



Governor Murphy Delivers 2023 State of the State Address

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January 10, 2023
Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

"Building the Next New Jersey"

Lieutenant Governor Oliver.

Senate President Scutari. Assembly Speaker Coughlin.

Majority Leaders Ruiz and Greenwald. Minority Leaders Oroho and DiMaio. Members of the 220th Legislature, and especially the bipartisan escort committee who led me into this chamber.

Chief Justice Rabner, Associate Justices Patterson, Pierre-Louis, Fasciale, and Wainer Apter. Judge Sabatino and Judge Grant.

Members of the Cabinet. Senior Staff.

Former Governors DiFrancesco, McGreevey, and Codey. I sure miss Jim Florio when I look down at you guys. God bless, Jim and Lucinda.

First Lady Tammy Murphy and our sons, Charlie and Sam.

Distinguished faith leaders, honored veterans and first responders. Leaders in organized labor, special guests, friends.

And my fellow New Jerseyans.

The last time we were together here was just days after Russia's malicious invasion of Ukraine.

For more than ten-plus months, the bravery and strength of the people of Ukraine in fighting back against Russia's barbaric aggression has been nothing short of inspiring.

I am incredibly honored that we are once again joined by His Eminence Metropolitan Antony and His Eminence Archbishop Daniel of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the United States of America, which, by the way, is headquartered in Somerset.

With us, as well, are Ukrainian Consul General Oleksii Golubov and four members of the Ukrainian Defense Forces who were wounded in battle and have been receiving treatment in the United States.

To all of you gentlemen, I restate that New Jersey proudly stands with the freedom-loving people of Ukraine in this moment of crisis and will do so for however long it takes.

May God be with the free People of Ukraine.

And in honor and memory of the Ukrainians lost over the past year – both the brave soldiers and the innocent civilians – I ask that we observe a moment of silence.

Thank you. Slava Ukraini!

Ten days ago, a new year dawned upon New Jersey.

With the close of 2022, we ended our fifth year of partnership to make New Jersey the stronger and fairer state we know it must be to support our future ambitions.

And as we start 2023, and embark on Year Six of our journey together, the state of our state is just that. We are stronger and we are fairer. We are moving confidently in the right direction – forward.

Put simply, we are building the Next New Jersey.

A New Jersey ready to lead the way for our nation.

A New Jersey with more possibilities.

With more safety and more justice.

With more freedoms protected.

With greater affordability for more families...

And with businesses and industries, and jobs and careers, that did not exist in our state a few short years ago.

New Jersey is truly becoming the State of Opportunity.

We are shaping this Next New Jersey in the service of growing and securing the middle class.

As you've heard me say from day one – and this will not change on my last day as your governor – it is my mission, and ours, to make this state work from the middle out and the bottom up.

I know where I came from and that is why I always know who I work for.

Like so many New Jerseyans, I am guided by family, fairness, and faith in our future.

Those are the values I learned growing up. In our family, my parents worked hard, yet living paycheck-to-paycheck was too often our reality. They instilled in their four children – my late brother, my sisters, and me – the values of education, hard work, and faith.

The saving grace back then was if you worked hard you would get ahead and you would do better than your parents.

And each of us did. That is our story.

But today, that notion of the American Dream is harder to achieve for too many people. And that is why I am dedicated to creating pathways to opportunity.

One of these pathways just got wider. Ten days ago, the minimum wage increased to \$14.13 an hour, an increase that will help more than 400,000 New Jerseyans better provide for themselves and their families.

They are better off because we worked together to strengthen the road to the middle class. Thank you.

Anyone who is willing to work hard should be able to do better than those who came before them. Everyone deserves a fair shot, and everyone must do their fair share.

Reasonable, responsible government is back and paying dividends for New Jersey's families.

We are rebuilding the American Dream right here – more expansive and inclusive than ever before – for all willing to put in the work.

So today, every New Jersey family can be proud to live in a state which, in so many ways, is not just a model for our nation, but also leading our nation.

Leading in building a modern economy that doesn't just create good jobs today, but has the staying power to keep creating good jobs well into our future.

Leading by centering our economic future around our best-in-the-nation public-education system so every child, in every community, is given the skills they will need to compete and win.

