

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Delivers State of the State Address

01/14/2020

"Building a New Jersey that Works for Every Family"

January 14, 2020

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

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EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

Lieutenant Governor Oliver.

Senate President Sweeney.

Assembly Speaker Coughlin.

Majority Leaders Weinberg and Greenwald.

Minority Leaders Kean and Bramnick.

Members of the 219th Legislature.

Chief Justice Rabner and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, and Judge Grant

Members of the Cabinet.

Former Governors Florio, DiFrancesco, McGreevey, and Codey.

First Lady Tammy Murphy.

Distinguished faith leaders, veterans, members of organized labor, honored guests, and my fellow New Jerseyans.

Five weeks ago, today, our state was shattered by the gunfire of anti-Semitism and hate.


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In Jersey City, a heralded police detective – Joseph Seals – and three innocent people – Mindy Ferencz, Moshe Deutsch, and Douglas Miguel Rodriguez – were murdered in what we now know was an act of domestic terror fueled by a vicious and unjustifiable hate.

This was an act of hate against the Jewish community and law enforcement, but it impacted everyone. Hundreds of schoolchildren and their educators were held in lockdown, including in a Catholic school across the street. Worried parents feared the worst. African-American residents hid in their basements.

Without the tremendous response of everyone in law enforcement, I shudder to think how much worse that day could have been for Jersey City and for our state. If ever there was a time for us to recognize the bravery and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform, it was that day.

We have several honored guests with us today. And, through them, we have the opportunity to give our thanks to our entire law enforcement community for their heroism, selflessness, sacrifice, and service on one of our most-trying days.

I would like to ask Laura Seals, the widow of Detective Joe Seals, Jersey City Police Chief Michael Kelly, Deputy Chief of Police Nick Scerbo, and Detective Robert Dunn to all stand.

December 10th also highlighted how close-knit our tremendous communities of faith are. All of us, regardless of where we worship, or by what name we call our creator, were attacked that day.

One of my heroes, Senator Robert F. Kennedy, quoted the Greek playwright Aeschylus on the evening of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Those words still give us comfort: “And even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.”

Over the past weeks, we have been brought together – as one New Jersey family – first in shock, then in mourning, and now in our commitment to stamping out anti-Semitism.

I want to be clear, we are committed to ensuring that our communities of faith have the resources they need to be safe. I will proudly sign legislation to provide additional security aid for our houses of worship, and to expand the definition of, and penalties for, domestic terrorism. I thank Assemblyman Gary Schaer for championing this cause.

The scar of anti-Semitism on our state is still fresh. The grief of four families is also still fresh.

Let us commit to using this new year to heal the rifts in our society. This is New Jersey. When someone tries to pull us apart, they only ever succeed in bringing us closer together.

And, I know we will heal.

We gather together at the dawn of a new year, and a new decade. The days and months before us are filled with potential and bursting with opportunity.

And, yet, even as the new year unfolds, our mission does not change. That, together, we must build an economy and a state that works for every New Jersey family.

Our values have not shifted. We are on the side of the middle class and all those working to get there.

We have taken on the tough fights that matter. We are working to change the culture in Trenton. And we are putting the needs of families ahead of the well-connected and entrenched special interests. And our work will not slow down.

So, joining together, we must continue to make smart investments for our collective future, restore fiscal responsibility, and change Trenton's culture.

Looking out, this room is packed with people who are proud to call themselves New Jerseyans.

We find commonality in – among so much – our history. Like, the state where the first game of college football was played.

And, to that end, I see one favorite son who has come back to intensify the Jersey pride we feel along the banks of the Old Raritan. Let's welcome home the returning head football coach of the Rutgers University Scarlet Knights, Greg Schiano.

I would like to also thank Rutgers President Dr. Bob Barchi for his years of service to our state's flagship institution of higher education. I am watching closely as Rutgers undertakes finding its next great president – because, as Rutgers goes, so goes New Jersey.

The dawn of a new decade is a time of optimism, but we also find it a time of growing anxiety.

More than ever, we must stay true to our promises and hold firm to our commitments. And, we have already done so.

Over the past year, by working together, we have made New Jersey a better, more hopeful place to call home. And, we will continue to do so.

And, because of this, I am proud to report that the state of our state is stronger and fairer than ever.

