



# do social justice.

NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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CANDIDATE'S NAME: Jim Johnson

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Please return to Elizabeth Weill-Greenberg at [ewgreenberg@njisj.org](mailto:ewgreenberg@njisj.org) by June 1, 2017.

### *Economic Mobility*

- Raise the Minimum Wage to \$15 an Hour in New Jersey. As one of the wealthiest states in the nation, with one of the highest costs of living, New Jersey should phase in an increase of the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, starting immediately by raising the minimum wage to \$12 an hour. Research shows that raising the minimum wage to \$12 an hour nationally would not produce any net economic drawbacks, which is especially true in New Jersey given the many competitive economic advantages that our state has. Most importantly, raising the minimum wage will increase the ability of many individuals and families in the state to support themselves, lifting hundreds of thousands of people out of poverty, and reducing the gender and race pay gaps in the state.

PLEASE PLACE AN X NEXT TO THE STATEMENT THAT IDENTIFIES YOUR POSITION:

CANDIDATE SUPPORTS THIS PROPOSAL

CANDIDATE DOES NOT SUPPORT THIS PROPOSAL

CANDIDATE'S EXPLANATION (IF ANY):

As Governor, I am committed to ensuring that all New Jersey workers are paid a living wage. Every person working 40 hours a week deserves to have enough money to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads. That's why I support a \$15 minimum wage without exemptions. I will work together with all stakeholders, including organized labor to generate political consensus on the issue so that we are able to pass this legislation quickly.

- Pass Stackable Credential Legislation. Building on state laws like the New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJ PLACE) Act, New Jersey should adopt a law requiring that community colleges and workforce training providers receiving government funds exclusively provide stackable credentials—certifications or course credits that can lead to a more advanced certification or a degree—that would be accepted by certificate or associate degree programs in the same field. Stackable credentials are a critical tool for people to advance in their career field over time, particularly while working full-time. They are also usually portable among employers within the same industry, which promotes career mobility for residents. Additional funds should also be appropriated to provide technical assistance and support to colleges and training providers to implement this stackable credential requirement.

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In a global economy, higher education is no longer optional and ability to pay should not be a barrier to success for anyone that grows up in New Jersey. By the end of this decade, 65 percent of all job openings will require an education or skills training beyond a high school education. 11 of the 15 fastest-growing occupations will require a postsecondary education. For students to be prepared for those openings, we need to start programs to train them right now. Stackable credentials are a great tool that will enable students to advance their careers even as there continue to be vast changes to our economy.

- Tax Credits and Funding for Apprenticeship Programs. New Jersey should allocate additional funding for apprenticeship programs in the state, which help directly bridge the middle skills gap between unemployed or under-employed people and employers. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that every federal dollar of investment in apprenticeship programs yields more than \$50 in federal revenue. Realizing a similar return on investment in New Jersey would mean that these programs will more than pay for themselves over time, as well as enable thousands of residents to enter career paths that pay a living wage and provide the opportunity for career advancement.

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Every student's needs are different. Often, the best pathway to the middle class is through community college or career and technical training. Apprenticeship programs must be a key part of ensuring that we fix the problem of skill mismatch in our economy. New Jersey needs to make an investment in our young people so that they are not left behind in a rapidly changing economy. In fact, with this investment, New Jersey can become an economic leader once again.

- Strengthen the Opportunity to Compete Act. While the Opportunity to Compete Act was an important first step in improving access to employment for people with criminal convictions in New Jersey, it should be strengthened. The law should be amended to only permit employers to inquire about an applicant's criminal history and complete a background check after a conditional offer of employment is extended. Then, in order for the employer to rescind the conditional offer of employment, it should be required to provide a written explanation to the applicant of why the criminal history makes them ineligible for the position, and provide the applicant an opportunity to respond. New Jersey should also examine and publicly report on the denial of employment based on criminal convictions across different racial and ethnic groups in the state. In addition to government enforcement of this law, there should be a private right of action to facilitate enforcement.

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It's critical that we end the system of continuing to punish offenders even after they have paid their debt to society. One of the most important steps to a smooth re-entry for formerly incarcerated individuals is to ensure that they have realistic access to employment. Giving applicants an opportunity to address their criminal history with their employer is a powerful step to ensuring that those who return to society get the second chance they deserve.

