

The State of Innovation

An Interview with The Honorable Phil Murphy, Governor of New Jersey

EDITORS' NOTE *Phil Murphy grew up in a middle-class family with a father who never graduated from high school and a mother who worked as a secretary. He put himself through Harvard University on loans and part-time jobs. After earning a graduate degree at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, he started his career at the bottom, working his way up to help lead a major international business. Governor Murphy has served as New Jersey's sole representative on the board of the NAACP. He has also served as Finance Chair of the Democratic National Committee. In 2009, Governor Murphy answered President Obama's call to service and became the U.S. Ambassador to Germany. After returning home in 2013, Governor Murphy and his wife, Tammy, founded New Start New Jersey as a "think and do" organization to rebuild the state's economy from the middle-class out. The organization partnered with the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University to create the New Start Career Network to help older, long-term unemployed residents actively compete for good jobs. Governor Murphy's vision for New Jersey is to grow the middle class, jump-start the state's economy by targeting investments in people and infrastructure, reclaim New Jersey's mantle as a center of the STEM and innovation economies, protect working families by raising the minimum wage and expanding earned sick leave for all, and protect the middle class with real tax fairness.*



The Hon. Phil Murphy

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What attracted you to public service?

Public service is a way-back story. I was born in Boston and grew up outside of Boston. My family was big into politics, Kennedy Democrats, and public service. It was a pretty traditional Irish Catholic upbringing. We didn't have a whole lot of money, to say the least, but service and community were kitchen table topics from as far back as I can remember. It goes that far back for me.

I started by getting involved in a number of organizations. I became the finance chair of the Democratic National Committee and raised a lot of money to help get Barack Obama elected. I became deeply involved with the NAACP and ultimately served on its national board. I served as the U.S. Ambassador to Germany.

What are your key priorities for New Jersey?

My priorities have not waived since day one; a desire for a stronger and fairer New Jersey that works for everybody. I am focused on not just growing the pie, but making sure everybody gets a slice of the pie. We're 19 or 20 months in and we've accomplished a lot, but we have a long road still to travel. The keys to success are raising the minimum wage to \$15, funding Planned Parenthood, signing gun safety laws, protecting the environment, sensible immigration policies, and being a business-friendly state. Two of the big underpinning levers of our economic story are investing in public education and transportation.

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What are the keys to driving change and getting things done in today's political climate?

We govern as pro-growth progressives, and I say that because it answers your question. That's the common ground that we have found. We stand for fiscal responsibility and

stewardship and adult leadership on the one hand, and on the other hand, we're proudly progressive.

There are some who would claim those are at odds with each other, but I think that's a myth. My hope is that through our story, we can prove that there's an enormous amount of common ground between a pro-growth agenda and a progressive agenda.

You've been very focused on New Jersey regaining its mantle around being the center of the innovation economy. Will you discuss this effort and the strength that New Jersey has in this regard?

I recently returned from an event at Nokia Bell Labs in Murray Hill. Bell Labs is an iconic institution which has had nine Nobel Laureates as well as four Turing Prize winners. In many respects, New Jersey was Silicon Valley before there was a Silicon Valley. I call it the state of innovation. We lost a little bit of our edge, honestly, over the past couple of decades and we are making an enormous effort to get that edge back.

We are blessed with the highest concentration of scientists and engineers per square mile anywhere in the world, which provides extraordinary access. We have great institutions of higher education. We are, by many measures, the most diverse state in America. We have a location that's second to none. We have great public education in K-12. These are enormous assets.

We want to be the nation's premiere innovation economy, and we also want to be the most diverse innovation economy, and we've got every right to claim both of those mantles over the coming years.

Is the strength of New Jersey from an innovation and business standpoint well understood?

I recently had an exchange with a leading businessman who is completely convinced that New Jersey is the place for innovation. He made the point that he did not feel everybody around the country or around the world understood that at the level they should.

I'm not shy talking about our brand, but I spend most of my time investing in the brand. I wanted to make sure that we had a really good story to tell and that it wasn't the promise of a good story, but that there was real evidence that New Jersey is the state of innovation. We need to start singing from the mountaintops about that story. ●