



ADVOCACY & MANAGEMENT GROUP

150 West State Street, Suite 110, Trenton, NJ 08608 • phone: (609) 392-7553 • fax: (609) 392-2664 • www.AMG101.com

January 2025 NJ State Society of Anesthesiologists Lobbying Report

Legislative Update

We are now in the second year of the current two-year legislative session. This means that all legislation from last year will continue to be active throughout this year, into January 2026, which is when this session will end, and a new one will begin. Both the Senate and Assembly have released their schedules for the next few months, including committee meetings and voting sessions. They are expected to meet regularly throughout June, including when the budget committee of each house will meet with each state department to review the proposed budget. On Tuesday, January 14th, Governor Murphy delivered his second-to-last State of State Address (full summary is included below).

On Tuesday, February 25th, he will also deliver his Fiscal Year 2026 budget address, which will be followed by the release of his proposed budget. The Legislature and the Governor will then spend the next few months reviewing the budget, which needs to be passed by the state's constitutional deadline of July 1st. Early conversations indicate that this will be a challenging budget year, with reports showing that in order to balance the budget, the Governor and legislative leaders may need to consider increasing taxes, rolling back spending, or further depleting state surplus funds. We will monitor the budget and provide updates for all relevant funding.

We previously shared in an election update that while there were no state legislative races this year, there will still be a few changes to the Legislature due to the elections, including a new Assembly Health Committee Chair. As of this posting, the new chairperson has not yet been named. With the current Chairman, Asm. Conaway, moving up to Congress, the Vice-Chairwoman, Asw. Lampitt retiring from the Legislature, and many of the other members on the committee being "freshman" legislators who are currently serving in their first term, it has not been clear who the next chair will be. There is some chatter that it may be Assemblywoman Donlon. While she is serving in her first term, she is also a physical medicine and rehab physician.

Industry-related Laws that Go Into Effect This Year

Minimum Wage Increase

- New Jersey's statewide minimum wage is rising by \$0.36 to \$15.49 per hour for most employees.
- The increase is part of a scheduled hike stemming from a 2019 bill signed by NJ Gov. Phil Murphy.

Health care providers required to give patients opportunity to create personalized postpartum care plans. (S912/A3887)

- Effective May 17th, this bill will require health care providers in New Jersey to offer personalized postpartum care plans for new parents, including those experiencing pregnancy loss and stillbirths.

Healthcare Preauthorization (S1794/A1255)

- Effective January 1st Insurance carriers will have tighter deadline in the state to decide whether to approve a prescribed test, medication or treatment — 24 hours for “urgent” requests and 72 hours for non-urgent requests.

The "Louisa Carmen Medical Debt Relief Act" (S2806/A3861)

- Effective July 2025, the remainder of the provisions in this law that did not take effect immediately will take effect.
- This law prohibits a medical creditor or medical debt collector from reporting a patient’s medical debt to any consumer reporting agency for health care services performed on or after the effective date of the bill. Other provisions of this law include:
- making a consumer report containing a patient’s paid medical debt or a medical debt worth less than \$500, regardless of the date the medical debt was incurred;
- charging an interest rate on a medical debt of more than three percent per year;
- garnishing the wages of a patient with an annual income of less than 600 percent of the federal poverty level to collect medical debt owed by that patient; or
- engaging in any collection actions against a patient until 120 days after the first bill for a medical debt has been sent or against a patient who accepts and complies with the terms of a reasonable payment plan.

State of the State Update and Summary

On January 14th, Governor Murphy delivered the 2025 State of the State Address, outlining a vision for New Jersey that prioritizes economic security, social equity, and robust public services. Below is a comprehensive summary of the major initiatives and priorities discussed.