Leading by leaning into the clean energy economy to not just power our future, but to fight back against climate change.

Leading in prioritizing youth mental health through comprehensive means that don't just connect kids with resources but empower parents and educators to identify negative signs and provide positive support.

Leading in maintaining and preserving every woman's right to personal reproductive freedom and trusting them with the ability to make the most intimate of healthcare decisions for themselves.

Leading in protecting our communities from senseless gun violence, with carefully crafted laws that keep guns out of our most vulnerable places.

Leading in recognizing the inherent value that every member of our proud LGBTQIA+ community brings to our state – and ensuring that everyone is given the basic human dignity to live life on their terms.

Leading, as we are through the work of Lieutenant Governor and Community Affairs Commissioner Sheila Oliver, in living up to our obligation to ensure every New Jersey family has access to a safe and affordable place to call home.

Leading, as the First Lady is doing, in taking on long-standing racial inequities in maternal and infant health, with New Jersey being one of only four states to improve in the most-recent March of Dimes Report Card.

Leading by living up to our obligation to make the word "justice" ring true in every community, to not just undo the injustices of the past but fix what was broken. How?

By advancing environmental justice. By undoing the harm that the War on Drugs did to our communities. By protecting our sacred voting rights. By standing strong against the ever-present and, sadly, rising tide of hate and intolerance. And by rejecting the politics of fear and grievance in favor of a new politics of hope and commonality.

Surely, fostering a stronger, fairer, responsible, more affordable, and growing New Jersey is what each and every one of us here were elected to do. And regardless of whether our names are followed by a letter "D" or a letter "R," this is work to which we are all committed.

Let us never forget that in the grand ranking of things we are partisans fourth, elected officials third, New Jerseyans second, and Americans first and foremost.

As you may know, I have the great honor this year of serving as the Chairman of the National Governors Association. Sitting by my side as vice-chairman is Governor Spencer Cox, Republican of Utah.

There are few states more different than New Jersey and Utah. Yet over the past six months, Spencer and I have come to respect each other not just as colleagues, but even more so as friends.

And I know the same can be said for the First Lady and Utah's First Lady, Abby Cox.

As Governor Cox said in his 2021 State of the State Address, "There must be no room for contempt or hate. We are friends. We must always be friends."

This is what we need more of in our politics. Definitely at the national level, but right here at home, as well.

We must always be an example not just to our constituents today, but to those who will sit and stand in our positions tomorrow.

People here are sharp, but rightfully skeptical. It's a Jersey thing.

So, let's never insult their intelligence. Let's always be honest and straightforward with them.

They don't want to see Washington-style dysfunction and chaos – and neither do we.

They sent us here to make life in New Jersey better.

And we're doing that. And, in 2023, we're going to keep doing it.

Now, while we celebrate the tremendous advances we've made, we remain cognizant that there are also seemingly intractable challenges at which we must continue to chip away.

Affordability, for example.

Together, we created the ANCHOR Property Tax Relief program – a historic \$2 billion investment in direct property tax relief. This is money going right back into the pockets of roughly two million New Jersey middle-class and working homeowners, seniors, and tenants – households in which well more than half of all of our residents live.

For more than a million homeowners, ANCHOR's direct relief will effectively undo years of property tax increases – even up to a decade's worth.

Let me put it this way.

A middle-class family making our state's average household income of just under \$125,000 and paying our statewide average of \$9,300 in property taxes is going to receive \$1,500 in direct relief – effectively dropping their property taxes to a level not seen since 2011.

And for nearly one million renters, ANCHOR's tenant relief will cushion rent hikes.

With us here today is one of the millions of New Jerseyans who stands to benefit. Josymara Espindola Conte owns her Robbinsville home.

Josymara has applied for her ANCHOR relief, and I ask you to join me in making sure every other eligible family does, too.

And today, working with the Senate President, Speaker, and Treasurer, I am proud to give them an extra month to do so – so go to [anchor.nj.gov](https://www.anchor.nj.gov) and apply for your relief by February 28th.

We continued to increase our investment in our public schools to take further pressure off of property taxpayers – a total increase of more than \$2 billion since our administration took office.

