution that has been made by the great mass of devoted civil servants, as well as the necessarily smaller cabinet group upon whom I have relied more closely. I take this opportunity to record my deep-felt appreciation to them all, and to the hard-working State House press correspondents, who have always helped to interpret our work to the public fairly and objectively. To the members of my Cabinet, to my Secretaries and staff, to the Directors of the Divisions, to the Comptroller and to my Counsel, and to that great host of New Jersey men and women who have served on our various boards and councils, I wish to acknowledge my warm gratitude for their loyalty and constructive support. They have served New Jersey well.

With all of the progress that has been made, however, it need not be assumed that there is little more to do. A balanced budget and the avoidance of unnecessary and oppressive taxes are essential if we are to maintain the present prosperity of our citizens. This is my key recommendation for the future. I am happy to report to you that new industries and new job opportunities have been flowing into our State with increasing rapidity. There has been created in New Jersey an environment in which labor and management may prosper and grow. It is a good State in which to live, and work, and to play.

While it has been my privilege to serve our State for the longest continuous period of years of any elected Governor, my tenure has been short in comparison with the time over which problems have been building up for us. We obviously could not do everything at once and have had to take first things first. Some of the projects we have started are even now in a phase calling for further development. To this

end, may I set before you ten areas which seem to me to merit your attention for the future.

1. *Education*—While we have greatly increased State aid for schools and support for our State University, and made a fine start on better facilities for the University and our teacher colleges, it will be necessary, in my judgment, to continue and expand these programs in the near future.

2. *Highways*—A modern program of highways and superhighways has made much progress. It will be your responsibility to carry it forward and to assure its proper integration with the highway systems of our neighboring States.

3. *Water Supply*—This problem, which has plagued our State for at least a quarter of a century, is now within striking distance of a solution. The steps which we have already taken will require your continued support and further attention.

4. *Rapid Transit*—High speed rail rapid transit in North Jersey and South Jersey can be attained. We have provided the basis for these programs, which remain to be carried to completion.

5. *Housing*—The continued high cost of slums and blighted areas re-emphasizes the importance of the 100 million dollar slum clearance program which I have previously recommended. That program, in my judgment, should be reconsidered and, if need be, modified to meet current needs, but its primary emphasis on private enterprise should be retained.

6. *Modernization of the Property Tax*—You have now had before you, for about a year, a carefully worked out program to correct the administration of the property tax, which has been characterized as “a century of inequities”. Action upon this proposal should not be deferred.

7. *Social Security and Industrial Safety*—The social security and industrial safety programs that you have

begun should be strengthened and greatly enlarged. They should be further expanded in such a manner as to permit us to have full coverage for unemployment compensation, and sickness benefit insurance, for example.

8. *Chronic Sick*—The pioneering research programs initiated in recent years by our Departments of Health and Institutions and Agencies and designed to prevent disease and reduce the impact of chronic sickness, as well as the vicissitudes of old age, should likewise be strengthened and expanded. In the long run, an investment in these preventive programs will cost less and do more for our society than prolonged hospitalization and cure. This same philosophy applies with equal weight to the excellent pioneering programs initiated in recent years by the Department of Institutions and Agencies in its other important activities where we seek to strike at the root of juvenile delinquency and to make our correctional institutions something more than places of confinement. This latter objective, of course, requires a continuing program for the construction of modern facilities.

9. *Public Welfare*—It is my hope that agreement will soon be reached on the basic objectives of the Commission to study the administration of welfare in New Jersey.

10. *Recreational Facilities*—The growing population of our State will continue to require expanded recreational facilities. We must provide playgrounds and play opportunities for all our citizens and particularly for our children. It is my hope that Island Beach, the Wharton Tract and, ultimately, Sandy Hook, will each be developed in keeping with their character, together with other existing natural facilities, as a recreational heritage for future generations.

By way of expressing my personal wishes for the future to the new Governor and to the members of this new Legislature, I would leave with you this thought:

The fight for liberty must be won anew each day, and the contest for good government waged during the days of

peace is no less important than the battle waged in the heat of armed conflict. May your service in guiding our State be one of dedication to those ideals that shine the brightest in the history of our great State. May you be blessed with clearness of vision, soundness of purpose and successful accomplishments, to the end that the future citizens of this State will repeat your names with pride and call you wise and just.

I shall miss you in the year and years immediately ahead. I shall look back upon these years, and particularly our service together, with affection and with gratitude for the opportunities that the citizens of this State have given to me. As one who loves his State, as one who thinks it is one of the truly great States of our great Nation, I am happy to have had a small part in its history. Yours, ladies and gentlemen, however, is now the high calling that I have followed—the service of our fellow citizens—and it is a continuing opportunity for each and every one of you to do credit to yourself and to your people.

For all that you have been to me, thank you, and may God bless every one of you.

Respectfully submitted,

ALFRED E. DRISCOLL,
Governor.

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Attest:

RUSSELL E. WATSON, JR.,
Secretary to the Governor.

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Respectfully,
Ralph E. Briscoe

RALPH E. BRISCOE
(Signature)

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Respectfully,
Ralph E. Briscoe

RALPH E. BRISCOE
(Signature)

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