

# Governor Christie: This Is A Better State Today—A Much Better State—Than It Was Seven Years Ago; By Almost Every Measure

Tuesday, February 28, 2017 Tags: [Budget and Spending](#)



Excerpts from Governor Chris Christie's Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Address

Trenton, New Jersey  
February 28, 2017

"This is the ninth time I've come before a joint session to address our state's budget. Each time I've had specific goals in mind; guiding principles to follow. Government should get smaller. Taxes shall not be increased. Our core commitments must be met. Each time, with varying degrees of struggle, harmony and acrimony, we have reached these goals – I have stuck to those principles. Let me assure you that today will be no different."

...

"Today, that failing and bloated state government that I inherited in those cold and dark days of 2010, is more than 11,000 employees smaller. While shrinking the government workforce, we've also shrunk the actual footprint of government infrastructure. The State has vacated 1.5 million square feet of State-owned properties in the past seven years – many being sold and bringing in revenues of more than \$10 million. Lease payments have decreased by \$15 million annually. We have sold and shuttered those thousands of government cubicles to try to insure that the 2009 promise of a smaller government made and kept to our taxpayers cannot be broken by a new administration swollen by frivolous election year promises. The people in this room are the only folks who may be able to spare the public the exploding tax rates which would inevitably come in the wake of someone actually trying to keep those election year fantasies. We set the tone for smaller government at the state level and it has relentlessly spread to every level of government. I committed to leaving our state better than I had found it in 2010, and through these actions, we have done it."

...

"We cut spending, we cut red tape, and we unleashed the potential of our businesses with targeted tax cuts. At the same time, we honored our commitment to provide for our most vulnerable New Jerseyans.

"And because of the hard decisions made over the past seven years and the targeted investments we made to grow the economy and not grow government, I am proud of the FY 2018 budget I am presenting to you today."

...

"Since I took office, New Jersey has seen seven consecutive years of private-sector job growth. We have created 282,000 private-sector jobs. We have recovered all of the jobs lost in the Great Recession and have grown an additional 33,000 jobs on top of that. And we would have grown even faster if we had followed the prescription that other states followed by lowering taxes even more. We now have steady job growth in a private sector that was moribund for 10 years before we arrived to cut budgets and hold the line on taxes."

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"In FY 2018, we will invest \$20 million combined to fund lead remediation assistance for low- and moderate-income households in New Jersey, and to meet the funding needs required by new regulations to identify elevated blood-lead levels in children. It was this Administration that reacted quickly and decisively to deal with this issue by adding immediate funding last year. We continue that commitment to our citizens' health in this budget.

...

"Fighting the addiction crisis facing New Jersey has been and will continue to be in the next 10 months a top priority in my tenure as Governor."

"The reason that we were able to close Mid-State prison and reopen it as an institution dedicated to drug use, is because of our new approach to drug-addiction. We have refocused our attention on the individuals that are suffering from drug addiction and helped them reform their lives. During my time as Governor, we have decreased our prison population by nearly 22 percent. Prison population has dropped at every one of New Jersey's prisons. By bucking a national trend we with our dramatic drop in prison population, we are showing that we can also leave this aspect of New Jersey life much better than when we found it in 2010."

...

"As you can plainly see, my FY2018 budget continues to prioritize important spending to help the state grow and to help those who most need it despite the escalating costs of fulfilling our pension and health benefit obligations that continue to erode the State's ability to address all of the important issues we want and need to address as a State."

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"While the need for real and sustainable long-term reform cannot be understated, addressing the continued compounding of our pension crisis requires a substantial increase in State contributions.

"Accordingly, I am proposing increasing the pension payment by \$647 million over last year, to a \$2.5 billion pension payment in FY18."

...

"For the seventh consecutive year, my budget proposes the highest amount of school aid supporting education in New Jersey history. I am proposing more than \$13.8 billion in spending on education. Of that, approximately \$9.2 billion represents direct aid to schools. Now, this represents 39 percent of our entire state budget for fiscal year 2018. For the naysayers, no amount will ever be enough. But the facts are that we have contributed more money to K-12 education than any Administration in history."

...

"I proposed the fairness formula because I believe in it. I proposed it because I wanted to shine a light on the failure of the current formula. I proposed it to shove the other two branches into a real conversation to fix this problem. Well, in the last few months I have finally heard the leaders of the legislature admit what I've been saying for eight years – this system is unfair and broken.

"So now I will make one final offer. In fact, I will make a pledge. I pledge to work with the leaders of the legislature to come up with a new funding formula. Everything is on the table. No idea out of bounds for discussion. I am willing to work with you to solve this problem without any pre-conditions on the ideas brought to the table.

"However, here is my one requirement to offering compromise. 100 days."

...

"We still have work to do. We will always have work to do. We are New Jerseyans—we are always striving, we are never satisfied. But I am proud of what our collaborations and conflicts have achieved. This is a better state today—a much better state—than it was seven years ago; by almost every measure."

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