What would you do to stimulate jobs?

Murphy:
Weakest economies in the country, lead the nation in home foreclosures. Last in increase in household income. Need to get the economy right to get NJ right. Grow the economy and make it fair again, which will push back on unemployment. STEM and infrastructure will stimulate economy. Need to be fair: 15 dollar min wage, sick leave for all, equal pay for equal work, college affordability, plans for college debt, childcare tax credit. Public bank that we’d all own as citizens, do all its business in NJ. student loans at better rates, small business loans with community banks. Contribute to a fairer economic NJ, but one that grows and creates jobs like we used to create in the state.

Wiz:
Grow our economy by investing in transportation and education. Stop past mistakes. State bank is a bad idea. The one state bank that exists (ND) has said that no other state should try it, because they have oil/gas revenue to underwrite the bank and we don’t. It would put taxpayers on the hook. Management of pension, etc should show track record.

Johnson:
We’re not where we need to be right now. Leadership has failed us- insiders have taken care of themselves and not the state. Infrastructure is failing. Cannot adopt Wall St gimmicks to fix Main St problems. State bank would be put into the hands of these insiders: this has to change.

Lesniak:
NJ Grow healthy plan: kill 4 pipe lines, make us fossil-fuel free by 2050. Invest billions of dollars from pipelines to solar, wind, energy efficiency and mass transit. It will improve economy, create high tech jobs, not temp pipeline jobs. Grow economy in a healthy way, stop potential for climate change impacting state of NJ while creating jobs.

2% cap on local spending increases under Christie. What more would you do to contain property taxes?

Wiz:
Christie’s efforts bad. Root causes: state of NJ not funding its fair share of education, local property taxes make up difference. As gov, make sure we’d be fully funding School Funding Reform Act. Christie wants to rewrite the funding formula in the next 100 days. Education is a fundamental investment. When corporate leaders choose to come to NJ, they come because of our location and because our workforce is well-educated: we need to continue to invest in good
public schools. Treat teachers well, make sure their retirement security is secure. Need a system of free public colleges and universities for young people.

Johnson:
Property taxes are too high, we are at the highest level of foreclosures in the nation. Wants to limit property taxes. Need to separate commercial and personal property in taxation. Aggressive formation of shared services agreements. Fully fund school funding formula- will lift burden of taxes off property owners.

Lesniak:
Can save money by having a controller of education that will look at school spending and not do things like allow truant offices for 4 year olds. Have to look after our tax dollars, make NJ affordable. Need to cut down waste that goes out the window in admin expenses and not to the classroom.

Murphy:
This is because of a complete breakdown of leadership, can’t be fixed overnight. Need to fully fund the school funding formula. Encourage shared services across communities. Look out for seniors, low income. Need to grow economy again.

What, if anything, will you do to reduce the impact of climate change in NJ?

Johnson:
I believe in climate change: put science at the center of state policy. Appoint chief science officer. Would re-enter the RGGI, invest in green technology (Atlantic city had opportunity for fisherman’s energy project, that brings jobs, decreases carbon). Used to be #2 in solar, we’re falling behind. We can use wind power- we’re failing because there’s a lack of intentional leadership, that has to change. President wants to take us backwards- even as EPA lowers standards, I’ll make sure we keep them high and improve them. Invest, make infrastructure investments, make sure there are charging stations for electric cars throughout the state. We should be a leader in this.

Lesniak:
NJ is at ground zero for climate change. Recent study: in 50 years, 20% of NJ could be underwater. NJ grow healthy plan is so important. The four pipelines will make us fossil-fuel dependent for a century. We need to kill the pipelines and invest in solar, wind, mass transit to fight climate change. I will take that leadership to the national governor’s council and across the world. It’s not just a NJ problem, it’s international, we need to lead the way.
Murphy:
We used to be a national model until Christie. Rejoin RGGI, propel solar energy forward, unleash offshore wind. Potential to generate 3500 megawatts in offshore wind: would power 1.5 million homes in the state. New mindset for conservation, embrace community solar programs so inner cities can benefit. We’ll have to battle back against federal administration.

Wiz:
Our current governor dismantled our environmental protections. Get back into RGGI, expand it as a regional compact. Reinvigorate PACE program (property assessed clean energy program vetoed by christie) Need scientists in dept of environmental protection, make sure they have the right resources.

How would you prepare NJ high school students to be competitive in the high-tech global economy?

Lesniak:
Bring respect back to teachers and into the classroom. Biggest mistake was to demonize teachers, makes teaching more difficult. Studied educational systems throughout the world: Poland and Finland stand out, teachers are professionals there. They don’t mandate testing, teachers decide how students will learn. This can upgrade our educational system. We have one of the best systems, but we have the biggest gap between the best and worst schools. We need wraparound schools for children in needy districts: prenatal care in low income neighborhoods with nutritional and health advice. Need to make sure these kids are ready for preK.

