Presenter Bios

Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, Esq.

Tahesha L. Way serves as New Jersey's 3rd Lieutenant Governor. She was appointed to the position by Governor Phil Murphy on September 8, 2023.

A lifelong public servant, Lieutenant Governor Way has devoted her entire career to improving the lives of her fellow New Jerseyans. Over the past two decades, she has served at numerous levels of local and state government.

As Lieutenant Governor, Ms. Way brings her extensive experience to bear on addressing the greatest challenges facing New Jerseyans — from making life more affordable, to protecting fundamental freedoms—like access to reproductive health care and equality under the law — to maintaining New Jersey's reputation as the best and safest state to raise a family.

In addition to her role as Lieutenant Governor, Ms. Way also serves as New Jersey's 34th Secretary of State — a position she has held since the beginning of the Murphy Administration.

As Secretary of State, Ms. Way leads one of the nation's oldest constitutional offices and directs a department with a diverse portfolio. In her capacity as New Jersey's top election official, she has overseen the state Division of Elections and its work in securing our democracy and ensuring broad, fair access to the right to vote. Lieutenant Governor Way also chaired New Jersey's Complete Count Commission, a 27-member non-partisan commission established to achieve a complete count in the 2020 US Census. In addition to the critical work protecting what Lieutenant Governor Way calls the "fraternal twins of democracy," she also oversees the state government offices supporting New Jersey's vibrant arts, culture, history, and business communities. Under her leadership, the state's tourism economy has generated record-high revenues.

Following her 2022-2023 service as the first Black person and first Secretary from New Jersey to lead the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) as President, Lieutenant Governor Way continues to serve on the NASS Executive Board as Immediate Past President.

Prior to joining the Murphy Administration, Lieutenant Governor Way was an Administrative Law Judge for the State of New Jersey. In 2006, Lieutenant Governor Way was elected to the Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders and served as the Freeholder Director in 2009. She served as Special Counsel for the Passaic County Board of Social Services overseeing all agency litigation. She also served as a Council Member for the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council.

She is the former President of the Women Empowered Democratic Organization of Passaic County, an organization dedicated to empowering Democratic women by increasing their participation with the goal of achieving greater equality in the political process. Lieutenant Governor Way also previously served on the Board of Directors for the Institute for Women's Policy Research, a leading national think tank geared towards advancing dialogue and policy for improving women's lives and their families.

Lieutenant Governor Way is a graduate of Brown University, where she served as Vice President of the collegiate chapter of the NAACP, President of the Iota Alpha chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. taught religious education, and was a radio announcer for WBRU-FM. She holds a J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law at Charlottesville, where she clerked for the Virginia Legal Aid Society and the United Steelworkers of America. Lieutenant Governor Way lives in Wayne, New Jersey with her husband Charles and their four children Fallon, Farrah, Faythe, and Fiona. She was raised in the Bronx by her late parents, Robert and Rosa Wright, who also devoted their careers to public service as employees with the New York City Transit Authority.

Lieutenant Governor Way has been a member of the New Jersey State Bar Association, Garden State Bar Association, National Association of Women Judges, Association of Black Women Lawyers, Passaic County Bar Association, and the New Jersey Women's Lawyers Association.

Jesse Burns

Jesse has been on staff with the League of Women Voters of New Jersey since 2007, previously serving as Communications Director before becoming the organization's executive director in 2015. Under Jesse's leadership, the League has strengthened its position as a critical, influential, and trusted voting rights and civic engagement organization, providing nonpartisan voter education to hundreds of thousands of voters, protecting them at the polls, and advancing equitable policy reforms. The League has championed recent voting rights advancements including online voter registration, automatic voter registration, an end to prison-based gerrymandering, in-person early voting, and rights restoration for people on parole and probation, among others. Jesse has sat on two New Jersey Supreme Court committees, was named to the 2023 Insider Out 100: LGBTQ Power List, and is the recipient of LUPE Fund's 2022 Power of Women Amiga Award. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from Dickinson College and a Master of Fine Arts in Poetry from Drew University.

Linda Czipo

Linda is the President and CEO of the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits. Linda's nonprofit sector experience spans over 30 years, and includes expertise in public policy, compliance and management issues. She writes and speaks frequently to the media, nonprofit, philanthropic and business leaders, and government officials regarding the size, strength, economic and social contributions of New Jersey's nonprofit sector and current and emerging trends facing the nonprofit community; and has successfully mobilized broad-based coalitions of nonprofits around numerous advocacy issues. An experienced researcher and analyst, she has conducted many of the Center's projects documenting the nonprofit community.

