



Dear Neighbor,

This has been a difficult week for many Americans. As we prepared to commemorate the victims of the September 11th, 2001, Terrorist Attacks, an assassin took the life of conservative organizer Charlie Kirk at an event on a college campus in Utah. Many of you have reached out to my office, concerned about the rise in political violence. I address these concerns below.

In This Newsletter:

1. Rising Political Violence
2. Funding the Government
3. The National Defense Authorization Act
4. Commemorating the September 11th Victims
5. Response to Secretaries McMahon and Kennedy on Youth Mental Health
6. Newly Opened Heart and Vascular Center
7. The Upcoming &Girls Conference

Rising Political Violence



Many were shocked and horrified by the assassination of Charlie Kirk on Wednesday. As I learned the news of Charlie Kirk's murder, I turned to prayer. Praying for Kirk's wife and children. Praying for the thousands of people who witnessed his killing and the

countless others who saw it online. And praying for our country.

The last ten to fifteen years have seen a disturbing normalization of political violence. Assassinations and attempted assassinations have been made against Governors, Members of Congress, State and Local Representatives, and Presidents.

Political violence is an insult to every American who believes in our country and its potential. Political assassination is an attack not only on the victim, but on the very notion of freedom and democracy. I encourage us all to reflect on the country we want to live in. And to ensure our words and actions point us in that direction.

If we are to have a thriving democracy we must be able to disagree and fight for what we believe in without denying each other's humanity. Much of the political rhetoric in recent years has failed this test. I pray we return to a place where, despite our differences, we can recognize the humanity in every one of us.

Funding the Government

This week, the Appropriations Committee finished "marking up" two more bills to fund different parts of the government. This time, it was bills that fund the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Commerce, Justice, and other related agencies like NOAA and the CDC.

"Mark ups" as they're called, are marathon committee meetings where both sides offer and debate amendments before we ultimately vote on whether to pass the legislation out of our committee.

I offered several amendments to both bills this week. I proposed restoring funding for the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS), which helps resolve disputes between labor and management. I offered an amendment to [fully fund the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#), a cornerstone of the Civil Rights Act that protects workers from discrimination in the workplace. I sought to [prevent cuts to the Legal Services Corporation](#), which offers legal services for low-income victims of crime and abuse. And I moved to [redirect funding from so-called "abstinence-only education"](#) to HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

I was also proud that two amendments I authored made it into the final bills. The first clarifies that the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) continue funding the research and development of mRNA vaccines, which Sec. Kennedy has withheld all funding for. And the second directed the Economic Development Agency to target their support efforts in communities experiencing persistent poverty.

Lastly, [I spoke in support](#) of my colleague's amendment, which would prevent any government funds from going towards payouts for the insurrectionists who stormed the Capitol on January 6th.



National Defense Authorization Act

Yesterday, I voted against the National Defense Authorization Act, the annual bill that sets policy and funding for the Department of Defense and related agencies. This year's Defense budget surpassed \$882 billion. Not only was the pricetag indicative of a bloated budget, the NDAA's policy attachments target LGBTQ+ veterans and servicemembers, limit access to healthcare for service members, veterans, and their families and rubber-stamp Trump's attacks on labor rights of government employees. All this led to one of the most [far-right, partisan NDAA's](#) in recent memory.

24th Anniversary of September 11th Attacks

Yesterday marked the 24th Anniversary of the horrific September 11th terrorist attacks that forever changed our country and the lives of so many New Jerseyans. I was able to attend the memorial ceremony in Ewing with Mayor Steinmann and others to remember the lives lost and honor the survivors, first responders, and families whose lives were forever changed that day.



Response to Secretaries McMahon and Kennedy on Youth Mental Health

On Wednesday, an op-ed in the Washington Post, titled “Children Need Natural Sources of Mental Health,” addressed the mental health crisis impacting our youth. The authors Education Secretary Linda McMahon and Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., warned against Illinois’ newly-adopted practice of holding annual mental health screenings for public school students in grades 3-12, and said the focus instead should be on promoting “strong families, nutrition and fitness, and hope for the future.”

Speaking as a public servant who has worked with experts in the field of the mental health of children and teens, I agree on the importance of the loving strength of their families, having enough nutritious food in their stomachs, engaging in play and exercise, and prospects for a better future, to the well being of every child.

However, children can still encounter mental health challenges even in the best of circumstances. During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, far too many have faced social isolation, the loss of loved ones, and trauma, affecting their ability to cope. Identifying their needs through school-based screenings is not about “medicalizing the unique and sometimes unpredictable behavior of young children,” or creating stigma. Professional help is truly effective when parents and caregivers are encouraged to push past stigma and engage in the process. It should never be withheld or avoided out of fear.

Read more of my response [here](#).

The Heart and Vascular Center

On Tuesday, members of my staff toured the new, state-of-the-art Heart and Vascular Center at Capital Health Regional Medical Center in Trenton. This cutting-edge surgery center will be the envy of the region. Most importantly, it will significantly reduce the time it takes for people suffering a medical emergency to get the care they need. In a medical emergency, every second counts, and the Heart and Vascular Center will save countless lives.



&Girls Conference

It's that time of year again. My annual &Girls conference is October 18th. It's a conference devoted to the empowerment of Black girls in middle and high school.

Black girls continue to prove resilient, despite the disproportionate rates at which they grapple with issues that, if unchecked, could impede their ability to live healthy and productive lives. The &Girls conference will provide girls with self-advocacy tools to help them address the school-to-prison pipeline, discuss how to have healthy relationships, live healthy lifestyles, and help set them on a path of career readiness.

Registration is open until October 6th. Students can register [here](#).

Casework Testimonials

Professional and willing to help. And, immediate action. - **Michele from Monroe**

[The District Office] is very efficient, helpful and attentive. Thank you all for the help. - **Dr. Z from Plainsboro**



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