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# Governor Sherrill Underscores Commitment to Working Families at Building Trades Conference

Posted on 04/21/2026

Washington, D.C. -- Today, Governor Sherrill delivered the keynote address at the North America's Building Trades Union (NABTU) 2026 Legislative Conference. Governor Sherrill underscored her commitment to expanding opportunity and supporting organized labor across

New Jersey. Her remarks as prepared for delivery are below:

"Thank you, President McGarvey and Secretary-Treasurer Bishop.

All of our brothers and sisters in labor.

I'm Mikie Sherrill, Governor of New Jersey – the state that built this nation.

So I want to thank your Governing Board.

Because one of the first things I did when I launched my run for Governor was to come talk with you – because you can't fight for working people without the Building Trades.

The whole reason I'm here today is because of labor.

I'm here because of my grandpa's union job.

His parents lost everything in the Great Depression. But he served in World War Two. Then he joined the UAW, and worked for decades as a welder, raising his eight kids.

And later, a good union pension meant my family didn't go bankrupt caring for him and my grandmother.

That union job put my family squarely in the middle class.

It put me on this path from the Navy, to Congress, to Governor.

It gave my family opportunity – and that's what America is all about.

That's what labor is all about.

So I'm here because of my grandpa's good union job...

And I'm also here because of the men and women from Steamfitters Local 475 in Warren, New Jersey. From IBEW Local 102. From Laborers Local 472. Just to name a few.

People who work hard all week, but found time to walk with me, door to door, on their weekends – to spread our message about driving down costs and creating opportunity for everyone.

You guys had my back, and I'll have yours.

I'll fight everyone who breaks their promise to the men and women of labor.

Because a deal is a deal.

And there's just too much at stake right now.

Too many people who are lining their pockets at the expense of everyone else.

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I ran for office to build a more affordable and accountable New Jersey.

To expand opportunity, and build a government that delivers for the people it's meant to serve.

For too long, we've seen a failure to invest in crumbling roads and bridges across America – a country that was once the standard bearer for



building big, innovative things.

So I laid out a plan. I committed. And I'm delivering.

But again and again, we've seen the federal government pull funding for projects, renege on deals that've been in place sometimes for years, putting politics over working people.

In New Jersey, we've seen funding canceled for dam repairs and toxic waste cleanup. Flood protection and storm resiliency. Not to mention for the biggest infrastructure project in America – the Gateway Tunnel.

I fought tooth-and-nail for that funding when I was in Congress.

It's not the President's to take away.

So when he tried to – I took him to court, and I won.

Because I refuse to back down in the fight for tens-of-thousands of Building Trades jobs.

I'm defending the right to bargain collectively – even as this Administration denies it to federal workers.

And I'm one of the first governors in decades to fully fund state pensions in New Jersey – honoring our promise to workers who paid in all their lives.

Because a deal is a deal.

And unless we fight for working people, we know the money only flows one way: to the top.

Jeff Bezos saw his net worth increase by \$100 billion in just two years.

Imagine that – he makes \$1 million every 10 minutes, and can't even pay for his workers' healthcare.

What Bezos makes in two hours could cover the downpayment on a healthy Amazon workforce in New Jersey for a year.

So my budget demands that companies like his step up and cover their workers – or pay a fine.

And the whole reason we can do that is because of the standards that all of you set.

It's because of you that workers everywhere have the power to demand what's fair.

In New Jersey, we'll fight alongside you to protect those rights – no matter who gets in our way.

It's not about politics; it's about government delivering the way it should for working people.

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For me, that starts with lowering costs. Utility costs. Transit costs. Healthcare costs. Housing costs. And more.

To do that, we have to increase supply, and that means we have to build.

Utility rates are soaring – they were up 20% in our state last summer, one of the biggest spikes in America.

So I declared a State of Emergency on Day One. I didn't commission a 10-year study. I didn't write a strongly worded letter.

I signed two executive orders in the middle of my inaugural address, minutes after I'd been sworn in.

The first freezes rate hikes, to get families relief right away. The second streamlines permitting – to bring as much new power online as possible.

Because more power means more supply, more jobs, and lower costs for everyone.

My plan has the largest increase in in-state power generation in 40 years: solar, battery storage, natural gas, nuclear.

If we're going to meet all our energy needs, we need an all-of-the-above approach. We need to build.

What I won't do is give tax breaks to utilities and sit around hoping their profits trickle down. I'm not a trickle-down-economics kind of governor.

I want bold investments in infrastructure. I want energy independence for New Jersey. I want more good-paying union jobs.

In my first two months in office, we approved six new solar and battery storage projects.



We're modernizing our natural gas facilities.

And two weeks ago, I signed a bill to end a 50-year-old moratorium on new nuclear power in our state. New Jersey is back at the table – and I'm fired up, because we're uniquely positioned to lead.

