August 21, 2025 - Sherrill speech on energy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZI7peYkd5z8>

Thank you so much. Um I really appreciate it and thanks for sharing your experiences. I'll get right to it. Our utility bills have gone up by 20% this summer. New Jerseyians are hurting and I hear it from families all across the state. You heard it from her, but he is just representative of so many of the families I speak to. And we can't continue to kick this can down the road. I was trained in the military. You handle a crisis head on. So on day one, I'm going to declare a state of emergency on utility costs. Um what that means for New Jerseyians and how to lower costs immediately is freezing utility rates on day one. When I take office, the average New Jersey family won't see an increase in utility rates for an entire year. I'll massively expand cheaper, cleaner power generation and building an energy arsenal in our state. We're going to cut through red tape and eliminate permitting delays to get that done right now. It means immediately breaking new ground on solar and battery storage projects, expanding capacity at our existing nuclear power plants, and streamlining the modernization of existing natural gas plants to make them cleaner and more efficient. I'll demand new a new level of transparency from our utility companies, JCPNL, PSCG, Atlantic City Electric, and Rockland Electric to prevent collusion and price gouging. and I'll instruct my attorney general to take on our grid operator PJM and Donald Trump to court to force them to end their mismanagement and get new power added to the grid. So, let me be clear. My plan is going to deliver immediate relief to New Jersey families by streamlining, modernizing, and expanding our energy arsenal. Will not only lower energy bills in the immediate future, but also create a long range plan and strategy for driving down cost, increasing production, and decreasing carbon emissions across the state because more power generation means lower bills. So, right now, solar is the fastest way we can get clean, cheap power into the grid, but we have too much red tape and permitting delay. So, we're worried that we're going to miss out on many of the programs that I passed in the last session of Congress. So, we have got to do better. We have got to get through the roadblocks, the interconnection delays that are preventing us from getting that into the grid. It's increasing utility bills. So, if we want to reduce utility costs, we need to get th those barriers and get that power into the grid. And my plan does exactly that. And we need to prepare for our future energy needs. So, I'm going to immediately develop plans for new nuclear capacity at Salem County. We already have a pre-approved site there, the fourth site. So, we have got to build that out. I'll sit down with neighboring states so that we can act together to drive down the cost of building new nuclear plants. It demands urgency because from across the state, I hear that this is breaking the back of too many families when we have an overall affordability crisis. So much of that pain is coming from electric bills. And the rate hikes are forcing families to make impossible choices between putting food on the table and paying for electric bills. I've heard from a hundred-year-old World War II veteran who's on a fixed income and in an assisted living facility. his bills have nearly tripled. So, it's what I've heard from Herb about having his electric electricity bills nearly double recently and having to re-evaluate his overall budget to adjust for that. It's unacceptable. The people of New Jersey can't afford any delay here. So, with immediate action, I'm going to get projects into the grid. I'm going to expand capacity, drive down price, and decrease carbon emissions. All of this is happening at the same time as Donald Trump is passing the price hike bill and driving up costs for everyone here. So, you know what? I'm a Democrat, sure, but I'm a New Jerseyian first. So, I am going to take on anyone who gets in the way of driving down costs for people. That includes PJM, a regional grid operator that has refused to plug new clean power into the grid, which is driving our utility bills up. My attorney general is going to join forces to take them on and add new energy to the gridge. I'll demand transparency from our utility companies like PSEG and JCPNL and Atlantic City Electric and Rockland Electric. When I'm governor, I'm going to make sure that they open their books so we can see exactly what is going on with pricing. I know I'm not going to back down as Donald Trump rolls back some of our clean power initiatives which have been working to enter enter more power into our grid and drive down prices. And this stands in complete contradiction to my opponent Jack Chidarelli because he won't take on anyone. He's going to do whatever Trump says. So he won't take on PJM. He won't take on the electric companies. He won't take on anyone if it if it threatens his relationship with Donald Trump. In fact, he's called PJM the largest grid operator in the United States the grid operator that a bipartisan group of governors across the country blames for much of this mismanagement, quote, some regional nonprofit and said that holding them accountable is quote a bunch of BS. He said it's okay if New Jerseyians feel some pain when it comes to Trump's economic policies that are punishing New Jerseyians. And here's some news for Jack. Trump's tax hike bill is raising utility costs by $220 each year. PJM's mismanagement is costing families an additional $400 per year. So yeah, people are feeling a lot of pain and as governor, I am going to address it. So we have an energy crisis on our hands. In times of crisis, I learned in the Navy you have to lead, follow, or get out of the way. I'm going to lead. Jack is going to follow whatever Trump tells him to do. Even if that means higher costs for New Jersey families. He's going to run away and let Jack call the shots. So, we have no time to waste and on day one, I'm going to get right to work. So, with that, I'm going to open it up to questions. Can you explain how the governor has the authority to freeze utility rates? Has the governor done before? So, no, this is something that we have looked into that I've determined as governor I'll have the power to do um to bring all of our um all of our utility companies to the table, BPU to the table, who's negotiating some of these prices um and make sure we're driving down cost. And there is also money that comes in through the BPU that I will use to defay some of this as well. Um but no, this is not something any governor's ever done before. Uh but if we are going to truly address the moment and meet the needs of New Jerseyians, we have got to act quickly to do so. And we've got to think of new ways of expanding state power to do just that. Talk about taking on PJM. If you're elected, will you explore taking New Jersey off of that grid opportunities? You know, I'm going to explore everything when it comes to building out our energy future