

Governor  
HomeMeet the  
GovernorGovernor's Office  
Executive Staff

Cabinet

Newsroom

Boards, Commissions  
and Authorities

Photo Blog

For Kids

## Newsroom

[Event Photos](#)[Press Releases](#)[Featured Videos](#)[Audio Clips](#)[Newsletters](#)[Speeches](#)[Reports](#)[Executive Orders](#)[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [Speeches](#) > State of the State Address 2009

## State of the State Address 2009

**State of the State Address****As Delivered by****Governor Jon S. Corzine****Tuesday, January 13, 2009**

Good afternoon everyone and Happy New Year. Thank you all for attending today's State of the State. Reverend Clergy; particularly Reverend Copas and Ellerbe for your participation today. Senate President Codey; Speaker Roberts; By the way President Codey thank you for reminding me to say hello to Sharon when I came in. That was good.

Majority Leaders Sweeney and Watson Coleman; Minority Leaders Kean and DeCroce; Chief Justice Rabner and we're honored that all of the Justices are here today, thank you very very much for joining us.

Members of the Legislature; Members of my Cabinet; Congressmen Pallone, Holt and Rothman, we're pleased that you're all here today. Thank you very much for being here. Former Governors Florio and Bennett; thank you it's terrific to have you. And we have a special guest today... a special welcome to Indian Consul General Praboo DiYaluh.

Your Excellency, all of us are saddened by the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai. We pray as I'm sure that you do, that all those accountable will be held to the responsible actions and brought to justice. But more importantly we reach out and pray for the healing of your great community and country. Thank you for being with us.

Honored guests and my fellow New Jerseyans.

Today, as we assess the state of our state, and look ahead to the challenges of 2009, I cannot help but feel an overwhelming sense of pride in the people of New Jersey.

Despite the challenges of today's national economic crisis, the people of our state are pushing forward in building better schools, broadening access to health care, making our streets safer, and building a more secure world.

Our state has long been blessed by its deep well of talent and by the character of its people, people who have built, in good times and bad, a tradition of achievement and excellence.

From the founding wisdom of Stockton and Kean to the genius of Edison and Einstein to the proud voices of Robeson and Springsteen, from the poetry of Carlos Williams and the prose of Toni Morrison to the leadership of President Wilson and General Ordierno. New Jersey and the nation have been shaped by our state's extraordinary people. This era is no exception.

Our determination remains strong, our drive is undiminished, and our work ethic knows no bounds. We are a creative, "can-do" people who, with fortitude and spirit. We know we will work through today's challenging times.

Despite the economic tsunami that's engulfing the nation, I believe that the character and fundamentals of our state are equal to any task.

We generate the highest incomes in the nation. We educate our children in schools that are the envy of others. We maintain a highly respected justice system. We provide a strong safety net for our most vulnerable. And, we have always welcomed newcomers from other shores, embracing the values of diversity and pluralism.

Yes -- New Jersey is a state committed to achievement and excellence.

Now at a time of national crisis, New Jerseyans are leading the nation in confronting our security and economic challenges.

Last week I was in Iraq, where nearly 4,000 citizen-soldiers of our National Guard, Reserves, and active duty personnel are serving. Today, we have the largest foreign deployment of New Jersey's National Guard since World War II. With courage, discipline, and professionalism, our men and women in uniform are making steep sacrifices so that all of us are safe. We are all grateful. Those guys and gals over there are doing an incredible job an incredible job.

Major Dwayne Kelley was one of those citizen soldiers. Last year, he went to Iraq for his third tour of duty. He left behind a wife, two daughters, a mother, a sister and a brother. A family bursting with pride.

His tours in Iraq weren't the only job in which Major Kelley put his life on the line for his fellow citizens. Major Kelley was also a trooper. Trooper Kelley, Brought up in Willingboro, raising his family in South Orange, Kelley served more than 20 years in the State Police, where he attained the rank of detective sergeant first class as a counterterrorism expert, fluent in Arabic.

