

**Governor Phil Murphy
INAUGURAL ADDRESS
Tuesday, January 16, 2018**

Mr. Chief Justice and Justices of the Supreme Court.

Members of our Congressional Delegation.

Mr. Senate President, Mr. Speaker, and members of the 218th Legislature.

Reverend clergy.

Honored guests.

Family and friends.

Ladies and gentlemen.

My fellow New Jerseyans, 70 days ago you chose to take our state in a new direction. Today, full of optimism and hope for a better future, we begin that journey together.

The work of our administration will be about you, your families, and your communities. We will never lose sight that we are one state and one family, with different beliefs but common dreams, and that we do not succeed unless we all succeed.

To Governor Christie, on behalf of our state, I thank you for your over two decades of public service to New Jersey. There is much in your body of work from which to choose, but, in particular, your work to save lives from the epidemic of opioid addiction is a legacy worth applauding and continuing, and I intend to do so. You and Mary Pat have also set the bar on how to be outstanding parents, even in the public eye.

And, to the other former governors who are with us today and in whose footsteps I now stand -- Governors Kean, Florio, DiFrancesco, McGreevey, Codey, and Corzine -- you have each given me your sage advice both as I contemplated running for this office and as I prepared to take it. I cannot thank you enough for your guidance and your leadership.

It is only 12 days since we lost Governor Brendan Byrne. His bold leadership, his inspiring vision, and his uncommon courage are examples to which we should all aspire.

Governor Byrne did big things and made a big difference in this state we all love. We should honor his legacy with the same willingness to make decisions with the future, not simply the next election, in mind.

I had wished nothing more than to look over and see Governor Byrne sitting by Ruthi's side today. I cannot make that wish come true.

However, in tribute, I have asked for the flag presented last Monday to Ruthi and the Byrne family by the military honor guard to be flown above this building as we sit here. Through this gesture, I know that he is with us.

When we part company today and leave this building, I ask you to pause and look up, to that flag and to the sky beyond, in remembrance of Governor Brendan Byrne.

Lieutenant Governor Guadagno, we have known each other over the years and you fought a heck of a fight. I know your deep commitment to your family and to our state. I thank you for your service and wish you, Michael, and your wonderful sons all the very best. And, any parent of a child serving in our armed forces is a hero in their own right.

To Senate President Steve Sweeney and Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, Majority Leaders Loretta Weinberg and Lou Greenwald, and Minority Leaders Tom Kean and Jon Bramnick, I congratulate you on having the support and confidence of your caucuses. I look forward to working with you, and all members in your respective houses, in true partnership, to accomplish great things for our state and its people.

Our commitment to finding common ground across the aisle is genuine. I know that if we forge our future together, we will get there faster and stronger, and it will last longer than if we go it alone.

To Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, I am excited and grateful to have you as my partner in this new administration. Your grace and good humor, your experience and knowledge, and your lifelong commitment to public service and improving the lives of those left at our society's margins have been an inspiration to me and to many across our state. I am ready to tackle the issues with you by my side. You have made history before and you have just made it again. Congratulations!

To our First Lady, Tammy Snyder Murphy, and our children, Josh, Emma, Charlie, and Sam, thank you for your patience over the past several years, during the long days and late nights. You have kept my feet firmly on the ground. You remind me daily that my most important duties are as a husband and as a dad. As we begin this new journey together, I couldn't be prouder to have you by my side and I love you all so very much.

A New Page

Ladies and gentlemen, a few moments ago our state turned to a new page. Today, and together, we embark on writing a new chapter in our history. However, instead of writing yet more pages about age-old problems that never go away, let's write about the solutions.

To do so will require leadership. It will require vision. It will require understanding the power of thinking big and refusing to wait for someone else to pick up the challenge.

It is leadership that has driven America through the generations to be the envy of the world, to have saved it from fascism and other existential threats, and to have made us a force for good around the world, and a beacon for peace and prosperity. It is leadership that has made our country a place where immigrants still come in hope of a better future.

It is an American truth summed up so succinctly by President John Fitzgerald Kennedy -- whose family Bible I had the honor of placing my hand upon moments ago -- that as Americans, we do things "not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

A Stronger and Fairer New Jersey

At this time, with the challenges facing our state and its people, our leadership and vision must once again align. For too long, too much has been done only for the short-term and only from self-interest.

