



## Final Edition of This Week in New Jersey: We're from Jersey Baby - January 17th, 2026

Posted on - 01/17/2026



### Governor Phil Murphy delivered Final 2026 State of the State Address

Governor Phil Murphy delivered his 2026 State of the State Address at the State House in Trenton, the eighth and final address of his Administration. In his speech, Governor Murphy highlighted how his Administration has made transformational progress in building a stronger and fairer state, where every New Jerseyan has the opportunity to pursue a brighter future. Under the Governor's leadership, the state government has prioritized the needs of working people, from raising the minimum wage to taxing millionaires, while at the same time securing a brighter economic future and delivering record-high property tax relief for households across New Jersey.

"Over the past eight years, we have proven that when we live by our Jersey values, our state government can serve the needs of working people, first and foremost, without compromising economic growth and prosperity," **said Governor Murphy**. "We are the Administration that governed by the principle of 'and' – not 'or.' We were who we said we'd be – and we did what we said we'd do. And it is thanks to everything we have accomplished that, today, our state is brimming with opportunity for all. New Jersey is where the American Dream was born – and it is where the American Dream lives on. I have never been more optimistic about New Jersey's future than I am today."

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### Murphy Administration Celebrates Fewest Judicial Vacancies in Over 20 Years

The New Jersey Senate confirmed 16 Superior Court judges, bringing the total number of confirmed judges nominated by Governor Murphy since January 2018 to 245. These confirmations reduced judicial vacancies to 11, the lowest number of judicial vacancies in more than two decades.

"Since taking office, we have been laser-focused on appointing high-quality nominees to the Superior Court from across the legal profession," **said Governor Murphy**. "Our Administration is proud to leave the Judiciary nearly fully staffed, ensuring that more New Jerseyans get the justice they deserve in a timely manner. I am grateful to the Senate, and in particular Senate President Nick Scutari and Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Brian Stack, for their partnership over the years in filling the judicial vacancies that surged during the COVID-19 pandemic."

Out of the State's 463 Superior Court seats, more than half have been initially appointed by Governor Murphy. The Murphy Administration has also



reappointed hundreds of sitting Superior Court judges, resulting in a total of 458 appointments and reappointments – touching nearly all of the Superior Court seats statewide. The prior gubernatorial administration had a total of 418 appointments and reappointments.

A number of nominations made by Governor Murphy mark historic firsts for representation for women and minority groups within the New Jersey Judiciary. By nominating highly-qualified judges from a diverse array of ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, the Governor has worked to ensure the Superior Court reflects the nine-and-a-half million residents of the Garden State.

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## First Lady Tammy Murphy Releases Nurture NJ: New Jersey Blueprint for Maternal and Infant Health and Path for the Next Decade

First Lady Tammy Murphy announced the release of

[Nurture NJ](#)

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: New Jersey Blueprint for Maternal and Infant Health and Path Forward for the Next Decade, a living roadmap to document and support the State's progress in transforming its maternal and infant health landscape. The report looks back on the accomplishments of the First Lady's

[Nurture NJ initiative](#)

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, provides a roadmap for other states looking to take on this work, and lays out forward-looking pillars to advance cross-sector action for maternal and infant health.

Nurture NJ brought thousands of partners together under a shared vision, directed unprecedented funding toward maternal and infant health efforts, and established mechanisms to support long-term sustainability so the work can continue and deepen over time. The report was informed by extensive stakeholder engagement, review and integration of findings from the [Rutgers School of Public Health evaluation of Nurture NJ](#)

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"When we started Nurture NJ eight years ago, we faced a stark reality: New Jersey, a state with world-class health systems and extraordinary providers, was failing far too many of its mothers and babies – especially Black and Brown mothers and babies," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "Through Nurture NJ, we have reached into every corner of our state in our tireless pursuit of transformational change. And, while we are immensely proud of the progress we have achieved, we know much work remains. With this report, we are leaving behind a clear and detailed roadmap to maintain our momentum and realize our goal of making New Jersey the safest, most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby."

