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April 2024

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Official Publication of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities

Long Hill Wins Annual Contest

Show Off Your City 2024



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On the Cover

This year's Show Off Your City winner, Long Hill, shared an image of the Great Swamp by resident Ed Zindel. Visit the story on page 42 to read more about the winning town, as well as the top 10 runners up and other notable submissions.

5 Ways to Celebrate NJ Local Government Week

Celebrate Your Town April 7-13!

It's your opportunity to showcase the importance of local government, spotlight the efforts of your municipal staff, and highlight the beauty of your town.

Consider these proven strategies for your 2024 plans:

It is Local Government Week!
We will be featuring members of the Township Committee & Office Staff throughout the week so you can learn about who is working for you!

BRENDA CLOSSER, ADMIN. & LAND USE SECRETARY

How long have you worked for Deerfield Township?
A - I just celebrated 39 years with Deerfield Township!

What is your favorite part of the job?
A - I love helping people and always treat people the way I would want to be treated.

What have been some of the biggest changes over the years?
A - Seeing how many new people and families have moved into the town!

What are your responsibilities in Deerfield?
A - While you most often see me at the front window, I actually have been assisting in the Tax Office for many years in addition to the Fire Marshal's Office, Assessor's Office, Finance Office and serve as the Land Use Secretary which keeps me busy. I try to be of help wherever I am needed in the Township Building.

1 Introduce and highlight your municipal employees with social media entries for each day of Local Government Week.

Image courtesy of Deerfield Township

2 Host a coffee & conversation with the Mayor, Elected Officials, or Professionals.

Image courtesy of Fair Lawn

Borough of Fair Lawn

Coffee with the Mayor & Council

Tuesday, April 18
Fair Lawn Municipal Building
Room 201 - 2nd Floor
8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Join your elected officials for coffee and light refreshments. This is an opportunity to ask questions, learn about upcoming projects, and share your thoughts and ideas. No agenda, just conversation.

Event is free and open to the public.

NJ LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2023 WEEK

3 Host tours of one or all of your municipal buildings & facilities.

Image courtesy of Fair Lawn

OPEN HOUSE TOURS

NJ LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK IS A TIME FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO ENCOURAGE CIVIC EDUCATION, COMMUNITY COLLABORATION, VOLUNTEERISM, AND LOCAL PRIDE. JOIN BOROUGH OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES FOR TOURS OF BOROUGH FACILITIES.

<p>Senior Center 1125 Gardner Road Monday, April 17 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Police Department 6-01 Fair Lawn Avenue Tuesday, April 18 12:15 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Water Department 2-14 Cassin Place Monday, April 17 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.</p>
<p>Library 10-01 Fair Lawn Avenue Tuesday, April 18 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Thursday, April 20 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Community Center 10-10 20th Street Tuesday, April 18 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 19 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.</p>	

NJ LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2023 WEEK



4 Welcome your town's next generation of municipal employees and volunteers with touch-a-trucks and open houses in your departments.

Image courtesy of Garwood



5 Host community gatherings, helping residents to help themselves and their neighbors.

Image courtesy of Garwood



For more information & inspirational ideas, scan the QR code or visit

www.njlm.org/NJLocalGovt

NJ LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2024 WEEK APRIL 7-13
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In this issue we share the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's latest effort to green the state by preventing waste of plastics and food, before it happens, and reinvigorating recycling to slow the growth of landfills.



Show Off the Garden State

This month we unveil the winner of the League's annual Show Off Your City photo contest. Congratulations to Long Hill! I'm sure it doesn't take too much looking around your own hometown to see something unique and beautiful—amazing architecture, natural wonders, and even smiles on familiar faces.

Which makes this month's focus on the environment particularly meaningful. The environment isn't simply planting trees and picking up trash, although that's certainly important. Taking care of the environment starts with every person, every community, and every leader. In this issue we share Rep. Mikie Sherrill's efforts to preserve native plants (page 18) and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's latest effort to green the state by preventing waste of plastics and food, before it happens, and reinvigorating recycling to slow the growth of landfills (page 6).

