

First Lady Tammy Murphy Announces 2024 State of the State Address Special Guests

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TRENTON – On Tuesday, January 9, Governor Phil Murphy will deliver the 2024 State of the State Address, outlining his vision for making life more affordable for more families and building upon the administration's progress in establishing New Jersey as the best place to live, work, and raise a family. First Lady Tammy Murphy will be joined by several special guests, including local entrepreneurs, workers, health care professionals, and young leaders who are doing their part to build a stronger, fairer, and more inclusive state. These individuals were invited because they embody the ideals, aspirations, and policy priorities the Governor will highlight in his speech.

"As we begin our seventh year of partnership, New Jersey stands tall, resilient, and brimming with ambition. But our work is far from finished," **said Governor Murphy**. "The special guests joining us at this year's State of the State Address reflect the ongoing – and highest – priorities of our administration: lowering costs, raising wages, and creating boundless opportunities for every family, especially the next generation of New Jerseyans. Together, we are building a New Jersey that is better today and brighter tomorrow."

"Phil and I are privileged to be joined by this group of exceptional individuals from across our state," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "Each of these New Jerseyans exemplifies the values at the heart of the administration's work to build a stronger and fairer New Jersey. As we reflect on the past six years and share our vision for the future, we are inspired by the remarkable leadership, courage, and life experiences of these guests and their contributions to our state."

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

Sabrina Charles (Glen Ridge, NJ): Sabrina Rose Charles is a senior honors student at the Rutgers University School of Nursing in New Brunswick. From an early age, Sabrina developed a passion for service that continues to shape her values and nursing ideals. At the State University of New Jersey, Sabrina acknowledges the wide-reaching impact nurses have. Her involvement extends outside of the hospital setting, through her collaborations with local non-profits like the Urban Health Collaborative and the Vaccine Equity Education Coalition to promote health education and address disparities. Sabrina's commitment to service and creating equitable environments is further evident in her active roles within Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Ambassadors of Douglass Residential College, and the Rutgers University Senate. In addition, Sabrina holds membership and has received awards from several nursing organizations including the New Jersey League for Nursing, the National Black Nurses Association, and the National Student Nurses Association. In her final semester, Sabrina remains committed to expanding her knowledge of health inequities, public health, and health policy. She envisions herself as a catalyst for positive change with aspirations to become a Nurse Practitioner.

Alex Chen (Newark, NJ): Alex Chen is a senior at the Essex County Donald M. Payne Senior Tech High School (THS) in Newark and Valedictorian for the Class of 2024 with a GPA of 4.422. He aims to assist others and solve problems. Alex will attend Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, this fall, majoring in Computer Science with a concentration in Security and Privacy and an emphasis on Generative AI. He has taken and successfully completed a series of cybersecurity courses and will earn the Cisco Certified Network Associate Certification at the end of this year. Alex is also the co-captain and student coding lead for THS's robotics team and has competed in many FIRST Robotics Competitions. He is a programming mentor for THS's Technology Student Association, teaching underclassmen basic coding skills. Alex will continue to study his aspirations and delve deeper into the cyber and technological world. Technology High School is one of New Jersey's nine schools that just received National Blue Ribbon School distinction by the United States Department of Education.

Jose Flores (Union, NJ): Jose Flores joined El Gordo Restaurant in 2001 when he immigrated to the United States from Peru. El Gordo is a chain of Peruvian restaurants, which has been awarded more than \$60,000 through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. Jose began his career as a dishwasher and learned the recipes through the founder of El Gordo, Monica Velis, and has now grown into the restaurant's executive chef/general manager where he oversees the kitchen operations of the restaurant's four locations. El Gordo restaurant is currently a family-run business; Monica handed over the keys to her daughter Lizeth Morales in 2012.

Eddie Freeman (Marlton, NJ): Eddie Freeman is a homeowner in Marlton and a United States Army reserve

veteran. He served in United States Army from 2002 into 2011 and completed one tour of duty in Afghanistan in 2008. Mr. Freeman reached the rank of sergeant and was very active within his unit and supporting his soldiers and the mission. After moving to New Jersey, he was able to take advantage of the ANCHOR program as a renter, and looks forward to benefiting as a homeowner.

Andrew Gregory (Late wife is a native of Tenafly, NJ): Andrew Rose Gregory is a songwriter and director who creates music videos as part of the musical quartet The Gregory Brothers. Their videos have been watched on YouTube well over one billion times. He married Tenafly native, Casey McIntyre, a publisher at Penguin Random House, in 2015. Casey sadly passed away on November 12th, 2023, after a battle with stage IV ovarian cancer. While Casey was in home hospice, she and Andrew planned to hold a posthumous debt jubilee in Casey's honor through the charity RIP Medical Debt. Her last message on Twitter, published the day after her death, caught the world's attention and has made her debt jubilee more successful than she and her family had ever imagined. In just a few days after the campaign launched, they raised nearly \$220,000, and to date, the campaign has raised almost 1.1 million dollars, which will forgive 110 million dollars of medical debt. Her last message read, "A note to my friends: if you're reading this, I have passed away. I'm sorry, it's horseshit and we both know it. The cause was stage four ovarian cancer. I loved each and every one of you with my whole heart and I promise you, I knew how deeply I was loved."