"Over this administration, the importance of maternal and infant health has been amplified, and initiatives like Nurture NJ have been instrumental in bringing disparities to light and driving systemic change," **said Lisa Asare, President and CEO of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority**. "We have made tremendous progress – but there is still work ahead. It will require us to activate, collaborate, and sustain our momentum. In New Jersey, we're doing the work, building partnerships, and leading the charge to ensure every mom and baby is supported at every stage."

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## Netflix Celebrates Partnership and Progress at Fort Monmouth Closing Ceremony

This week, at The Park Loft, Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, First Lady Tammy Murphy, Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill, and other elected officials celebrated the closing of the purchase of the Mega Parcel at Fort Monmouth for the development of Netflix Studios Fort Monmouth.

"We first announced our plans to transform Fort Monmouth back in 2022," **said Ted Sarandos, co-CEO of Netflix**. "It is incredible to think about how what started as an idea is on its way to becoming a reality - a state-of-the-art production facility that will bring new jobs and economic opportunities to New Jersey. This project is also a great example of what real cooperation looks like. Over the last few years, we've worked with everyone from the Trump Administration to the US Army Corps of Engineers to the Fire Departments in Eatontown and Oceanport."

"As we speak, Netflix is shooting 2 films in the Garden State. And those productions employ over 500 people, both in front of and behind the cameras. That's

good for the industry, and it's good for the country. The production renaissance in New Jersey is good for American jobs and American competitiveness," **continued Sarandos.**

"With construction already underway at Fort Monmouth, Netflix Studios is no longer a promise—it's a reality taking shape in the heart of Monmouth County," **said Governor Phil Murphy.** "This project represents the transformation of a long-dormant site into a world-class creative campus that will generate thousands of jobs, spark new businesses, and anchor New Jersey's film and television industry for decades to come. Netflix's investment affirms that the birthplace of film is where its future is being built once again."

"The progress and momentum we are seeing with the Netflix Studios Fort Monmouth project is a clear sign that New Jersey has become a place where world-class stories will be told for years to come, making our state a permanent cornerstone of the film and television ecosystem," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy.** "I am thrilled to see this industry expand, support skilled workers, local businesses, and creative talent at every level, and I look forward to both the art and economic growth that will come out of this exciting project."

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## Governor Murphy Signs Bipartisan Legislation to Modernize and Reform Farmland Assessment Program

Governor Phil Murphy signed the "Farmland and Woodland Tax Assessment Integrity and Investment Act" (

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) into law during the final episode of the "Ask Governor Murphy" radio broadcast on WNYC, WHY, and WBGO. This bipartisan legislation advances significant reforms to New Jersey's Farmland Assessment Program to modernize our taxation system for farmland and woodland owners while adding invaluable voices to the State Farmland Evaluation Committee.

Over the past eight years, "Ask Governor Murphy" has welcomed hundreds of calls from constituents seeking to ask the Governor a question on a range of issues and topics. One such caller, Jack Curtis of Mendham, a retired educator from Morris County, made a lasting impression with his persistent advocacy to reform farmland taxation and improve the system as a whole for farmers and taxpayers. Governor Murphy met with Mr. Curtis in the State House in April 2024, and continued to work together for nearly two years on the legislation, which passed the Legislature earlier this week and was signed live on air this evening. This legislation comes one year after Mr. Curtis was honored as a special guest at the January 2025 State of the State, where Governor Murphy

highlighted his reform proposal.

Thanks to Mr. Curtis' determination, Governor Murphy was proud to sign legislation updating the "Farmland Assessment Act of 1964," P.L. 1964, c.48 (C. 54:4-23.1 et seq.). This new law requires the State Farmland Evaluation Committee (FEC) to periodically adjust the minimum and anticipated gross sales and income requirements for land that qualifies as actively devoted to agricultural and horticultural use for valuation, assessment, and taxation under the act. These changes better reflect the realities faced by the state's farming communities and ensure the program continues to serve our dedicated farmers and protect the Garden State's natural resources.

