# Oct 5 - Ciattarelli - StateofAffairs

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We kick off the series with Jack Chidarelli, a former state legislator, a business professional, the Republican candidate for governor. Jack, good to see you. Steve, great to be with you. Thanks for having me on. You got Hey, before we talk issues, let's do this real quick. 30 seconds on your family history in New Jersey. We've been here for 100 years. My grandparents came from Volantano, Italy, which is just northwest of Rome. And um you know, it's typical Italian New Jersey family, but three generations of us have achieved our American dream right here. And I want to make sure future generations of New Jerseyians do, too. Let's talk about that. Harder and harder for folks to stay in the state, particularly younger people. Affordability is talked about all the time, but let's get down to details. The most significant thing you would do as governor, if elected in January 2026 regarding affordability in the state, would be we need to build more affordable housing, but we're going to be very smart about where we put it. We're overdeveloping our suburban communities where there's no mass transit, no infrastructure, no jobs, only putting more idling cars on the road. The opposition party's taking garden right out of the Garden State. I want to use affordable housing as a way to get people want to live in our major urban centers again like Norark, like Trenton, like Atlantic City. For young people, I also want to make the first two years out of high school or college taxfree. No income tax in your first two years. For seniors, all retirement income should be taxfree, just like it is in Pennsylvania, and your property taxes are frozen for life once you hit age 70. Jack, how would you make up that budget shortfall without that revenue coming in? Steve, it took us 238 years to get to 36 billion. In 8 years, we've gone from 36 billion to 59 billion. I believe we're bloated. I believe we're inefficient. There's room in our government to do these very fiscally responsible programs that are long overdue. We cannot continue with this affordability crisis. Jack, you talk a lot about Governor Murphy. He's not the candidate. Congresswoman Cheryl is, who we'll do a an in-depth half hour interview with. What is your biggest beef with Governor Murphy's policies and how does that relate to Congresswoman Cheryl? He's not the candidate, but his policies are on the ballot. This is a referendum on Phil Murphy's policies which she has supported. Take a look at your monthly electric bill. Everywhere I go around this state, everybody is talking about their monthly electric bill. They broke it. They own it. Steve, when Murphy took office, we were an electricity exporter. Today we have to import it through the exchanges because he shut down six different electricity generation plants. Didn't expand our nuclear capabilities in South Jersey. Didn't accelerate solar on the rooftops of all the warehouses that have gone up which are ripe for solar arrays and bet it all on wind. And here we are today importing it and paying through the nose. It's interesting. Um Jack, you talk about the governor, Governor Murphy not being on the ballot. President Trump Trump is not on the ballot either, but he matters. We agree that he is and his policies are particularly federal policies impacting New Jersey. They are relevant. Fair. Uh here's how he matters. He's put a temporary halt on wind farms off the Jersey shore. That agrees with an overwhelming number of New Jerseyians. I support that. I'll make it permanent. He's beating up on the New York Democrats over their congestion pricing plan. I think it's an egregious money grab to ask New Jerseyians to pay for their subway system. He just signed a budget bill that quadruples the property tax deduction salt on your federal tax return. Doubles the child care tax credit. State and local taxes. Sorry for interrupting, Jack. The state and local taxes. What's happening there? Was a $10,000 cap. What's it now? 40,000. And in that bill, he also doubled the child care tax credit for families with young children. Doesn't tax tips, social social security, or overtime. And provides a magnificent tax credit for people who send their kids to private school. But your governor has to opt in. Vocal and Newsome have already said they won't. Cheryl won't say anything about it. We're opting in to get people that tax credit. You know, Jack, you just listed a whole range of things um that you believe President Trump is doing that benefits the state. Let's look at the other side or some would argue the other side of the coin um in the so-called big beautiful bill passed by Congress, proposed by the president, federal cuts, significant federal cuts to Medicaid. It is estimated by several credible sources, including the New Jersey Department of Human Services, that 350,000 eligible residents for Medicaid will potentially lose their healthc care coverage because of the barriers that are set up in the federal legislation that takes many people off of Medicaid who will no longer qualify. Almost 400,000 New Jerseyians. Jack, first, you agree that that will happen. Second, if it does, how's that a good thing? You know, Steve, the key word you use there is potentially affect 350,000 New Jerseyians. This reminds me very much of when Bill Clinton turned welfare into workfare, and we heard the same kind of rhetoric. Here's what the president has done. He's