Major Kelley, father and husband, sadly was one of 10 people, 4 Americans, killed in a roadside bomb in Sadr City on June 24, 2008.

Our hearts go out to his family. His widow, Manita, and their daughter, Mushirah, intended to be here today, but had a family emergency and were not able to. But I know as all New Jerseyans, we want to express our condolences. Words cannot express what their sacrifice is, what their fortitude is, or their loss. God bless them.

Whether it's the brave men and women I've met in Iraq, or the food pantry volunteers, including Assemblywoman Coyle, I joined several weeks ago in Bound Brook; or the advocacy and faith-based groups counseling people on how to modify their mortgages and stay in their homes; or small business owners struggling to meet payroll each week; New Jerseyans are tough, and resilient, and we are fighting back against a national economic recession exceeded in depth and duration only by the Great Depression of the 1930s.

We see that spirit in every public school, every senior center, every hospital, and in every place where people come together, day-by-day, to reaffirm what I think we all believe is a basic truth: 'We are our brother's keeper -- we are our sister's keeper.'

People also came together last November 4th, when our citizens in record numbers voted overwhelmingly to elect Barack Obama our next president.

In doing so, our voters embraced a new vision for America, a progressive vision, one we share in New Jersey. In fact, it's a vision we've been working on for the last three years, a vision that we must responsibly share our economic bounty; that all of our children deserve a thorough and efficient education; that health care is a right; that we have a moral responsibility to be good stewards of the Earth.

Barack Obama's vision is our vision. And now, thankfully, starting next Tuesday, New Jerseyans have a partner in Washington -- a partner who will join us in pursuing a common vision. Change is in the air, and with that change, I truly believe that as a nation and as a state, our best days lie ahead.

That said it's impossible to ignore the deep challenges we face today.

We have been in the grips of a national recession since the fall of 2007. Our country's financial system hovers near collapse. Home values, personal savings, and the securities markets have plunged.

The national unemployment rate has soared to over 7%, with expectations of a 9% to 10% rate in the year ahead. Our citizens' economic security has been compromised. Our people did not cause this meltdown, its causes are beyond their control and are national, even global, in scope.

The cost of this colossal economic meltdown is far more than the trillions of dollars of lost value in the securities markets and economic production, it goes well beyond any batch of statistics. The cost must be understood in the pain and anxiety of our neighbors, of everyday people across this state.

Last month, I attended an anti-poverty conference here in Trenton -- a conference where I heard three life stories of people struggling just to stay afloat in these troubling times. A single mom told us that she lost her home to foreclosure because of a predatory mortgage.

She worked for 30 years as a corrections officer. Never did she imagine she would be out on the street. A young man described how he lost his job, then his apartment, and then his ability to put food on the table. A young woman told us how she struggled to get critical health care after she lost her job and her insurance, and was being forced toward bankruptcy.

These three people were prepared to work hard and play by the rules. They were caught up in forces well beyond their control. And when good people are at the end of their rope, they need to know that government's there to lend a helping hand.

I wish I could say the impact of the national recession is limited to a few stories but it's not. Food pantry calls are up 30% to 40% across the state. 48,000 New Jerseyans received foreclosure notices in 2008, and their ranks are growing. The number of unemployed and uninsured is exploding.

It is in this context that we have made the economy Priority #1, Priority #2, and Priority #3.

It is in the human context that we have initiated efforts to combat hunger, to provide home heating and utility assistance, to offer legal aid, and to address the foreclosure crisis through mediation and financial assistance.

Frankly, our foreclosure prevention initiatives, the one's that we've worked on today with this body, are a model for the nation. I thank the judicial system for its efforts in the mediation exercise. We are making a difference.

Similarly, New Jersey is at the forefront of the nation's efforts to provide healthcare to our citizens. When the Bush administration tried to kick 10,000 kids out of New Jersey's Family Care program ...we said 'no!' And I want to thank our congressional delegation because they stood with us every step of the way saying that children's health insurance is something that we should stand up for an we should fight for.

