



NJLM President Mayor
Paul Tomasko, Alpine

President's Note:

Governor Murphy delivered his final budget address

[<https://www.youtube.com/live/JSOwBvqcvk0?si=QKkP3epZgWOKuH6>] with the theme,

“Stronger, Fairer, and More Prepared for the Future.” The 2026 State Fiscal Year budget

proposal appropriates \$58.1 billion and has a \$6.3

billion surplus. The budget includes flat funding for Energy Tax

Receipts/CMPTRA and Open Space PILOT and no appropriation for the Municipal Relief Fund.

Governor Murphy noted that with the budget proposal “our Administration will continue delivering economic security and opportunity to every New Jerseyan by providing yet another round of record-high tax relief.” It’s reported that 41% of the State budget will be distributed through school aid or municipal aid payments. The proposed budget includes \$12.1 billion for K-12 schools in the school funding formula. It also includes \$4.2 million in Direct Property Taxpayer Relief (i.e., ANCHOR, Stay NJ, Property Tax freeze), and \$1.65 million for municipal aid. The Governor also noted that while the Consumer Price Index rose by 24% from 2017 to 2023, the average property tax bill rose 12.8%. In 2024, the average property tax bill increased \$313 or 3%.

The proposed budget includes \$7.2 billion for the State’s pension system and approximately \$6.7 billion for the State Health Benefits Program (state’s fund).

The proposed budget also includes an increase in the cigarette tax (\$0.30 per pack increase to \$3.00 per pack); Liquid Nicotine tax (to \$0.30 milliliter and container e-Liquid rate to 30%); alcoholic beverage tax (10% increase); internet gaming and online sports wagering tax (from 15% and 13% to 25%); a new \$2 per truck traffic excise fee on warehouses; and increases the 1% assessment for homes purchased above \$1 million to 2%, while homes purchased for more than \$2 million increase to 3%.

In his budget remarks

[<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562025/approved/20250225b.shtml>], when noting the affordable housing laws, the Governor stated, “and this year, we are going to build upon that accomplishment by reforming New Jersey’s zoning and permitting laws, so we can make it easier to build new, affordable housing where it is needed most.”

Prior to the Governor’s Budget address, Senate Republican Leader Anthony M. Bucco, Senate Republican Budget Officer Declan O’Scanlon, Senate Republican Whip Michael Testa, Senator Doug Steinhardt, and Senator



Carmen Amato Jr. [sent a letter \(PDF\)](#)

[\[https://www.senatenj.com/DocumentCenter/View/4519/Bucco-OScanlon---Constitutional-Funding-Issue-22125_FINAL?utm_source=New+Jersey+Senate+Republicans&utm_campaign=ed82820ec0-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2025_01_08_08_37_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-c483c7df64-\]](https://www.senatenj.com/DocumentCenter/View/4519/Bucco-OScanlon---Constitutional-Funding-Issue-22125_FINAL?utm_source=New+Jersey+Senate+Republicans&utm_campaign=ed82820ec0-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2025_01_08_08_37_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-c483c7df64-) to Governor Murphy notifying him of intended legal action if the 2026 SFY budget uses income tax revenues placed in the Property Tax Relief Fund. In the letter, it was noted that the New Jersey Constitution requires funds from the Property Tax Relief Fund be annually appropriated pursuant to formulas.

Mayors around the state have an opportunity to testify at Legislature hearings through the spring. If you're heading to Trenton, please [email Executive Director Mike Cerra \[mailto:mcerra@njlm.org\]](#) to let him know.

Action List: March

1. [Apply for Congressionally Directed Spending](#). Senator Cory Booker announced that the application process for Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) is open for FY26, with an application deadline of March 11. Congressman Jeff Van Drew's [FY26 Community Project Funding](#) for Congressional District 2 is also open and closes on March 14.
2. [Register for the League's Lunch and Learn](#) focusing on Garden State Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) on March 5 at 12 noon. This briefing will address how the program will provide a new form of financing for renewable energy, energy efficiency, water conservation, and certain types of resiliency-related improvements for New Jersey.
3. Nominate potential candidates for the [New Jersey Emergency Preparedness Association's](#) (NJEPA) [Emergency Manager of the Year](#) (due March 5), [student scholarships](#) (due March 5), and [scholarships for emergency managers](#) (due March 15) working on their NJ Certified Emergency Manager (NJCEM) certification.
4. Finalize your plans for Local Government Week 2025. We invite you to join in with municipalities across the Garden State from April 6-12 to engage citizens while celebrating the work of local government. NJ Local Government Week is a time for municipalities to encourage civic education, community collaboration, volunteerism, and local pride. [Share your activities](#) with the League and use the hashtag #NJLocalGovt on social media when sharing event reminders, updates, and interesting facts via X and Facebook.
5. Nominate a Black heritage site for inclusion on the Black Heritage Trail. The New Jersey Department of State' New Jersey Historical Commission is seeking nominations for Black Heritage Trail sites. Applicants must first submit a letter of intent (LOI), a preliminary one-page letter that outlines your intention to apply for the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail program for the fiscal year 2025 cycle, to NJBlackHeritageTrail@sos.nj.gov by March 14. It should contain the proposed site name, a brief description of the nomination, and the nomination's contact information (name, organization address, email, and contact phone number). Additionally, it should include the proposed marker location address. Nominations must be submitted online.