The long-term common good, along with our confidence and optimism about what we can achieve, has suffered.

New Jersey was once renowned for big ideas, and can be again.

The public is tired of pessimistic and short-sighted thinking. They have rejected the politics of division, of "us" versus "them", and asked us to focus on "we" -- all nine million who call this great state home.

We have visited every New Jersey county and met tens of thousands of people longing for leadership that will restore their confidence in the future of our state and their hold on the American Dream.

It is for all of these good and hopeful people -- and the millions more like them -- that I take my oath today, an oath to not only uphold our Constitution, but to follow through on delivering the promise of a better life and a better future.

There is no ambiguity in their mandate: They voted to build a stronger and fairer New Jersey that works for every family.

And they elected a Governor and Legislature with a duty to carry out this promise.

A stronger and fairer New Jersey is rooted in an economy that creates better jobs and provides higher wages ... that creates places where industries can grow and communities can rise, where innovative companies are born and where millennials want to live and where seniors want to retire ... and, which remembers that we all have value and we all can contribute, including, and especially, the differently abled.

A stronger and fairer New Jersey funds its public schools and delivers on the promise of property tax relief ... makes a four-year college more affordable and provides free access

to community college ... and, creates new training programs to prepare our residents for jobs in an innovation-driven economy.

A stronger and fairer New Jersey creates tools for small businesses ... and women, veteran, and minority-owned businesses ... to thrive instead of delivering massive tax breaks to a handful of select and connected big corporations that don't need them in the first place.

A stronger and fairer New Jersey ensures the wealthiest among us pay their fair share in taxes so working and middle-class families can keep more of their hard earned money.

A stronger and fairer New Jersey embraces comprehensive criminal justice reform -- including a process to legalize marijuana -- and focuses on creating housing that is affordable and safe from the danger of lead.

A stronger and fairer New Jersey welcomes all who wish to become a part of building our future, and protects our hardworking immigrant families.

A stronger and fairer New Jersey accepts the reality of climate change, invests aggressively in renewable energy, and upholds the goals of the Paris Climate Accord.

A stronger and fairer New Jersey means that someone has your back. I do.

And, for those of you who are debating whether to stay in New Jersey or leave, or perhaps, considering moving here from elsewhere, I commit to you -- many years from now, when you look back, planting your flag in New Jersey will have been one of the smartest decisions you ever made.

Standing for the Right Things

New Jersey once was a national model for protecting the environment and growing an economy fueled by innovation and ideas. We were fiscally responsible and home to a thriving middle class, yet we ensured that the least among us had programs to help lift them from poverty. We have long had strong firearm laws that have kept guns out of the wrong hands and protected the Second Amendment rights of sportsmen.

We can once again be the state that leads the nation in progressive policies and puts common sense and our residents first in line.

We can, and will, stand for the right things.

We begin by having a Cabinet and leadership team in place that looks like the state we now proudly serve. This was my first promise, and it has been kept.

We sought out the very best and talented leaders to carry out our mandate to build a stronger and fairer New Jersey.

Because of that, our cabinet reflects the great diversity of our state, among them the first Latina to lead the Department of Banking and Insurance, Marlene Caride; the first Muslim-American cabinet official in state history in Dr. Shereef Elnahal; the first African-American -- and first minority -- to lead the New Jersey National Guard, Adjutant General Jemal Beale; and, in Gurbir Grewal, the first Sikh-American Attorney General in our nation's history.

While we still have important positions to fill, I am extraordinarily proud to introduce them to you now, and I ask them all to please stand and be recognized.

One New Jersey

From our cities to our suburbs, from the Shore to our farms, I feel the intense energy for a stronger future built right here.

I hear the excitement from the heads of the technology incubators where start-up companies begin.

I see the pride at construction sites where union workers are building exciting new spaces where residents will work, learn, and live; in our schools where educators are preparing the next generation of New Jerseyans; and, in the neighborhoods where police and fire are protecting both their neighbors and complete strangers.

I feel the satisfaction that comes from knowing people across the country are enjoying products grown and raised, or fermented, brewed, and distilled in New Jersey.

We are one New Jersey -- north, central, and south -- an extended family striving for success.

I pledge to you now to be the governor for all nine million who call our great state home, with the goal of doing only what is best for our shared future.

We shall take our cue from the late stateswoman Barbara Jordan: "The imperative is to define what is right and do it."

