

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Pardons 11 Veterans in Commemoration of Veterans Day

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HOLMDEL – In honor of Veterans Day, Governor Phil Murphy today announced 11 pardons for New Jersey veterans, reaffirming his Administration's commitment to rehabilitation and respect for those who have served our nation. Today's pardons come on the heels of yesterday's historic fourth round of clemency actions that surpassed 200 cumulative grants of clemency in the past 16 months. With today's pardons, Governor Murphy has exercised his executive authority to grant clemency to a total of 228 individuals.

"Actions taken during a person's hardest chapter should not define them – especially for those who have sacrificed so much in service of our nation," **said Governor Murphy**. "Today's pardons are a declaration of who we are: a state that believes in redemption, responsibility, and opportunity."

"This initiative reflects our values as a state – compassion, justice, and responsibility," **said Lt. Governor Tahesha Way**. "By offering clemency to deserving veterans, we're ensuring that those who served our country are given a true chance to rebuild their lives and continue to contribute to their families and communities."

Today's announcement marks a new phase of the Governor's historic clemency initiative, building on its foundation by recognizing the unique experiences and contributions of veterans and the efforts they have taken to rehabilitate their lives.

"The New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is dedicated to serving those who have served our country," **said Brigadier General Yvonne L. Mays, The Adjutant General of New Jersey and Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**. "Veterans bring enduring values of service and commitment to communities across New Jersey. Our team is committed to ensuring Garden State Veterans receive the support and resources they've earned, empowering them to thrive and continue contributing to our state."

[In June 2024](https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562024/approved/20240619a.shtml) (<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562024/approved/20240619a.shtml>), Governor Murphy signed [Executive Order No. 362](https://www.nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-362.pdf) (<https://www.nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-362.pdf>), establishing the state's first-ever Clemency Advisory Board. The Board reviews applications for pardons and commutations and provides recommendations to the Governor on executive clemency actions. Under the Order, certain categories of applications receive expedited consideration, including non-violent offenses with long post-conviction periods of good conduct, victims of domestic violence who committed crimes in their victimization, or sentences reflecting excessive trial penalties. The process also incorporates robust victim outreach, ensuring that the perspectives of individuals harmed by crime are heard and addressed as part of a fair, transparent system.

"On this Veterans Day, we are reminded that many who have served our nation with honor also deserve the chance to


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rebuild their lives with dignity," **said Bishop Joshua Rodriguez, Chair of the New Jersey Clemency Advisory Board.** "By extending clemency to deserving veterans, Governor Murphy has shown compassion that honors their service and affirms our shared belief in redemption. I thank the Governor for leading with empathy, courage, and moral conviction."

"As the foremost second chance state in the nation, it is heartening and uplifting to see Governor Murphy grant clemency to deserving veterans," **said Ed Neafsey, United States Army Veteran and Clemency Advisory Board Member.** "As a proud Army veteran, I applaud the Governor's sense of fairness, justice, and compassion in taking this action. It represents a restorative step forward for each veteran and for society as a whole."

Among those pardoned today is Daniel Ruiz, a current member of the Army National Guard. Ruiz has one conviction from 2004, when he was a juvenile, involving charges for assault and drug-related offenses. He has since received an expungement from Hudson County, in which he serves as a member of the Bayonne Fire Department.

Daniel Ruiz has been a member of the National Guard for over 18 years and has a very distinguished military service, including having served our nation in Iraq. He graduated from Officer Candidate School in August 2024. With today's pardon, Ruiz will now have the opportunity for advancement in the Army National Guard to continue to support his wife and children.

"I am deeply grateful to Governor Murphy and the New Jersey Clemency Advisory Board for their commitment to second chances, which has made a life-altering impact on my life and on countless others," **said Daniel Ruiz.** "This pardon allows me to continue serving our nation and state as a member of the National Guard – the honor of my lifetime. I could not have come this far without the unwavering support of my wife, family, friends, and colleagues, who took the time to vouch for me and my character. I am proud to have such remarkable New Jerseyans by my side."

