

PROPERTY OF  
NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY

You are viewing an archived copy from the New Jersey State Library

Governor Jim Florio  
Annual Message  
January 12, 1993



974.901  
252f  
c.1

JAN 19 1993

185 W. STATE ST.  
TRENTON, NJ 08648

Good afternoon, Mr. Senate President, Mr. Speaker, distinguished members of the Legislature, ladies and gentlemen: Before I begin, I want to take a few moments to pay tribute to some very special people -- people whose deeds speak to the very best that is New Jersey.

Last month we had a storm in New Jersey that won't soon be forgotten. It was a devastating weekend. And yet, so inspiring was the way people came together to help each other, that I can say I was never more proud to be Governor of this state. I'd like to point out just a few people, whose efforts were typical of countless acts of courage and caring we witnessed.

On the morning of December 12th, Victoria Wells of Clifton was married to Joseph Hollis of Garfield. But that morning, the family of the bride discovered that the roads to their reception hall were flooded -- and the hall had no electricity. As Mrs. Wells put it to me in her letter, "After calming down, I took a chance and made a phone call to the Bethwood...in Totowa."

Frank Pombo Jr. of Little Falls, the owner of the hall, answered Mrs. Wells' plea and was able to hold a reception for 150 guests on just six hours notice.

Coming when it did, the storm put a real damper on the holiday season for a lot of people. But in Highlands Borough, the work of one dedicated woman meant that the children would not be forgotten. Lillian Gordon is a social worker at Highlands Elementary School. She spent hours on the phone, soliciting donations for a toy drive, and then she went out and bought gifts that were distributed to children all over the area.

And finally, when Rich Gruskos of Oceanport realized that high water was threatening his neighbors' homes, he and his son, John, put on their wetsuits, got the rowboat out of their garage and spent hours pushing it up and down the street in water six feet deep in winds of up to 70 miles an hour. The 15 people they rescued were taken to their house, where Rich's wife, Michele, gave them dry clothes and hot food.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ladies and gentlemen, last month New Jersey said goodbye to one of our best-loved citizens -- a hero to many New Jerseyans -- our former Governor and Chief Justice, Richard Hughes. Each of us, I'm sure, has our own memories of Governor Hughes. I know I do.

When this Legislature changed hands from one party to another a year ago, I was worried. No offense, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, but I was afraid we might spend the next two years fighting each other instead of fighting the recession and fighting for a better New Jersey.

But Governor Hughes called me at home the morning after the election. And he assured me that it didn't have to be that way. He had also seen our party lose control of the Legislature halfway through his first term -- but some of the accomplishments he was most proud of had come after that realignment.

He told me: "Accommodate wherever you can. But never compromise on matters of principle." Governor Hughes understood that we have a choice to make. As Democrats and Republicans and we can choose to wear ideological straitjackets that bind us to the failures of the past -- or we can seek the freedom of new solutions that put us on the path to progress.

Well, believe me, when a two-term Governor offers advice, I listen.

Since we last met in these chambers, our greatest achievement has been to recognize that our choice isn't between moving left or right. It's between moving backward or forward. And we have moved forward.

Together, we've shown the nation that, here in New Jersey, people still have the vision and the will to tackle the big issues.

Today I want to talk about where we can accommodate each other to keep tackling problems like education, public safety and winning the global race for new jobs and industries. And I want to make clear the principles on which I stand, and where I will not compromise.

But first, I want to thank you, Senate President DiFrancesco, Speaker Haytaian, Senator Lynch and Assemblyman Doria and every member of this Legislature for what we've accomplished this year:

In health care.

School funding.

Transportation.

And shore protection.

Together, we got government out of the car insurance business once and for all and kept Allstate in the car insurance business.

We're attracting new businesses to our state -- more than 100 of them in 1992 -- with all the jobs and opportunities that come with them.

We're rebuilding our roads and our infrastructure.

And laying the information highways of the future by being the first in the world to move ahead with fiber optic cable -- an accomplishment of tremendous significance.

We're breaking gridlock, and good things are happening.

A better New Jersey is taking shape.

But we're still a work in progress. Now, we need to plan and prepare for where we want to be, and where we want our children to be. We appreciate the wisdom of hockey superstar Wayne Gretzky who said he's successful not by being where the puck is, but by being where the puck is going to be.

Thomas Jefferson said it well when he said: "Each generation has a moral obligation to pass on to the next opportunities and possibilities for life at least as great as those it received from its own parents."

That is the promise of America, and it's a promise we're going to keep!

Eight days from today, this country will welcome a new President. The election of Bill Clinton is a sign, I believe, that the country has indeed found the courage to change.

And New Jersey is the vanguard of that change. By accommodating where we could, we have accomplished much. But we have more to do.