Back here in Trenton, instead of throwing children out of healthcare we expanded our program to cover every child and have enrolled more working and moderate-income families than ever before.

And I want to give a shout out, a thank you to Senator Vitale for your leadership on broadening access to healthcare. The Senator knows, and we know,

that getting people insured saves money ... and saves lives.

Another critical element of our health system is our network of community health centers, which serve almost 350,000 uninsured or underinsured New Jerseyans. I see the Rabbi shaking his head because he knows that works in Lakewood.

We need these centers today more than ever, as more people lose their insurance or struggle with their out-of-pocket expenses. That's why we increased our reimbursement rates and provided additional grant funding.

One network that will be receiving grant support is Community Health Care, which operates 17 facilities in Cumberland, Gloucester, and Cape May Counties. Community will be using these funds to expand innovative prenatal care, helping women maintain healthy pregnancies while reducing infant mortality.

We are joined today by Michelle Torchia, who has made healthy pregnancies and babies her life's mission at Community. Thank you, Dr. Torchia, will you please stand so that we can all salute you.

I'm proud that the State has been able to partner with private institutions like Community even as we had to make major cuts to balance the budget.

I don't have to tell you, you can recall quite vividly, the 2009 budget cut spending by \$600 million year-over-year, as we anticipated a gathering national recession and shrinking revenues. By the close of the calendar year, the deepening recession had required us to cut spending by another \$800 million.

That's a total of \$1.4 billion in cuts in this fiscal year alone. Let me repeat, \$1.4 billion. Not in the rate of growth, but in absolute dollars. It's been painful, and we've had to make many ugly choices. But together with my partners in the Legislature, we are making the hard choices.

Senator Buono and Assemblyman Greenwald have been especially diligent in taking on this challenge, and I want to thank them for their partnership.

Just as we've taken action to discipline spending and shore up New Jersey's safety net for our most vulnerable ... we've also built a foundation for future economic recovery. We began by offering small and mid-size businesses \$3,000 for each new job created over the next year. Additionally, wherever I go, small business owners tell me that they're having trouble getting loans. So are some of our homeowners. That's why we're encouraging new lending through innovative credit facilities and placing deposits with New Jersey's community-oriented banks.

Most importantly, we are creating jobs by accelerating public investments in roads, bridges, school construction, and the new mass transit tunnel under the Hudson.

In the next year alone, we're committing, and this is before any federal infrastructure investment program, we're committing \$4.7 billion in high-return investments ... saving or creating as many as 42,000 New Jersey jobs.

We all know that infrastructure matters. We saw the high cost of failure in Minneapolis and New Orleans. These investments not only create jobs today -- they will provide returns for all New Jerseyans tomorrow.

Just talk to the students I visited in the Oliver Street School in Newark. I want you to listen to this. Their building is overcrowded and crumbling -- classes in English as a Second Language are held in the hallway -- special education classes are crammed into a windowless coat closet. Oliver Street School was built in 1869. Ulysses S. Grant was the president that year. Can we really expect our children to learn and to grow to their fullest potential when their classrooms are in a closet?

That's why I fought to authorize \$3.9 billion in new school construction funds and I'm proud of it -- money that can be leveraged into \$5.4 billion in investments across the state.

My hat goes off to Senator Rice and Assemblyman Coutinho, who stood with me and there are many other legislators who did the right thing by New Jersey's school children.

Through all of these initiatives, we're planting the seeds for future prosperity. We are positioning as many people and businesses as possible to survive the national recession ... and then thrive once the inevitable recovery begins, and it will.

We've structurally reformed our oft-criticized corporate tax code, reforms that will encourage investment, and research & development, reforms that will allow businesses to recoup operating losses and competitively align our rates with those of surrounding states.

These actions are especially beneficial to our core biotech, pharma, high-tech and alternative-energy sectors. We've taken steps to expedite regulatory review and offer permit relief in this time of recession.