making you now verify twice a year that you're eligible for your Medicaid. That was originally put in place by Barack Obama. Trump kept it in place. Joe Biden put it to once a year. I think it's reasonable for you to have to verify twice a year. Here's the other thing that bill does. If you're on Medicaid and you're able-bodied and your children are 15 or older, you have to give us 20 hours a week of work, volunteerism, or education in order to continue to qualify. I think those are reasonable, and I don't think you're going to see 350,000 people potentially affected by these changes. Okay? Federal policies in the Trump administration regarding immigration, let's be clear on this. Um, we have a whole range of law enforcement professionals joining us. We're taping all day today and some of them are saying, "Look, we are in control of law enforcement in our community, a local community, a municipality, an urban community, a county, whatever, and the state of New Jersey." You have said the sanctuary state, I don't even know if that's an official thing, um, Jack, but you're saying sanctuary state no more. Correct. Correct. The immigrant trust directive goes away on day one, executive order number one. Okay. But the federal government sending National Guard troops into or ICE folks, folks from ICE, federal government folks into a municipality or a county that says, "Wait a minute, we'll handle law enforcement." Does that make sense to you? A and B, couldn't it? And may it create real confusion regarding who's in control of law enforcement? The first job of any public official, Steve, and you've been one, is public safety. And if the current leadership is not protecting the citizenry, the president has an obligation, I think, to do that. But here's the deal. He won't ever have to worry about doing that. New Jersey, I'll pick an attorney general and I'll appoint 21 county prosecutors that will support our local police. We should not be restricting them in any way. Keep our community safe. Okay. Um, shift gears. I've talked to you before. I've talked to many people. We've had an ongoing series that really looks at talks about affordability. Um, former Assemblyman Sharelli talked about affordability. Congresswoman Sher will as well. Affordability also has to do with child care. Long-standing series on child care. The graphic will come up. It's a new initiative called Start Strong NJ. It has to do with affordable quality accessible child care. Um, federal money matters, state money matters. You're governor. top priority regarding child care would be providing a voucher for those among certain income levels to take that voucher and use it to offset the cost of child care expenses which is usually the second or third biggest expense in any family budget. Uh it's breaking middle class and lower middle class families. So again, the president's budget bill doubles the child care tax credit. I'll provide a voucher system to allow people to go to the child care facility of their choice and wherever you are on the income level, it will help offset that cost. Jack, do you have a sense of where that cap is a in terms of income and b what the voucher would be? We'll sit down and do that demographic profile and analysis, Steve, but that's what I'm committed to doing. Again, this is one of the biggest expenses uh across New Jersey for families with young children. Okay. I'm going to go back to issues, particularly New Jersey Transit and some other things in a second. This is the third time you run for governor. Um, I saw you in a recent interview talking about how much you've learned running for governor. In these incredibly challenging times, in these polarized times, in the last two times you ran, political violence was not what it is today. It's always been there, but never heightened to the degree that it's been. We are taping this literally a week or so after uh the horrific assassination of Charlie Kirk, one of many. um instances of political violence. Jack, as governor, what could and would you do to tamp down political violence in this state? You know, the way you go about your business, Steve, as a candidate means an awful lot. This campaign is marked by positive energy, a message that unites, doesn't divide, and a message that's really about people, not power or politics. And so, it's my job to get up and down the state. Last weekend, we were in different houses of worship, including all black congregations in two different houses of worship in Essex County. The power of social media is people seeing where it is I go. And as a Republican, I've always gone places other Republicans don't or won't. That's how you bring people together. So, specific to your question, I will reinvigorate the interfaith council. We'll bring together the leaders of every faith in Jersey every month over breakfast with the governor to talk about how we work in partnership to strengthen our community. And I've committed myself to attending two different houses of worship each month and using social media to show people where it is I'm going. Let's embrace our diversity. There's power and beauty in our diversity here in New Jersey if we embrace it. And diversity of thought. Absolutely. Respecting each other. To listen. To listen is to acknowledge the dignity of the other person. Jack, you are not President Trump. You are your own person, but so far in the interview, you've basically praised everything he's done as president as it relates to New