Last year with the help of Senators Bassano and Codey, and Assemblymen Coburn and Felice, we patched our tattered health care safety net. This year let's mend the last hole by guaranteeing the 250,000 New Jersey children who are uninsured the right to good, affordable health care.

Last year Assemblyman Bryant showed us that welfare ought to be a way out, not a way of life. This year let's give children and families the education and training and child care they need to make a better life and become productive citizens.

Last year we pulled together to rebuild our shore. This year, Senators Bennett and Kyrillos have proposed a bill to protect shore communities from future devastation by closing loopholes in CAFRA, our shore development law. I want to work with you to make it a law that will preserve and protect our precious Jersey shore.

Last year, working with Senators Haines and Rand, we invested a record amount to build a strong transportation network. I particularly want to acknowledge the invaluable leadership of two national leaders who are here today: Senator Lautenberg and Congressman Roe. This year let's do even more to keep traffic, our people and our economy moving.

Last year, under the leadership of Senators Lynch and Dorsey, we passed the Permit Extension Act to get good projects that had been stalled by the credit crunch moving again.

Also last year the Senate President and the Speaker joined me in an historic first. We created a "jobs czar" -- a Chief of Economic Recovery -- to take full advantage of our job-creating capabilities and to expand on the exciting engines of opportunity already in place: places like the Meadowlands Sports Complex, Camden waterfront and our world-class aquarium; Liberty State Park and its new Science Center.

This year I'm looking forward to seeing the promise of the Newark Performing Arts Center become a reality...and to breaking ground for the new convention center in Atlantic City on February 24.

This year I'm putting Bob Hughey in charge of a \$1 billion capital improvement plan to build an even stronger, better New Jersey and create 30,000 new jobs. The capital improvement plan will provide municipalities with low-interest loans to build new roads and sewers, libraries, fire houses and other essential facilities.

The plan will help entrepreneurs create new hope in our communities. And, thanks in large part to the leadership of Senators DiFrancesco and Gormley, the capital improvement plan will include a low-interest loan pool to help communities repair their aging schools and build new ones.

In the 80s, our state was flush, but we didn't invest. And now our roads, our bridges, our school buildings and sewer systems are in disrepair. We should have done it then. We have to do it now.

We will pay for our plan with the money we saved last year by refinancing our long-term obligations. We won't need any new taxes. And I will not propose any new taxes.

\* \* \* \* \*

From Thomas Edison to Albert Einstein, from David Sarnoff to the scientists who gave us fiber optics, New Jersey has always been on the cutting edge of new technologies...always leading the way in manufacturing, and always bestowing a better life to the next generation.

Last year New Jersey was recognized as the number one state in the nation in solving environmental problems, a source of great pride to all of us. This year let's put that leadership and know-how to work to do more than clean up the environment. Let's use it to create jobs for our people -- good, high-paying jobs from the laboratory to the factory to the field.

Environmental goods and services is big business. By the year 2000, it is estimated that cleaning up mistakes of the past and preventing pollution in the future will be at least a \$300 billion a year industry -- more than the aerospace, more than chemicals -- with tens of thousands of jobs. That market will go to the people who produce the best products and services for the best price and get them to market first.

I want New Jersey to capture that job-rich new market. So today I'm proposing a comprehensive seven-point plan to make sure New Jersey wins that jobs race. Our plan is based on our belief that there ought not be a Democratic or a Republican approach to creating tomorrow's high-paying jobs, there should be a New Jersey approach.

First: We'll help New Jersey's environmental entrepreneurs develop and market their ideas by dedicating a portion of our Economic Recovery Fund specifically to environmental technology.

Second: We'll target part of our job training grants to make sure our workforce in this area is the best-skilled in the nation.

Third: We'll offer tax incentives to companies that create new jobs and job training by investing in environmental technology. Speaker Haytaian and Assemblyman Doria have also suggested some interesting new ways we can use tax incentives to help manufacturers retool and expand. I want to work with them to fashion incentives that work.

Fourth: To transfer our environmental research and development into jobs for New Jersey, I'm asking you to join me in creating the New Jersey Corporation for Advanced Technology -- NJ CAT.

Just as Japan and Western Europe have demonstrated the benefits of linking academic and industrial bases, we need to maximize New Jersey's resources and target them to the marketplace. NJ CAT will do that by expanding on already successful research programs at places like NJIT, Rutgers and the Stevens Institute.

Fifth: Through our Economic Development Authority, we'll create a new loan export program. We'll call it "New Jersey Worldwide." It will help New Jersey companies sell their products throughout the world.

Sixth: I'm directing Commissioner McConnell to help business and the commercial real estate industry by matching high-growth businesses in environmental and other high-tech fields with available low-cost office space. We'll also help existing companies retrofit buildings to their specific needs, in order to make good use of our inventory of existing commercial buildings.

