

New Jersey Organizing Project

2022 Elections Scorecard

The New Jersey Organizing Project (NJOP) was founded in 2014 by Superstorm Sandy survivors. With over 7,200 members from primarily rural and suburban areas in New Jersey, NJOP has successfully advocated at the federal and state levels for, among other things, disaster recovery and ending the overdose crisis. **We win by putting people first, not party politics.** We are sending this questionnaire to the Republican and Democratic candidates for Congress in districts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Please read the following questions carefully and fill in your responses. Then, submit the survey by sending the completed document to meghan@newjerseyop.org by August 28th. Any questions can also be sent to meghan@newjerseyop.org.

A NOTE ABOUT SCORING

We have a track record of working with elected officials on key legislation, and the goal of NJOP's 2022 scorecard is to show how aligned candidates are with NJOP.

We score by measuring candidates' alignment with NJOP, which helps us decide: are you with us? We look at key areas we work on and evaluate two things:

1. The records of the candidates if they are already in office: whether you worked with us on any of our campaigns or priorities, whether actions taken aligned with our stated goals, and whether you were accessible during this process.
2. Your questionnaire responses for this survey.

Our rating scale goes from 1-5, with 1 being 'Not at all aligned with NJOP' and 5 being 'Very strongly aligned with NJOP.'

- 1: Not at all aligned with NJOP
- 2: Somewhat aligned with NJOP
- 3: Aligned with NJOP
- 4: Strongly aligned with NJOP
- 5: Very strongly aligned with NJOP

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Governance & People First Politics

NJOP values co-governance. The people directly impacted by all of the issues mentioned in our questionnaire should have a seat at the table making decisions about solutions.

Question 1

Please provide a brief description of why you chose to run for office.

Question 2

As an elected official, what concrete steps have you taken (or will you take) to ensure that your office and NJOP work together?

Note: We will also score this section based on member experiences with your constituent services, including responsiveness.

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Storm Recovery

We are made up of Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Ida survivors and know firsthand how broken our disaster recovery system is. In the decade since Sandy and the year since Ida, we've fought to get relief for disaster survivors in New Jersey, including winning foreclosure forbearance for Sandy families two times, securing a supplemental fund for Sandy survivors not yet home, and calling for a National Flood Insurance Program that works for everyone - from the shore to the cities and everywhere in between.

Question 1

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) hasn't been systematically reformed since Superstorm Sandy a decade ago. On top of this, FEMA is unilaterally rolling out Risk Rating 2.0 which reforms the NFIP, but not in the way we were hoping. These changes do not address the primary issues storm survivors are facing, such as affordability, which could result in working class families being priced out of their homes. We have worked with the New Jersey delegation to shape the National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2021 ([S3128 / HR5802](#)) The bill would fix systemic flood insurance issues like affordability, accessibility, and fairness while focusing disaster recovery on prevention and mitigation in order to reduce the cost of rebuilding, and reauthorizing the program through FY2026. The following reforms proposed in this bill have been identified as priorities by our members:

- a. Prohibits FEMA from raising certain premiums, surcharges, and fees more than 9% a year for five years.
- b. Revises flood insurance coverage limits.
- c. Raises Increased Cost of Compliance Coverage from \$30,000 to \$60,000.
- d. Establishes a means-tested program to provide financial assistance to low income households through policy discounts.
- e. Revises the standards and certification requirements for flood insurance rate maps.
- f. Creates requirements for Write Your Own companies related to reimbursements, agent commissions, and penalties for underpayment of claims.
- g. Allows for the continuous operation of the NFIP during a lapse in appropriations.
- h. Allocates \$1,000,000,000 for each of the first five full fiscal years to the National Flood Mitigation Fund to provide mitigation assistance.

For incumbents: Since you are a cosponsor, please explain your current support for this bill and what you believe we can do if you are re-elected in November to push back against Risk Rating 2.0 and other proposed harmful legislative reforms, in order to implement reforms that truly benefit communities, such as those listed above.

