

OPINION

Gov. Carney: We're making progress on the issues Delaware cares about

Gov. John Carney

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Gov. John Carney (Photo: Submitted by the governor's office)

John Carney is Delaware's 74th governor.

Strengthening our economy.

Improving schools for all Delaware children.

Preserving Delaware's unique natural heritage.

Responsibly managing taxpayer dollars.

Since taking office as your governor in January 2017, these have been my top priorities. And it's clear that we're making real progress.

More Delaware students are graduating from high school. Our unemployment rate is at its lowest level in 30 years. We're preserving record amounts of open space statewide.

And Delaware is on sound financial footing just two years after climbing out of a \$400 million budget deficit.

Our progress is thanks in large part to Delawareans speaking up, and having their voices heard in Legislative Hall and in communities across our state.

Over the past three years, we have worked hard to connect with Delawareans to get their ideas on how to make Delaware an even better place to live, work, and raise a family. We've held more than 50 town hall meetings, small business roundtables, and other public discussions.

Time and again, we've heard that Delawareans expect us to manage their taxpayer dollars responsibly. Every Delaware family has to worry about their own budget — how they will make important investments while saving for the future. The state should do the same.

I'm proud to say that the budget I signed on June 25 meets that test. As part of the state's 2020 budget, we set aside \$125 million in reserves to guard against budget cuts and tax increases the next time we face an economic downturn. That's in addition to the \$250 million Rainy Day fund.

We're also continuing to make investments where we can make a real difference.

We're funding a six-year, \$3.2 billion transportation infrastructure program to fix roads and bridges, and create good-paying jobs, up and down our state. And we're directing more than \$100 million to our highest-needs schools because I'm optimistic that we can help more Delaware children succeed in the classroom.

This is hard work that requires a long-term commitment. But we are moving in the right direction.

Working with members of the General Assembly this year, we created [the Opportunity Funding initiative](#) to provide more support for the Delaware students who need our help the most — children living in poverty, and children from families where English is not the primary language.

The initiative sets aside \$75 million over three years for low-income students and English learners, as well as additional mental health and reading supports. Our goals are simple: to help more Delaware children read proficiently by third grade, do math on grade level by middle school, and graduate high school ready for college or a good-paying career.

It is in every Delawarean's best interest to make sure all Delaware children have an opportunity to succeed, and contribute positively to the success of our state. We believe the Opportunity Funding initiative will help us deliver on that promise.

We're also making significant investments in Delaware's infrastructure and our economy.

Early on July 1, I signed an \$863 million capital budget — [our largest infrastructure plan ever](#) — that will help us build schools, preserve open space, fund new affordable housing, rebuild drinking water infrastructure, and support economic development projects at Delaware's colleges and universities.

These are fundamental investments that will create good-paying jobs, and benefit every Delaware family.

Working with members of a [new, more diverse General Assembly](#), we made progress on a host of other issues, as well.

We [passed an Equal Rights Amendment to Delaware's Constitution](#), and reforms that will make our criminal justice system fairer for all Delawareans. We passed legislation that will protect health insurance coverage for Delawareans with pre-existing conditions.

We passed [early voting legislation](#) that will make it easier for more Delawareans to cast a ballot and participate in our democratic process.

With the help of student activists, we [raised the smoking age to 21](#) to prevent more young Delawareans from smoking, to save lives, and save health care costs. And we [banned single-use plastic bags](#) to get rid of litter in Delaware communities, to protect our environment, and protect Delaware wildlife.

This is real progress toward our shared objectives that will make Delaware stronger than ever before. Our future as a state is bright. With your help, I look forward to continuing to work together for Delaware families of today, and for future generations.