And seventh: Thomas Edison called his laboratory in Menlo Park his "invention factory." To make our colleges and universities the invention factories of tomorrow, we'll create "incubators" for environmental technology and other job-rich industries. We'll set aside \$10 million from our Economic Recovery Fund to help colleges and universities build and renovate their R&D facilities.

Today, when people around the world think of pharmaceuticals, when they think of telecommunications, when they think of photonics, they think of New Jersey. Tomorrow, when people in Eastern Europe want to make the polluted Danube River blue again, when people in Ukraine want to clean up Chernobyl, they will need environmental technology -- and they will look to New Jersey.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the future, how we work will change.

But why we work will remain the same.

We all want a better life for our children. Isn't that why we aspire to public office and what brings us here today?

The lasting greatness of any society is contained in the promise of its children, and the most important thing we can do is to nurture that promise through education. Last year we put politics aside and put children first on the tough question of school finance. I want to thank the teachers and parents, school officials and school board members and, especially Senator Ewing and Assemblyman Rocco for helping us to find common ground.

This year let's continue to move forward, to make sure our investments result in good schools where children can get a genuine education, not just a series of empty promotions through an outdated system.

We need not just new money, but a new system.

Under Dr. Fitzgerald, our new commissioner, we are going to insist on dollars and accountability -- because we are kidding ourselves if we think that one is of any value without the other.

Our new school monitoring requirements set higher standards for everyone -- students, teachers and school administrators. And we're working with the PTA to put parents at the center of the system, not the bottom of the bureaucracy. But we can't expect kids to learn if they're hungry or sick. So I urge you to join me in strengthening GoodStarts, our pre-school program for kids in some of our poorest communities. We can provide more services for more children in more school districts. And we should.

By making sure that all children come to school ready to learn, we can start to remove poverty as a barrier to educational success.

Twenty-five years ago Governor Hughes created the Department of Higher Education to prepare our colleges and universities for a changing 20th century. To build a higher education system that prepares our children for the new industries of the 21st century, I'm proposing a "Jobs of the Future" bond issue for this November's ballot. This bond issue will help us work with New Jersey businesses and colleges to upgrade the high-tech labs on our campuses and create classrooms that mirror the workplaces of the future so that we can attract high-skill jobs to our state.

We can also keep skills high and tuition low by helping colleges and universities purchase high-tech equipment. But college isn't the only way to prepare young people for the future. And for some, it's not even the best way. Half of New Jersey's young people don't go to college. For too long, they've been forgotten. But they will be forgotten no more. Let's resolve to give back to our skilled working people their shot at the American Dream.

We can do that by creating the New Jersey Youth Apprenticeship Program. Engineers and scientists are important partners in the high-paying economy we're building. But just as important are highly skilled technicians and factory workers -- people who can make the products and deliver the services we invent.

Beginning in the 10th grade, students will be able to take a rigorous three-year program combining classroom studies and real-life work experience. I'm pleased that Assemblyman Bob Brown has expressed interest in our proposals. So I'm directing the State Employment and Training Commission to work with legislators, the Education department and Labor department, and with the business community, to get this program up and running. Not sometime in the future, but this year.

We can close the skills gap for our young people, but we also need to bridge the caring gap that separates many young people from their communities. All over New Jersey, young people are discovering a new sense of community and compassion through voluntary community service projects -- from rehabilitating homes to organizing recycling drives, tutoring, planting gardens and creating community parks.

Through a new initiative called "New Jersey First," we'll combine federal dollars and New Jersey idealism to create a network of opportunities for more young people to help themselves and their communities. We'll also establish a leadership institute to prepare our top college students to lead New Jersey tomorrow by volunteering to build New Jersey today.

The energy and spirit of our young people is a wellspring of hope that we need to tap. And we will.

\*\*\*\*\*

But we know that there can't be any sense of community, any long-term economic security, where there is no sense of safety. Crime isn't a Democratic or Republican concern. It's our common concern. This year we'll continue to fight carjackers, stalkers and other thugs with increased patrols, public awareness programs and tough-as-nails enforcement. But the police, by themselves, can't stop crime. All across our state, people are working with police to keep their communities safe by organizing block watches or teaching kids to stay away from drugs.

Attorney General Del Tufo has done an excellent job in promoting the concept of community policing -- citizens and police working together to prevent stop crime before it happens. This year let's help more communities to fight back against crime.

On Friday, 93 new State Troopers will graduate. We're making the "thin blue line" that protects our communities a little wider -- because our most important right is the right to be safe and secure. I particularly want to thank Senator Littell for his help.