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For candidates: Every current New Jersey Congressperson is currently a cosponsor of this bill. If you are elected in November, please explain why you would or would not support this bill, and what you would do to push back against Risk Rating 2.0 and other proposed harmful legislative reforms, in order to implement reforms that truly benefit communities, such as those listed above.

Question 2

Hurricane Ida survivors in New Jersey will not see any state-based grant funds through the CDBG-DR to rebuild and replace damaged homes and property until 2023. This money is allocated through the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Program (CDBG-DR) and implemented by the Department of Community affairs - it is a major source of resources for storm survivors. A decade earlier, Superstorm Sandy survivors also had to wait more than a year for grant funds to reach them so that they could rebuild. The current system treats disasters as one-off, totally unpredictable events that each require new Congressional action. By doing so, we put communities at risk of a protracted and inefficient recovery process - if they are able to recover at all. This makes no sense when we know that climate change is driving the increased frequency and severity of disasters. This poorly designed system is one of the reasons Ida survivors have not seen grant funds nearly a year after the storm.

The Reforming Disaster Recovery Act (S2471/ HR4707), which would drastically improve long-term federal disaster recovery and mitigation systems, passed the House with strong bipartisan support in 2019 but never came up for a vote in the Senate. This legislation would establish CDBG-DR as a permanent program with permanent rules. This would expedite future recovery for those states most at risk from climate change, like our own.

For incumbents: Why did or didn't you support the Disaster Recovery Act when it passed the House in 2019?

For candidates: If you are elected in November, please explain why you would or would not support this bill?

Question 3

The Stafford Act outlines federal natural disaster assistance for state and local governments and requires that agencies establish policies and procedures to prevent duplication of benefits. Unfortunately, that system does not always work. Clawbacks have been holding Superstorm Sandy survivors hostage in the decade since the storm. These "clawbacks," also known as

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recoupment, refer to money the state is demanding back from Sandy survivors in the RREM program, claiming they received a duplication of benefits under the Stafford Act. The state is asserting that these survivors received a provision of funds from more than one source for the same purpose. The problem is, most families with clawbacks followed the rules when applying for, receiving, and utilizing aid to rebuild, and were told that their funds were not a duplication. In other words, through no fault of their own, Sandy survivors are being accused of taking advantage of a program they needed to recover, and are now being asked to repay money they already used to rebuild their homes and lives after the storm. At the Federal government's behest, our state government is demanding thousands of dollars from each person hit with a clawback, 1,700 New Jerseyans can not find closure from the storm.

We would like to amend the Stafford Act by removing SBA loans as a category under duplication of benefits. While this would not entirely fix the problem, it would be a step in the right direction. We need sweeping action, and that starts here.

For incumbents: If you are elected in November, please explain why you would or would not amend this bill and any other action you would take to eliminate existing and future clawbacks

For candidates: If you are elected in November, please explain why you would or would not amend this bill and any other action you would take to eliminate existing and future clawbacks.

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Energy Security & Community Preparedness

New Jersey is second in the nation for most homes at risk from chronic flooding due to rising seas. Our Shorekeeper work focuses on the connection between the flooding we experience, the need for community mitigation and adaptation projects, and the role of renewable energy.

Question 1

Our communities continue to struggle with flooding caused by tidal surge, storm runoff, and extreme weather events. Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Ida opened our eyes up to how fragile our communities are to natural disasters and their ongoing aftermath. Staving off these issues will require investment into mitigation and clean energy.

There are FEMA **Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) grants** available to states and local communities that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). According to FEMA, these communities should receive \$3.5 billion in grants over 4 years to reduce or eliminate flood risk for buildings, homes, and other structures. New Jersey (along with Louisiana, Mississippi, and Pennsylvania) has the highest flood claims nationwide, and also gets Swift Current initiative access for equitability. Basically, the funding to mitigate the impact of flooding in our communities is there, but we need to make sure it gets into the right hands.

We know this is a complex issue, to put it mildly, but it is important that we know how this funding can be moved to our communities to mitigate and be better prepared for future storms.