It is through this comprehensive approach that we expect to maintain a lower unemployment rate than the rest of the nation. Today, New Jersey's unemployment stands at 6.1% -- nationally, the rate is 7.2%. Make no mistake -- as long as one New Jerseyan is unemployed, we have work to do.

While we are reducing corporate taxes, we have also expanded the Senior Freeze on property taxes to include 70,000 additional senior households. And something that gets very little focus, we have continued to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit, making work pay.

Let me repeat -- getting our state through this national economic crisis is my Number One, Number Two, and Number Three priority.

Current economic circumstances dictate that we take steps which in normal times I would not.

It's regrettable that over a period of at least 15 years, when the sun was shining and the economy was strong, New Jersey failed to put its financial house

in order ... particularly our public pension system.

It's only because of today's financial crisis that I've recommended giving local governments the option of deferring a percentage of their employee pension payments. To be sure, I hope you've learned, I've demonstrated a commitment to the solvency of our pension system. Over the past three years, we've contributed more money to that system than previous administrations have in the preceding 15 years combined, 15 years.

Our plan doesn't require towns to put off pension payments -- it simply gives them a tool to work through this financial emergency. Some may not need to exercise their option.

But others will have to either seek cap waivers, leading to significant property tax hikes, or impose unacceptable cuts in public safety and other vital services. Yes, the economy and its harsh impact on our people remain our most significant challenges.

That said, we have not turned our back on long-term strategic goals like reforming and restructuring our state finances, improving government ethics, enhancing public safety and education, and protecting the state's most vulnerable citizens.

Even as we've cut the budget by \$1.4 billion, we've continued to reshape and reduce the size of government. Today, there are nearly 4,000 fewer employees on the state payroll than when I took office and 3,000 fewer at our independent authorities. That's 7,000 people! By comparison, nearly half of our municipalities in this state have fewer residents than our personnel reductions.

We've also scrubbed line-by-line state government for inefficiencies and implemented departmental consolidations, we ended Christmas tree spending, we improved the timing and transparency of the budget process, and we approved a constitutional amendment to give voters a greater voice on state borrowing. These ideas have been on the table for nearly two decades. We made them happen.

Additionally, starting with the upcoming year's budget, I have through Executive Order required that recurring expenditures be matched with recurring revenues. We're ending our dependency on gimmicks and one-time-shots. Meaningful reforms are in place. We are truly doing more with less.

This past year, we also made progress on ethics reform, although not enough to my liking. As you know, I've taken steps through executive orders to close loopholes in the state pay-to-play ban including by extending that ban to state redevelopment contracts.

We created the office of Comptroller to audit the use of public money. I put a former prosecutor, Matt Boxer, to work systematically searching for breakdowns in financial controls and government efficiencies.

Now I am asking you, the Legislature, to end pay-to-play, wheeling, and no-bid contracts at all levels of government, to lower the limit on campaign contributions to county committees and to make the state ethics committee a public-member only body.

These initiatives come in addition to steps taken by the Legislature in previous session, to put us on a pathway to end dual-office holding, among other measures.

I want to acknowledge the contributions of Senate President Codey who, as governor, helped enact one of the strongest state pay-to-play bans in the nation, and the efforts of Speaker Roberts, who overhauled the Legislature's ethics commission and has been a champion of publicly-financed campaigns.

That said, with continuing ethical and legal breakdowns by some, and with pay-to-play headlines unfolding in Alaska, Illinois, and in other states, we must act to restore the public trust.

People deserve a government they can trust. People have a right to know that when a decision is made, when a contract is awarded, when a law is passed, the officials in charge had only one thing in mind: the public good. Let's complete our agenda on ethics because it's the right thing to do.

In addition to my fiscal and ethics reform agendas, no issue has been closer to my heart than education. Our schools, from pre-K through college, rank among the very best in the nation. This month, Education Week rated us as one of the top five systems for overall performance in the nation and number two in providing the most important thing, a chance for our graduates to succeed in life.

