



GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

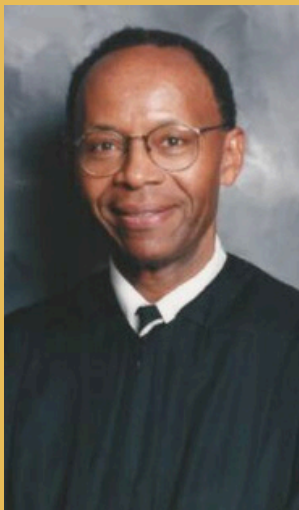
Office Newsletter
July/August 2024

CONGRESSMAN WILLIAM JAMES PASCRELL (1937 – 2024)

Congressman Bill Pascrell, who served New Jersey's 9th District, passed away on Wednesday, August 21st at the age of 87. A proud native son and lifelong resident of Paterson, Congressman Pascrell dedicated his life to public service. He was a US Army Veteran and history teacher before serving in the New Jersey General Assembly and later as Mayor of Paterson. He was elected in 1996 to the US House of Representatives. For nearly two decades in Congress, Pascrell championed tax fairness, transportation safety, infrastructure improvements, and climate justice. The grandson of Italian immigrants, he was committed to fighting for New Jersey families. He is survived by his wife, Elsie, their three children — Bill, David, and Glenn — and six grandchildren.



JUSTICE JAMES H. COLEMAN, JR. (1933 – 2024)



James H. Coleman, Jr., New Jersey's first Black Supreme Court Justice, passed away on August 2nd at the age of 91. Raised under Jim Crow laws in Virginia, Coleman shares in an essay that he chose to let those experiences make him "better" not "bitter." He authored over 2,000 opinions in his 39-year career, while championing social and racial justice. His landmark opinions included an appellate court decision striking down indiscriminate exclusions of people of color from serving on juries and his most cited Supreme Court decision governs summary judgments, *Brill v. Guardian Life Ins.*, 142 NJ 520 (1995). Appointed to the Supreme Court in 1994 by Gov. Christine Todd Whitman, Coleman was known for his astute intellect, independence, and fairness. He joined Porzio Bromberg & Newman after retiring in 2003. He is survived by his wife, Sophia, two children, and four grandchildren.

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

- **REMEMBERING LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR SHEILA Y. OLIVER - ONE YEAR LATER**
- **MEDICAL DEBT RELIEF LEGISLATION ENACTED - Governor Murphy signed the Louisa Carman Medical Debt Relief Act**
- **LEGISLATION SUPPORTING STUDENT LITERACY ENACTED - Two bills were signed by Governor Murphy aimed at bolstering student literacy rates in New Jersey**
- **GOVERNOR MURPHY ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF GEORGE HELMY TO THE US SENATE**





NJ GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

Office Newsletter July/August 2024

GOVERNOR MURPHY SIGNS MEDICAL DEBT LEGISLATION

In July, Governor Murphy signed the Louisa Carman Medical Debt Relief Act, landmark legislation aimed at easing the financial strain of medical debt for New Jersey patients. This bill was named in honor of Louisa Carman, a dedicated Policy Analyst in the Governor's Office of Healthcare Affordability and Transparency, who tragically passed away earlier this year.

The act prohibits a medical creditor or medical debt collector from:

- Reporting a patient's medical debt to any consumer reporting agency for healthcare services performed on or after the effective date of the bill
- Making a consumer report containing a patient's paid medical debt or a medical debt worth less than \$500, regardless of the date the medical debt was incurred;
- Charging an interest rate on a medical debt of more than three percent per year;
- Garnishing the wages of a patient with an annual income of less than 600 percent of the federal poverty level to collect medical debt owed;
- Engaging in any collection actions against a patient until 120 days after the first bill for a medical debt has been sent or against a patient who accepts and complies with the terms of a reasonable payment plan.

This legislation, championed by Senators Shirley Turner and M. Teresa Ruiz and Assembly members Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Wayne P. DeAngelo, Anthony S. Verrelli, and Herb Conaway Jr., works to address a key driver of the state's staggering wealth disparity.

"The Louisa Carman Medical Debt Relief Act is a monumental step toward building a healthcare system that is more affordable and more accessible for families all across New Jersey. And it will always stand as a testament to the indispensable role Louisa played in transforming our healthcare system for the better, so we can protect all of our neighbors from being forced to choose between seeking potentially life-saving care or falling into a medical debt trap."

- Governor Phil Murphy

US SENATE APPOINTMENT OF GEORGE HELMY ANNOUNCED



Governor Murphy announced the appointment of George Helmy to the United States Senate, filling the vacancy caused by the resignation of Senator Robert Menendez. Helmy, Executive Vice President and Chief External Affairs and Policy Affairs Officer at RWJBarnabas, will fill the seat until the November election when he will resign, and the election winner will be appointed to serve. Helmy, the longest-serving chief of staff to a NJ Governor in state history, served the Murphy Administration from February 2019 to October 2023.