"This new legislation will strengthen the Farmland Assessment Program and establish the necessary requirements to ensure fair taxation and environmental protection," **said Governor Murphy**. "I thank Jack Curtis for his unwavering dedication to ensuring that New Jersey's agricultural and horticultural lands are better protected and advocated for. This bill reflects our Administration's commitment to supporting and preserving the essential agricultural landscape of the Garden State. I'm proud that Jack brought this issue to my attention years ago as a constituent and worked patiently and collaboratively with us to make real change – this is exactly what responsive government is meant to do."

"The bill takes further steps to improve the integrity of the Farmland Assessment program by adding forestry expertise to the Evaluation Committee," **said Ed Wengryn, Secretary of Agriculture**. "The bill also calls for additional reporting that will improve the transparency of the program."

"I am deeply grateful to Governor Murphy, his administration, Director of Taxation Marita Sciarrotta, and bipartisan legislators like Senator Joe Pennacchio, Senator Anthony Bucco, and Assemblyman William Spearman for enacting the Farmland and Woodland Tax Assessment Integrity and Investment Act," **said Jack Curtis, a retired educator who was a special guest at the last State of the State**. "This bill is a helpful step towards making sure that the farmland assessment benefits real farmers, and it builds on other efforts like an increased sales threshold and online filing system. I'm proud to advocate for accountability and appreciate how seriously the Governor takes constituent services."

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## Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Revising Process for Filling Vacant U.S. House of Representatives Seats

Governor Phil Murphy signed into law

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, revising the requirements for filling a U.S. House of Representatives seat following a vacancy. The revised requirements seek to eliminate previous challenges that have led to delays in electing a new representative.

"Securing a consistent voice for New Jersey's congressional districts is critical to making sure our government is working for every New Jerseyan," **said Governor Murphy**. "This law eliminates barriers to ensuring House seats are filled as quickly as possible without unnecessary confusion for voters or long periods without representation when a seat becomes vacant."

Recent experience in New Jersey under previous law has demonstrated that the legal requirements for filling a House vacancy could result in lengthy delays that left New Jerseyans unrepresented for extended periods of time. In addition, previous law did not allow the New Jersey Department of State to modify the numerous deadlines of New Jersey's election statutes, which led to significant administrative burdens as candidates and election officials struggled to meet those deadlines within the compressed time frames for special primary and special general elections (70-76 days and 64-70 days, respectively).

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## Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Creating Greater Oversight of Charter Schools

Governor Phil Murphy signed two bills to modernize the Charter School Program Act of 1995, establishing new transparency requirements and creating greater State oversight of charter schools and their management organizations.

"Every child in New Jersey deserves to receive a high-quality education, and taxpayers deserve to know how public funds are being used. That is why the principles of transparency and accountability must apply to charter schools that receive State dollars, just as they do to our public education system," **said Governor Murphy**. "Stronger oversight is necessary to ensure public funds are used responsibly and that students – not private interests – are the top priority. With today's bill signings, we are setting a higher standard for charter schools operating in New Jersey and giving the State greater authority to hold them accountable to the communities they serve."

"We appreciate the collaboration of the many individuals and diverse perspectives that came together to inform these updates that modernize the Charter School Program Act," **said New Jersey Department of Education Kevin Dehmer**. "These bills strengthen the framework governing charter school operations, enhance accountability and transparency, while maintaining the innovative model that has long characterized New Jersey's charter school communities."

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## Governor Murphy Signs First Responders Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Protection Act Into Law

Governor Phil Murphy signed

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, also known as the New Jersey First Responders Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Protection Act, providing employment protections for paid first responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder under certain conditions.