Economic Security and Opportunity

The Governor reaffirmed the administration’s commitment to economic security, with particular emphasis on supporting working families. Key initiatives include:

- **Property Tax Relief:** Over \$14 billion has been delivered to New Jersey families through the ANCHOR program and other measures, with a pledge to continue direct relief efforts.
- **Minimum Wage Increases:** The state’s minimum wage has risen to \$15.49/hour, nearly double its level from the start of the administration. This reflects a focus on ensuring basic economic dignity for workers.
- **Retirement Security:** The newly launched *RetireReady NJ* program offers publicly run retirement savings plans, giving workers a crucial tool to prepare for the future.

Supporting Families and Children

The Governor introduced several policies aimed at bolstering family well-being and addressing educational needs:

- **Paid Parental Leave Expansion:** State employees will now have access to fully paid parental leave, with hopes this will inspire similar policies in the private sector.
- **Universal Pre-K and Full-Day Kindergarten:** The administration plans to expand universal pre-K and mandate full-day kindergarten in districts where it is not yet offered.
- **Cell Phone Restrictions in Classrooms:** To enhance educational outcomes and address the youth mental health crisis, the administration supports a proposal to ban cell phones in classrooms.

Advancing Innovation and Workforce Development

New Jersey continues its focus on becoming a leader in emerging industries. Highlights include:

- **Strategic Innovation Centers:** Partnerships with institutions like Princeton University and Stevens Institute of Technology aim to advance fields such as AI, fintech, and clean energy.
- **Support for Startups:** The Innovation Fellows Program, funded through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, provides early-stage funding to local entrepreneurs, fostering a culture of innovation.

Infrastructure Investments

The administration emphasized its ongoing commitment to modernizing transportation and infrastructure:

- **Transportation Overhaul:** With federal funding secured for the Hudson River Tunnel Project, transit delays are expected to decrease, and more one-seat rides to Manhattan will be added.
- **Road Safety Initiatives:** Plans to address the state's ten most dangerous intersections and update driver education to prioritize pedestrian and cyclist safety are underway.

Equity in Business and Housing

The Governor highlighted efforts to address historical inequities and expand opportunities for marginalized groups:

- **Minority- and Women-Owned Businesses:** Legislation is being proposed to connect these businesses with public contracting opportunities, addressing disparities in government procurement.
- **Affordable Housing:** Building on last year's landmark housing legislation, the administration aims to reform zoning and permitting laws to accelerate the construction of affordable housing units.

Environmental and Energy Initiatives

Acknowledging the urgency of climate change, the Governor outlined a plan to meet ambitious environmental goals:

- **100% Clean Energy by 2035:** The administration is working to codify this target into law, emphasizing energy independence and clean energy job creation.
- **Water and Drought Resilience:** With recent drought conditions, further investments are expected in water conservation and management.

Social Justice and Public Safety

The Governor outlined several measures to enhance fairness and safety within the state:

- **Criminal Justice Reform:** A proposed bill would reform penalties for technical parole violations, aligning New Jersey with best practices from other states.
- **Clemency Initiative:** The Governor highlighted recent pardons and commutations as part of an effort to offer second chances to rehabilitated individuals.

Protecting Fundamental Rights

In response to national shifts, New Jersey remains steadfast in defending individual freedoms:

- **Reproductive Rights:** The administration is pushing legislation to eliminate out-of-pocket costs for abortion and stockpiling Mifepristone to ensure access.
- **Voting Rights:** Proposals include same-day voter registration and expanding voting rights in school board elections to 16- and 17-year-olds.

Fiscal Responsibility

The administration has prioritized paying down state debts while funding critical programs:

- **Pension System Contributions:** For the first time in 25 years, full payments have been made into the pension system for four consecutive years.
- **Education Funding:** The state's school funding formula is now fully funded, providing record support to districts and reducing the burden on property taxpayers.

Summary

- The Governor's address underscores the administration's dual focus on economic growth and social equity. Policies aimed at easing financial burdens for residents, fostering innovation, and addressing long-standing disparities will likely shape the legislative landscape this year.