and driving down cost immediately. And um I will start by working to drive down those immediate market costs. We've seen uh Governor Shapiro take them to court to set a Florida ceiling. We've seen um some production issues that Governor Moore has taken them to court on. But if they can't deliver, I mean recently they've had six years that it's taken to get projects into the grid. We have more projects in the queue in New Jersey than we actually have power in the grid. Many of those projects are clean power projects. So if they are going to continue to mismanage our grid like this, then yes, I'll explore all options to drive in capacity and drive down costs. If you're elected, you'll have to work hand in hand with New York and its new mayor. You haven't been clear about where you stand. Do you support mom Donnie? And if you don't, what are the reasons why? So, I have not weighed in on the New York governor's race because I'm running a race in New Jersey. I'm going to let the people of New York decide who their next mayor is going to be and then I'll deal with that person when they're in office. But what I'm critically focused on is how I'm going to govern New Jersey. And that means on day one declaring an energy utility cost emergency so we can drive down those costs right away so we can freeze rate hikes so we can hold people accountable who have mismanaged the grid, who have driven up prices and really deliver for families. Because right now, whether it comes to the administration, whether it comes to the utility companies, whether it comes to PJM, whether it comes to BPU, all of this mismanagement has been put on the backs of New Jersey families. And I'm not going to accept that. Applied, you know, I I was surprised when he uh won. And I I didn't really weigh in on that race beforehand or after. Congresswoman, what are the potentials to get wind and solar up to the degree that you would like with an administration that is so opposed, overtly opposed to wind and solar? So, we have got to increase our energy production here in New Jersey. And New Jersey has some really great opportunities in solar. Um we have quite a few warehouses. We're a logistics state and all those flat roofs provide great opportunities in solar. So what we have to do to drive that in is to um increase the use of solar but also increase battery storage capacity um so that we can drive it safely into our grid. Look at every turn we see the federal government and Donald Trump increasing costs for New Jerseyians. So whether it's the tariff policy, this energy policy which is driving up rates everywhere and will cost uh rate payers another couple hundred bucks a year um as we're seeing from the big beautiful bill, whether it is the $5 billion hit to the state government or whether it's cuts to the department of education or Medicaid again and again and again we see costs going up from the federal government. That's why I will both drive down costs here by cutting through permitting and red tape and getting solar into the grid as quickly as possible, but also taking this administration to court to claw back that federal money because remember New Jersey pays $70 billion more in federal taxes than we receive back. So the fact that this federal government is so incompetent and is costing us so much money is unacceptable. Congresswoman, some New Jersey Assembly Democrats have introduced legislation that would support the an operation of small modular nuclear reactors in the state. That's an idea that's opposed by some other legislative Democrats. You know, obviously if you become governor, they would have to redu reintroduce a bill, but where I'm interested in knowing where you stand on those small modular reactors. You know, I'm a supporter of small modular nukes. I I've actually worked side by side with them um for many years that the Navy has them on ships and has since the 60s. So, um, I think this is a a great opportunity going forward. Um, but we also have to look at where to site those. It's it's not as if you're going to put these in the middle of towns and stuff. So, I I do think there's a great conversation to be had, education to be done with the public, but I'm very supportive of that as one of the tools that we can use going forward. Congressman, um, how would you deploy your your BPU towards these efforts? Look, my PB my BPU is going to share my focus on expanding power, decreasing cost, and decreasing carbon emissions. And right now, I think again, this is just one of the entities that has really been asleep at the switch. This was a foreseeable crisis, not every single part of it, but the can was kicked down the road because it's complicated and hard to address. Well, look, that's that's no excuse for any entity that's serving the public. You know, this is what public servants do. So, my PPU is going to take these things head on and address these things head on. Are you looking to replace the current BPU commissioners? If the current BPU commissioners are not going to address this and if they are not going to drive down costs for people, then yes, they will be replaced. How much time are you going to give them to do that? Um, we are acting very quickly. Um, that's why this emergency will be declared on day one. We got time for one more. You mentioned Shapiro and more. What do you think specifically could have been done? As you know, this isn't a this is something you could have anticipated in the last 8 to 10 years here in New Jersey like what would you have specifically done differently that could have averted this crisis? So, I think it's I think it's several things. I think um it is making sure that as we are moving into new power such as solar that we're cutting through bureaucracy and red tape that is making it too hard. So, we have moved slowly. For example, in Pennsylvania, they've increased solar capacity by I think about 11%. We've actually lost some solar capacity over the last several years. And we have some of we have a lot of ability to do it. Um, but some of our utility companies aren't allowing some of the new solar projects onto the grid even at even in areas where they control the grid. Then more broadly, where PJM controls the grid, they've taken six years to get things onto the grid. This could have been handled and addressed years ago. We know um in Texas for example, I think they were taken about three years at the same time. So these types of things could have been addressed previously. Um I think we also should be generating more nuclear power. That fourth site was approved in I think 2016, but we've not made any moves to build that out, that fourth nuclear site. So that needs to be addressed. Um, so again and again and again in looking forward, we just haven't appropriately planned for the moment, which is why I'm both declaring the emergency so that families aren't bearing the brunt of lack of a plan for this moment by all the agencies, but also coming up with a long-term strategy so that we can address future power. All right. Thank you. Thank you. I'm glad we got you guys at 10. Is this ours? Great.