Now, some might say, two years into this journey, we are halfway through. I'm leaning toward saying we're a quarter of the way through. But that is another speech for another day.

Making Smart Investments in the Middle Class

But, already, in just two years, New Jerseyans are seeing results because we are doing what we were all sent here to do.

We are investing in them.

Every family worries about how they will make ends meet or how they can cover an unexpected expense. That's why we're raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, why we created and expanded tax breaks for working families, why we're attacking the sources of high property taxes, and why we're providing more property tax relief than ever.

Too many families wrestle with how they balance work and family – particularly at a moment of need. So, we expanded paid family leave and guaranteed the right to earned sick leave.

Some families – our military families – are also anxious about their futures, and whether they may soon be deployed. We owe it to them, and to the veterans who preceded them, to create a state where their place is secured, and where they feel supported.

Our families lose sleep over the cost of health insurance coverage, how to pay their medical expenses or about the financial turmoil an unexpected accident or illness will cause.

In stark contrast to President Trump, we're protecting the Affordable Care Act, which has benefited millions of our residents. I remain incredibly proud of the work we have done to protect the tenets of the ACA and to establish the State-Based Health Exchange which will go online later this year.

But, the simple fact is that despite this progress, the cost of health care is still too high. Our residents, our families, and our businesses all struggle with the high cost of coverage, the cost of medications, high deductibles, out-of-pocket expenses, and more.

We've implemented smart policies, like the historic reforms Speaker Coughlin and Senator Joe Vitale sponsored to protect consumers from surprise out-of-network bills.

But we can do more.

So, I am establishing an Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency, in the Governor's Office, to work across state agencies and lead critical efforts to reduce consumer health care costs, make insurance more affordable, and improve price transparency.

And – to ensure we have the facts – I am directing the Department of Banking and Insurance to work with this new Office to track the actual costs residents pay for the health care services they receive. Armed with this data, we will make smart decisions to limit cost increases and set new standards for quality and transparency.

We have some of the nation's, if not the world's, leading hospitals and health care facilities. We are home to groundbreaking research and treatments. We need to ensure that these are accessible to everyone.

We will also seek to better integrate behavioral and physical health care. Especially for our young people, it will allow us to better identify and treat core youth health-care issues like anxiety, depression, and suicide.

This will also be a powerful tool to further combat our opioid epidemic – as well as the broader fight against addiction and mental health illnesses that, when left untreated, lead to tragedy.

The preliminary numbers suggest New Jersey saw a three-percent decrease in the number of individuals lost to opioids last year, after three years of double-digit increases. This is not a number to celebrate – 3,021 lives lost is still 3,021 precious lives too many. But, it should give us a measure of confidence that our targeted, evidence-based, and data-driven whole-of-government approach is the right one.

And, we will continue the strong partnerships the First Lady has created across the state – government officials and legislators, health care practitioners, faith leaders, and community activists – to combat our Black infant and maternal mortality crisis. We will not stop until New Jersey is the safest state in the nation to give birth.

To be clear, we can't do all of what I just said alone. We need our hospitals and providers, insurers, and consumers to join us in these efforts.

I'm proud we are fighting the Trump administration's efforts to block women from receiving vital information critical for them to make important decisions.

Together, we've protected funding for Planned Parenthood and women's health care. We ended the prior administration's eight-year-long effort to starve these critical facilities.

But, this must go beyond just providing funding to make up for the loss of Title X money. It's about protecting a woman's fundamental and constitutional right to full reproductive freedom.

So, let's commit to codifying a woman's full reproductive rights in state law. At a time when these rights are under attack nationwide, let's make it clear where New Jersey stands.

Our families worry about their children's futures, and whether they can afford one. So, together, we've expanded pre-K and made a STEM education more widely available.

We've become the first state in the history of our nation to make arts education available to every single child in our public schools.

And, today, our public schools are ranked as the very best in the entire country. Let's thank our public-school educators and Educational Support Professionals, who do this outstanding work every day.

But, we're not done.

In this 401st year since the first enslaved Africans arrived on the shores of this continent, we're committed to furthering the work of the Amistad Commission and the NJEA Amistad Stakeholder Group to ensure that the African American story is made real not just for all our students, but for our educators through the new Amistad Journey program.

Likewise, with the rise of anti-Semitism, we renew our commitment to the mission of the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, as well.