Murphy:
Need to dominate innovation economy- begin by funding public schools. Had a landmark, national model school funding formula that’s now underfunded. Need to fund it. Put our educators back up on a pedestal. Find ways to incentivize teaching STEM courses. Not a lot of comp sci AP courses, particularly with female students. Need to expand this offering. Can pull vocational/technical school lessons from Germany.

Wiz:
Make sure we’re investing in our public schools, which we haven’t done. Need to make sure there’s a future for teachers. People are discouraged from becoming teachers: need to make sure they’ll know schools will be funded as will retirement. PARCC needs to go- takes up too much educational time.

Johnson:
Children have the sense that they’ve been left behind. Starting with high school is too late. K-3rd grade, learning to read, then reading to learn: governor needs to make sure science is important. preK education needs to be provided, after school programs where young people can learn about science. We need to invest at the right time.

What is your actual plan to develop clean, renewable energy sources?

Murphy:
Envisions a 100% clean energy economy by year 2050. Endorsed by League of Conservation Voters. Need to push back against Trump and Congress. Re-ignite solar industry in the state, lost 1000 jobs in solar last year when it should be booming. Re-ignite offshore wind industry. Would have been first in the nation but Christie didn’t let it happen. Rejoin RGGI. Focus on environmental justice: urban communities suffer disproportionately.

Wiz:
Need to use clean energy fund for its intended purpose, reinvigorate PACE program. Close to 50% of emissions come from private passenger vehicles, need to invest in mass transit system that’s reliable. Need to take long-range steps like banning fracking. Need to make sure that our dept of environmental protection is staffed with scientists and is funded.

Johnson:
We’re in the middle of a climate crisis. Governor needs to lead in working with industry to develop clean energy. There’s also an educational component. Our education and civic culture needs to point toward dealing with the problem of greenhouse gases. Would put science at the center of policy.

Lesniak:
Established the first superfund site in the nation in NJ, made petrochem companies pay. In court to overturn Exxon’s settlement with Christie, which allow Exxon to be released from liability. Adopt PACE and invest in mass transit.

Clean drinking water is crucial. What are your plans to protect drinking water sources in the Highlands and Pinelands?

Wiz:
Need to protect drinking water. Christie re-engineered membership of Pinelands Commission so he could get a gas pipeline through the Pinelands. Need to be pushing back on these pipelines
because we can see the damage they can do. Need to set aside funds to buy open space to protect water sources. We've back slid, we need to have a gov who knows the importance of this. Need to recognize dangers fracking presents on drinking water. There’s now a moratorium on fracking in Delaware river basin, but neighboring governors want to get rid of it. We need a governor who will take it to a ban instead of a moratorium.

Johnson:
Focus from source to faucet. More than 15 school districts have lead in their pipes in this state. My proposal would help- water commissions would have people who know science and are experts, acting with a public purpose in mind. Focus on new technologies to remove lead from water. Our standards should reflect new knowledge.

Lesniak:
Sponsored first safe water drinking act in the company to test for hydrocarbons. Drinking water quality inst has recommended 12 chemicals be tested since Christie in office- Christie has tested zero. My entire career has been focused on clean water and clean energy.

Murphy:
We are the densest state in the nation, fourth smallest geographically. We used to have a master water plan, but under Christie we don’t. The Highlands and Pinelands are unique. We cannot have the referee in the tank for one of the teams. The oversight of these entities has been politicized. We need fair and balanced oversight.

State pension fund has been raided, creating a huge shortfall. What would you do to make the system whole? Can NJ taxpayers afford it?

Johnson:
Democratic and Repub leaders have acted carelessly with the pension fund. That’s wrong. Need to get the math right. Our overall budget is a mess, need to consider raising estate taxes to add more revenue. Need to make payments that we’re committed to- as new employees come on, we need to look and see if we can afford to make the same payments moving forward. I wouldn’t ask for sacrifices for those who have already paid into the system. I would open up the budgeting process to see where all the money goes.

Lesniak:
No employee should have to worry about the integrity of their pensions. Voted against chapter 78, which made public employees pay more while the state could skip its obligations to fund. We need to fully fund. Bring back millionaire’s tax. Would bring 1.2B dollars back into system. Close corporate tax loopholes to prevent international and interstate companies to prevent
income that’s generated in NJ from moving offshore. This plus reforms in budget would secure pension payments.