Before his work in the Administration, Helmy served as State Director for Senator Cory Booker and prior to that as a staffer to Senator Frank Lautenberg. He will be sworn in when the US Senate reconvenes in September. Helmy, the son of Egyptian immigrants, will serve as the only Arab American Senator in the 118th Congress.





NJ GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

Office Newsletter July/August 2024

HONORING THE LEGACY OF SHEILA Y. OLIVER



Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver would have celebrated her 72nd birthday on July 14th, and to honor the impact of her life of public service, the Sheila Y. Oliver Civic Association hosted its first annual legacy brunch.

Governor Murphy, First Lady Tammy Murphy, and Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, pictured here with members of the Oliver family, attended the gathering.

Sheila Oliver was the state's second Lieutenant Governor serving from January 2018 until her passing on August 1, 2023.

Oliver pioneered a successful career in public service advocating for marginalized people in the fight for social justice, education, and women's equality. Oliver served as Speaker of the New Jersey Assembly, and later in 2017, when she was elected as lieutenant governor, she became the first woman of color in New Jersey to serve in a statewide elected position. Her legacy of public service continues to impact the lives of people across our state and to inspire the next generation of leaders.

ATLANTIC CITY COMMEMORATES FANNIE LOU HAMER AND HER ACT OF BRAVERY IN SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

In August, Atlantic City honored Fannie Lou Hamer with a Mississippi Freedom Trail Marker at Kennedy Plaza, the first marker on the trail outside of Mississippi. Hamer, during the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, testified before the credentials committee requesting that the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party represent the state at the convention, highlighting the systemic racism and voter suppression that Black Americans faced in Mississippi. Hamer bravely questioned, "Is this America?", bringing national attention to the plight of Black people in the South and their struggle for full citizenship and civil rights.

The ceremony was attended by Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves and Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, who emphasized the importance of remembering and teaching this history to future generations. Lieutenant Governor Way said, "[w]e cannot heal our nation from centuries of racism and discrimination without making this history visible,"





NJ GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

Office Newsletter July/August 2024

BOOSTING STUDENT LITERACY IN NEW JERSEY



Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation to increase literacy rates in New Jersey schools through new initiatives that increase access for young learners to the tools and resources needed to become strong, confident readers while also supporting educators and increasing professional development opportunities.

The first initiative (S-2644/A-4303) requires students from kindergarten to third-grade to undergo literacy screenings twice a year starting in 2025, with interventions for those who fall behind. It also includes a literacy training program for teachers and a working group to draft recommendations and support materials to enhance reading skills. The second bill (S-2674/A-2288) creates a new office within the NJ Department of Education to develop and implement policies to boost literacy and close achievement gaps.

S-2644/A-4303 was sponsored by Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz and Senator Vin Gopal, Assembly members Carmen Morales, Pamela Lampitt, Annette Quijano, and Eliana Pintor Marin

S-2647/A-2288 was sponsored by Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz, Senator Shirley Turner and Assembly Members Yvonne Lopez, Benjie Wimberly, and Sterley Stanley

SPURRING INVESTMENT IN THE AI SECTOR

Governor Phil Murphy signed S-3432/A-4558, in July, establishing the Next New Jersey Program to boost the state's artificial intelligence (AI) sector. This initiative provides capital and infrastructure support to AI innovators and businesses, positioning New Jersey as a leader in AI development.

Administered by the NJ Economic Development Authority, the program will offer tax credits for AI projects and data centers to drive economic growth, job creation, and groundbreaking advancements in AI technology. This builds on the establishment last fall of the [State AI Task Force](#), charged with studying emerging AI technologies, ethical development and use of AI, and its societal impacts. The state's AI initiative draws on New Jersey's unique strengths in a range of sectors which can benefit from the application of AI technologies, including healthcare, financial services, education, and technology.

NEW JERSEY AT THE OLYMPICS

New Jersey proudly sent over 30 athletes to the 2024 Olympics in Paris, and several returned home with medals. This remarkable achievement highlights the dedication and talent of our athletes. Here are athletes who brought home medals. All of our athletes made New Jersey proud!

- Bam Adebayo, Newark, NJ, Basketball, Gold
- Jack Alexy, Mendham, NJ, Swimming, Gold and Silver
- Jackie Dubrovich, Riverdale, NJ, Fencing, Gold
- Nic Fink, Morristown, NJ, Swimming, Gold, and 2 Silver
- Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, Dunellen, NJ, Track, 2 Gold. Broke her World Record in the 400-meter hurdles
- Hezly Rivera, Oradell, NJ, Gymnastics, Gold
- Scottie Scheffler, Ridgewood NJ, Golf, Gold
- Casey Murphy, Bridgewater, NJ, Soccer, Gold
- Morgan Pearson, New Vernon, NJ, Triathlon, Silver





NJ GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

Office Newsletter July/August 2024

FRANCIS K. O'CONNOR CONFIRMED AS COMMISSIONER OF THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



Francis (Fran) O'Connor was confirmed as the 20th Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Transportation this summer, after being nominated by Governor Murphy and serving as Acting Commissioner since February 2024. With over 40 years in the transportation sector, Fran began his career at the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, advancing from toll collector to Deputy Director of the Electronic Toll Collection Program, where he launched the Authority's first electronic toll system. In the private sector, he advised on toll road projects nationwide, managed large teams, and implemented major customer service centers. Fran graduated summa cum laude with a degree in accounting from St. Peter's University.

AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

NJ TRANSIT: FARE HOLIDAY FOR ALL CUSTOMERS Free rides from Aug. 26 to Sept. 2, 2024. ([read more](#))

- **BPU:** The Murphy Administration highlights Residential Energy Assistance Payment to advance affordability for New Jersey ratepayers. ([read more](#))
- **DCA:** DCA launches new and improved data hub. ([read more](#))
- **DEP:** DEP receives \$72 million from NOAA to advance climate resilience projects across multiple New Jersey counties. ([read more](#))
- **DOE:** The Murphy Administration announces promising practices project to accelerate student learning in NJ schools. ([read more](#))
- **DOH:** The New Jersey Department of Health proposes new rule at N.J.A.C. 8:43E-15.1 Establishing Lactation Room Standards at Licensed Health Care Facilities. ([read more](#))
- **DOL:** The "Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights" became effective on July 1, 2024, and establishes a broad range of rights and employment protections for domestic workers. ([read more](#))
- **DOT:** The Transportation Accessibility and Mobility Pilot Program (TAMP) is accepting applications for \$2 million in FY2025 grants. ([read more](#))
- **NJDA:** Gloucester County farm operator Joel Viereck was sworn in to join the NJ Board of Agriculture. ([read more](#))

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

- **P.L.2024, c.32:** Requires, among other things, sellers of residential property located in New Jersey to use the "Seller's Property Condition Disclosure Statement"
- **P.L.2024, c.41:** Authorizes NJ Infrastructure Bank to expend certain sums to make loans for environmental infrastructure projects for FY2025.
- **P.L.2024, c.44:** Appropriates over \$101,000,000 from constitutionally dedicated CBT revenues to DEP for local government open space acquisition and park development projects; and for certain administrative expenses.
- **P.L.2024, c.45:** Authorizes NJ Infrastructure Bank to expend certain sums to make loans for Community Hazard Assistance Mitigation Program projects for FY 2025.
- **P.L.2024, c.51:** Establishes penalties for employers who disclose or threaten to disclose an employee's immigration status for the purpose of concealing violation of State wage, benefit, or tax laws.





NJ GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

Office Newsletter July/August 2024

Holidays and Observances

July

Disability Pride Month
French American Heritage Month



July 4th - Independence Day

August

Black Business Month
Transgender History Month
National Breastfeeding Month

August 9th - International Day of the World's Indigenous People

August 12th - International Youth Day

August 12th - Tisha B'av

August 26th - Women's Equality Day

September

Hispanic Heritage Month
(September 15th to October 15th)
National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September 2nd - Labor Day

September 11th - Patriot Day

September 21st - International Day of Peace

September 22 - Fall Equinox

Events, Public Meetings, and Program Highlights



September 17-18, 2024
Governor's Conference
on Housing and Economic Development
Harrah's Resort Atlantic City

Governor Phil Murphy
Announced as Keynote Speaker

Register to Vote!



CLEAN FLEET EV PROGRAM

WEBINAR

Learn more about New Jersey's EV programs
WEDNESDAY | SEPT. 11, 2024 | 2:00 PM

REGISTER NOW



CHECK OUT THIS NEW RESOURCE!

Disability Information Hub

Edna Mahan Correctional Facility Public Meeting

September 13, 2024
at 10:30 a.m.
Join the Meeting:
<https://tinyurl.com/b42jfr>



Join the conversation!
Submit your questions online:
<https://bit.ly/EMCsubmit>



NJ Department of Human Services' Opioid Summit 2024

BUILDING HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

Virtual All-Day Conference | Workshops | Panels
Keynote Speakers | CME and CEU Credits Available



ANCHOR TIMELINE
For Tax Year 2021 Season

- August 19, 2024** - ANCHOR Benefit Confirmation Letters are mailed to 1.5 million prior recipients. Applications will be filed automatically on their behalf.
- August 26, 2024** - To reach new applicants, Application Mails with info on how to apply for the program are sent to 2 million residences.
- September 15, 2024** - Deadline for residents who received a Benefit Confirmation Letter to update personal information if it has changed.
- November 2024** - Benefits begin to be distributed on a rolling basis.
- November 30, 2024** - Deadline for new applicants to apply.




Jayné J. Johnson,
Director of the
Office of Equity

Thank you for connecting with the NJ Office of Equity! We appreciate your interest in learning more about our work.

[If you are not receiving this email directly from us and would like to subscribe to our mailing list, please click here.](#)

Many thanks to Helen Cashman, Christofer Robles, and Mel Walker for their contributions to this issue!

N  **GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF**
EQUITY