Below is a full list of veterans receiving pardons today:

1. **Tyrone Asia (U.S. Army):** unlawful possession of a weapon, sentenced in 2012
2. **David Kelley (U.S. Marines Corps):** possession with intent to distribute a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 2005
3. **Luis Rivera (U.S. Marines Reserves):** possession with intent to distribute a controlled dangerous substance and possession of a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 2001; local ordinance violations, sentenced in 2003; loitering to obtain a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 2015; possession of a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 2015
4. **Michael Griffin (U.S. Army):** larceny, sentenced in 1992; distribution of a controlled dangerous substance within a school zone, sentenced in 1997; contempt of order, sentenced in 1997
5. **Nelis Hansen (U.S. Army):** unlawful possession of a weapon and possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose, sentenced in 1983
6. **Daniel Ruiz (U.S. Army National Guard):** Simple assault, aggravated assault (2 counts), possession of a controlled dangerous substance, possession of a controlled dangerous substance < 50g, Resisting arrest, Distribution of a controlled dangerous substance within a school zone, Distribution of a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 2005
7. **Howard Jones, Jr. (U.S. Army):** distribution of a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 1993; piracy, sentenced in 2003; theft, sentenced in 2003; violation of probation, sentenced in 2004; violation of probation, sentenced in 2005

8. **Dante Monk (U.S. Army):** failure to turn over a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 2002; terroristic threats and distribution of a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 2004
9. **Justo Pena (U.S. Marine Corps):** possession of a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 1982; possession of a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 1986; unauthorized use of vehicle, sentenced in 1987; larceny, sentenced in 1990; possession of a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 1991; possession of a controlled dangerous substance with intent to use and under influence of a controlled dangerous substance without a prescription, sentenced in 1993
10. **Dwayne "Hassan" Jones (U.S. Navy):** conspiracy (two counts) and distribution of a controlled dangerous substance, sentenced in 1991; distribution of a controlled dangerous substance and distribution of a controlled dangerous substance within school zone, sentenced in 1991
11. **James Mangold (U.S. Army National Guard):** arson, sentenced in 2003

"We commend Governor Phil Murphy for extending pardons to deserving veterans, as part of New Jersey's ongoing clemency initiative," **said David Pearson, Veteran Director, Catholic Charities.** "This action reflects our state's deep commitment to fairness, redemption, and second chances. We are proud that New Jersey continues to lead with compassion and believes in the power of renewal and service."

"The New Jersey Veterans Network supports Governor Murphy's pardons of New Jersey veterans who have already served their time and are active members of their communities," **said Michael D Boll, President, New Jersey Veterans Network.** "We believe these individuals continue to contribute positively to our state and embody the values of service and resilience."

"I am thrilled to learn about Governor Murphy's grants of clemency to veterans today," **said Selina S. Kanowitz, National Vice Commander, Department of New Jersey Jewish War Veterans.** "It's wonderful to know that those who are receiving pardons will have a second chance to improve their lives and their futures which is of great value both to the individual, their family, and the community where they may reside and work. Thank you Governor Murphy."

"The Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of New Jersey is incredibly grateful to Governor Murphy for his act of compassion to our veteran community on this Veterans Day," **said Yvonne Zirrih, State Commander, Department of New Jersey Veterans of Foreign Wars.** "This meaningful gesture and his decision to pardon these veterans honors the service of all who have worn the uniform in defense of our freedom."

"The Department of New Jersey Veterans of Foreign Wars supports the Governor's recognition of the sacrifices made by our veterans, his understanding of the challenges that follow those sacrifices, and his commitment to granting pardons that provide a true second chance and a fresh first impression. Thank you for honoring our veterans," **said Luddie H. Austin, Past State Commander, Department of New Jersey Veterans of Foreign Wars.**

"We proudly recognize Governor Phil Murphy for his compassion and leadership in extending clemency to New Jersey's Veterans through his statewide Clemency Initiative. His focus on second chances and compassionate care reflects a steadfast commitment to restoring dignity and opportunity for those who have sacrificed in service to our nation," **said Sharon McGreevey, Director of Veterans Services, New Jersey Reentry Corporation.** "The New Jersey Reentry Corporation Veteran Services stands with the Governor in this mission of justice, renewal, and hope – ensuring that those who once fought for our freedom are given the opportunity to rebuild their lives with purpose and pride. The long shadows of deployment and service must be met with understanding, compassion, and action. Every Veteran deserves renewed purpose, honor, and the deep respect owed for their sacrifices."

To learn more about the Governor's clemency initiative, visit www.nj.gov/clemency/ (<https://www.nj.gov/clemency/>).

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