

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Appointment of George Samir Helmy to the United States Senate

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Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Good morning. Thank you all for joining us.

Eleven months ago, all of us – in New Jersey and across America – were shocked and appalled by the allegations contained in the indictment against United States Senator Robert Menendez.

I said on the day of his indictment that while Senator Menendez was entitled to due process under the law, the severity of the allegations against him compromised his ability to effectively represent New Jersey.

And I called for his immediate resignation.

Senator Menendez went through the legal process. And ultimately, a jury of his peers found him guilty on all charges.

And following those convictions, on July 23rd, I received a letter from Senator Menendez informing me of his intention to resign on August 20th.

It is a tragic ending to a long and largely productive career in public service.

Senator Menendez accomplished many things on behalf of our state and our residents. Sadly, he will be remembered for putting his own interests ahead of the public interest.

So today, at a time of such great division in our nation, when the bonds between our fellow citizens have grown so frayed, it is all the more important that we hold our nation's leaders – of every political persuasion – accountable when they are found guilty of breaking the law and betraying the people they are elected to represent.

Here in America, and especially here in New Jersey, we do not reward leaders when they violate the public trust. We replace them with public servants who are worthy of high office.

Public servants who will represent our families with honesty, integrity, and the deepest respect for the rule of law.

And public servants who will live up to our state's most cherished values.

That is exactly why, today, I am proud to announce that – upon Senator Menendez's resignation – I will be appointing George Samir Helmy to represent New Jersey in the United States Senate.

George is the ideal leader to take on this role – and he has more relevant experience under his belt than perhaps

anybody in New Jersey.

For one, he is the longest-serving gubernatorial chief of staff in state history.

Prior to his service in our Administration, he served as state director to Senator Cory Booker, and, before that, he served the late Senator Frank Lautenberg.

In other words, George understands, on a fundamental level, how a U.S. Senate office operates. And he will be ready to run this office from day one.

And he will bring to this office first-hand expertise in providing the best possible constituent service to our state's families.

That expertise will be especially relevant over the next few months, as the presidential election rapidly approaches, as the Senate will be in recess for much of the fall.

Even though the members of the Senate will be away from the Capitol — their work, on behalf of the American people, must go on.

And our neighbors in New Jersey are depending on our state's representatives in the Senate to continue addressing their needs as constituents.

That work continues all 365 days of the year, and there is no one better positioned to lead those efforts than George Helmy.

George will speak more to his previous experience as a Senate caseworker, but the fact is he has devoted years of his life to untangling the red tape of government to help New Jerseyans access the benefits and resources they deserve.

From helping veterans get the health care they need, to assisting senior citizens who depend on Social Security — George knows how to navigate the complexities of government and to make life easier for our families.

And, as the proud son of two Egyptian American immigrants, who are both with us today, George will also make history as the only Arab American Senator serving in the 118th Congress.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate George's wife, Caroline, and their two sons, Joshua and Elijah, along with their entire extended family.

Now, crucially, George will be serving in this role on a temporary basis.

What do I mean by that?

Well, George will hold this office until the voters of New Jersey have a chance to choose their next U.S. Senator — for a full, six-year term — in this year's election, on November 5th.

And once the results of this year's election are certified — which will occur late in November — I will ask George to return to the Garden State.

And, at that time, I will appoint the winner of November's election to the United States Senate before the new year begins.

I called the Democratic nominee — Congressman Andy Kim — and the Republican nominee — Curtis Bashaw — earlier this morning, to inform them both that I will be taking this step.

And I expressed to them my ardent belief that this approach will allow the democratically chosen winner of this year's election to embark on the smoothest possible transition into office so they can provide the best possible representation to the people of New Jersey.

But, in the meantime, I have absolute confidence that George Helmy will be the best possible caretaker for this seat in

the U.S. Senate.

You will never find a person who has served others so well. Not only those of us in elected office, for whom he has served as a trusted aide, but also the people of New Jersey, for whom he has worked in roles I'd wager most New Jerseyans rarely think about, but are impacted by every day.

There is almost nothing our Administration has done to improve the lives of New Jerseyans that George does not have his fingerprints on.

He is an exceptional talent. And yet, he has chosen an unsung path. Because for him, it has never been about who gets the credit — it has always been about whom he can help.

He is the model of integrity that we need to help restore the public's trust in our state's leadership.

And his deep wealth of knowledge, born of experience in both the public and private sectors, will greatly benefit New Jerseyans over the next hundred days.

But of course, what happens after those one hundred days will be decided by you, the people of New Jersey.

On November 5th, as voters, you will decide the future of our state as well as our nation — just as you always have.

Through revolution and reconstruction, the Menlo Park invention that lit the world and the two wars that tore it apart, through attacks on our shores, our democracy, and our diversity, the people of New Jersey have never stopped believing in our great American experiment.

You have never stopped believing in the idea that this is your government.

That no elected official is above the law.

And in the principle that when leaders violate the public trust, the people can and will replace them.

I thank George for his willingness to fill this role until the people of New Jersey can make their voices heard.

And I thank every single one of you who will cast your ballot in November — no matter who you vote for — for continuing our great democratic tradition.

Everyone who knows George knows his personal disdain for pomp and titles and for that reason alone I cannot wait to refer to him as "Senator."

So, why not start today?

It is now my distinct honor and pleasure to introduce our soon-to-be Senator: George Samir Helmy.

Governor Phil Murphy

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