Jersey. But these quotes right after the Charlie Kirk assassination, I want to ask you to respond. He said this on Fox News. I'm reading for the New York Times. I'll tell you something that's going to get me in trouble, but I couldn't care less. The radicals on the right often times are radicals because they don't want to see crime. January 6th is what it is. People can decide for themselves. That's not the president. That's me saying that. The president continues, "The radicals on the left, they are the problem and they're vicious and they're horrible and they're politically savvy." Jack, you just talked about coming together, listening to people, respecting all sides. the president. This is after the assassination of a leading member of the Minnesota legislature. You were in the legislature in New Jersey. I was in the legislature. That female legislator, her husband, killed in the middle of the night. President was asked about it. He said, "Who you talking about?" Translation, is the president's rhetoric helping, Jack? Steve, I I can't control what other people say. All I can do is lead. And so I've seen some pretty ugly ugly uh comments from people across the political spectrum. Agreed. Uh there's hate on the left, there's hate on the right. The key is for our leaders to call out hate when they see it. I will tell you on my recent uh return uh from my trip to Israel as a gubernatorial candidate, some of the rhetoric, some of the comments I saw on social media were ugly. I can't believe that's my fellow New Jerseyians or my fellow Americans. Emotions are running high right now across the spectrum. And when people get this emotional, they tend to say things maybe they shouldn't say. My job is to lead. Before we take this break, one more thing. I want to be clear. You do not believe that there's some disproportionate effort and and political violence that is coming from the left versus the right as opposed to political violence is an issue across the board. I'm not going to speak for you, Jack, but clarify. You don't believe it's one side more than the other because I don't know where that gets us. Uh there's hate all around, Steve. What we should be most concerned with is this was a 22year-old young man that had his entire life ahead of him. What would ever compelled somebody that age to do something this terrible and this heartbreaking? Agreed. Let us not and this is not what aboutism but I'll just say this and again my job is not to editorialize and I won't but when Paul Pelosi the husband of the former speaker of the house was attacked in the middle of the night um with a hammer and almost lost his life. Let's just say there are a lot of folks online who have a political point of view consistent with some folks on the right who found it funny. Nothing funny about that and nothing funny about what happened at Charlie Kirk. We're talking to Jack Chidurelli, Republican candidate for governor. We'll have a half hour with his Democratic opponent, uh, Mikey Sher. It'll be just as civil, just with different points of view. We'll come right back right after this. To see more State of Affairs with Steve Abato programs, find us online and follow us on social media. Steve Aottabato, way more importantly, Jack Chidarelli, potentially uh the next governor of New Jersey. It could be Mikey Cheryl as well. Jack, let me ask you this. Uh, public health. We're very into public awareness. Those of us in public media, trying to explain to folks what the truth is, what the science is about public health. Vaccine vaccine policy in Florida. D. Santis, the governor. No more mandates. Your governor January 2026 mandates for vaccines. Uh, I believe in in childhood vaccines, Steve. My children are vaccinated. They would be again. I think it's very very concerning that we're seeing outbreaks of measles, mumps, rebella uh across the the country. And so again, one of the top priorities of any elected official is public health. And so what I do believe in a dialogue with the medical profession is a great many people have concerns about the concentrations of vaccines in a very short amount of time. And so in discussions with medical professionals, they seem okay with spreading out the vaccination schedule. And I don't think people should have to pay more out of pocket because health insurance companies don't want to pay for a spread out vaccine schedule. But along those lines, RFK Jr. as we speak is the head of health policy in this country has said consistently, we need to find out more about whether vaccines cause autism. The studies have been done. Jack, you you're not a scientist and neither am I, but those studies have been done. Is the debate and the constant questioning as to whether the MMR vaccine causes autism the kind of thing we should be discussing? As governor, would you say that every child should be vaccinated for measles, MS rebella? I believe that every child should be vaccinated for those potential disease states. And uh listen, if the federal government is going to do anything right now, let's have the most exhaustive research of all time uh to answer the question as to whether or not vaccines cause autism. Um we do know there is vaccine injury. We do know that. I mean, you you hear the old story today from doctors that if aspirin had to go through the FDA process today, it wouldn't get approved. Uh all medications have the risk. Look what we've learned from the COVID vaccine. And I'm someone who took the vaccine, so let's do