- Repeal the Parking Offenses Adjudication Act. New Jersey should repeal the Parking Offenses Adjudication Act (POAA), a law that permits suspending a person's driver's license as a result of their inability to pay outstanding parking fines. Research has shown that conditioning one's access to a driver's license upon their ability to pay a fine, even in small installments, effectively denies the right to drive to low-income people and those living month-to-month. By taking away an individual's right to drive, this law hinders the ability of residents to work—license suspensions lead to job loss and diminished income. New Jersey should repeal the POAA in order to help people, particularly those in poverty, have full access to employment opportunities.

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We absolutely need to stop punishing people for the crime of being poor. Laws like the Parking Offenses Adjudication Act (POAA) are emblematic of a structural effort to criminalize poverty. Access to a driver's license should be contingent upon people's fitness to drive and nothing else.

***Criminal Justice Reform***

- Close Hayes and Jamesburg Youth Prisons. New Jersey must end the failed experiment of youth incarceration by closing Hayes and Jamesburg—the state's girls' youth prison and the largest youth prison for boys, respectively. Incredibly, two-thirds of kids incarcerated in New Jersey's youth prisons are Black, even though Black and white youth commit similar offenses at similar rates. New Jersey's system of incarceration is based on racialized policies that treat certain children as children, while forcing others—particularly children of color—into incarceration. Locking up our kids in large youth prisons harms them irreparably at a critical stage in their development and, as 80 percent of youth have a new court filing or are rearrested within a few years after release, perpetuates racial disparities. Though it fails to reduce recidivism or increase public safety, it nevertheless costs New Jersey taxpayers over \$200,000 per year to incarcerate each child.

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One sign of just how deep the damage from the War on Drugs can be seen in the way we treat our children in the juvenile justice system. Here in the United States, we continue to rely on a model of incarceration for our youth that has never proven to benefit our children or our society. According to Liz Ryan, president and CEO of the Youth First Initiative, incarceration harms youth and increases the number of repeat offenders. In many youth prisons, solitary confinement is used as punishment, causing deep psychological and developmental damage. There are also deep racial disparities when it comes to youth incarceration. Thanks to the work of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, we know that in New Jersey, African-American youth are 24.3 times more likely

to be committed to a secure juvenile facility than their white peers, despite little difference in delinquent behavior and status offending. Because the concept of youth incarceration is so fundamentally flawed, I would close the Hayes and Jamesburg Youth Prisons in New Jersey and use those funds to invest in community-based programs that are proven to work.

- Increase State Funding for Community-Based Youth Programs. New Jersey should re-invest funds from closing Hayes and Jamesburg youth prisons into developing and strengthening community-based intervention, prevention, diversion, and alternatives-to-incarceration programming for our youth. Community-based programming has been proven to increase public safety at a fraction of the cost of incarceration. For example, programming provided by organizations such as Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. successfully provides kids with intensive wrap-around services while decreasing recidivism rates—all at a cost of around \$75 a day per child. For those young people who may need to be placed in secure confinement for public safety reasons, they should be sent to small, treatment-centered facilities that are close to home and familial support.

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*CANDIDATE'S EXPLANATION (IF ANY):*

A key aspect of my educational platform is to increase wrap-around services as well as community-based programming. I have advocated for community schools, which would create partnerships between schools and other community resources. These partnerships would help children and their families gain access to services like health, dental and vision care, social work, nutrition and food security assistance, adult and continuing education for parents, among other things. I have also been a strong proponent of afterschool programs. Access to afterschool programs has been proven to have numerous positive effects for students. Studies have shown that participating in afterschool programs can enhance academic achievement, promote social and emotional development, prevent risky behaviors like crime and drug abuse, and contribute to student health and wellness. These programs also give students a safe place to go while parents are still at work. As Governor, I will push for these community-based youth programs that will ensure that all children in New Jersey have a chance to succeed.

- Strengthen and Codify the Attorney General's Stationhouse Adjustments Directive. New Jersey should strengthen and codify Attorney General Directive No. 2008-2, which

establishes guidelines for law enforcement agencies' use of stationhouse adjustments. A stationhouse adjustment occurs when a young person who commits a first-time, low-level offense is diverted from having a formal complaint filed against him or her by fulfilling certain conditions—such as performing community service or attending a program such as Newark's Youth Court. Although the directive mandates that all law enforcement agencies with patrol jurisdiction must use stationhouse adjustments, the majority of agencies are not using this important process. To strengthen this policy, the Attorney General should issue a new directive including stronger enforcement protections and public access to data, and the legislature should then codify this order.