"Prioritizing reduction in these efforts, from the single-use plastic bag prohibition to cutting food waste to effective recycling, as well as in future efforts, we will make greater strides toward achieving a sustainable New Jersey," writes Janine MacGregor, Director of the DEP's Division of Sustainable Waste Management.

The issue also looks at the growing challenges created by flooding in an piece from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Union Beach (page 22), navigating the challenges of flooding

and pollution in Central Jersey (page 30), and the growth of solar power in Woodbridge (page 28). Around the state, efforts are underway to make life sustainable into the future in the great garden state.

We're also looking at the environment within municipal buildings. An article from Rutgers discusses strategies to attract and retain municipal employees (page 32), inspired by a session at the Annual Conference including identifying potential hires, developing the employees you have, and offering flexibility in work schedules, creating a work environment unlike that seen as unchangeable prior to the pandemic.

In addition, a guide to AI in local government by Intashan Chowdhury, MPA, from Prospect Park shows how technology can help municipal governments respond 24/7 to residents without burning out staff (page 36).

As we go to press, there is pending action, including possible final action, on several legislative issues of interest, including affordable housing,, the renewal of the Transportation Trust Fund, and the Open Public Records Act. We will provide updates through our communications and website, and look for more in upcoming issues.

There is no shortage of challenges and opportunities to create better environments—and futures—for New Jersey's municipalities. We look forward to helping you succeed and sharing your stories. 

Michael Cerra

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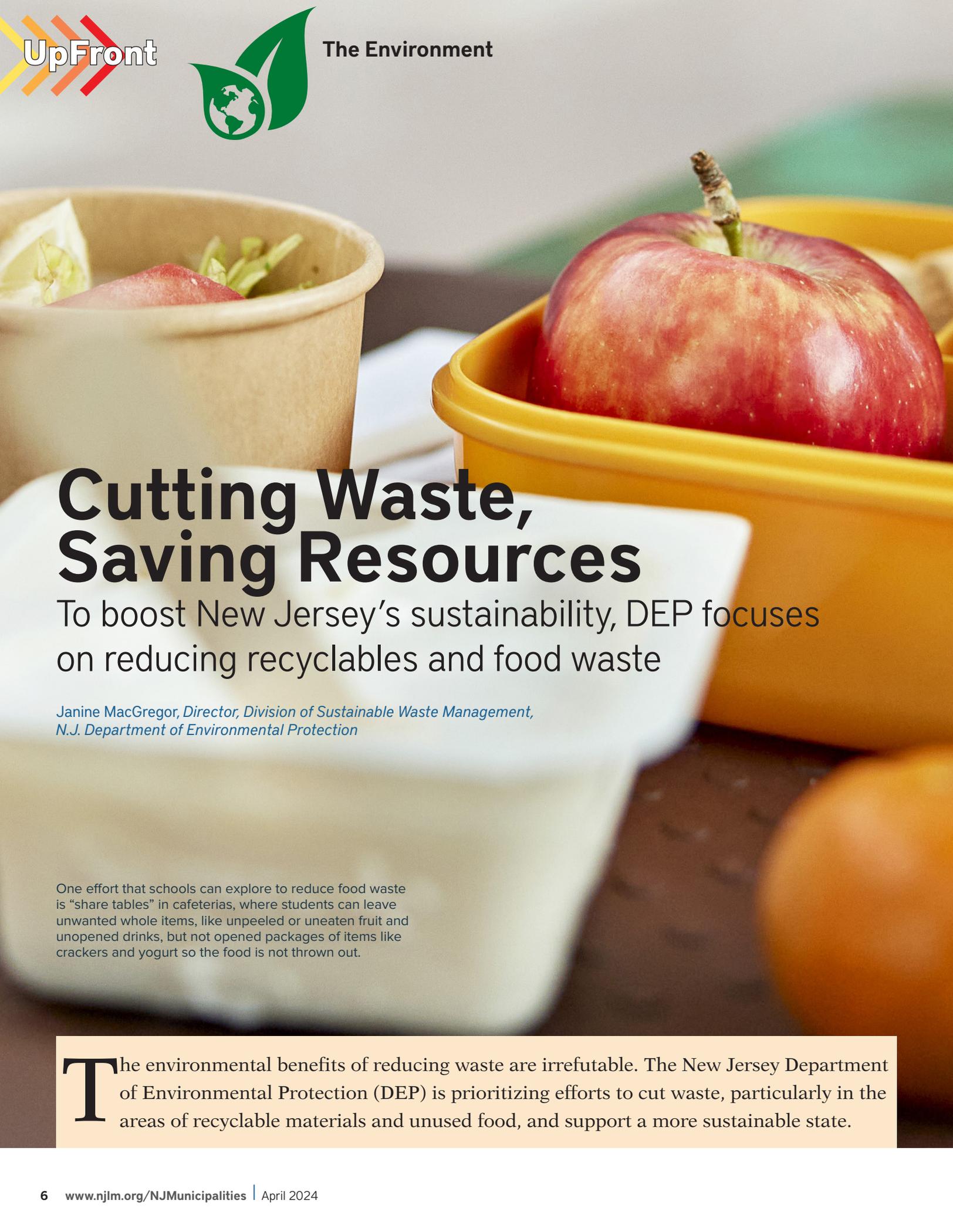
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Cutting Waste, Saving Resources