the exhaustive research to come to a conclusion. I'm sorry for interrupting, Jack, but that vaccine saved millions of lives. And there are many who argue that President Trump, who was president at the time, when Operation Warp Speed was underway and the vaccine, it was amazing what happened. It was praised. The president praised it, others praised him for it. Now questioning it, how much sense does that make? You can't have it both ways. Wait a second. those who argue that yeah if something shows up 2 3 4 years after you took it that would strongly suggest that maybe it wasn't as safe as we thought there has been injury from the co vaccination but then again the same thing happens when people take the flu vaccine each year so but let me say this uh as new as the vaccine was for the co virus I don't think people should have been forced to take it and I don't think people should have lost their jobs over it you don't I don't think people force to me the COVID vaccine was no different than the flu vaccine. We don't force people to get the flu vaccine. But don't you put Jack, I don't want to turn this into a public health discussion in great depth because there's so many other issues. We're going to talk about New Jersey Transit after this and those who are on those trains suffer every day. That being said, Jack, um, but those who are vulnerable, not those who choose not to get the vaccine, but those who are at risk, don't we put others at risk who are older, who are younger, who have immune systems that are compromised? Don't we put them at risk by saying you don't have to get it? Are you required by law to get the flu vaccine, which causes thousands of deaths each year amongst our most vulnerable people in the community? So, you're saying not mandated? Uh, I don't see it as any different than the flu vaccine. Okay. Um, New Jersey Transit, Governor Murphy, and I remember it wasn't in the interview he did with me, but he did it many years ago. If he doesn't, you know, the quote, I'm going to I'm going to fix New Jersey unless if it kills me. He'll be leaving office in January 2026. We wish him a long healthy life with his family. It's not fixed. Not even close. top priority for you, New Jersey Transit, as governor, please. Number one, I'm going to reorganize our state government in a number of different ways, Steve. We'll have a Department of Commerce. We'll have a Department of Energy. And what I hope to have is the Garden State Transportation Authority. Other states do it this way. Let's put all of our mass transit systems under one roof. And that includes the Atlantic City Expressway, which produces revenue with its tolls. Turnpike and Parkway, which produces revenue with its tolls, New Jersey Transit, which produces revenues with its fairs. I want one management structure. I got authorities everywhere running these different mass transit systems. I think from an accountability standpoint, from a transparency standpoint, from a management standpoint, we put it all under one roof. And let me say this specific to New Jersey Transit. We're a sprawl state. We can't possibly be everywhere. We have to re-evaluate every single train and bus line to make sure it's getting the kind of readership that says we should continue with those lines. um so that we can dedicate our resources to the lines that are most most used by commuters. So let me let let me do this. We actually put out on Facebook um X uh Instagram other places. We ask people we said look we have Jack Chidarelli we have Mikey Cheryl what's the number one question you would ask them and sometimes social media is really useful in engaging people. You know that sometimes sometimes and in this case it was true the the questions we got were extraordinary. I want to thank everyone who took the time to to to write in questions, but many of the questions, Jack, were about state funding of our public schools. What is the most significant change that you would make? And this is tough because you get into the state funding formula and it's arcane government mumbo jumbo jargon acronyms nobody understands. explain it in a way that folks will understand what is the what's the biggest change you would make to the state funding formula, state monies going to our public schools, which has a great impact on property taxes. Jack, the state's taking over the cost of special ed in every one of our 600 districts. It's causing a crowding out effect in the local budget, and we should not have disparity in the quality of special ed from one district to the next. States's taking over the cost of special ed. After that, every district gets X for every English- speakaking student, Y for every English language learner because that student is a bit more educationally intensive. And then every district better be within a reasonable range on a cost per pupil basis for non-special ed. And if they're not, they're wasting state tax dollars. And I'll reduce their uh their state aid dollar for dollar. Real quick on this, you you've been critical of some urban communities that you believe are getting too much state aid and not spending it. Well, fair to say I've been critical of those that get the greatest amount of state aid that have terrible educational outcomes. 