

The Fund for New Jersey News

- The Fund for New Jersey is proud to announce that for the second quarter of 2016 it has awarded grants in the total amount of \$890,000 to advance public policies in the areas of climate change and clean air, water quality, transportation, and criminal justice reform and social justice. Read the full press release [here](#).

Grantee News

Policy Victories:

- Due to advocacy by Education Law Center and partners and action by the State Assembly, the Christie Administration reversed its decision to cut the education costs for at-risk and English language learner (ELL) students in the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA). The NJ Department of Education reduced the formula weights for these students, resulting in the “underestimation of most districts’ adequacy budgets.” Read Education Law Center’s full statement [here](#).
- Education Law Center, ACLU-NJ, and Gibbons law firm negotiated an agreement with the State on behalf of parents and students challenging the NJ Department of Education’s (DOE) graduation requirements, which were announced in 2014. The rules called on students to achieve minimum PARCC, ACT, or SAT scores or utilize a limited portfolio review process in order to graduate. Education Law Center and ACLU-NJ successfully argued that the DOE did not follow State law when it issued new graduation requirements (there was no public prior notice or comment period), and negotiated a settlement that allows students to use the portfolio review as an alternative pathway to graduation. Read more [here](#).
- Due to efforts by Fair Share Housing Center, an Ocean County Superior Court Judge issued a ruling that could increase the number of new affordable housing units in the state dramatically if other jurisdictions follow precedent set by this case. The Judge ruled that “municipalities in Ocean County, at least, will have to plan for not only past and present low- and moderate-income needs, but also for the 15 years, known as the gap period, for which the Council on Affordable Housing was unable to determine the Mount Laurel housing obligations.” Read Fair Share Housing Center’s full statement [here](#).
- Due to advocacy by NY/NJ Baykeeper and partners, the NJ Department of Environmental Commission (DEP) abandoned its plans to privatize Liberty State Park. DEP first revealed its plan in a November 2015 report, laying out a vision for Liberty State Park that would involve the leasing of public parkland for commercial purposes. Ideas under consideration included an amusement park, hotel, indoor sports arena, and restaurants. Read more [here](#).
- Newark Mayor Baraka issues an executive order establishing the City of Newark Port Authority Oversight Advisory Committee. Thanks to advocacy by Ironbound Community Corporation, Clean Water Fund, NJ Environmental Justice Alliance, and partners at the Coalition for Healthy Ports, one task of the committee is to work with the Port Authority of NY/NJ and environmental groups to “address environmental quality concerns for Port Authority facilities, equipment, and practices in Newark.” Read the full executive order [here](#).
- ACLU-NJ successfully argued that the State’s \$11 million grant to two religious schools in NJ violated the State’s prohibition against using taxpayer funding to support the maintenance of

ministries, arguing that religious schools qualified as ministries. Read more [here](#).

Policy Setbacks:

- Governor Christie proposed a new school funding proposal that would provide school districts across the state with the same per pupil funding, regardless of need, as a means of lowering property taxes. Though Christie has touted this proposal as a model of “tax fairness,” Education Law Center, Save Our Schools NJ Community Organizing, and partners have noted that this proposal reallocates funding from the state’s neediest school districts to wealthier school districts, thus widening the gap in educational quality between wealthy and impoverished areas of the state. Read more [here](#).
- Governor Christie conditionally vetoed Heat and Eat legislation that would have provided a minimum of \$21 for heating assistance through the NJ Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to qualified families thus qualifying them for additional federal SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. If passed, the legislation would have provided an extra \$90 in federal food assistance to 160,000 of NJ’s low-income households. Read more [here](#).
- Governor Christie conditionally vetoed legislation that would have allocated funds from the constitutional amendment to dedicate a portion of the corporate business tax to open space, historic, and, farmland preservation. Christie rejected the legislation, citing a lack of Blue Acres funding (to purchase flood-prone areas), though environmental advocates and others have called this argument into question. Read more [here](#).
- Governor Christie conditionally vetoed legislation that would have allowed people with drug distribution and possession charges to receive general assistance through Work First NJ. In his conditional veto, Christie expressed his inability to support a measure that would allow those with drug distribution charges to access general assistance. Read more [here](#).
- An additional \$125 million will be diverted from the State’s Clean Energy Fund this year, with approval from both the Christie Administration and the State Legislature. Since Governor Christie took office in 2010, more than \$1 billion have been diverted from the Clean Energy Fund. Read more [here](#).

Policy Updates:

- The State Legislature is moving forward with a plan meant to solve the Transportation Trust Fund Crisis through a \$0.23 increase in NJ’s gas tax, last increased in 1988. This proposal has been coupled with a series of tax cuts that would decrease the State’s revenue—including the estate tax repeal that benefits the state’s wealthiest heirs with estates worth more than \$675,000, an increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit to 40% of the federal level, and charitable giving incentives for contributions made to in-state service agencies. Read more [here](#).
- In early 2016, the State Legislature approved a concurrent resolution to prevent against the weakening of NJ’s Flood Hazard Area Control Act regulations by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) by arguing that the proposed rules violate the intent of the Clean Water Act and other environmental protections due to advocacy by NJ Highlands Coalition, ANJEC, and partners. NJDEP had 30 days to revise or withdraw its proposed rules, and made minor revisions to the rules despite promising to rewrite the rules to address concerns over weakened protections for NJ’s waters. The State Assembly approved a second resolution to invalidate DEP’s

proposed rules. In order to invalidate the rules, the State Senate will need to approve a second resolution, as well. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