To boost New Jersey's sustainability, DEP focuses on reducing recyclables and food waste

*Janine MacGregor, Director, Division of Sustainable Waste Management,
N.J. Department of Environmental Protection*

One effort that schools can explore to reduce food waste is "share tables" in cafeterias, where students can leave unwanted whole items, like unpeeled or uneaten fruit and unopened drinks, but not opened packages of items like crackers and yogurt so the food is not thrown out.

The environmental benefits of reducing waste are irrefutable. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is prioritizing efforts to cut waste, particularly in the areas of recyclable materials and unused food, and support a more sustainable state.

It is the DEP's mission to protect the environment and public health, and create vibrant, sustainable communities. To accomplish this goal, the DEP promotes the three Rs of sustainable materials management: reduction, reuse, and recycling.

Beyond Recycling: Waste Reduction

The agency has focused on a variety of recycling efforts since the late 1980s and successfully recycles plastics and other recyclable materials. In 2020, the statewide recycling rate was 55%, compared to the national rate of 32%, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. However, recycling alone is not sufficient to achieve sustainability. For this reason, we have shifted our focus to waste reduction—the R with the greatest environmental impact.

Implementation of the Single-Use Plastic Reduction Law, which prohibits the use of single-use plastic carryout bags, as well as the dispensing of polystyrene foam food service products and single-use straws without request is lowering the number of plastics introduced into New Jersey's ecosystems. Since the law was put into action in 2022, the Plastics Advisory Council estimates there are 88 million fewer single-use plastic bags per month in the state.

We're also addressing additional plastic consumption issues through the Recycled Content Law, which aims to stimulate recycling markets by requiring manufacturers to meet minimum recycled content standards for certain containers and packaging products sold in the state.

Most recently, the DEP has concentrated on food waste reduction. Food waste is the largest component of municipal solid waste and its decomposition releases significant amounts of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, exacerbating climate change.

Food Waste Reduction Plan

In 2023, the department published the Food Waste Reduction Plan, which establishes actions needed to achieve the state's goal to reduce

food waste by 50% from levels reported in 2017 by the year 2030. The plan includes creating educational materials and tools for reducing food waste, and coordinating outreach to raise awareness.

The DEP will develop guidance and a toolkit to help local governments establish or update food waste

management programs focused on prevention and recovery, as well as recycling, and provide concepts/tools for developing collection programs in conjunction with existing infrastructure.