80% of the kids in Newark are not on grade level for reading, writing, math. But I blame that as much on the current administration who in the post-pandemic world has not put in place after school programs, summer enrichment programs, or put in place a high impact curriculum. We slipped from 2 to 12 on the National Report Card. Louisiana went from 48 to 32 with a high impact curriculum. That's what we need in New Jersey. Real quick, Jack, I'm gonna I'm gonna go last question on President Trump. I think Jack, you've been asked a hundred times about this. Just clarify. Back in 2015, you said the president wasn't qualified to be president. You just did. And it wasn't about policy and it wasn't about politics. It was about character. What the heck changed in 10 years? JD Vance and Marco Rubio said a whole lot worse than I did, Steve. And today they're leading our nation. One as vice president, the other one as Secretary of State. What changed is his performance in the first term. And I think that he matured as a politician. And uh I think we're seeing a stark difference from Joe Biden's four years. We needed change. We needed to secure the border. He did that. And we needed to hit the reset button on the trade deficit. And that's what he's trying to do. Since you mentioned uh trade deficit, what if any concerns you have about the long-term impact of tariffs particularly on small business? You're a small business professional, three generations of uh family in business. You have an accounting background if I'm not mistaken. CPA. Yes. I was never good with numbers. Thank god others are. That being said, Jack, any concerns if at all about tariffs because a lot of business people D's and Rs are saying we're worried for the future tariffs. Uh the president was very transparent, Steve, that there may be some shortterm pain for the long-term gain. The way to get interest rates down for the long term is by correcting the trade deficit. We've got to bring manufacturing jobs back home. President Obama was a globalist and that global philosophy and approach to economics caused a lot of offshoring. When middle class New Jerseyians and across America are losing their job because Whirlpool is manufacturing its appliances in the Pacific Rim, how is that good for America? We got to fix the trade deficit. There might be some short-term pain. And if there is, I'll do my best to make up for it with our New Jersey economy with my policies. Got a minute and a half left. Biggest concern you have about Mikey Cheryl and I ask you to say something nice about her. So, please get ready to do that. Uh, number one, she's not from New Jersey, and I don't think she understands New Jersey. My number two, she's not getting up and down this state. I don't think she's been south of 195. The other thing is, if you're going to interview for this job, do your homework. I haven't seen that in her interviews. Number four, Jack, hold on. Not come being from New Jersey is a bad thing. I mean, those of us born and raised here, we love the state, those who can afford to stay here. But that's really in and of itself, that's an issue. Jack, let me show you how it's an issue. If you're from New Jersey, you'd realize how sank sank our Jersey shore is. Steve, nobody wants those wind farms off our Jersey shore. Male, female, Republican, Democrat, liberal, conservative, for different reasons, and it's bad energy policy. So, stop forcing that down our throats. There's another way to meet our energy need. All right, 30 seconds. Something positive about your Democratic opponent, not your enemy, just your opponent in this campaign. Mikey Cheryl. Uh like my army captain's son, Steve, we salute her service to our nation. Jack Chidarelli, the Republican candidate for governor in the great state of New Jersey. Um go online, find out more about each candidate. Uh Mikey Cheryl, a congresswoman. Jack Chidarelli, a member, former member of the legislature and a business professional. His third time running. Find out more. Make sure you vote. Make sure it's an informed vote. As I say all the time, Jack, I know it sounds corny. Democracy is not a spectator sport. Jack, thank you. Steve, thank you. We appreciate it. That's Jack Chidarelli. I'm Steve Abato. For everyone connected to our production at State of Affairs and our partners in public broadcasting, we thank you so much for watching. Make sure you get out there, make an informed vote. See you next time. State of Affairs with Steve Abato is a production of the Caucus Educational Corporation. Funding has been provided by RWJ Barnabas Health. Let's be healthy together. Kain University, NJM Insurance Group, the Turrell Fund, a foundation serving children, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, IBEW Local 102, Operating Engineers Local 825, the New Jersey Education Association, Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters, and by these public spirited organizations, individuals, and associations committed to informing New Jersey citizens about the important issues facing the Garden State. Promotional support provided by NJ.com and by insider NJ. I'm very grateful that I'm still here. That's me and my daughter when we went to celebrate our first anniversary with a new kidney. I have strength. They gave me a new lease on life. I'm still going everywhere and exploring new places. Nobody thought I was going to be here. Nobody. And I look forward to getting older with my wife. That's possible now. We're transforming lives through innovative kidney treatments, living donor programs, and worldrenowned care at two of New Jerseys premier hospitals. They gave me my normal life back. It's a blessing. RWJ Barnabis Health. Let's be healthy together.