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In 2015, I co-founded a group called "Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime and Incarceration." One of the key pillars of our criminal justice reform plan is to increase alternatives to arrest and prosecution. Stationhouse adjustments are a perfect example of an effective strategy to divert offenders from the criminal justice system and give them opportunities to redeem themselves. I would be a strong supporter of strengthening and institutionalizing stationhouse adjustments as Governor.

- Establish a Five-Year Police Residency Requirement. Law enforcement officials must see themselves as an integral part of the community, duty-bound to respect and honor the rights, dignity, and humanity of the people they serve. Police officers must seek to first build trust and community, and then join with the communities they serve to be both peacemakers and peacekeepers. Toward that end, New Jersey should pass legislation requiring that all newly-hired police officers live in the municipality they police for at least the first five years of their employment. Indeed, during a time when Newark—New Jersey's largest city—is under a consent decree that requires widespread changes in the Newark Police Division's practices, requiring police officers to be proximate to communities they protect as residents is foundational to those reforms.

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I have been a proponent of this idea for a long time. I often say that police need to be a part of the community, not apart from it. Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative often says that to address our problems, we must get proximate to them. These concepts are deeply embedded in my thinking and as Governor, they would inform my decisions. I think one thing we do need to be careful of is that residency in a city isn't an automatic indication that police officers will be embedded within the particular communities that they are policing. We know that there are great divides in our cities and this step cannot replace adequate training and the building of meaningful relationships between police and community members.

- Enforce and Pass Reentry Laws Focused on the Currently-Incarcerated. The legislature should evaluate current reentry laws to assess whether they are providing effective resources for incarcerated individuals. In particular, meaningful opportunities should be provided during incarceration for people to continue their education, receive treatment and services, strengthen technology literacy, and benefit from early notification of information that will impact them upon release—such as voting information and what fines and fees have been assessed against them. The Department of Corrections should also expand its workforce program to provide opportunities for individuals to develop unique skills to increase employment options upon release—for example, several states currently operate successful prison braille programs.

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*CANDIDATE'S EXPLANATION (IF ANY):*

It is not enough to stop the damaging actions of the past, we must also work to repair the wounds that persist. In the context of the criminal justice system, this means facilitating re-entry for those that have been incarcerated. Re-entry back into society is only possible if we use incarceration as a time for rehabilitation and not simply punishment. Ideally, the re-entry process would begin at the time of sentencing. Whenever it begins, it means increasing access to education and skill development while incarcerated, so that when released, formerly incarcerated individuals can find employment and put their lives back on track. It also means restoring the right to vote for all formerly incarcerated individuals, so that they have a stake in society and can take up their roles as citizens in a democracy.

### *Civic Engagement*

- Establish Automatic Voter Registration. New Jersey should pass automatic voter registration (AVR), a reform that would modernize the state’s election system and dramatically increase the number of citizens who participate in our elections. Under AVR, eligible citizens who interact with participating government agencies—like the Motor Vehicle Commission—are automatically registered to vote unless they opt-out. The individual’s information is electronically transmitted from the agency to election officials, which reduces the need for paper forms and improves record-keeping. In addition to registering new voters, AVR ensures that voters’ registration records are kept up-to-date if they move within the state, both protecting the franchise and helping to maintain accurate voter rolls.

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*CANDIDATE’S EXPLANATION (IF ANY):*

I have come out in strong support of Automatic Voter Registration. When New Jersey citizens turn 18, they should automatically be registered to vote. We should make it as easy as possible for people to exercise their rights and registering citizens unless they decline would be a great step in that direction. Automatic voter registration would be a powerful tool to eliminate registration errors and make it more difficult to commit voter fraud. Most importantly, it would bring down barriers to the right to vote and increase turnout. Jonathan Brater of the Brennan Center for Justice has said, “It’s one of the biggest things you could do to boost participation nationwide.” Unfortunately, Gov. Christie vetoed a bill that would have instituted the policy in New Jersey three times. As Governor, I will ensure that it passes once again and I will sign it.