"Our first responders put themselves on the line daily to keep our residents safe," **said Governor Murphy**. "This bill recognizes the real and lasting impact that traumatic experiences can have and ensures that first responders are treated with dignity, compassion, and fairness when they need it most."

The New Jersey First Responders Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Protection Act prohibits employers from discharging, harassing, retaliating, or otherwise discriminating against a paid first responder who requests or takes leave related to a qualifying diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. It also guarantees that a first responder who has taken such leave will be restored to their prior position once they are cleared to return to work by a mental health professional.

The Act applies to a broad range of first responders, including law enforcement officers; paid firefighters; paid members of duly incorporated first aid, emergency, or rescue squad associations; paid emergency medical technicians; paid paramedics; and paid 9-1-1 first responder dispatchers. By extending these protections, the bill acknowledges the cumulative psychological toll associated with exposure to traumatic incidents such as violent crimes, serious accidents or injuries, and medical emergencies.

Employers who violate the law may be subject to legal action. The bill allows affected employees or former employees to file an action in the Division of Workers' Compensation and the judge of compensation may order remedies including reinstatement to employment, restoration of lost benefits and seniority rights, back pay, and other appropriate relief.



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## Governor Murphy Signs Speaker Coughlin's Historic Family Leave Expansion Legislation

Governor Phil Murphy signed into law A3451/S2950, revising New Jersey Family Leave Act (NJFLA) eligibility requirements to extend job-protected leave to hundreds of thousands of additional employees.

The New Jersey Family Leave Act (NJFLA) provides 12 weeks of job-protected leave every 24 months to eligible employees who need to take time off to care for a family member with a serious health condition or to bond with a new child or a child recently placed for adoption or foster care. In addition to expanding job-protected leave, these new protections will also empower workers to utilize their Family Leave Insurance (FL) cash benefits, with the knowledge and comfort that they can return to their jobs. When the leave concludes, the employee is entitled to be restored to their position or a position of equivalent seniority, pay, and benefits and employers cannot retaliate against employees for taking or attempting to take leave.

Currently, for an employee to be eligible for NJFLA job-protected leave, the employee must work for an employer with 30 or more employees, have been employed for at least 12 months, and have worked 1,000 hours in the last 12 months. Today's legislation amends the eligibility requirements to include employees that work for an employer with 15 or more employees, have been employed for at least three months, and have worked 250 hours in the preceding 3 months.

The legislation also provides additional job protections to those employees who utilize Temporary Disability Insurance benefits (TDI) for their own medical needs, requiring that employees be restored to their position or a position of equivalent seniority, pay, and benefits upon their return.

"I am proud to sign this legislation into law and expand job protection to hundreds of thousands of additional New Jersey workers," **said Governor Murphy**. "By amending the eligibility requirements for job-protected leave, we are ensuring newer employees and employees of small businesses are not excluded from the protections of the New Jersey Family Leave Act. Now, employees will not have to work as long before being able to utilize their leave with the assurance that they can return to their job once the leave concludes."

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## Governor Murphy Announces Release of New Jersey Youth Mental Health Strategic Plan

Governor Phil Murphy announced the release of the [New Jersey Youth Mental Health Strategic Plan](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/762ern/zo77ft/ftx7xdb_!!J30X0ZrnC1o0tbA!PkIkhKScm0djZ5Voa0Bow10CpzVQMq5_LTVOMGwQVGuV6fe2wqWfoj0584ZvP2i4ZUD_yqRd1HyIVw$) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_https://t.e2ma.net/click/762ern/zo77ft/ftx7xdb\\_!!J30X0ZrnC1o0tbA!PkIkhKScm0djZ5Voa0Bow10CpzVQMq5\\_LTVOMGwQVGuV6fe2wqWfoj0584ZvP2i4ZUD\\_yqRd1HyIVw\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/762ern/zo77ft/ftx7xdb_!!J30X0ZrnC1o0tbA!PkIkhKScm0djZ5Voa0Bow10CpzVQMq5_LTVOMGwQVGuV6fe2wqWfoj0584ZvP2i4ZUD_yqRd1HyIVw$)), a roadmap to sustain progress across the State's continuum of youth mental health supports. The plan shares strategies that are already underway and highlights additional opportunities to foster youth resiliency, reduce stigma, facilitate care delivery, and support caregivers.