Test scores across the state reinforce their conclusion. Results count.

We already lead the country in graduation rates and in access to quality pre-school. And while there are notable exceptions, New Jersey schools give most of our children an exceptional opportunity to build a bright future.

The new school funding formula for which we now are seeking court approval will only strengthen our commitment to success. That formula recognizes that 50 percent of disadvantaged students live beyond the borders of Abbott districts. The formula fulfills the state's obligation in my view to provide a thorough and efficient education to all children, wherever they live.

In fact, even though we cut the overall state budget this year by \$1.4 billion, you and I held firm in increasing total spending on education by nearly \$500 million.

Beyond our financial commitment, we're doing more. We're also working to upgrade standards, curricula, and graduation requirements in all of our schools. We've been collaborating with Colin and Alma Powell's effort to substantially lower dropout rates.

Again, obviously, results matter, but outcomes are best measured in more than just statistics. We educate our young people one student at a time. This a good story, a really great story. We are joined today by one of New Jersey's bright hopes for the future.

Kamaris Loor came to New Jersey from Ecuador in 1995 didn't speak English, and is on track to graduate this spring from Union City High School with a 4.2 grade point average and that's on a four point scale. Pretty good.

Kamaris is a county champion in the 100-meter butterfly, she did cancer research at the Susan Lehman Cancer Research Center, and next year, Kamaris will attend Brown University to begin a joint undergraduate and medical degree program. She is clearly on a track of success. But behind every student's success is an exceptional teacher.

Nadia Makar is the science chairperson at Kamaris's high school, where she has been a career educator for 35 years. Nadia is a prime example of the excellence you'll find among teachers in New Jersey's classrooms. Kamaris isn't alone in Union City. In fourth, eighth, and eleventh grades -- and in both language arts and math -- test score improvements in Union City are beating the state average.

I'd like to ask Kamaris and Nadia to stand and be recognized -- not only for themselves and what they've achieved, but in recognition of all the great schools across New Jersey. Think Nadia's parents are proud? Thank you for being here.

Beyond pre-K through 12, I need not tell you about the excellence of our county and state colleges and public universities. They continue to provide an affordable path for our young people from all walks of life to access the American promise. To that end, even in difficult times like the last three years, we've expanded financial aid for students each year for New Jersey's low- and moderate-income college students that need help.

Now, let me turn to another focus of success. We've taken great strides in making New Jersey a safer place to live. In 2007, we achieved a 7% reduction in statewide violent crime and an 11% reduction in murder. In the first three quarters of 2008, we have achieved another 7% reduction in violent crime, and an additional 6% decrease in murders.

Eighteen months ago, I launched a statewide anti-crime plan in cooperation with local authorities to bring safety to our streets and neighborhoods. We addressed the issue comprehensively through prevention, re-entry and enforcement initiatives.

Gangs were stealing young lives and leaving people in fear of letting their children play on our streets. There's more to do, but we marshaled resources across state departments and local law enforcement agencies to focus on reducing gang, gun, and drug activity. The results are showing up on the streets of Newark, Asbury Park, Vineland, and communities throughout the state.

I want to thank Assembly Majority Leader Watson Coleman for her leadership on this issue, and Mayor Booker for his great efforts in our great leading city, Newark, thank you.

Just as we are addressing crime, we have been tackling highway and pedestrian safety, and we've realized exceptional results under the leadership of Pam Fischer.

One of our most important safety measures is increased awareness of seatbelt use. As you can imagine, I have a personal stake in this issue. I'm blessed to be here today, and if one more person decides to buckle up because of my poor example, then something good will have come from my mistake.

Through enforcement and education -- particularly for teenage drivers, and with previously higher gas prices, highway deaths dropped by 127 lives year over year. 127 fewer people killed on highways this year than last, it's a drop of 18% and the lowest level in 25 years.