The "fighting 113th" is the first new class of troopers in four years. But, ladies and gentlemen, it won't be the last. I'm pleased to announce that this year we will recruit another new class of troopers -- the 114th.

\*\*\*\*\*

Education...health care...jobs: these are some of the ways we've tried to heed Governor Hughes' advice to accommodate wherever possible. Let me say just a few words about his admonition not to compromise on matters of principle.

Though we may disagree, I hope you will respect my firm and uncompromising adherence to certain beliefs:

I believe more than ever that every child deserves the chance to go to a good school so he or she can earn a good living and have a good life -- regardless of where they live.

I believe the women of New Jersey -- not big government -- should have the power to make the most personal and private decision a woman can make. Nothing must interfere with women's right to choose.

I believe it's dead wrong to make it easier for criminals to use weapons of war against the citizens of New Jersey. I read a story the other day about New Jerseyans who were risking their own lives to take assault weapons away from crazed thugs who are using them to terrorize neighborhoods -- in Somalia.

If we care about law and order we need to continue our ban against assault weapons -- in New Jersey!

\*\*\*\*\*

But the most important principle I believe in -- the first principle -- is our shared belief that government ought to serve the people. Last year half-a-million people in our state turned away from both political parties to vote for Ross Perot because they didn't believe that government works for them anymore.

That's particularly true of middle-class people, who pay most of the tab for government. They're sick of lumbering bureaucracies that waste their hard-earned dollars on irrelevant systems and inflexible rules. Without fundamental change, we're all stuck with a system that can't respond to the real needs of real people.

Over the last three years, we've made some progress -- combining agencies and consolidating services. We've saved taxpayers \$1.6 billion by following the recommendations of the Governor's Management Review Commission. But there's more to do.

To give one example, we can start by returning some common sense to ECRA, our Environmental Clean-up and Recovery Act. ECRA is in some ways a national model for holding polluters accountable. Unfortunately, in other ways, it's also a symbol for red tape. Several months ago I proposed reforms that would enable us to revitalize abandoned industrial and urban sites and move them

back into the economic mainstream -- and still in no way compromise our commitment to clean air, clean land and clean water. I'm pleased that Senators McNamara and Lesniak are working with Commissioner Weiner to craft my ideas into a workable plan. I want to work with you to pass that law as soon as possible.

If we want people to trust us, we need to listen to them. So once again, I'm calling on this Legislature to give our citizens the right to make their voices heard through Initiative and Referendum.

Finally, people are disillusioned by the growing perception that government is for sale to the highest bidder. A quarter-century ago Governor Hughes set us on the road to accountability when he established the Executive Commission on Ethical Standards. Let's finish that journey. Let's give government back to its rightful owners: the people.

I commend The Senate President and Assembly Speaker for moving forward with the campaign finance reform proposals in their respective houses. I hope their bills are a first step toward real change. But I have to say what many in this chamber, and many outside here, already know: They are not the strong medicine we need. You've said so yourself, and I agree.

Let's work together to do it right.

I'm proud of the fact that the first Executive Order I signed as Governor was to require senior members of my administration to disclose what they own and their sources of income. Since then we've broadened our disclosure requirements to cover members of state boards and independent authorities as well as local government officials and school board members.

This morning, before I came here, I signed two more Executive Orders.

The first prohibits state government from leasing or purchasing property in which members of the Legislature or their families have a financial stake.

The second requires state agencies and independent authorities to put their contracts through a competitive bidding process -- whether they're buying pencils or cars.

These orders are based on two fundamental assumptions:

That government officials aren't entitled to any special privileges.

And that taxpayers deserve the best deal for their money.

But there's more for us to do.

Eight months ago I proposed to this Legislature comprehensive campaign finance reforms. The reforms set reasonable limits on campaign contributions. And they close loopholes in our reporting laws so people know who's giving money to whom. I also proposed, with Senator Adler's support, that we establish higher ethical standards for all of us in government.

We know these reforms can work. One reason is because they're based on the recommendations of the bipartisan, independent "Rosenthal Commission," which included the legislative leadership. I'm asking you today to make real reform your first priority. I want to work with you all to craft a genuine reform bill, based on the Rosenthal recommendations.

That bill must apply to this fall's elections -- because people don't want to go through another election under a system that increasingly appears rigged against them. I see no reason we can't pass a good law within the next month. Let's roll up our sleeves and get it done.

\*\*\*\*\*

As we begin this new year, this new era in our nation, let's rededicate ourselves to the belief that we are here to solve problems, not create them. Governor Hughes showed us that the best use of life is to use it for something that will outlast us -- something that helps people, that leaves this place a little better than we found it.

When people look back on what we were able to accomplish in 1993, let's make sure they say of us: They used their time well. They put the public interest ahead of the special interests. They cared not just about the next election, but the next generation.

Thank you very much.