And every penny of that is property tax relief.

We enacted a state-level child tax credit on top of more than a dozen other tax cuts for our middle-class and working families, seniors, and veterans.

We gave parents a sales-tax holiday on the back-to-school items their kids needed to get a strong start this past September.

We gave countless New Jerseyans a break by making Island Beach State Park, and all state parks, free and also by waiving numerous licensing fees.

And we started a streak of three consecutive credit upgrades because the rating agencies trusted our leadership. These new ratings mean money saved for every New Jersey taxpayer.

In seven weeks, I'll be back here to unveil my proposal for the upcoming Fiscal 2024 State Budget.

Making New Jersey more affordable for our families and seniors will again be central in the plan I will present to you. But I remain incredibly proud of the work we have done together in this current budget to make our state more affordable.

I remain grateful for the partnership of the Senate President and Speaker and budget chairs Senator Paul Sarlo and Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin, and the leadership of Treasurer Liz Muoio.

And as we continue our work to keep our families secure in their homes we will continue our work to make them feel safer in their communities.

I noted our ongoing efforts to end the epidemic of gun violence that infects too many of our communities – not just around our state, but across the country.

Because of New Jersey's strong gun safety laws, in 2022, we saw shootings go down 26 percent and gun homicides go down 17 percent.

But many of our communities are also living amidst another persistent wave of car thefts.

Over the past year, our administration has focused clearly on this problem.

We grew the State Police's Auto Theft Task Force to give it greater ability to investigate and disrupt car theft rings, including adding new detectives and prosecutors.

Police pursuit policies were revised to explicitly permit the pursuit of stolen vehicles.

And we marked \$10 million in federal American Rescue Plan funds to purchase and install automated license plate recognition technologies for local police to better track and trace not just stolen vehicles, but those being used to shuttle would-be car thieves into targeted neighborhoods.

These steps are already helping to bring down the numbers of car thefts. From September through December, car thefts were down 13 percent from the same four months of 2021.

And together we're going to continue driving these numbers down because we all know there's more we can do.

In fact, three months ago, I stood alongside the legislative leaders from both houses to unveil a package to further tighten our laws against car theft.

So, I ask you today to make passing these measures a top priority.

If you send these bills to my desk, I will enthusiastically sign them.

And as we take on crime we also work for justice.

Last year I proudly signed into law a comprehensive police licensing framework, ensuring that law enforcement officers – like Franklin Township Police Department Director of Public Safety Quovella Maeweather, who joins us today – are both recognized as the highly trained and skilled professionals that they are, and are held to high and uniform standards.

And we saw the continued expansion of our transformative ARRIVE Together program, which pairs law enforcement officers with mental health screeners to respond to individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

We must continue our efforts to restore faith and partnership between law enforcement and the communities they serve. This partnership not only enhances the safety of our neighborhoods, but it protects our brave men and women in Blue, as well.

There are so many people across law enforcement who deserve credit for all of this progress – but I cannot say enough about the leadership shown by Attorney General Matt Platkin and State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan.

Let there be no doubt, New Jersey is a safer state today.

We're also going to continue to provide our families with the spaces where they can safely play and exercise, and enjoy our state's unrivaled beauty.

We announced the final purchase of the land that will become the Garden State Greenway – the conversion of nine miles of abandoned railroad trackbed from Montclair to Jersey City into a linear park that will rival any other of its kind, dwarfing Manhattan's High Line.

I must give a huge amount of credit to the team at the Department of Environmental Protection, headed by Commissioner Shawn LaTourette.

In a state as small and dense as ours, this project exemplifies our belief that we can take previously underutilized or overlooked properties and turn them into points of civic pride to better our communities and environment.

And it exemplifies our commitment to environmental justice and to undoing the mistakes of the past which pushed undue burdens on underserved communities – so often communities of color.

And then there is one of our most tragic challenges – the fight against the opioid epidemic.

From 2018 through 2021, opioid deaths had remained relatively constant after huge increases throughout the previous five years. More than 3,000 New Jerseyans were lost to the opioid epidemic in three of those four years.

But, at last, we have a glimmer of hope. The preliminary numbers for 2022 show 231 fewer drug-related deaths than in 2021 – giving us our lowest statewide total since 2017.