Fewer drunk drivers on our roads, stricter licensing requirements on young people, and enforcement of seat belt laws have resulted in fewer accidents and fatalities. Safer roads and better drivers should result in lower auto insurance rates and overall economic costs. We'll be working on that to make sure it happens.

On another public safety front, the protection of our most vulnerable children remains one of our highest moral responsibilities. Over the past three years, our newly created Department of Children and Families took a sometimes broken, understaffed, and flawed system and made it a ray of hope for at-risk children. The department found permanent homes for 4,200 children, drastically reducing the backlog and caseloads.

And the department recruited over 5,200 new foster and adoptive families -- a net gain of more than 1,800 safe, stable, and loving homes for foster children. We rebuilt a broken system and are on track to becoming one of the very best. These efforts are driven by dedicated employees and a commitment by all of you.

People like James Williams, as a senior case worker at the Division of Youth and Family Services, James stands up every day for New Jersey's most vulnerable children. So on behalf of all his colleagues, I'd like to invite James to stand up and accept the thanks of a grateful state for moving us from a position of weakness to a position of strength in protecting our children.

These highlighted achievements and work in no way describe the entirety of our agenda and activities.

Keep in mind:

- \* We enacted a family leave insurance program, the second in the nation
- \* We strengthened our worker's compensation system
- \* We continued reform of our public pension system
- \* We appointed record numbers of women and minorities to the bench
- \* We created the office of supplier diversity
- \* We built and dedicated a long-overdue World War II memorial
- \* We reformed the Charity Care funding formula to better protect health care for our most vulnerable, especially in our urban areas

- \* We created an inter-agency Council on the Prevention of Homelessness
- \* We finalized the Highlands Master Plan
- \* We built and participated in a regional auction system for carbon credits
- \* And, we delivered a nationally recognized Energy Master Plan as well as a Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan.

We've done a lot.

No one has been more instrumental in shepherding environmental initiatives than my former DEP commissioner, Lisa Jackson. I had hoped to introduce her today, but tomorrow, I'm proud to say she is appearing before the United States Senate for her confirmation hearing as the nation's next EPA Administrator.

As you know, Lisa is the only state commissioner to be nominated by President-elect Obama for his Cabinet and I know you'll join me in wishing her great success.

Now, as we look towards the coming year, it's probable that the national recession will continue to take a toll on our revenues, and in March, I'll be back here talking to you, undoubtedly about additional, painful cuts. I don't look forward to it, I know you don't.

Recognizing these harsh realities, we must continue to do everything we can to limit the impact of cuts on the state's most vulnerable citizens, our children's education, and public safety and we will.

In addition, some of the work outside of the budget will be complex and controversial. A case in point, I'm sending "formal instruction" to the Local Finance Board to firmly enforce the 4% levy cap in the coming year. Last year, we saw 80% of reporting municipalities come in over that cap. In fact, 30% came in with increases of 10% or more.

We need to reverse this pattern, by the way it was only 2.2% for our school districts across the states, and that's why it's important we enact the pension deferral bill to give towns the tools to hold the line on property taxes.

Additionally, I will ask Commissioner Doria to request, for both the Legislature and myself, concrete recommendations on cost saving from "shared services and consolidations" to be submitted by the Consolidation Commission no later than March 31st.

I will also direct the COAH board to allow for maximum flexibility and ample time for collaborative review of the 240-plus affordable housing plans submitted by municipalities who did the right thing and filed their plans by December 31st. In fact, that figure represents an 80% compliance rate.

Finally, recognizing the economic realities and pressures of the current economic environment, I am calling today for a one-year moratorium on the 2.5% developer's fee while additionally exempting projects that were in the pipeline before the fee was instituted. I look forward to working with Speaker Roberts, and Senators Codey and Lesniak, who all support this initiative.

A second topic of vital concern is "open space," and it's a tough one. Not because we don't want it, but because it's a tough financing issue. Open space preservation has always been one of New Jersey's priorities and which should be today, and it must be addressed before June 30th. It is my preferred approach that we put in place a long-term funding solution.