- Restore Voting Rights to People with Criminal Convictions. New Jersey should restore the right to vote to the over 94,000 people currently disfranchised because of a criminal conviction. Currently, a person convicted of a felony must complete all terms of their sentence—including parole and probation—before their voting rights are restored. Three-quarters of those disfranchised, over 70,000 people, are living in our communities, raising families, and paying taxes. Laws that disfranchise people with a criminal conviction also disproportionately impact communities of color due to racial discrimination in the criminal justice system. As New Jersey continues its public dialogue around criminal justice reform,

it is important that those most deeply impacted by the criminal justice system are able to make their voices heard.

PLEASE PLACE AN X NEXT TO THE STATEMENT THAT IDENTIFIES YOUR POSITION:

- CANDIDATE SUPPORTS AUTOMATICALLY RESTORING THE RIGHT TO VOTE TO PEOPLE ON PAROLE OR PROBATION ONLY
- CANDIDATE SUPPORTS AUTOMATICALLY RESTORING THE RIGHT TO VOTE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE CURRENTLY INCARCERATED, AND TO PEOPLE WHO ARE ON PAROLE OR PROBATION
- CANDIDATE DOES NOT SUPPORT AUTOMATICALLY RESTORING THE RIGHT TO VOTE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE ON PAROLE OR PROBATION, OR TO PEOPLE WHO ARE CURRENTLY INCARCERATED

CANDIDATE'S EXPLANATION (IF ANY):

Not only do I support automatically restoring the right to vote for people with criminal convictions, I worked to make it happen, representing 600,000 disenfranchised voters in Florida (*Johnson v. Bush*) as well as in Colorado. As Governor, I would support the automatic restoration of the right to vote for parolees and those on probation and then support restoration for those currently incarcerated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the crime and circumstances.

- Designate State Corrections Agencies as Voter Registration Agencies. New Jersey should designate its state corrections agencies, such as the Department of Corrections, State Parole Board, and probation offices, as voter registration agencies under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA). For over 20 years, the NVRA has required state public assistance agencies and departments of motor vehicles to provide voter registration services to their clients and customers. New Jersey's corrections agencies should perform a similar service. As designated voter registration agencies, they would be required to notify each person when their rights have been restored, provide the person with a voter registration application, and provide assistance in completing the form and transmitting it to election officials. Designation will not only ensure that people are aware that their rights have been restored, it will provide them with the tools to exercise their right to vote.

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Shortly after the horrific mass murder in a Charleston church, I took some time off to travel down south with my daughter Abby. In visits to Atlanta, Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma, we saw the sacrifice that went into ensuring that the franchise was extended to all people. We know that in this country, it has been a battle for some communities just to have their voices heard in the democratic process. New Jersey is the site of one of the most famous instances of voter suppression in American history. In the 1980s, a court found that the Republican National Committee unlawfully interrogated and challenged registered black and Hispanic voters before kicking them off the voting rolls. We cannot go back to those times. We need to work to ensure that hard-won voting rights are not rolled back and that we continue to ensure that communities who have been targeted for voter suppression in the past are protected. That's why I will support any initiatives to expand the franchise and make it easier to vote for all citizens.

- Set Minimum Early Voting Requirements. New Jersey should expand the opportunities for early voting by establishing in-person polling sites in each county that open at least two weeks prior to Election Day, with multiple locations in each county. These sites should be required to offer some early voting hours during evenings and weekends, including the weekend immediately before Election Day. As early voting is only effective if voters are aware of it, the legislation should also include a public education requirement. Research shows that early voting improves participation and results in shorter lines on Election Day, as well as allowing for early diagnosis and correction of any errors with registration rolls, ballots, or machinery. Beyond these benefits, early voting is particularly helpful to voters of color, who are more likely to take advantage of the flexibility early voting affords. Enacting a robust early voting law is an essential step toward making New Jersey's elections accessible to all citizens.

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We have made expanding access to early voting a key part of our voting rights platform. Early voting has been shown to increase turnout. According to Professor Elliott Fullmer of Randolph-Macon College, "Early voting *does* increase participation. In order to do so, however, it must be widely accessible." With turnout reaching a record low of 39.6% in the 2013 governor's race in

New Jersey, it's clear that we need to make it easier for people to vote. Early voting, especially on the weekends, also helps those who are working parents or who work jobs with odd hours. Implementing early voting will help ensure that the voice of every New Jerseyan is heard.