We're putting a college education back within reach. We've opened the doors to a tuition-free community college education to thousands of eligible students, and put in place safeguards to combat college debt.

And, for those who want the opportunity, we've reinvested in workforce development and apprenticeships like never before.

We are building a New Jersey where everyone belongs and everyone matters. We are seeing the reinvigoration of our cities, from Newark to Camden, Trenton to Paterson, and Elizabeth to Atlantic City.

In fact, Atlantic City just saw its bond rating improved for the second time in as many months, proof that our collaborative and cooperative approach to turning Atlantic City around is the right path to take.

We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Lieutenant Governor Oliver, and her team at the Department of Community Affairs, for this progress.

Our people want New Jersey to stand at the forefront of the national fight for justice, so we worked together, to allow the expungement of records of residents whose futures have been held back because of past convictions, to once again give residents on parole or probation their right to vote, and to give our proud immigrant community the ability to earn a driver's license.

We received the far-reaching and transformative recommendations of the Criminal Sentencing and Disposition Commission, led by former Chief Justice Deborah Poritz and former president of NOBLE Jiles Ship. And, I thank Senators Sandra Cunningham and Nellie Pou for serving on the commission.

Let's recommit to enacting its recommendations, which include the elimination of mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug offenses. Let's lead the way for creating safe communities and neighborhoods through a criminal justice system that lives up to that all-important word, "justice."

And, let's do this not just because it's the right thing to do, but because our state will only be stronger – and better – when everyone is a full participant in our economy, our democracy, and our society.

I have also spoken about wealth disparity as a persistent issue that separates and segregates our communities, harms predominantly Black and Latino families, and prevents our state from fulfilling its potential. These disparities have deep roots and complex causes. Overcoming them will require us to leave behind old ways of thinking so we can ensure no resident gets left behind.

So, I am creating a new task force – government officials, academic researchers, and faith and community leaders – with the specific charge to address wealth disparity from all angles and all causes. Their work will better inform our work in closing these gaps, and ensure that the communities which have historically been

left behind can help us lead.

Where residents have felt marginalized and left out, we've worked to renew their faith that they have a place in our family. And, for our LGBTQ+ community, we're making sure they will never fear for who they love, how they identify, or who they are.

Despite the inaction in Washington, New Jersey is now leading the nation in sensible gun safety measures and our communities are stronger and the gun lobby is weaker.

We did that together.

Likewise, we know climate change is real. Instead of denying reality, we're acting on it. To win the next generation, we're working to be the first state to incorporate climate change education across our K-12 state education standards.

And, we're going to make the fight against climate change a cornerstone of the innovation economy.

Two years ago, when our administration took office, New Jersey's clean energy future was stalled. Today, we are on the way to an ambitious goal of 7,500 MW of offshore wind energy by 2035 – enough to meet half of New Jersey's entire retail electric needs, remove billions of tons of fossil-fuel pollution from our air, and create tens of thousands of good-paying union jobs.

And, in two weeks, I will unveil New Jersey's new Energy Master Plan, our comprehensive roadmap for arriving at our goal of a 100-percent clean-energy economy by 2050.

We're working to protect every school and home in New Jersey from the dangers of lead.

I applaud Mayor Ras Baraka, Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, Freeholder President Brendan Gill, and many legislators, for their partnership to fast-track the elimination of lead service lines in the City of Newark.

But, we all know this is a statewide problem. It extends far beyond just lead in old water lines – lead paint is a much bigger problem – and it extends to our suburban and rural communities.

When I proposed my plan for taking on our lead crisis, in all the ways it manifests itself, I did not shy from acknowledging that it will require significant investment. This is an acknowledgement shared in this chamber, as well.

We will need funds to replace old lead lines and remediate lead paint in homes. We will need to mobilize a veritable army of union workers – plumbers and pipefitters, remediation experts, carpenters and laborers, among so many other tradespeople.

Let's work together, now, to come to an agreement on what this investment needs to be – so we can put it before the voters this November, and can invest in our communities that much faster.

Over the past two years, since the beginning of our administration and of our work together, our economy has responded by adding and supporting more than 72,000 new private-sector jobs.

In 2019, we set, and then reset, record lows for unemployment since the state began keeping records in 1976.

Wages are increasing. More people are entering our workforce. This is all good news.

But, none of this progress happened by accident. Economic progress does not happen on its own. Social progress does not happen on its own.

