



Celebrating New Jersey's LGBTQ+ Leaders

By: Navya Menon, Diversity Unit Intern

New Jersey's LGBTQ+ community boasts a vibrant history of resilience, advocacy, and cultural influence, shaping the state's legacy in profound ways. In celebration of Pride Month, we highlight some of the trailblazing LGBTQ+ figures whose contributions continue to inspire and uplift communities across New Jersey.



Luanne Peterpaul made history in 2023 as the first openly LGBTQ+ woman elected to New Jersey General Assembly, following her tenure as a Municipal Judge in Long Branch and Asbury Park from 2018 to 2022. A steadfast advocate, she has worked to foster an inclusive environment where people of all backgrounds feel at home in New Jersey. Her lived experience as an LGBTQ+ individual, combined with her dedication to social justice fueled her efforts to advance anti-bullying legislation. She played a key role in shaping policies as a member of both the New Jersey Commission on Bullying and the New Jersey Anti-Bullying Task Force, striving to create safer communities statewide. Additionally, in her position on the Board of Directors of Garden State

Equality, Peterpaul was instrumental in securing marriage equality in New Jersey.



Reed Gusciora, currently serving his second term as the Mayor of Trenton, is a trailblazer in New Jersey politics as an openly gay elected official. Despite opposition fueled by anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment, he secured a decisive victory, reinforcing his strong support within the community. Before becoming mayor, Gusciora served in the New Jersey General Assembly beginning in 1996, since representing portions of Mercer and Hunterdon counties. He gained prominence for his advocacy in 2012 when he championed legislation to legalize same-sex marriage in New Jersey. His legislative impact extends beyond LGBTQ+ rights; having spearheaded initiatives such as the NJ Smoke-Free Act, the Senior Gold Prescription Discount Act, and efforts to expand the State's recycling laws to include electronic waste.



Betsy Driver former mayor of Flemington, made history as the second openly intersex person elected to public office. A dedicated advocate for intersex rights, she co-founded *Bodies Like Ours*, an online platform fostering connection and community among intersex individuals. She also played a pivotal role in establishing, *Intersex Awareness Day*, a global initiative designed to bring visibility and awareness to intersex issues.



Jennifer Williams made history as Trenton City Council's first transgender councilwoman. Using her position to advocate for transgender representation in New Jersey. Committed to ensuring that marginalized voices are heard in government, she emphasizes the importance of direct involvement in shaping policy. As she told *New Jersey Monitor*, "If you want representation, you need to be in the room, you need to be part of the discussion, and you need to be part of the decision— more than being a citizen who votes and a citizen who advocates".