We Don't Have to Wait

In a matter of weeks I will go before the Legislature to present our first budget and to put these ideals into greater specificity.

We will have a budget that is balanced fiscally and morally.

We will be bold, but we will be responsible and realistic. And in doing so we will send a loud and clear message that our days of muddling through from crisis to crisis are over -- that we will charge forward with bold ideas and with a recognition that, while we can't change everything overnight, we also can't create a stronger tomorrow unless we start making smart investments today.

We do not need to wait until that budget is presented to alter our trajectory.

To my partners in the Legislature: I ask you to send me the bills, among others, to reaffirm our support for women's health and Planned Parenthood; to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour; to promote equal pay for women; to give every worker the peace of mind of earned sick leave; to tear down barriers to voting; and, to strengthen our gun laws.

And, I promise you now that they will be met with a signing ceremony instead of a veto pen.

We don't have to wait to make our economy stronger and fairer, to attack income inequality, and to protect and grow our middle class. That's why, later today, in one of my first official acts, I will sign an executive order promoting equal pay for women.

A Fight We Must Take On

We must also immediately resist Washington's all-out assault on New Jersey.

This is not as much a battle between Democrats and Republicans, but a battle between right and wrong – between standing up for the people of New Jersey or standing for failed Washington politics.

We will resist every move from President Trump and a misguided Congressional leadership that would worsen income inequality; or divide families or deny access to college for our Dreamers; or defund essential infrastructure; or gut health care for our children, seniors, and the working poor; or provide a tax windfall to giant corporations and billionaires at the expense of our working and middle-class families.

We will resist the dangerous and wrong attempt to allow drilling for oil off our precious shore. We will not allow this threat to our environment and our economy to stand. Our administration, along with the bipartisan support of our federal delegation, will not back down in our fight to protect the Jersey Shore from President Trump and the energy industry special interests.

We will resist every attempt to define who is, and who is not, a real American, to delegitimize our LGBTQ brothers and sisters, or to divide us based on how we worship. And we must reject President Trump's dark belief of an America in decline and in carnage.

Let there be no doubt: ours is an imperfect, but great, nation. Our exceptionalism derives from our values, articulated as forcefully in our Constitution as in the words written by Emma Lazarus at the base of the Statue of Liberty.

The current and unrelenting assault on our values will not stand, and we will combat it with every available means. We did not ask for this fight, but it is one that we must -- and we will -- take on.

I Remain An Optimist

Despite the challenges we face, I remain an optimist.

This optimism -- this belief that we don't have to accept our current state of affairs -- was instilled in me by my late parents and my siblings.

Our family was working poor -- my father managed a liquor store, among other jobs, and my mom was a secretary. We lived in a house that was too small for a family of six -- so small that I slept in my parents' bedroom until I was nine. I started working at age 13, washing dishes. And I would never have been able to afford college or graduate school if not for student loans, and summer and school jobs.

My parents never accepted our circumstances as just part of a family condition in which we were all trapped. They pushed my brother, my two sisters, and me to work hard and to dream bigger than they had. They knew that we had the same God-given gifts as any kids from a well-off family. But they also knew we had a government that had our backs should we need a hand up to achieve whatever we wanted.

That was the deal in the America I grew up in. It's a deal that has all but disappeared. And it's a deal that too many of New Jersey's working poor families -- and, more often than not, our middle class ones -- desperately need to have today.

I accept the tremendous responsibility of this office with my parents clearly in mind and knowing they and my big brother are looking down today satisfied that the lessons taught around the kitchen table -- the lessons of fairness, of justice, and of having the backs of others -- still burn deeply within me.

And these are the ideals that must once again -- and will -- define New Jersey.

A Common Destiny

We can do this together if we approach politics not as a game to be won, but as a noble calling to be answered.

We can do this if we reject the urge to think small, but instead accept the need to do big things that will benefit everyone who calls New Jersey home -- today and tomorrow.

I am moved, as I am in so many instances, by the words of the late Robert F. Kennedy, whose model for service set a half-century ago still guides me today and whose words at the University of Cape Town still inspire: "Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation."

I urge you to join us on the road forward. Whether you are a Democrat or a Republican or an independent.

We all share a common destiny. We must undertake a common cause.

So now, the page is turned, and the pen is in our hands. Let us, together, write this history.

Thank you, may God bless you all, and may God continue to bless the great state of New Jersey and the United States of America.