For both incumbents and candidates: How would you get more funding into programs such as the FMA and the Blue Acres Program and make that funding accessible to communities who may not have the capacity for intensive applications?

Question 2

NJ is a leader in the offshore wind industry. In February 2022, six companies bid a combined \$4.37 billion for the right to build wind energy projects on the ocean floor off the New Jersey and New York coasts. That's the highest-grossing energy lease ever. We and future generations will benefit from the economic opportunities this industry will bring right here in our state. However, we must make sure this is done right so that offshore wind is a direct boon to our local economy and environment. Responsibly developed offshore wind entails:

- a. Robust stakeholder engagement ensuring that everyone has meaningful access to a seat at the table.

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- b. Putting communities first by ensuring economic and environmental investments, community benefits, small business opportunities, and respectful coexistence with other ocean users and industries.
- c. Creation of good family-supporting jobs with commitments such as project labor agreements, prevailing wage, and union neutrality agreements.
- d. Engagement with underrepresented populations in workforce development and local hire provisions that lead to workforce opportunities.
- e. Commitment to Black, Indigenous, People of Color and women-owned business enterprises.
- f. Advocating for a coordinated efficient grid constructed between turbines and the shore with a minimum of cables that is as safe as possible.
- g. That recreational and commercial fishermen can still fish near the turbines, and near the artificial reef sites they will create.
- h. Ensuring stringent wildlife protections with commitments to ongoing research and monitoring.
- i. Investment in a low-carbon domestic supply chain.

Doing this right is going to require an investment up front. Currently, funds from offshore wind farm leases go to the federal treasury, even though New Jersey owns the land that was auctioned.

For both incumbents and candidates: How will you ensure that the people of New Jersey benefit from the highest grossing energy auction in history and that the use of those funds is transparent?

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Not One More: End Overdose

As loved ones of people with substance use disorder and/or people in recovery, we are dedicated to taking action to end the overdose crisis by expanding access to evidence-based treatments and harm reduction in NJ. Since launching our Not One More campaign, we have passed 3 key pieces of legislation in NJ that expand access to lifesaving naloxone and medication assisted treatment (MAT).

Question 1

Medication assisted treatment, or MAT, is considered the gold-standard of treatment for substance abuse disorder and has been shown to reduce the risk of overdose by 50% while increasing long term recovery. However, only 22% of those who needed treatment like MAT in 2019 received it, and 40% of those who wanted to get treatment were unable to. 2021 was the worst year on record for preventable overdose, with over 100,000 deaths nationwide. We have to take action to increase access to MAT and equip communities with much-needed harm-reduction tools.

For incumbents: We appreciate your “yes,” vote on this bill in May as part of the “Restoring Hope and Well Being Act.” Why did you support the MAT Act when it moved through the House?

For candidates: If you were elected in November, please explain why you would or would not support this bill.

Question 2

We are concerned about how current resources are being allocated to address the overdose crisis. We want to implement more transparency and accountability when it comes to funding programs in the recovery industry. For example, the grassroots research organization [Monmouth County CARE Inc.](#) found that a person affiliated with an Ocean County recovery organization was involved in body brokering: getting paid to send people to specific rehab centers rather than finding the best match for care. Why are recovery organizations such as this one being funded when they clearly are not prioritizing patient wellbeing? Lapses in transparency such as these can have dire consequences. When rehabilitation centers are chosen based on preferential treatment rather than effectiveness or suitability for the individual, people can die.

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Do YOU know the criteria for making decisions about how grants and funding are prioritized for substance use disorder treatment? We don't, and not for lack of trying - the information is simply not publicly available. This makes it harder to fund programs that are actually working - and to hold accountable the ones that aren't.

For both incumbents and candidates: What ideas do you have to increase transparency and accountability, and quality of care for those seeking resources for substance use disorder?

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSES

Please submit your responses to meghan@newjerseyop.org by August 28th. Any questions can also be sent to meghan@newjerseyop.org.

Thank you for participating in NJOP's 2022 Scorecard survey! We will share the final scorecard with you once it's completed.