That said we need, at a minimum, an interim-bonding question for November's ballot to extend the financing the voters approved in 2007.

Between the budget, ethics, and job creation for the economy, I will need your bipartisan cooperation to address the people's agenda. My door is always open to anyone who is seriously interested in putting good ideas, intellectually honest ideas on the table.

One good idea I like is the posting of our state expenditures on the Internet as suggested by a number of Republican legislators.

I think this is a credible way to increase accountability and transparency in our budget process, and so I have directed the Comptroller, Matt Boxer, to review how to undertake this initiative.

In closing, three years ago, I came to Trenton to make our state a better place for all of our people. To move an agenda on fiscal responsibility, on ethics, on early childhood education, on the environment and on health care.

We've made important strides. There surely is more work to do, and I'm committed to finishing the job.

We don't choose the circumstances in which we govern. Let me repeat, my first priority -- my second priority -- and my third priority -- is to get our state through these challenging economic times.

Our job is to help our citizens cope with this crisis, and lay a foundation for a strong recovery.

Great crises, through necessity, make us think clearly and practically about the most important responsibilities of government. Necessity forces us to choose our most vital objectives. Necessity focuses us on our most important legacies. In 2008 my second and third grandchildren were born, it was a great year.

When I look at those two boys and when I think of the young men they'll one day become, when I think about the world we're creating for all of our children and grandchildren, I'm certain that the work we're doing is important.

We must strive for universal pre-school, so that all of our children have a chance to succeed in a competitive environment.

We must do our part to fight climate change by investing in energy conservation, alternative power, and mass transit, and by the way, We must flat-out build the new mass transit tunnel between New York and New Jersey and we should do it now.

We must work with county executives, freeholders, mayors, and school boards to make New Jersey more affordable by holding the line on property taxes.

In the coming year, we must build on our commitment to healthy children and healthy parents.

I entered public life because I believe that government matters, that government can play a constructive role in people's lives. I know it has in mine. I'm sure you feel the same. Almost 35 years ago, I chose to live in New Jersey because of its great strengths. It's wonderful environment to raise children in. I raised my children here, and through good times and bad, I have always been able to count on my community to stand together. Today we must stand together. In ordinary times, our job tough job but these are no ordinary times.

Given the magnitude of the national economic crisis, the challenges we face are unprecedented and daunting. I've never run from a challenge, and I'm not running from this one, and I don't think you are either. Everywhere I go, people ask me two questions: How long will this recession last? Have we seen the worst of it? I wish the answers were easy. They're not.

The national recession undoubtedly will intensify in the next few months and will likely last beyond 2009. New Jersey is faring better than other states by any standards. But when one worker loses his job, when one family loses its home, when one child goes without health care, our work is incomplete.

Hubert Humphrey once offered that society's character is measured by how it treats those in the dawn of life, its children; how it treats those in the twilight of life, its seniors; and how it treats those in the shadows of life, those with special needs, the sick, and the forgotten.

New Jerseyans have a strong character, because New Jerseyans believe in our common good. That's why I have confidence that if we pursue the common good together we will get through these difficult times and emerge even stronger.

Let me say this to the people of New Jersey: I may not always say what's popular, but you can be sure that what I say comes from my heart. Members of the Legislature, we may not always agree, but we must, we must always share a common commitment to making the world a better place for this generation, and those beyond.

It's fitting that on this 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth, we conclude with his hope: "With firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right ... let us strive on to finish the work we are in."

Thank you and may God bless you, and God bless New Jersey and America!

[Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Legal Statement](#) | [Accessibility Statement](#)



Statewide: [NJ Home](#) | [Services A to Z](#) | [Departments/Agencies](#) | [FAQs](#)  
Office of the Governor: [Governor Home](#) | [Meet the Governor](#) | [Executive Staff](#) | [Cabinet](#) | [Newsroom](#) | [Boards, Commissions and Authorities](#) | [Photo Blog](#) | [For Kids](#)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2009  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-6000