They only happen when we work together. And, when we put the people we serve ahead of everything else. We didn't achieve this despite our progressive economic policies. We achieved this because of those policies.

And, yet, we're not done.

Restoring Fiscal Responsibility

Many of our residents are anxious about their place in an increasingly unsettled global economic and political climate.

A stronger state is a more resilient state – more fiscally responsible and better prepared for any weakening in the economy, and more capable of protecting families by giving them the tools and opportunities they need to not just get by, but to get stronger.

Changing the culture also means we stop making the hole deeper.

We can't lose sight of what makes us stronger and fairer – smart policymaking and staying true to growing and strengthening our middle class.

These are the key lessons we learned the hard way in the Great Recession.

We've built a surplus this state hasn't seen in years. We're watching every penny. Last year, I took the steps necessary to ensure we made the first honest-to-goodness deposit into our Rainy Day Fund in more than a decade.

And, we're working in partnership with our public workforce to find hundreds of millions of dollars in health care savings and efficiencies without scapegoating them – and to them, I say, thank you for your partnership.

There are still more opportunities for partnership, especially with our educators and ESPs, who have experienced unfair and unsustainable consumer health-care cost-increases under Chapter 78.

I look forward to working with labor leaders and legislators in this new session to provide them relief.

Just as we did with in collaboration with state workers, we will reduce health care costs without sacrificing health-care quality, while generating additional savings for our property taxpayers – and let's not forget that the overwhelming number of our educators and ESPs are New Jersey property taxpayers.

This is the kind of win-win-win approach we need as we continue taking on the root causes of our high property taxes, and seek to bring stability and relief to our middle class and seniors.

We've restored more than \$500 million in formula-based aid to our public schools – and every new dollar in state aid is a dollar that isn't shouldered by property taxpayers.

And, working with the Lieutenant Governor and the Senate President, we've renewed a commitment to shared services. For the past two years, and at my request, Mayors Nicolas Platt and Jordan Glatt have served as our administration's shared-services czars, and they've worked hard to bring communities to the table together.

And, today, we have more shared-service agreements under consideration than ever before – 980 at last count, and still more coming in.

To help these communities, we've enhanced both capacity and capabilities at the Department of Community Affairs to provide greater in-house assistance, and we've unveiled innovative new programs to spur more towns and school districts to look at new ways to work together.

I think we can all agree, our collective task is to fix the gimmicks in Trenton, not raise property taxes that hit the middle class the hardest.

Some in Trenton claim the best way to make our state stronger is to undo the commonsense, middle-class-building accomplishments that we've made together. They want us to make the same false and failed choices made a decade ago.

Trenton tried their way. And, history is clear – that way failed. New Jersey hobbled its way through economic recovery because their choices failed to create jobs and failed to raise incomes.

They failed to keep New Jersey from falling behind.

Together, we must choose differently.

I am going to fight every day for the middle-class values that built New Jersey in the first place.

It's why I am not giving up the fight for a millionaire's tax, so we can ease the property tax burden on millions of middle-class families and seniors, and do more to help fund our public schools. Overwhelming majorities of residents – of all political stripes – support this. We should, too.

The millionaires and corporate CEOs made out just fine in the last recession – and, I assure you, they will again when the next one hits. Thanks to the federal tax system, the richest 400 Americans now pay a lower tax rate than the nation's middle class – the first time that has ever happened.

The answer to ensuring we come out of any recession stronger than when we went in is not to tell the middle class and the most vulnerable, "perhaps another day, but not now."

That choice was made in the last recession. And, the middle class paid the price.

We lagged in no small part because we were stuck in an old-fashioned belief that when a job is lost in a recession, all a worker has to do is wait things out and get it back once the economy recovers.

The Great Recession proved the fallacy and foolhardiness of that old way of thinking. Many of the jobs lost never returned, and more workers were left without the skills necessary for the new jobs that beckoned.

We will not repeat this mistake. We will make New Jersey a national leader in welcoming and maintaining the jobs of tomorrow.

We have been ranked the smartest state in the nation, yet I have met CEOs and corporate board chairs whose first question about New Jersey is whether we have the homegrown workforce they need.

And, on the flip side, I have talked with New Jersey college graduates afraid that they won't find the employment they want with the skills they have.

For us to succeed, we need to close this gap.