We're already home to one of the biggest nuclear-generating sites in America. It provides nearly half of all electricity produced in our state – enough to power 3 million homes.

We have one of only six pre-approved sites in the nation.

And here's where labor comes in... We already have 1,600 skilled workers doing nuclear-power jobs, plus a thousand more union contractors.

We have advanced training programs, built together with all of you.

Princeton has the nation's first registered apprenticeship to train welders for fusion, the holy grail of clean power.

And, we're cutting red tape across the board.

I'll keep pushing the federal Department of Energy to fund new nuclear projects, with a national plan to drive down costs and increase the pace of building.

Because these projects have a huge impact on families, just like my grandpa's job had on mine.

Families like my friend Gary Emerle's.

He's an expert welder who helped to build our existing nuclear reactors at Salem and Hope Creek. He's worked there ever since, for 46 years

It's a great union job that allowed him to raise two boys in a three-bedroom house next to a park.

One son became a welder, and has worked at the plant with his dad for 20 years. His other son became the first in their family to go to college, and then to law school.

That son, Colin, is devoting his career to energy issues – and now works as a lawyer in my office.

Inspired by his dad, he wrote the first draft of that law I just signed, making new nuclear possible in New Jersey again.

In our office, Colin keeps a photo of his dad at work inside the reactor. He lights up when he talks about him. And it all traces back to that good union job.

Union jobs can create opportunities for families for generations.

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But to really build the future – it's not just about energy. People have to be able to get around. It's about transportation.

And New Jersey has the biggest, most important project in America: Gateway.

It's a chokepoint for the entire northeast corridor.

It's set to create 100,000 jobs over a 15-year build.

Trump tried to take it down, and put a thousand people out of work overnight.

But I promised to fight anyone who tries to target our state or these jobs.

So I took the President to court, and I won.

He appealed; I won again.

And we're in court again now to guarantee Gateway's funding for the whole life of the project – and force him to pay us back for the millions in costs that his delays caused.

I'm fighting tooth-and-nail for our state – and for the Gateway workers I've been lucky to get know.

Guys who get up at 3 a.m. to go to work. Who believe in America. Who give everything they've got to build big, lasting things.

Guys like Tracy Porter – from Laborers Local 472. He worked his first job laying apartment foundations alongside his dad, when he was just 11 years old.

He's since worked up and down the Turnpike – building the roads and bridges that many of us in New Jersey use every day.



Now, Tracy is putting his own kids through college; he pays their full tuition.

My grandpa's, Gary's, and Tracy's union jobs put our families securely in the middle class.

I'm fighting for guys like Justin Fowler. He was born near the naval base in Hawaii where his dad served. He has 20 years with the Laborers in New Jersey.

He told us that when he went up 90 feet to set the American flag on top of the processing plant they'd just built at Gateway – it was the proudest day of his life.

But Trump's cuts put him out of work – and put at risk the health insurance he needs for his severely autistic son.

If the President is willing to jerk people around on the single biggest infrastructure project in America – what's stopping him from doing the same thing in your state?

We have to make sure a deal is a deal everywhere.

We have to hold people to their word.

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When I was in Congress, I fought so hard to deliver on Gateway, they called me the “tunnel-obsessed Congresswoman.”

Now I'm “the transit-obsessed Governor” – fighting for our entire transit system.

It's one of the premier systems in America, but it's fallen on hard times.

Again, a lack of consistent investment – even in New Jersey, a state of commuters.

People depend on transit every day – and they depend on all of you, to help us bring that system into the future.

Because today, the roads and bridges, tunnels and train tracks in our state are literally some of the oldest in America, with some of the worst delays.

I know personally, because for 10 years, my husband has commuted by train every day.

So last month, I signed an Executive Order to start fixing the things we can fix right away.

We're finishing the brand new Portal North Bridge – easing a bottleneck on America's busiest rail corridor, between Newark and Manhattan.

We're replacing our entire train and bus fleet by 2031, for the first time ever.

And I just greenlit a new \$6.7 billion bridge across the Newark Bay – the biggest project in Turnpike history.

We're building again in New Jersey.

That bridge alone will support 19,000 jobs – and I'll make sure it requires PLAs. Because union labor is what moves this country forward.

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I'm not just planning for tomorrow – I'm planning for 10, 20, 30 years from now.

When I talk about my grandpa and his impact on my life, I want your grandkids talking about you the same way.

You all keep costs down and hopes up and opportunities ahead.

What you build lives on, for generations.

Our commitment to you should be just as enduring.

Well-run government can be life changing.

I've seen it in my own family and in so many others.

That's what I'm fighting to build in New Jersey – a government that keeps its word, that delivers a better life for ALL our kids, and opens the doors of opportunity for everyone.

I'll always answer first to people around their kitchen tables, not the boardroom or the backroom.



We're partners in this fight.

And I'm excited to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all of you in the years ahead.

New Jersey built this nation. It's past time to do it again.

So together, let's build something!"

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