"Youth mental health has been a defining priority of my Administration – and was a key focus during my time as Chair of the National Governors Association," **said Governor Murphy**. "Our children are facing increasing isolation and social pressure brought on by our ever-changing digital landscape and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It's up to us to meet this moment with action and provide proper resources to support their complex mental health needs."

As Chair of the National Governors Association from 2022 to 2023, Governor Murphy raised national attention to the youth mental health crisis and consolidated best practices from across the country in [Strengthening Youth Mental Health – A Governor's Playbook](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/762ern/zo77ft/vly7xdb_!!J30X0ZrnC1o0tbA!PkIkhKScm0djZ5Voa0Bow10CpzVQMq5_LTVOMGwQVGuV6fe2wqWfoj0584ZvP2i4ZUD_yqSByHnTLA$) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_https://t.e2ma.net/click/762ern/zo77ft/vly7xdb\\_!!J30X0ZrnC1o0tbA!PkIkhKScm0djZ5Voa0Bow10CpzVQMq5\\_LTVOMGwQVGuV6fe2wqWfoj0584ZvP2i4ZUD\\_yqSByHnTLA\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/762ern/zo77ft/vly7xdb_!!J30X0ZrnC1o0tbA!PkIkhKScm0djZ5Voa0Bow10CpzVQMq5_LTVOMGwQVGuV6fe2wqWfoj0584ZvP2i4ZUD_yqSByHnTLA$)). The New Jersey Youth Mental Health Strategic Plan builds upon that work—highlighting strengths honed since the COVID-19 pandemic and offering strategies to expand prevention, early intervention, and crisis response through collaboration among government, schools, health care providers, and community members.

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## Governor Murphy Signs Illicit Opioid Supply Substance Poisoning Awareness Act

Governor Phil Murphy signed bipartisan legislation, known as the Illicit Opioid Supply Substances Poisoning Awareness Act, which requires school districts to provide instruction to students in grades 6-12 on the dangers of substances that are the most prevalent or emerging in the illicit opioid supply in New Jersey.

"Educating young people about the dangers of illicit opioids is a critical public health responsibility. Clear, honest information saves lives by helping students recognize risks and reduce harmful exposures," **said Governor Murphy**. "By directing our public schools to integrate age-appropriate instruction on illegal drugs, we are equipping our children with the tools necessary to make informed decisions. The opioid crisis is real and has had a devastating impact on countless families in our state and across the country. I am thankful to Patrice for her advocacy to advance this commonsense measure in honor of her son, Max. Her leadership on this issue is truly inspirational."

"Too many families have already experienced the unimaginable heartbreak of losing a child to the opioid epidemic. Prevention through education must remain a cornerstone of our response to this crisis, because talking to our kids about the dangers of opioids isn't optional – it's part of protecting them," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "Today's bill signing would not be possible without the tireless advocacy of Patrice Lenowitz, who turned her grief into activism. I applaud Patrice's dedication to honoring her son Max through this legislation and giving children across the state the resources they need to protect their health and well-being."

"The way we've been talking to our kids about drugs no longer reflects the reality they are facing," **said Patrice Lenowitz, a Woodcliff Lake resident who advocated for the creation of this legislation after her son, Max, died of fentanyl poisoning**. "Every life lost is a child's future erased and a family's story rewritten in agony. Primary prevention education is how we fight back—and how we win—by keeping our children informed, safe, and alive. I am deeply grateful for the bipartisan support behind Max's Law, and especially to Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy, who have stood by my family from the very beginning. Their leadership honored my son's life and carried us forward with compassion, dignity, and action."

