

MIKIE SHERRILL'S TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY AGENDA

New Jersey families want to know where their hard-earned tax dollars are going and how that spending is actually impacting their communities. I'll make sure that happens when I'm governor, because I learned in the Navy that accountability is critical — no excuses, no exceptions. I'll publish a "New Jersey Report Card" that breaks down the programs and contracts that the state is funding in plain language and measures the results of those state initiatives, not just the dollars spent. Together, we'll make Trenton transparent and accountable to New Jersey families.

INTRODUCTION

New Jersey families work hard for every dollar they earn. But when those dollars are sent to Trenton, taxpayers are all too often left in the dark about how their money is being spent. The state government spends billions every year, and taxpayers have too little information about where those funds go. The process is complicated, and unless you are an insider, it can be nearly impossible to follow.

This lack of transparency weakens public trust and allows waste and inefficiency to go unchecked. At the same time, New Jerseyans struggle with high property taxes, decaying infrastructure, and growing frustration with the way government works. Families are expected to manage their household budgets responsibly. It is only fair to demand that the government should do the same.

That's why, as governor, I'll launch a first-of-its-kind online "Report Card" where New Jerseyans can track state contracts and grants in plain language. No more hiding the ball. You'll see where the money goes, what it's supposed to deliver, and whether it actually does.

The Report Card will provide key information on state programs — what they cost and what they do. State contracts will be posted online, with plain-language updates on whether taxpayers got what they paid for.

Just as importantly, this plan will measure outcomes — not just dollars spent. It is time for programs to be evaluated to determine if they actually deliver results for New Jersey families. This new standard of evaluation and accountability will help ensure that taxpayer-funded programs meet their goals, and will assist policymakers in Trenton in strengthening or reforming these programs so New Jersey gets the best possible return on taxpayers' dollars.

This plan has one goal: to make Trenton answer to the people who pay the bills. It builds trust by opening the books, it cuts out waste so we can fund critical priorities like property tax relief, transportation infrastructure, and schools, and it makes clear that taxpayer dollars must be spent wisely.

Enough is enough — government should answer for taxpayers' hard-earned dollars, and New Jerseyans deserve to see the results.



PILLAR 1: THE NEW JERSEY REPORT CARD

As governor, I will launch the New Jersey Report Card — a first-of-its-kind public platform that makes state spending transparent, accessible, and accountable.

The Report Card will feature an easy-to-use online portal that shows the payments, contracts, and programs funded by the state government, with comprehensive information on who is receiving funding, for what purpose, and on what timeline. Residents will be able to track where their taxpayer dollars are going, how the funding levels of certain programs have changed over time, and the drivers of long-term trends in the state budget and spending.

This platform will consolidate and expand upon what the State currently offers online, and puts the power in your hands. You will be able to see the budget items and contracts that are being funded, track the results of that funding in terms of new programs and projects, understand the costs behind each budget line and how the final program costs compare to initial projections, and grade the government in Trenton. Because New Jersey families deserve a state that delivers accountability, transparency, and fiscal discipline. **It's your government, and it should work for you.**

Agencies will be required to update the Report Card to show when a program receives funding in the budget, begins to operate on the ground, and demonstrates results that matter to families. You will be able to see who got paid, for what purpose, at what cost, and what results were achieved, which will allow New Jerseyans to hold the state accountable. All of this information will be presented in plain language, eliminating confusing bureaucratic jargon and making government data accessible to everyone.

Programs that have been active for more than a year will include clear explanations for any increases or decreases in spending. This will empower families to judge whether state programs are truly delivering value for their money.

The New Jersey Report Card will also include common-sense protections for privacy and security to ensure that sensitive information isn't being shared.

PILLAR 2: MEASURING OUTCOMES, NOT JUST MONEY SPENT

Beyond simply showing where money goes, we will take a hard look at what that funding actually achieves and how cost-effectively it does so. For programs and contracts funded by the state, the Report Card will display their costs to taxpayers and provide evidence-based information on what they deliver for New Jersey communities.

The focus will be on rigorously evaluating the impacts and returns on investment of state-funded programs and providing this information to residents in a transparent manner. **New Jerseyans have the right to know whether their tax dollars are producing real results—whether it's improving schools, fixing roads, or making our communities safer.**

As governor, I will require state agencies to evaluate the programs that they operate to the greatest extent feasible, to identify whether funded programs are actually meeting the goals set by lawmakers and the public. This approach will help us to prioritize certain programs that have demonstrated results and identify ways to reform others that aren't producing the desired outcomes. We will strengthen programs that are effective and restructure or get rid of those that aren't meeting expectations.

PILLAR 3: PLAIN-LANGUAGE BUDGET THAT'S ACCESSIBLE TO RESIDENTS

Every year, the governor proposes a budget and then the Legislature adds revisions and amendments before sending it back for a final signature. **The Report Card will include a plain-language, interactive version of the budget that will allow residents to see what the governor proposed, the changes made by the Legislature, and what was ultimately signed into law.** These plain-language budgets will clearly show where the money comes from — including taxes, fees, and other revenue — and how it is spent, broken down by program, department, and initiative.

This plain-language budget will also highlight trends in spending over time, and interactive charts and summaries will make it easy for New Jerseyans to understand how state revenue and spending have changed in recent years. Through this tool, for example, you will be able to see how spending has changed over a governor's tenure and what programs accounted for those changes, which will allow you to hold our elected leaders accountable.

PILLAR 4: TRANSPARENCY ON STATE CONTRACTS

In addition to the Report Card's breakdown of the state budget and program outcomes, **state contracts will also be fully transparent**. Contracts will be posted online, detailing in plain, simple language who won the contract, its total cost, and what the state is expected to receive in return. And most importantly, they will be assessed to see if the contracts actually delivered for New Jersey.

Although basic contracting information is available, it is sorely lacking. The Report Card goes beyond what is currently offered and will enable residents to see who is winning contracts with the state, along with their track records for delivering services on time and at cost. **This will increase accountability among contractors and the state agencies that award these contracts, leading to a more cost-effective use of state funds and better outcomes for New Jerseyans.**

CONCLUSION

As governor, I will ensure that the public knows exactly where their taxpayer dollars are going and how effectively state-funded programs and contracts are actually delivering for residents. The New Jersey Report Card will build trust by providing residents with a clear view of how their tax dollars are spent. It will also expose inefficiency and waste, allowing us to redirect funds to higher, more cost-effective priorities such as property tax relief, infrastructure, and public schools. And finally, it will foster a culture of accountability in Trenton, making clear that every dollar is expected to yield results.

My plan will not require new layers of government, only a commitment to openness. The technology exists today to deliver real-time data in clear, user-friendly formats. The only thing that has caused delays is a lack of political will. **As governor, I will provide that leadership and bring transparency and accountability to the way Trenton spends taxpayers' money. Because New Jerseyans deserve a government that works as hard as they do.**