

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Madam Chief Justice, distinguished members of the Legislature, proud veterans, honored guests, fellow New Jerseyans:

Five years ago, when I took my oath of office on this stage, the Trenton War Memorial had reached a sad state of disrepair. Look around you now.

Once again, New Jersey has a war memorial as majestic and proud as the heroism it honors. I want to thank all those who played a part in restoring this remarkable structure.



It is fitting that we remember New Jersey's patriots and rededicate this memorial to them. As we do so, it is also fitting that we look back at what we've done together for our state and rededicate ourselves to building its future.

As I begin, I want to applaud the outstanding work accomplished last year by the Legislature and, in particular, the two gentlemen sitting behind me.



Whether the issue was auto insurance or open space or a property tax freeze for seniors, Senate President DiFrancesco and Speaker Collins have always put the people first. Working in collaboration with minority leaders Codey and Doria, they have helped New Jersey achieve some remarkable things. Gentlemen, I salute you and I thank you.



Since I have been Governor, I'm often asked, "What do you want to be known for? What do you want your legacy to be?"



It's a tough question. This state is too diverse, its challenges too great, for us to focus all our energies on any one area, no matter how worthy.

I don't want to be known just as the tax-cutting governor. But I'm proud that together, we cut taxes 17 times. That working families are keeping more of what

they earn. And that today in New Jersey, more people are working than ever before.

I don't want to be known just as the crime-fighting governor. But I'm proud that laws we've passed have made our state a tougher place for criminals and a safer place for families. Today, New Jersey has the lowest crime rate in a quarter of a century.

I don't want to be known just as the education governor. But I'm proud that we have put in place tough academic standards. That we have charter schools opening all around the state. And that for the first time in three decades, we have put the spotlight where it belongs: not in the courtroom, but in the classroom.



I don't want to be known just as the welfare reform governor. But I'm proud that, together, in a bipartisan spirit, we have helped families get back on the road to self-sufficiency. Today, the welfare caseload in New Jersey is 45 percent lower than the day I took office.

Our citizens deserve leaders who are tax cutters, crime fighters, education and welfare reformers, and so much more.

So let the fullness of our record mark my tenure as governor - and let that record be the health of our economy, the prosperity of our workforce, and the strength of our families.

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