Murphy:
Must stand up for obligations that the state has agreed to. Need to find the money. Could be millionaire’s tax, corporate loopholes, Wall St carried interest loophole, out of network healthcare loophole, get hedge funds out of management pension assets. Legalization of marijuana could bring in money.

Wiz:
Public employees have made their contribution, and the state of NJ has not. It needs to stand up behind its promise. Need to look at millionaire’s tax. We cut the sales tax 1/8th of a cent: 600m hit on the budget. Legalizing marijuana to raise money. Close corporate loopholes.

What potential problems do you see if NJ was to legalize recreational marijuana use and expand medical marijuana use?

Lesniak:
I’ve founded the only public recovery high school for children with substance abuse disorder. I looked at the Canada report- they will allow legalization in 2018. Will include protection so children are not exposed, will have an infrastructure in place so it’s not exposed to the youth. Will receive award: champion of recovery. Children who are addicted often go back to their original schools and it has them relapse. Now they can go to the recovery high school. Legalizing is not the solution to our economic problem, but I’m in favor of it. We have to do it right, have testing for DUI which we don’t. We need to ensure things like candies, advertising for children do not increase their likelihood in using it.

Murphy:
Support legalization and expansion of medical use. There’s an enormous crisis in opioid addiction. But I believe this is the right step. There’s growing research that it suggests, can be a weapon in the opioid pushback. Economic reason is the last reason we should be doing this, but it is a potential for the economy.

Wiz:
Need to legalize, and create a market for it. Need to liberalize medical marijuana laws. Our war on drugs is not working. It disrupts and ruins lives- social crimes. People with records can’t get student loans, or jobs. Need to also provide pardons and amnesty to people with these sentences so they can move on with their lives. Need to redirect police resources so they confront real issues.
Johnson:
I oversaw a customs service, and recognize a failed war on drugs. We need to bring compassion- the same that we bring to opioid addiction. We need to focus on inner cities. Enforcement has a disproportionate impact on our inner cities, minorities.

Polls show that NJ voters want compromise to resolve issues instead of partisanship and bickering. How would you work with the other party to resolve issues?

Murphy:
Christie has been an us vs them governor. We now also have an us vs them president. It behooves the next governor to make sure he or she is the governor for the entire state, for all 9 million regardless of party or status. Big issue for us is the economy: most growth and fairness initiatives, more, better jobs can garner bipartisan support. Should be appealing across all party lines.

Wiz:
Bipartisanship is essential. I have 21 years of experience working across the aisle in Trenton, with members of both parties to understand the issues that are important to them. Issues are different throughout every district. Knowing the differences makes you a better leader.

Johnson:
In the age of Trump, there are some times we will just have to fight and take a hard line on. I have worked to bring people together. Chaired advisory committee on police standards- to solve racial issues in policing on the turnpike/parkway. Led to bipartisan legislation. We brought citizens into the process and listened to the citizens.

Lesniak:
Deals amongst Dems and GOP in the past 8 years have been bad for tax payers. I stopped a deal that would have politicized the Rutgers board of Gov. There was a deal between Christie and leg about a book deal- I stopped that. I’m trying to stop Christie’s 500-750million statehouse renovation. Transportation trust fund focuses on getting political projects funded. When both parties make bad deals, I’ll stand up and fight them.

What is your position on oil drilling off the Atlantic coast?

Wiz:
Horrible idea. I would work very hard to make sure it doesn’t happen. Has to be an advocate for the environment. That would ruin our coastline, hurt our economy, kill tourism. We have to address the fossil fuel economy to have success at this. Need to reinvest in mass transit to get people out of their cars. Make mass transit reliable, make NJ transit have real leadership. Need real investment in transportation infrastructure—more money to rail and buses. Need a Port Authority bus terminal built. Need to change the relationship with Penn Station in NY so it’s fairer to NJ transit. I will be the transportation governor.

Johnson:
The Jersey shore is one of our state’s assets. I would fight to protect it for future generations. My attorney general would be armed, fully authorized to fight this in the courts. I would work with our legislature to fight federal efforts to initiate offshore drilling. If we don’t change the way insider deals are cut, we the people won’t be involved in the process. It could open up the coast to offshore drilling.

Lesniak:
Doesn’t support offshore drilling. I would put citizen representatives on the port authority. Commuter advocates would be watchdogs, put on the record all votes that come down that would reveal money wasted. It would give the public a voice.

Murphy:
Offshore drilling is wrong. Let’s embrace offshore wind and turn our back on offshore drilling. Could create 3500 megawatts of energy, create high paying union jobs, it’s a win win. While protecting asset of the Jersey shore. Let’s embrace a clean energy economy, invest in rail infrastructure.