We are far from out of the woods. We are far from victory.

One death is one death too many. These are our brothers and sisters, our sons and daughters, and our moms and dads. They are our friends. They are our fellow New Jerseyans.

But, as we begin 2023, we are bringing new resources to this battle to save lives.

Late last month, the Department of Human Services received approval to make New Jersey the first state in the nation to allow any pharmacy to provide anonymous and free access to Naloxone to any individual, at any time.

To be sure, Naloxone alone is not going to end the opioid epidemic. Turning back this challenge requires constant vigilance from all of us.

But this nation-leading policy will ensure that a crucial and lifesaving tool is put in the hands of more people, free and anonymously, so we can save more precious lives and allow individuals struggling with addiction to seek treatment.

I thank Commissioner of Human Services Sarah Adelman for her leadership in this groundbreaking initiative.

And COVID remains a public health reality, even though the numbers of people in our hospitals are less than one-third of what they were one year ago, and half of what they were two years ago.

Meanwhile, the flu and RSV are combining to further complicate things.

These viruses are persistent adversaries, to be sure. But we have stronger weapons in our arsenal.

First, we have the vaccines, and we encourage everyone to get their COVID booster and their flu shot.

And second, we have another weapon – one that needs no introduction – Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli. Thank you, Judy, for your continued leadership.

Keeping our families secure in their homes, safe in their communities, and able to get the treatment that they may need reinforces one of the most basic roles of government – a role outlined by one of the first lines of our state constitution, “Government is instituted for the protection, security, and benefit of the people...”

But equally as important to our charge is to ensure that our people have good jobs to support their families. And in this, too, we have not only seen great successes in growing new economic opportunities over the past five years, but we are setting New Jersey up for an even more prosperous future.

Before our administration took office, our economic focus could be summed up as: find a big company, any company, and throw a big enough tax break at them to get them to move to – or stay in – New Jersey.

That way of doing things came with limited successes. But the true downside of that way of doing things was that, behind it, there was no strategy.

No one ever stopped to ask what the New Jersey of 20 or 50 years down the line should look like. The only question that was ever asked was whether a deal could get done fast enough so it could be used in the next campaign commercials.

That is not how this administration has looked at job growth or economic development. Through the CEO of the Economic Development Authority, Tim Sullivan, and his team, our focus from day one has been to make New Jersey the place where the companies of tomorrow will come to plant their flags.

We worked to overhaul our entire offering of economic incentives – to make them more responsive to our economic realities, more focused on our core economic strengths, and more persuasive to the key business sectors and start-ups we know have the ability to grow over time, including a first-in-the-nation public-private venture fund.

When we first proposed our reformed incentives program, I noted that we needed to be nimble and to work at the speed of business. And so today, in that spirit, I call for us to live up to this by coming together to make a necessary update.

We must recognize that in the new, post-pandemic business environment, not every new job created for a New Jerseyan is going to be housed in a physical office in New Jersey. For many New Jerseyans, working remotely is here to stay.

So, let's take this moment to focus on incenting jobs in New Jersey, wherever they are, regardless of whether they are in an office building in Newark or at a kitchen table in Cherry Hill.

And, at the same time, let's also make developing new green spaces and urban parks part of our incentive program, too, because they can have just as much of a positive impact on the life of a community.

At the same time, let's also continue the work of modernizing our infrastructure. We finally broke ground on the new Portal North Bridge. And I was tremendously honored to have President Biden by my side when we ceremonially did so.

And numerous projects along NJ TRANSIT's rail lines are moving forward – projects that will improve the customer experience, improve reliability, and improve on-time performance.

Additionally, the project to build those long-awaited new rail tunnels under the Hudson River also moved forward. And because of our partnership with New York, Amtrak, our Congressional Delegation, and this White House and the previous White House, we recently received a \$292 million federal grant – the first of what we anticipate to be many awards to get this project done.

And here's what this will mean. It will mean fewer delays. And if you commute on the Raritan Valley Line and have been waiting for your one-seat ride into New York-Penn, this will be your ticket.

As much as these investments represent the future of our large-scale infrastructure, we know that it is local infrastructure that is the backbone of a community. And, in many towns along our Atlantic coast, that backbone is, literally, made of wood.