Emily Gutierrez (Elizabeth, NJ): Emily Gutierrez is a second-year English teacher at the J. Christian Bollwage Finance Academy in the Elizabeth Public Schools. Prior to joining the Elizabeth Public Schools, Emily spent four years as an English teacher at Union High School, where she was an advisor for the National Honor Society. At J. Christian Bollwage Finance Academy, she continues to be an advisor for the National Honor Society and tutors students during the after school and lunch tutoring programs. Emily is a member of the New Jersey Education Association, and the union representative for her high school. Emily knew she wanted to become a teacher since kindergarten; she loves her job and her students. She recognizes none of her accomplishments would be possible without her family, friends, and colleagues who have supported her along the way. She is a graduate of the Elizabeth Public Schools and Kean University, and is currently receiving her master's in School Counseling from Kean University. The Elizabeth Public Schools is the second largest school district in the State of New Jersey, serving over 28,500 students at thirty-seven schools.

Yenjay Hu (Westfield, NJ): Yenjay Hu is currently a senior at Westfield High School in Westfield, NJ. He is a co-founder and executive director of Vote16NJ, a student-led advocacy organization dedicated to lowering the voting age to 16 in local elections. With the strong coalition he's helped create with the NJ Institute of Social Justice and the NAACP Youth & College, Vote16NJ has made significant progress in implementing the policy throughout New Jersey. Among Yenjay's varied political experiences, he has also interned for Senator Cory Booker, volunteered for Congressman Tom Malinowski's 2022 re-election campaign, and worked with the Hoboken Strategy Group.

Andrés Jaquez-Cruz (Newark, NJ): Andrés Jaquez Cruz was born in the Dominican Republic and has lived in the United States for 7 years. He is a citizen and prospective first-generation college student; he is a Governor's STEM scholar and has received a perfect score on his math SAT and NJSLs. He is a Quest Bridge scholar and has been awarded a full ride to MIT. He works with AI through his robotics class/competitions.

Anjali Krishnamurthi (Somerville, NJ): Anjali Krishnamurti is an 18-year-old student at Harvard College who is originally from Somerville, New Jersey. She is the co-founder and executive director of Vote16NJ. For four years, she has been leading the fight to lower the voting age to sixteen in New Jersey through coalition building, advocacy, and expanding civic engagement. Outside of Vote16NJ, Krishnamurti works on political campaigns and is involved in several student organizations, such as Harvard Votes, the Harvard Undergraduate Law Review, and the Institute of Politics Policy Program, where she leads a team of policy researchers to make policy recommendations that protect American democracy. She was also a 2023 New Jersey Delegate for the United States Senate Youth Program, where she represented the state of New Jersey in Washington D.C. Krishnamurti hopes to pursue a career in law, politics, and voting rights advocacy in the future.

Dr. Rupal Mansukhani (Hillsborough, NJ): Dr. Rupal Mansukhani is a Clinical Professor at the Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy at Rutgers University. She completed her Doctor of Pharmacy degree at the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and a PGY 1 Community Practice Residency at the University of Illinois in Chicago. She currently practices at Morristown Medical Center in the pulmonary department and focuses on transitions of care. Her areas of expertise include respiratory conditions such as COPD, asthma, and pneumonia with a special interest in improving immunization rates and women's health. Advancing patient care and promoting pharmacy services through research, scholarly activities, and presentations have also been fundamental to Dr. Mansukhani's approach to moving the profession of pharmacy forward.

Ulysses McMillan (Irvington, NJ): Ulysses McMillan was sentenced for 22 years for drug trafficking while carrying a firearm. When Ulysses was released from prison, he met Governor McGreevey and enrolled in NJRC. As of today, Ulysses has acquired his identification and license, established his own personal banking accounts, and owns an LLC, which he founded since he returned. He presently works two jobs, the first of which is for Driscoll Foods in Wayne, NJ, and the second for NJRC as a Driver. Since returning home, Ulysses has also provided support to court-involved persons, including defendants, respondents, and victims.

Cristina Tone (Paterson, NJ): Cristina Tone, born in Peru, is a certified housing counselor and currently serves as the Deputy Director of the Neighborhood Help Center for the New Jersey Community Development Corporation (NJCDC), leveraging over 25 years of experience in both the public and private sectors. Cristina is well-respected in the community and leads the "I Grew Up in Zárate" organization with over 35,000 members worldwide, offering support to a town in Lima, Peru. Cristina's family has personally benefited from the Murphy Administration's Hospital Partnership Subsidy Program. After her son, Christopher Valencia, 23, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, contracted a rare form of encephalitis in 2021, their family received crucial support provided through the program. Needing intensive treatment, Christopher had to move back home. Cristina spent two years searching for affordable housing to accommodate her family and Christopher's medical needs before finally finding a supportive housing project in Paterson owned by St. Joseph's University Medical Center, where her son received treatment. She is grateful that he has emerged healthy and thriving after facing a significant health battle during the Covid pandemic, acknowledging that God had a better plan for him. She feels blessed to have him by her side today.

Brian Venturo (Cedar Grove, NJ): Brian Venturo is the co-founder and Chief Technology Officer of CoreWeave, a leading specialized cloud provider of large-scale, GPU-accelerated workloads that began – in part – in a garage in suburban New Jersey. At CoreWeave, Brian works directly with clients, engineers, and partners to build unmatched compute infrastructure for the most demanding artificial intelligence, machine learning, and visual effects applications. He is based in New Jersey and holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Haverford College.

Jason Williams (Somerset, NJ): Jason Williams attends Kean University where he majors in Special Education and History. Upon graduating, Jason hopes to become a special education and social studies teacher and a soccer coach. His heart of gold and true passion for the education profession allows him to create strong, meaningful, nonjudgmental relationships with young students. Jason serves as the New Jersey Education Association's Preservice Diversity and Justice Chair and is the Governor's representative for preservice educators.

Governor Phil Murphy

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