

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Support for Allowing Formerly Incarcerated Persons to Serve on Juries

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Proposal Builds on Governor's Second Chance Agenda

NEWARK – Governor Phil Murphy today spoke at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice's 25th Anniversary Gala to discuss his Administration's continued commitment to empowering communities of color across New Jersey. In his remarks, Governor Murphy highlighted his Administration's progress in uplifting individuals who have previously been involved in the criminal justice system and publicly endorsed the legislative effort to restore the right to serve on juries to formerly incarcerated persons. The bill is currently sponsored by Senator Raj Mukherji and Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, and other prime sponsors last session or this session include Senator Brian Stack, Senator Angela McKnight, and Assemblymembers Shanique Speight and Reginald Atkins.

Currently, approximately 500,000 New Jersey residents are barred from jury service for life, with this population disproportionately coming from communities of color. A number of other states, including Maine, Indiana, North Dakota, and Washington, restore the right to serve on a jury after an individual has completed their term of incarceration.

"Today, I am proud to publicly announce my support for legislation that will restore the right to serve on juries to more than a half million formerly incarcerated individuals in New Jersey," **said Governor Murphy**. "Our Administration believes in second chances, and restoring these individuals' right to perform a fundamental civic duty is not just about ending an injustice that continues to plague our formerly incarcerated neighbors; it is also about defending the integrity of our democracy, our criminal justice system, and the rule of law. I thank the legislative sponsors of the bill for their leadership and look forward to working with them in this effort."

"As we further our national lead in criminal justice reform, I stand by Governor Murphy in support of restoring formerly incarcerated individuals' right to serve on a jury," **said Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way**. "Having proudly led our state to restore voting rights for residents on probation or parole, I am confident that this additional measure will strengthen our democracy, bring a broader perspective to juries across our state, and better reflect our communities."

During the Murphy Administration, New Jersey has solidified its standing as one of the nation's most progressive criminal justice systems and has implemented several initiatives to support formerly incarcerated individuals through the reintegration process.

In 2019, Governor Murphy signed two landmark criminal justice reforms, creating a petition process for "clean slate" expungements for residents who have not committed an offense in ten years and have not been convicted of the most serious crimes, as well as restoring voting rights to over 80,000 residents on probation or parole.

Having recognized the barriers to finding stable housing for those with criminal records, in 2021, Governor Murphy signed the "Fair Chance in Housing Act" a landmark law barring landlords from asking about criminal history on housing applications in most instances. Today, the Office of the Attorney General continues to monitor and take

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enforcement action on any housing provider found to have violated the law.

Following the legalization of the adult-use recreational cannabis sales in New Jersey, Governor Murphy reprioritized his commitment to a stronger, fairer, and more diverse legal cannabis market. Through the Cannabis Regulatory Commission, social equity businesses, diversely-owned businesses, and Impact-Zone businesses are prioritized in the licensure process, allowing for those most severely affected by the War on Drugs and those who have convictions for marijuana-related offenses to have a chance at success in the burgeoning cannabis market.

In Fiscal Year 2022, the New Jersey Department of Corrections launched the Locally Empowered, Accountable and Determined (NJLEAD) reentry grant program to provide support to local non-profits and communities to assist formerly incarcerated persons reentering society. NJLEAD continues to provide a coordinated and collaborative system of services to ensure a continuum of care and treatment from prison to the community, including mental and physical health services, housing, employment, and entrepreneurship.

To build on New Jersey's reputation as the state for second chances, Governor Murphy will announce a new clemency initiative in the coming months. The Governor first shared his plans for the initiative in his 2024 State of the State Address.

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