Linda has been listed for the past four years as one of ROI-NJ's Power Influencers and ROI-NJ's Women in Business Influencers, including among the Top 50 Women in Business Influencers for 2024, and was named as one of South Jersey Biz' Top CEOs/CFOs in 2022 and its 2023 "Superwomen" Woman of the Year. She was honored by the YWCA Northern with their 2023 "Woman of Action" award, and she was recognized in 2016 as one of Lead New Jersey's 30 Leaders for 30 Years; and by the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA) for Leadership in Nonprofit Regulatory and Legal Issues. She was listed by NJBIZ as one of the "state's most powerful women, according to the state's most powerful women," was named to the 2016 "Power 50" by South Jersey Biz.

Linda is a current public policy committee member and former board treasurer of the National Council of Nonprofits. She also serves on the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service, and the Policy Committee of the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers. She holds a degree in Political Science from Rutgers University.

Craig Drinkard

Craig is the Executive Officer at the Victoria Foundation. Born and raised in Newark, Craig's career includes stints with the federal government, the private sector, and with non-profit and philanthropic organizations. For nearly 20 years, he has served in several roles at Victoria Foundation. Craig has also served on a number of non-profit boards including Greater Newark LISC, YouthBuild-Newark, LEAD Charter School, Council of NJ Grantmakers, and the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation. He holds a B.S. in Finance and a M.B.A. in management.

Jeremy Grunin

For over 10 years, Jeremy has been actively engaged throughout the community as President of the Grunin Foundation, a proactive grantmaker focused on economic growth at the Central Jersey Shore. Jeremy is also a Partner of Grunin Holdings, LLC., a New Jersey Partnership specializing in investing in third party commercial ventures. Prior to that, Jeremy was a leader in the private sector for over 15 years, where he led teams of over a thousand employees responsible for over $500 million in revenue. Jeremy currently serves on 19 foundation, advisory and nonprofit boards focused on Monmouth and Ocean counties.

Dan Harris

Dan is the Chief of Staff to New Jersey General Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin and Deputy Executive Director of the Assembly Majority Office. Dan's duties include advising, drafting and strategizing all legislation sponsored by the Speaker. Over the course of the Speaker's seven years, signature accomplishments include a phased-in $15 Minimum Wage, establishment of the StayNJ program, Economic Recovery Act of 2020, New Jersey Out-of-network Consumer Protection, Transparency, Cost Containment and Accountability Act, New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Enforcement Assistance Marketplace Modernization Act (CREAM Act) and the enactment of over 30 food security laws—many of which are nation-firsts. Annually, Dan advises and assists the Speaker and staff with the State Appropriations Act negotiations and enactment. He serves as a member of the office's senior staff leadership team responsible for efficient management of 35 employees. Finally, Dan works with the Majority Office's Communications staff on communications issued from or on behalf of the Speaker.

Dan is a lifelong and dedicated resident of Woodbridge Township, NJ where he is serving his fourth term on the Woodbridge Township Board of Education, the state's eighth largest district. Dan's work and interests have focused on the annual budget, planning, communications and curriculum such as engineering and vocational-technical education.

Outside interests and commitments include a managing two annual park cleanups, serving on the executive board of the American Irish Association of Woodbridge and contributing to various state and county school board member committees. Finally, Dan serves a founding board member of the Speaker-founded 501 c. 3, Bowl for Hunger Committee Inc. which includes the annual planning and execution of the 600-plus attendee bowling fundraiser event. To date, the 15 events have raised over $610,000 for the 19th Legislative District's 30 food banks and soup kitchens.

Theresa Jacks

Theresa joined the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers in 2008. A creative, versatile leader with over 25 years' experience in government, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors, she was appointed President and CEO in December 2022.

As President and CEO, and previously Deputy Director and Manager of Advancement & Special Initiatives at the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers, Theresa has been instrumental in strengthening CNJG's leadership work, leading policy and advocacy efforts, building relationships with partners, developing and increasing funding to support operations and special projects, providing learning opportunities, and enhancing capacity and management processes. She has a deep knowledge of best practices in grantmaking.

Prior to joining the Council, Theresa served as Executive Director of the Whitesbog Preservation Trust, a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring a 19th century historic village. Leading the operations of both the Trust and the ongoing restoration of the historic village included working closely with the Board of Trustees, effectively guiding board and committee initiatives, developing and coordinating educational and recreational programs, fundraising, member relations, ensuring long-term strategic and day-to-day management and administration of the organization, and building partnerships with the community.

Prior to launching a career in the nonprofit sector, Theresa worked in New Jersey state government for nearly twenty years in varying levels of management and leadership.

Theresa graduated from Central Michigan University with a Master of Science in Administration, and Rowan University with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. She graduated summa cum laude from both.