So, when I come before you next month, I will propose a new Boardwalk Fund that will partner with our Shore towns and counties to make vital upgrades.

Our boardwalks are more than just places for recreation and exercise. They are more than just the space that connects a parking area to the beach. They are wooden Main Streets which, in so many ways, define their communities and support their economies as much as the sand and surf.

So, for all the excitement about our tomorrow, let's take stock of where we are today.

First, our state has regained and grown new jobs for 31 consecutive months.

Our unemployment rate stands at 3.4 percent – lower than the national rate and the lowest since right before the pandemic.

Moreover, in the 3rd quarter of 2022, the most recent quarter for which we have data, New Jersey's GDP grew 3.9 percent above the level of the 2nd quarter – the tenth biggest jump in the nation, and the highest growth rate of any state in our entire northeastern neighborhood.

And more than half-a-point above the national average.

And we outpaced many of the so-called “business friendly” states – states that some claim we have to emulate. States like Georgia and Florida.

Our clear record of success is greater than that of states that pay for huge tax breaks for the wealthiest and most powerful by taking away investments from public education and civic programs.

In New Jersey we are proving we can live our values, improve lives, and compete with anyone, any time.

But even more than that, those states aren't the leaders in new and emerging industries. We are.

We are primed to be a leader on the East Coast in offshore-wind and a national leader in component manufacturing and logistics for the wind industry as a whole. In doing so, we are creating thousands of good, overwhelmingly union jobs up and down the entire state, especially in places like Gloucester and Salem counties, where the Paulsboro manufacturing facility and the New Jersey Wind Port are taking shape.

We are growing an entirely new and broad-based adult-use cannabis industry – an industry that is making room for women and minority small business owners, folks like Darrin Chandler Jr., who is with us today.

We remain a leader in all aspects of online gaming and sports wagering.

We are a leader in the financial services technology sector, as evidenced by Fiserv's opening of its new office in Berkeley Heights, in Union County, where roughly 3,000 jobs will be centered.

We are taking full advantage of our location to be a global trading hub, as evidenced by the clothing retailer Uniqlo's decision to put their major logistics operations in Phillipsburg, in Warren County.

And we are reclaiming our historic standing as the Medicine Chest to the World, welcoming tomorrow's leaders in the life sciences while keeping companies that have proudly called New Jersey home right here – companies like Roche, which is expanding its manufacturing footprint and creating new jobs in Branchburg, in Somerset County.

And then there is our burgeoning film and television production industry.

The numbers for 2022 are still being tabulated, but the numbers for 2021 were recently finalized.

In that year, film and television production poured more than half-a-billion dollars into our state's economy.

We were home to 725 productions, including 68 feature films and 132 television series.

These productions created more than 5,500 jobs.

In just four years since we joined together to renew our suite of television and film production tax credits, we have supercharged productions in the Garden State – a more than six-fold increase in total investments.

And every early indication is that 2022 was an even bigger year.

Moreover, we are ready for the long-term.

Just before the holidays, we got one of the best possible presents with the announcement by Netflix that it will create a major production hub at the site of the former Fort Monmouth – a nearly \$1 billion dollar investment that will create thousands of permanent, and overwhelmingly union, jobs.

This investment underscores our emergence as a world-class location for television and film production. The dozen soundstages to be built, along with new housing and hospitality space, will revitalize not just Fort Monmouth but lift the small businesses around it.

More than anything, this investment by Netflix makes it clear to all – New Jersey is ready for our close up.

And it proves that the moves we have made to build our production industry have been the right ones.

On top of Netflix, Lionsgate Studio in Newark's South Ward is moving closer to its own production – another huge feather in our state's cap.

The motion picture industry was born in New Jersey – Fort Lee was Hollywood before there even was a Hollywood. Like so much else, what past generations and prior politicians let get away from New Jersey, we are bringing back.

And, because of the commitment of the Economic Development Authority and the New Jersey Film and Television Commission, and each of you, we are going to make sure we don't lose out again.

But while we are so proud of these major companies investing in our state, we know that our economy hinges even more on the health and vitality of our small businesses and downtowns.