- Eastern Environmental Law Center, on behalf of NJ Conservation Foundation and Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, filed a letter asking the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to suspend its work on an environmental impact statement and withdraw its Notice of Schedule For Environmental Review for the proposed PennEast pipeline. The letter argues that the PennEast pipeline's incomplete application and repeated failure to provide information to federal and state agencies when asked warrants actions to halt the review of the proposal until a complete application is submitted. The groups also filed a separate complaint and motion with FERC, requesting that a hearing is held to determine the public need for a pipeline in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Policy Reports:

- Advocates for Children of NJ released its *2016 NJ Kids Count report: A Statewide Profile of Child Well-Being* with new data on family economic security, early childcare and education, child health and protection, teens and young adults, and immigrant families. Read the full report [here](#) or access data through the interactive [Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center](#).
- Anti-Poverty Network of NJ released its *The Cost of Poverty: The Perpetuating Cycle of Concentrated Poverty in New Jersey Cities* report, detailing how increased economic burdens and decreased investment in four NJ cities have trapped communities in a cycle of concentrated poverty. Read the [summary](#) and [full report](#).
- American Friends Service Committee, NJ Advocates for Immigrant Detainees, and NYU School of Law Immigrant Rights Clinic released *Isolated in Essex: Punishing Immigrants through Solitary Confinement*, a report that documents the use of solitary confinement at Essex County Correctional Facility, the state's largest immigration detention facility. The report finds that the use of solitary confinement is excessive, arbitrary, and disproportionate (42.1% of incidents resulting in solitary confinement were nonviolent conduct) in the facility, and presents recommendations to reform the detention system. Read more [here](#).
- NJ Policy Perspective released its *The 'Exodus' is More Like a Trickle* report, combatting the tax flight myth. The report highlights that there is no significant correlation between state taxes and interstate moves and that data from the IRS provides a different view of migration from NJ. Four of the top ten states residents move to have comparable tax rates and migration from NJ to Florida mirrors data from other northern states. Despite migration from NJ, more people continue to flow into the state than out and the population continues to grow. Read the full report [here](#).
- NJ Policy Perspective released its *Time for Affordability: How Involuntary Out-of-Network Medical Bills Harm NJ Consumers* report. Involuntary out-of-network medical bills cost NJ residents almost \$1 billion in direct and indirect costs per year, driving up insurance premiums that are rising faster than incomes and resulting in fewer small employers who are providing insurance. Read the full report [here](#).
- NJ Policy Perspective and NJ United for Marijuana Reform released their *Marijuana Legalization & Taxation: Positive Revenue Implications for New Jersey* report, which details the economic benefits of marijuana legalization in NJ. According to the report, legalization could increase tax revenue by at least \$300 million per year. Other benefits include increasing public safety, fixing the criminal justice system, enhancing racial justice, and bolstering public health. Read the full report [here](#).

- Environment NJ Research and Policy Center and Environment America released *A New Way Forward: Envisioning a Transportation System Without Carbon Pollution*, a report that lays out a vision for a zero-carbon transportation system that can be implemented through policies to further urbanization and smart growth, public transportation usage, walking and biking, shared mobility, electric car infrastructure, and smart pricing to reduce congestion and incentivize low-carbon travel. Read the full report [here](#).

Events

- July 8—[NJ Spotlight Roundtable: Solving New Jersey's Public-Pension Crisis](#)
- July 13—[Advocates for Children of NJ: South Jersey Kids Count 2016 Forum](#)
- July 19—[Advocates for Children of NJ: North Jersey Kids Count 2016 Forum](#)
- July 27—[Anti-Poverty Network of NJ General Meeting](#)
- September 28—[Anti-Poverty Network of NJ General Meeting \(Health\)](#)
- October 13—[NJ Spotlight On Cities 2016](#)
- October 21—[Housing and Community Development Network of NJ 2016 Annual Conference](#)
- October 28—[Anti-Poverty Network of NJ Poverty Summit 2016](#)
- November 16—[Anti-Poverty Network of NJ General Meeting](#)

Job Announcements

- ACLU-NJ—[Communications Director](#)
- Association of NJ Environmental Commissions—[Municipal Environmental Specialist](#)
- Council of NJ Grantmakers—[Newark Philanthropic Liaison](#)
- Education Law Center—[Fundraising Coordinator/Administrative Assistant](#)
- Faith in NJ—[Community Organizer](#)
- HANDS, Inc.—[Community Organizer/Developer](#)
- Hyacinth AIDS Foundation—[PrEP/Mpowerment Counselor](#)
- Isles, Inc.—[Community Liaison, East Trenton Collaborative](#)
- NJ Citizen Action—[Bilingual Loan Counselors](#)
- NJ Citizen Action—[Bilingual Tax Preparers](#)
- NJ Conservation Foundation—[Land Steward](#)
- NJ Future—[Outreach and Development Coordinator](#)
- NJ Institute for Social Justice—[Director of Philanthropy](#)
- NJ Work Environment Council—[Industrial Hygienist Consultant](#)
- Princeton Area Community Foundation—[Accountant](#)
- Princeton Area Community Foundation—[Vice President of Grants and Programs](#)
- Princeton Area Community Foundation—[Vice President of Development Programs](#)
- Regional Plan Association—[Director, New Jersey](#)
- Regional Plan Association—[Research Analyst, Transportation](#)
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation—[Managing Director, Leadership for Better Health](#)

The Fund for New Jersey's news updates will be distributed monthly. Please send policy news and updates, job announcements, and staff updates to Ami Kachalia at akachalia@fundfornj.org.