

Governor Phil Murphy

First Lady Tammy Murphy Announces 2025 State of the State Address Special Guests

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TRENTON – On Tuesday, January 14, Governor Phil Murphy will deliver the 2025 State of the State Address, outlining his vision for the final year of his Administration and his proposals to deliver greater economic security and opportunity to every New Jerseyan. During the annual Address, First Lady Tammy Murphy will be accompanied by six special guests who are doing their part to help build a stronger, fairer, and more inclusive state for all. Each of these remarkable individuals exemplifies the values that will guide the Murphy Administration over the next 12 months.

"As I begin my final year in office, New Jersey leads the nation in being the best place to live, work, and raise a family," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "And while we have taken enormous strides over the past seven years to build a state in which every child has a fair shot at a brighter future, our work is far from finished. The distinguished individuals joining us this afternoon not only embody our New Jersey values, they reflect our Administration's central goal: building a stronger, fairer New Jersey—and economy—for every family. And together, we are going to run through the tape in ensuring every New Jerseyan has the opportunity to achieve their very own American Dream."

"Phil and I are honored to be joined by these six outstanding New Jerseyans whose stories and contributions represent our vision for the future," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "As we build on the progress we have made over the past seven years, I am certain these individuals will continue to advance our shared goals and inspire New Jersey's next generation of leaders."

The following guests, listed in alphabetical order by last name, will be in attendance:

Abdur Azim (Newark, NJ): Abdur Azim is a seasoned public servant with over 25 years of experience in social work and substance abuse counseling. Born and raised in Newark, New Jersey, Abdur has dedicated his career to supporting individuals in need, particularly those affected by substance use and mental health challenges. Currently working with the New Jersey Department of Corrections as a reentry specialist, Abdur provides reintegration services to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals through the Providing Access to Community Employment (PACE) program. He helps participants gain adequate job preparation, employment readiness, and access to sustainable job opportunities in their communities. Abdur's professional journey is marked by his unwavering commitment to service. A dually licensed social worker and alcohol and drug counselor, he has worked across various sectors to improve the lives of vulnerable populations. Abdur is also an active member of CWA Local 1040, where he serves as Chair of the Men's Committee and as a member of the By-laws Committee. He is the proud recipient of the New Jersey Prevention Network Award for his exceptional work in substance abuse treatment and mental health counseling. Notably, Abdur was granted one of the 33 pardons issued by Governor Murphy in December as part of the Murphy Administration's broader criminal justice reform efforts.

Sangeeta Badlani (West Orange, NJ): Sangeeta Badlani is the founder of the Nikhil Badlani Foundation and Families for Safe Streets NJ. With a background in Mathematical Statistics (B.A.) and Business Economics (M.A.), Sangeeta has dedicated her career to advocating for traffic safety. After tragically losing her 11-year-old son, Nikhil, to a reckless and distracted driver, she transformed her grief into action by leading the charge to make New Jersey's streets safer for all. Sangeeta played a key role in the enactment of legislation including Nikhil's Law, the 50 Back to Top Practice Hours initiative, and the NJ Target Zero bill, all aimed at improving driver education and preventing traffic-related fatalities. She has also established programs, such as the Traffic Safety Youth Advisory Board and Drivers Ed

Through Art, which have educated thousands of students and raised awareness about safe driving. Sangeeta's story and her unwavering commitment to traffic safety continue to inspire and drive change across New Jersey. Her work is a powerful testament to one's ability to turn personal tragedy into a mission to protect communities and save lives.

Jack Curtis (Mendham, NJ): Jack Curtis is a retired educator with over 30 years of experience in supporting the growth and development of New Jersey's students. He began his career in education as a teacher in Randolph Township, and later served as a Principal in Roxbury Township for 17 years. A strong advocate for civic engagement and tax fairness, Jack also served as an Alderman in Dover for 10 years, working to improve local governance and quality of life for residents. Outside of his professional accomplishments, Jack is proud to be a lifelong resident of New Jersey. A family man, Jack enjoys spending time with his wife, Mary, his daughters, his two grandsons, and their beloved yellow labrador, Dakota. Jack remains deeply committed to both his career and his community, exemplifying the values of service, leadership, and lifelong learning.

Brian Grant (Sayreville, NJ): Brian Grant is a New Jersey licensed Professional Engineer and the Managing Principal at Grant Engineering & Construction Group LLC, a firm he founded in 2012. Since 1994, Brian has devoted his time to working with various civil engineering and construction management companies. Under Brian's leadership, Grant Engineering has prospered, providing helpful engineering and consulting services across both the public- and private-sectors. Brian earned his first Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Civil Engineering at NYU Polytechnic University, a second B.S. in Surveying Engineering Technology at New Jersey Institute of Technology, and his J.D. from Seton Hall University School of Law.

Jennifer Lai (Hillsborough, NJ): Jennifer Lai is a dedicated nurse with a passion for both literature and health care. Jennifer earned her first bachelor's degree in English from Rutgers University, and a second bachelor's degree in nursing from William Paterson University. Jennifer works as a nurse at two notable New Jersey health care facilities: Penn Medicine Princeton Medical Center and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. She is proud to cultivate a compassionate environment for her patients and connect with people from diverse communities. A Central Jersey resident, Jennifer lives with her husband, their four children, and their family dog in Hillsborough. Two of her children will benefit from ongoing efforts by the Murphy Administration to expand and invest in pre-K and kindergarten.

Tom Steen (Highlands, NJ): Tom Steen is a proud father, husband, and entrepreneur. As the CEO of Planthopper, Tom is committed to combatting one of agriculture's most pressing challenges: the spread of invasive insects. Under his leadership, Planthopper focuses on safe and effective pest management with biological pesticides, which help deliver sustainable solutions to support farmers and protect ecosystems. Tom's dedication to sustainability earned him a spot in the inaugural cohort of New Jersey Innovation Fellows, a program he is honored to represent at the 2025 State of the State Address. Tom's leadership as an entrepreneur showcases his devotion to protecting New Jersey's environment and advocating for the needs of the community through cutting-edge innovations.

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