A movie set in one of our great and historic downtowns is a great thing. But what's even better is knowing that your Main Street is going to be just as active, and just as lit up, once the cameras go away.

Our downtowns took a beating during the pandemic, and we have committed ourselves to bringing them fully back. We have helped our downtowns and small businesses make it through some very dark times and into the recovery which is still ongoing with more than \$1 billion in support.

And together, in the budget we passed, we maintained our \$50 million investment in the Main Street Recovery Program.

And the holiday season saw our downtowns bustling again, as they should be.

But Main Street isn't just a place to shop. It's a place to gather.

And I am greatly aware that some of, if not the, hardest hit businesses from the pandemic were our restaurants. And few were harder hit than the small neighborhood establishments – many, if not most, family-owned – that couldn't get a liquor license that is so critical to maintaining a healthy profit margin.

There's no other way to put it – our liquor licensing regime is antiquated and confusing. We rely on a foundation of rules written in the days immediately after Prohibition to govern a 21st century economy. That makes no sense.

It makes no sense to restaurateurs like Ehren Ryan, the chef/owner – along with his wife, Nadine – of Millburn's Common Lot, where a liquor license can ensure the stability of his establishment. Ehren is with us today.

And so, I ask for your partnership in rewriting our liquor license laws to make them not just modern, but fair. The old rules have purposely created market scarcity and driven up costs to the point where a liquor license can draw seven figures.

For many small, independent restaurateurs – folks like Ehren, and many others like him in other communities, and especially those in Black and Brown communities where access to capital has historically been limited – that's just too high a price to pay.

Expanding the number of available liquor licenses will not only help keep our favorite local restaurants healthy, it will also help keep our economy healthy.

This won't be easy, but it will be worth it. We project that overhauling our liquor license regime will create upwards of 10,000 jobs annually and, over the next 10 years, generate up to \$10 billion in new economic activity and \$1 billion in new state and local revenues.

And here is how we can do it.

Right now, the number of liquor licenses allowed to be issued by any local government is one for every 3,000 residents. I propose that over the next few years, we gradually relax this requirement and expand the number of available licenses until the restriction is eliminated in its entirety and the market can work freely.

Meanwhile, we can maintain the local control that is so critical in making sure our downtowns retain the character that makes them so special.

Now, I fully recognize that some restaurants have made significant up-front investments to obtain their current licenses. We must be fair to them and I propose a targeted tax credit to support them as the supply of licenses grows.

I further ask you to join me in removing outdated licensing and operating restrictions on our craft breweries, distilleries, and wineries, which are seeing nothing short of a true renaissance.

And they are represented here today by Abbie Galie of Medford's Lower Forge Brewery.

People from all across the northeast, and indeed from across the country, are coming to taste what is being poured from bottles, taps, and barrels across New Jersey.

They are coming to enjoy one of the best and most diverse restaurant scenes of any state.

It is absolutely imperative that we keep this renaissance going.

For Ehren and Abbie, and so many others, there is simply no reason for us to push this off any longer.

As an aside, one of the easiest decisions Tammy and I ever made was to serve only New Jersey made beers and wines to our guests at Drumthwacket – and we're adding New Jersey-made spirits to this list by the end of the month.

We do this because we want to share our Jersey Pride with everyone who enters the People's House.

And we know this Jersey Pride is bubbling up once again all throughout our state.

We've always had a swagger. In past times it was our line of defense against any number of slights and jokes. But not any more.

It is okay to admit it – it's cool to be from New Jersey again.

It's cool because we are once again leading in all the right things.

In protecting the basic rights and honoring the human dignity of every New Jerseyan.

New Jersey Puerto Rico	Advice and Consent
Commission	Appointments
(https://www.nj.gov/puertoricocommission/governor/news/acappointments)	
Internship Opportunities	Statements on
(/governor/admin/internship.shtml)	Legislation
Governor's Fellows	(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)
Program	Administration Reports
(/governor/admin/fellows)	(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)
Governor's Residence -	Transition Reports
Drumthwacket	(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)
(http://drumthwacket.org/)	Press Kits
	(/governor/news/press)

(<http://nj.gov/opra/>)

(<https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login>)

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