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## Governor Murphy Announces Seventh Round of Medical Debt Relief, Eliminating Almost \$16 Million in Medical Debt for Nearly 14,000 New Jerseyans

In the Murphy Administration's seventh round of medical debt relief, Governor Phil Murphy announced that nearly 14,000 New Jersey residents will see almost \$16 million in medical bills abolished as a result of the State's ongoing partnership with national nonprofit Undue Medical Debt (Undue).

By leveraging approximately \$165,000 in American Rescue Plan funds from the State's investment in medical debt abolishment, Undue has purchased this debt from the secondary market. Undue-branded letters to those impacted are expected to arrive in the coming weeks.

First proposed during the [Governor's 2023 budget address](#)

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"Medical debt should never stand between New Jersey residents and the care they need. Too often, families are forced to make impossible choices after a health crisis, facing bills that grow faster than their ability to pay. Since day one, we have governed with the principle that health care is a right, not a privilege – and, across government, we have worked to break down barriers to accessing affordable services," **said Governor Murphy**. "By retiring this debt in partnership with Undue Medical Debt, we are easing a financial burden that has weighed on hundreds of thousands of households and taking a concrete step toward a health care system that puts people first – one that is fairer, more compassionate, and more accessible for everyone."

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- Lt. Governor Tahesha Way  
(/governor/admin/lt)
- In memoriam of Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver  
(/governor/admin/lt-sheila-y-oliver)
- Senior Staff  
(/governor/admin/staff)
- Cabinet  
(/governor/admin/cabinet)
- Office of Climate Action and the Green Economy  
(/governor/climateaction/)
- Office of Equity  
(/governor/admin/equity/)
- Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency  
(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)
- Boards, Commissions & Authorities  
(/governor/admin/bca)
- New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission  
(https://www.nj.gov/puertoricocommission/)
- Internship Opportunities  
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- Governor's Fellows Program

**Key Initiatives**

- Economy & Jobs  
(/governor/initiatives/#Economy)
- Education  
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- Environment  
(/governor/initiatives/#Environment)
- Health  
(/governor/initiatives/#Health)
- Law & Justice  
(/governor/initiatives/#Justice)
- Transportation  
(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

**News & Events**

- Press Releases  
(/governor/news/news/562026/approved/press-releases/)
- Photos  
(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy/)
- Public Addresses  
(/governor/news/addresses)
- Executive Orders  
(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo\_archive.html)
- Administrative Orders  
(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao\_archive.shtml)
- Direct Appointments  
(/governor/news/appointments)
- Advice and Consent Appointments  
(/governor/news/acappointments)
- Statements on Legislation  
(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements\_archive.shtml)
- Administration Reports  
(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

**Social**

- Facebook  
(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy)
- Twitter  
(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)
- Instagram  
(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy)
- Snapchat  
(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)
- YouTube  
(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernors)
- Bluesky  
(https://bsky.app/profile/govmurphy.bsky.social)

**Contact Us**

- Scheduling Requests  
(/governor/contact/scheduling/)
- Contact Us  
(/governor/contact/all/)

**Statewide**

- NJ Home** (/www.nj.gov)
- Services A to Z**  
(/www.nj.gov/njgov/njgov/alphaserv.html)
- Departments/Agencies**  
(/www.nj.gov/njgov/deptserv/)
- FAQs** (/www.nj.gov/faqs/)
- Contact Us**  
(/www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)
- Privacy Notice**  
(/www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)
- Legal Statement & Disclaimers**  
(/www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)
- Accessibility Statement**  
(/www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)

<a href="/governor/admin/fellows">(/governor/admin/fellows)</a>	Transition Reports
Governor's Residence -	<a href="/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml">(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)</a>
Drumthwacket	Press Kits
<a href="http://drumthwacket.org/">(http://drumthwacket.org/)</a>	<a href="/governor/news/press">(/governor/news/press)</a>

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