I directed our Jobs and Economic Opportunity Council to generate a plan to do just that. I thank Higher Education Secretary Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis, Education Commissioner Dr. Lamont Repollet, Labor Commissioner Rob Asaro-Angelo, and EDA CEO Tim Sullivan, and members of my policy staff, among so many others.

Today, I am proud to present this plan, which we are calling, simply, "Jobs NJ."

And, tomorrow, I will visit the East Brunswick campus of Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools to further highlight this new effort.

Jobs NJ is how we ensure our state prospers in good times and how it overcomes tough times.

It is a way to ease the anxiety so many feel as they wonder how the future will work for them and not against them.

Jobs NJ has a clear mission – to better align our education system to meet the future needs of both employers and workers, and do better at matching our workers with potential employers.

Jobs NJ will clear a path to ongoing job training, so residents can continue to learn and compete as the needs of employers evolve with new technologies and new economic realities.

It will also close longstanding structural and racial equity gaps that have kept some of our residents from job training and skills development – whether they come from historically underserved communities, are new immigrants, or are formerly incarcerated individuals reentering the workforce.

It will also help the differently abled to be full and equal participants in our economic future.

And, importantly, Jobs NJ will dovetail with our nonstop efforts to make our state the home for leaders in the innovation economy.

Last month, I announced four new appointments to the Economic Development Authority Board – Virginia Bauer, Aisha Glover, Rosemari Hicks, and Marcia Marley.

They mirror our state in its diversity and breadth of experiences, and they recognize that economic development isn't one-size-fits-all, but that the unique needs of each business, and each community, must be given full consideration.

We now know that some companies received tax credits they did not deserve and took credit for jobs they did not create. They didn't just hurt their own reputations, they hurt the reputations of the many more good corporate actors who have done exactly what they said they would.

I've now spent well over a year working alongside Senate President Sweeney and Speaker Coughlin, and many of you, to create a new system of incentives – one complete with greater transparency and safeguards, and commonsense caps.

Once again, I firmly believe that a targeted and responsible incentive system is important to our economic future. We all share this view, and we should have gotten this done. Unfortunately, the legislative session ended yesterday without a final agreement on tax incentives.

But, today starts a new legislative session, and I am just as determined to finish this job now as I was yesterday and as I was on October 1, 2018, when I first put forward the case for a new way of doing things.

Let's get this done now. There are thousands of jobs just waiting for us to do so.

Let's send a clear and unmistakable message to our people that we can successfully tackle the big issues, and that we can put the interests of our taxpayers ahead of the special interests.

And, I look forward to our continued partnership to fix NJ TRANSIT.

At the end of the day, we still must answer to the commuter whose train was cancelled, or whose bus is over capacity. And, I won't be happy until we bat 1.000.

But, let's be clear, the series of reforms we are undertaking to change NJ TRANSIT's fundamental operations, and the hundreds of millions of dollars in state budget investments we have restored, are unquestionably

improving things – data clearly shows that cancellations are down and on-time performance is up.

This past year, we saw the first three classes of prospective new rail engineers complete their classroom work – and one week from today I'll celebrate another – a significant step in restoring the depleted ranks of licensed professionals we need to keep the lines running.

NJ TRANSIT is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in new rolling stock – rail cars, locomotive engines, and buses – to update its fleet for increased commuter comfort and greater reliability.

These steps, as we all know, are long overdue. The prior administration left NJ TRANSIT to wither on the vine. They allowed the ranks of rail engineers to be depleted. I want to thank the union men and women who have hung in there despite some very difficult working conditions.

Soon, NJ TRANSIT will announce a 10-year strategic plan, and, beyond that, a five-year capital plan, to guide the agency through this new decade. These aren't just "new" plans – it's actually the first time these have ever been done.

If a transit system doesn't know where it's going, it's never going to get there. That's what our strategic and capital plans will change.

In a few weeks, I will be back to present my Fiscal Year 2021 budget proposal. I certainly will have more to say about NJ TRANSIT then.

But, let's be honest. It will take more than just dollars and cents to raise NJ TRANSIT to where we know it can be, and where our commuters need it to be. It will also take a clear mission and a clear vision.

For the first time, NJ TRANSIT will now have both. And, all of us will have a new set of standards by which we can track its progress.

All of what we've accomplished is changing the trajectory of our state.