Jeffrey Key

Jeff is the General Manager for coLAB Arts, a New Brunswick based nonprofit that engages artists, social advocates, and communities to create transformative new work. He is also the founder and principal consultant of Nfinity Enterprises, specializing in providing operations and technology support to small and mid-sized nonprofit organizations and businesses. His experience also includes extensive coaching, mentoring, and leadership development training for nonprofit professionals.

Outside of his work with operations and technology, his work in the nonprofit sector includes developing partnerships, resources, and consulting with organizations on IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access), succession planning, and board engagement and governance. He currently serves as a board member for the New Jersey Center for Nonprofits and Link Community Charter School.

Brian Miller
Brian has served as Executive Director of Nonprofit VOTE since 2014, where he has brought Nonprofit VOTE's work to scale, leveraged new resources, documented the impact of its work, and forged new partnerships. He helped establish the Philanthropy for Voter Engagement initiative to help foundations effectively support voter engagement within their grantee networks. He also played a key role in Nonprofit VOTE's successful management of National Voter Registration Day since 2017. Prior to his tenure at Nonprofit VOTE, Brian served as Executive Director of both United for a Fair Economy (UFE), an organization recognized for its work to raise the veil of growing economic inequality, and Tennesseans for Fair Taxation before that, a statewide coalition working to pass comprehensive tax reform. A south Louisiana native with Cajun roots, Brian started his career as a community organizer in cancer alley south of Baton Rouge before moving on to organize in Kentucky and Tennessee.

David L. Thompson
David is Acting CEO and Vice President of Public Policy for the National Council of Nonprofits, the nation's largest network of nonprofit organizations. The organization is active at the local, state, and federal levels advancing nonprofit policy priorities in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. Through its member state associations and nonprofit allies, the Council of Nonprofits amplifies the voices of America's local community-based nonprofit organizations, helping them engage in critical policy issues affecting the sector, manage and lead more effectively, collaborate and exchange solutions, and achieve greater impact in their communities.

Thompson has served in all three sectors over the course of his career. He practiced law for 17 years specializing in labor relations, employment law, government contracting, and subsequently directed federal and state advocacy for a government relations firm. He served in the public sector from 2001 to 2007 as a Senior Counsel and as Policy Director to the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, notably as Counsel to the Pension Protection Act conference committee. Those experiences have served him well in guiding advocacy efforts for the network of the National Council of Nonprofits. He was honored as one of the *NonProfit Times* Power & Influence Top 50 for 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2024.

David Thompson holds a bachelor's degree from Emory University and a law degree from the University of Georgia Law School.

Michele Tuck-Ponder, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, Destination Imagination
Michele is the Chief Executive Officer of Destination Imagination, Inc. a global creative problem-solving program for young people. A former mayor of Princeton, NJ she also completed two terms as a member of the Princeton Board of Education. She has served as Executive Director of the Women's Fund of New Jersey, CEO of the Girl Scouts of Delaware-Raritan, Inc., assistant counsel to former Governor Jim Florio, assistant director of the New Jersey Division on Women and New Jersey Division on Civil Rights, director of development and public affairs at UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, and congressional aide to former US Representative Louis Stokes and the late US Senator Frank Lautenberg. She also was a Community Builder Fellow with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development in Camden and has served as a lecturer at Princeton and Rutgers Universities. Michele is a former trustee of New Jersey After 3, Princeton United Methodist Church, Leadership New Jersey, the Center for NonProfit Corporations, Morven Museum and Gardens, the Princeton Housing Authority and the United Front Against Riverblindness. A graduate of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Tuck-Ponder is married to Rhinold Lamar Ponder, Esq. and is the mother of two children, Jamaica and William D'Artagnan.

Lucy Vandenberg
Lucy is the Executive Director of the Schumann Fund for New Jersey where she leads the Fund's mission to empower low-income children and families of color to thrive. Lucy ensures that Schumann Fund's investments positively impact opportunities for affordable homes and healthy communities, early childhood and education, and child welfare and youth justice in Essex County and statewide. From 2013 through 2021, Lucy served as Senior Program Officer for The Fund for New Jersey and managed a $3 million grant portfolio that included lead poisoning prevention, public education, public media, racial justice, immigration, and the environment.

Previously, Lucy served as Executive Director of the New Jersey State Council on Affordable Housing. She worked with municipalities to provide their fair share of affordable housing resulting from New Jersey's landmark Mt. Laurel Supreme Court decisions. Earlier in her career, Lucy served as Senior Policy Advisor for Housing and Urban Revitalization in Governor James E. McGreevey's administration, and as the Associate Director of the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey.

Lucy holds a Master of Social Work degree in administration, policy, and planning from Rutgers University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan.

Currently, Lucy serves as a Trustee of the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers (CNJG), co-chairs the CNJG Policy Committee, is a Lead New Jersey graduate, and a Council on Foundations Career Pathways Fellow. She has served on numerous nonprofit and public sector boards during her career.