To further our food waste reduction goals, the DEP also awarded funding to Rutgers University to conduct a



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Cutting Waste

food waste management pilot program in three pre-K to 12 schools and to develop a toolkit from the lessons learned during the pilot. The Reduce, Recover and Recycle Food Waste–Toolkit for pre-K-12 Schools, published in 2023 by Sustainable Jersey, provides strategies for reducing food waste, as well as waste from food packaging and single-use items. The strategies include audits, share tables (kids can place unwanted whole foods, including fruits and vegetables like bananas or apples, or drinks, like unopened juice containers, on a designated table for others to take) and onsite composting.

Free Recycling Resource

In November 2023, DEP renewed its agreement with Recycle Coach, providing a no-cost platform for counties and municipalities in New Jersey to publicize recycling information to residents.

Recycle Coach, which DEP has made available to local leaders since 2018, is an information and education system designed to encourage recycling, reduce confusion about “what can be recycled” and, ultimately, reduce recycling contamination. The Recycle Coach app can be customized to provide specific recycling information to residents based on their addresses. Since recycling differs based on a local facility’s ability to accept a variety of products, the Recycle Coach app serves as a key informational tool on mobile phones or through a municipal website, for residents to stay up-to-date on local recycling efforts.

Recycle Coach also provides resources for municipalities, such as free marketing material for newsletters, emails blasts, social media posts and more. Additionally, it offers advanced education and marketing materials if a municipality upgrades to the PRO package, an expense that could be financed with Municipal Recycling Tonnage Grant funding from the DEP. In late 2023, the DEP released a Recycle Coach Case Studies resource, highlighting New Jersey municipalities that successfully utilize

the Recycle Coach system. In the five years that the Recycle Coach system has been accessible in New Jersey, 20 of 21 counties and 364 municipalities have used the system.

According to the Case Studies summation, more than 2 million NJ residents took advantage of Recycle Coach to keep track of their local recycling requirements in the 12 months leading up to the issuance of the report.

The Case Studies resource includes a description of how Recycle Coach has become an important tool in Point Pleasant. The borough touts Recycle Coach on its Public Works home page and the mobile app at community events for its 19,000 residents, but also promotes the system to summer renters of its wildly popular beach houses.

Summer visitors only have to change their address on Recycle

Coach to the address of the home they are visiting in Point Pleasant to find appropriate recycling information while there.

Municipalities not integrated with Recycle Coach can contact Kim Stuart at kstuart@recyclecoach.com to get started.

Through all of these initiatives, DEP continues to pursue a balanced and comprehensive approach to materials management that encompasses all three Rs.

Prioritizing reduction in these efforts, from the single-use plastic bag prohibition to cutting food waste to effective recycling, as well as in future efforts, we will make greater strides toward achieving a sustainable New Jersey. ♻️

Janine MacGregor is Director of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Sustainable Waste Management.



LINKS

For more information on reducing plastic and food waste and building your recycling efforts, visit the following resources.

Single-Use Plastics Reduction Law:

<https://tinyurl.com/Get-Past-Plastics>

Recycled Content Law:

<https://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycled-content/>

Reduce, Recover and Recycle Food Waste – Toolkit for Pre-K-12 Schools:

<https://tinyurl.com/Pre-K-Toolkit>

Recycle Coach Case Studies Resource:

<https://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/RecycleCoachOctober23.pdf>

Municipal Recycling Tonnage Grants:

<https://dep.nj.gov/grantandloanprograms/municipal-recycling-tonnage-grants/>

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League Hosts Pre-Budget Reception, Plans for FY2025

On Feb. 27, Governor Phil Murphy held his annual budget address. Prior to the event, the League hosted a reception for mayors, local officials, and friends of the League including Acting DCA Commissioner Jacquelyn Suárez before heading to the State House to hear Gov. Murphy present his sixth financial plan to the assembled Legislature.