Changing the Culture of Trenton

But, I was also elected to move the needle here in Trenton, and to change a culture that many New Jerseyans feel is out of step with their lives, and behind the times in which we live.

That's why all we have done to restore fiscal responsibility has mattered so much – increasing our surplus, putting away funds for a rainy day, honestly making our pension payments.

This is changing the culture.

But we can and must do more to gain the trust of our residents and decrease their rightful cynicism.

In the coming weeks, I will propose a series of ethics reforms to, among other things, strengthen financial disclosures, tighten pay-to-play requirements, expand transparency, and increase awareness to the goings-on here in Trenton.

It's been more than a decade since the executive and legislative branches undertook comprehensive ethics reform. It's time now for us to look at it anew, with a whole-of-government approach that ensures we all live under the same laws, and play by the same rules.

And, nothing – I repeat, nothing – more exemplifies that need to change the longstanding culture than the pernicious sexism and abuse that still creeps across these hallways, at conferences, and in meeting rooms.

We all must be disgusted by the stories which women – across the entire spectrum of race, age, and

experience – tell of their mistreatment by men who felt empowered, if not protected, by Trenton's culture.

For too many years, too many people in power have turned their eyes away from behavior they knew was not only happening, but was pervasive in Trenton.

We know that Trenton is often resistant to change, and this is a most egregious failure.

Today, I am calling for us all to work together to tear down the existing system and replace it with one that treats everyone with equal dignity and respect. I am calling on my partners in government to join me in this mission.

And, I am calling on those who have stood idly by and allowed this behavior to flourish to start speaking up and speaking out whenever they witness injustice.

To my fellow men, we can and must do better, not just by changing our own behavior, but by making the conscious choice to not ignore the behavior of others.

And, to the women listening, we will listen, and we will act.

Our Administration has enacted several groundbreaking reforms to make our system survivor-focused, instead of geared to the protection of abusers.

Under Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, law enforcement now has clear new directives for investigating crimes of sexual assault, ensuring greater empathy for – and support of – survivors. We updated the state's discrimination and sexual harassment policies so they lean more directly in support of state employees who have experienced sexual harassment or discrimination.

I signed the Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights. And, just yesterday, I signed both a series of bills to protect survivors and encourage people to speak up, and legislation to create a new commission on campus sexual assault.

This is progress, but it is not nearly enough.

We can all point to the number of women serving in the Legislature, in the Cabinet, or in other important positions in our government and claim that misogyny no longer exists. We can believe all we want that this is a problem somewhere else in government. And, we'd be fooling ourselves to think that.

Misogyny is alive and well. But, together, we can change that.

We can do this. We must do this. And, we must do this together.

Closing

Two years ago, we began a journey to renew our New Jersey values.

We began a journey to restore investment in our people, restore our sense of fiscal responsibility, and change Trenton's culture.

We're taking on challenges which developed and deepened across a generation, as past leaders neglected the problems facing ordinary New Jerseyans while taking care of the special interests and the well-connected, if not just taking care of themselves.

Putting self-interest before the common good, the next-day headline before the long-term work – those were deliberate choices.

And, because of that, the challenges left to us won't be solved overnight. In fact, many can't.

We owe it to the people of New Jersey to be honest about that.

The easy way out would have been for us to continue pursuing shortcuts that could paper over our problems and make us feel good in the short-term. But, I refuse to let our problems become bigger.

Where others have focused only on the next election, we're focused on the next generation.

I am proud that we have made headway in attacking our challenges fairly and honestly.

Today, and together, we are not only making different choices, we're making better choices. And, at no point have we sat back and claimed, "mission accomplished."

I am not going to lose sight of who it is we have to look out for. In our effort to make New Jersey stronger, we will not leave out our middle class, or those striving to join its ranks.

Our job is to lift New Jersey up, and to make it stronger, fairer, and more resilient to the unknowns of tomorrow – so our residents can feel more secure not just in their futures, but also in their children's.

We're now two years into this journey together, and look how far we've come. And, yet, we have so much more to do and so much more to fix.

And, as we do so, we will continue to be who we said we'd be.

And, we will keep making New Jersey stronger and fairer for everyone who calls our state home.

Thank you, may God bless us and the people we represent, and may God continue to bless the great State of New Jersey and the United States of America.

Governor Phil Murphy

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