Grants

T-Mobile Hometown Grants

T-Mobile Hometown Grants is a \$25 million, five-year initiative to support the people and organizations who help small towns across America thrive and grow. Hometown Grants are given every quarter to up to 25 small towns. Apply for funding to support a community project of your choice, like revitalizing or repurposing a historic structure, creating a downtown asset or destination, or

improving a space where friends and neighbors gather. Projects that add to a sense of place or could lead to further investment are of particular interest.

Projects must be completed and usable by the public by May 31, 2026. Make sure to consider these parameters when choosing the kind of project you are proposing for this grant.

Due Date

The portal will close on the last day of each quarter and reopen for the new quarter on the first of the month. All Hometown Grants applications will be notified 30–60 days after the end of each quarter on the status of the submission.

To apply

[Create an account](#)

https://nationalmainstreetcenter.submittable.com/submit/ac8b3679-fa43-4014-b6bf-705b75098f34/t-mobile-hometown-grant-application-q1-2025-application-open-january-1-march-3?cid=MGPO_TMO_P_HMTWNGRNTS_5860E717E9A704D742097] and follow the steps on the application site.



Past President Mayor Janice Kovach of Clinton Town (r) and League Legislative Committee Member Councilwoman Karen Kominsky of Lambertville.

NJLM News

League Past Presidents were under the Gold Dome for Governor Phil Murphy's final Budget Address on February 25.



Mayor Kovach with Al Komjathy of Komjathy & Kean and Past President Mayor Al Kelly of Bridgeton.

Educational Opportunities

[Budget, Ethics, and Procurement Updates](#)

March 14, 9:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. webinar. At this webinar, attendees will receive important updates and information from the Division of Local Government Services on the topics of Budgeting, Ethics, and Procurement.

[Management Workshop Program - Part 2 - Department and Workforce Management - South](#)

March 25, 2025, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Rowan at Burlington College. The New Jersey League of Municipalities has partnered with NJ Community Solutions to provide educational programming that will teach individuals about the practical side of managing municipalities in New Jersey. The Management Program is a series of three-hour practical educational sessions. Each session will be held in-person in small class sizes to provide opportunities to learn, discuss, and question key aspects of managing a municipality in New Jersey. Starting on March 25, the second series will cover a broad range of issues regarding Department and Workforce Management. Included will be Negotiating

Contracts, Health Insurance and Retirement Benefits, Arbitration, and Disciplinary Action.

CEUs: CMFO/CCFO, CTC, CPWM, RMC, QPA, NJCLE, PACLE, and SHRM

Meet Your Executive Board: Mayor Dina M. Grilo



Mayor Dina M. Grilo,
East Newark

As a lifelong resident of East Newark, Mayor Grilo is proud to serve the community and is committed to realizing the full potential of the borough. Growing up in the borough, she attended East Newark elementary school and proudly served as a volunteer firefighter with the East Newark Volunteer Fire Department.

Mayor Grilo is first generation American, born to Portuguese immigrant parents. Her parents instilled in her a strong work ethic and respect for people, principles she implements daily.

Mayor Grilo currently serves on the Board of the New Jersey Conference of Mayors and the Harrison Education Foundation. She served on the advisory board of Best Buddies New Jersey, launching the state's chapter.

To gain knowledge and better understand the partnership of local, state, and federal public safety teams working together, she has participated in FBI Newark Citizens Academy and the New Jersey State Police Citizen Academy.

Professionally, she has worked in the financial industry for over 20 years and is currently a Program Manager for the Office of Disability Inclusion at JPMorganChase. Supporting employees and individuals with disabilities with financial literacy, workforce programs, and community engagement.

She personally supports veterans and military family causes, paying gratitude for their past and ongoing service. She is fluent in Portuguese and conversational Spanish.



East Orange's DEI plans for employees are creating a pipeline for the future of the police and fire departments.

Share Your News

Is this the year that you'll write an article, news item, or opinion column for *NJ Municipalities* magazine? We're now seeking submissions for our May issue (due March 20) with a focus on Historic Preservation and Planning, and June (due April 15) issue with a focus on Municipal Vision and Visionaries (think ADUs, town centers, planning outlooks, and what the future's municipalities will look like). See the [author's guidelines](#)

[<https://www.njlm.org/804/Submit-Editorial>] for more information. Submit your queries, news items, op-eds, or articles for *NJ Municipalities* magazine [by email to Amy Spiezio](mailto:aspiezio@njlm.org) [<mailto:aspiezio@njlm.org>].

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