Gov. Murphy proposed a \$55.9 billion State Fiscal Year 2025 budget, outlining a comprehensive plan to bolster the state's infrastructure in education, property tax relief, public transportation, and fiscal discipline. Key components include the following:

- **Municipal Aid:** Allocates \$1.635 billion, municipal funding has a proposed reduction of \$134.3 million from FY2024 but supports initiatives like the Local Efficiency Achievement Program (LEAP) and the School Regionalization Efficiency Program (SREP). Energy Tax Receipts are projected at \$805 million. The budget does not include the \$150 in Municipal Relief Aid received in FY24.
- **Housing Initiatives:** Allocates \$10 million for municipalities to create new Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs); \$15 million to aid rental assistance beneficiaries towards homeownership and supports non-profits in-home rehabilitation; and \$32 million for Down Payment Assistance.
- **Property Tax Relief:** Allocates more than \$3.5 billion in direct property tax relief through the ANCHOR program and school funding; fully fund school aid; and a full \$7.1 billion pension payment.
- **Economic Development and Innovation:** Includes investments in AI education, support for small businesses, climate change initiatives, and workforce development.
- **Public Safety Initiatives:** Allocates \$9.5 million for the ARRIVE Together program. This initiative, a collaboration between police and mental health professionals, is complemented by investments in the parole system and the Office of the Public Defender to safeguard civil rights and maintain a low recidivism rate.
- **Truck Traffic Excise Fee:** Proposes a \$1 truck traffic excise fee on warehouses based on the number of truck trips. The budget estimates \$10 million in new revenue to mitigate warehousing development impacts. 📍

@ Please visit the League's budget page for more information, <https://njlm.org/1280/2025-NJ-State-Budget>.



DCA Acting Comm. Jacquelyn Suárez and NJLM Past Pres. Bridgeton Mayor Al Kelly at a reception at the League HQ prior to the Budget Address.



L to R: Past Presidents Mayor William Pikolycky, Mayor William Chegwidien and Mayor Janice Kovach, with Executive Board Member Mayor Brad Cohen at the pre-budget reception.



Gov. Murphy giving his annual budget address.

NJ Knowledge Answers 1. Currently 2 women, Representatives Mikie Sherrill and Bonnie Watson Coleman; historically, 7 U.S. Representatives, Florence P. Dwyer, Millicent Fenwick, Helen S. Meyner, Mary Teresa Norton, Marge Roukema, Mikie Sherrill, and Bonnie Watson Coleman. New Jersey has never had a female U.S. senator. **2.** Five service areas were renamed for all-star women: Connie Chung (Brookdale South), Whitney Houston (Vauxhall), Judy Blume (Monmouth), Celia Cruz (Forked River), and Toni Morrison (Ocean View). **3.** Christine Todd Whitman was the first, and to-date only, woman elected Governor of New Jersey. **4.** Current First Lady Jill Tracy Jacobs Biden was born in Hammonton, the second first lady born here. Anna Harrison was the first First Lady born in New Jersey (1775, Morristown). **5.** On February 10, 1920, New Jersey became the 29th state to ratify the amendment and on August 26, 1920, it was fully ratified by Congress. **6.** Alice Paul, whose home, Paulsdale, in Mt. Laurel, is a National Historic Landmark and home to the Alice Paul Institute. **7.** Rebecca Estell Bourgeois Winston of Estell Manor was sworn in as mayor in 1925. **8.** Marie Louis Garibaldi, who served on the state's highest court from 1982 to 2000. **9.** Representing first black women elected were Madaline A. (Worth) Williams, NJ Assembly; Wynona Lipman, NJ Senate; and Sheila Oliver, Assembly Speaker, Lieutenant Governor, and NJ state-wide office. **10.** Executive Director Madeleine S. Frost became Executive Director in 1954. Virginia Hook was the League's first president, 1989, followed by, Phyllis Marchand (1993), Barbara Hall (2000), Jo-Anne B. Schubert (2004), Janice Mironov (2013), Suzanne Walters (2014), Colleen Mahr (2019), and Janice Kovach (2020).

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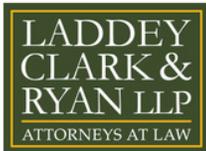
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