



A Message From  
**Tom Churchelow, President**

**2020 was a year like no other. We experienced changes to everyday life we probably thought we would never see. While the impact of COVID-19 has certainly been jarring, as always, New Jerseyans are fighting through it with a dedication that is second to none.**

At the New Jersey Utilities Association, we too were learning to adjust to this new landscape and way of life throughout the year. As legislative committee meetings and session days transitioned into Zooms and learning how to use the mute button, we made sure we continued to fight on the issues of importance to our Members: the issues that make life better for millions of New Jerseyans.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have created recognition for just how valuable the essential services NJUA member utilities provide truly are. The NJUA and its 13 member companies continue to closely monitor this rapidly evolving situation. New Jersey's investor-owned utilities work tirelessly, around the clock, to provide essential water, wastewater, electric, natural gas and telecommunications services to New Jersey residents and businesses.

As we look to 2021 and beyond, NJUA has created this newsletter to keep you informed of the issues, events and news that matter most to you and our industry. We hope you find this informative and an opportunity to learn more about us and the organizations we serve.

# 2020: A Year Like No Other



## **NJUA Convenes Members and Submits Comments for BPU COVID Proceeding**

On November 30, NJUA filed joint comments on behalf of its member companies in response to the Board of Public Utilities's October 28th Order establishing a proceeding to seek stakeholder comment on the timing, scope, and issues to be addressed relative to the COVID 19 pandemic. The NJUA comments reflected the Association's support for continued investment in utility infrastructure and development of programs and mechanisms aimed at helping customers in need.

## **NJUA Coordinates Members of the Restart and Recovery Advisory Council**

In June, after coordinating discussions amongst NJUA Members serving on the Governor's Restart and Recovery Advisory Council, NJUA stressed the Utilities' intention to assist the State in its economic recovery efforts through utility infrastructure projects directly to the Council Co-Chairs. With utility Members' support, NJUA shared a list of project categories with the Council that would spur economic activity and create jobs as well as modernize, enhance and address risk mitigation to create safer, more reliable, efficient, and environmentally responsible infrastructure. Soon after, NJUA followed up with the Co-Chairs of the Restart and Recovery Advisory Council, reiterating the need for necessary recovery mechanisms and timely regulatory reviews by the applicable government entities in order for the Utilities to invest billions of dollars that would create thousands of jobs across the economy over the next five years.

## **NJUA Leads Discussions with BPU and Governor's Office on Shutoff Moratoriums and Payment Assistance; Executive Order 190**

During the summer of 2020, NJUA proudly served as the liaison between the utilities' regulatory authority, policymakers, and member companies on discussions around shutoff moratoriums and payment assistance. After months of discussions, Governor Murphy announced in late August that New Jersey's investor-owned electric, natural gas, and water companies voluntarily extended shutoff moratoriums through October 15. The Governor's announcement also noted that companies are offering enhanced Deferred Payment Arrangements for 12 to 24 months. In October, Governor Murphy, through Executive Order 190, extended the utility shutoff moratorium, preventing New Jersey residents from having their utilities disconnected through at least March 15, 2021.

Prior to the issuance of EO190, NJUA spoke with key policymakers about the Executive Order. Subsequently, BPU President Joe Fiordaliso and Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver co-authored an [op-ed](#) encouraging customers to reach out to their utilities to seek assistance that is available. NJUA also authored an [op-ed](#) and worked with the BPU's communications team to coordinate company messaging around the moratorium and payment assistance.

## **NJUA Works For Permit Extensions During COVID-19 Emergency**

Once the COVID-19 crisis began emerging, NJUA worked diligently for passage of S2346/A3919, the Permit Extension Act of 2020 (PEA). As the bill moved through the legislative process, NJUA worked with policymakers on this legislation to assist those whose projects may be held in abeyance as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these projects have already received myriad governmental permits and approvals, which are expensive and time-consuming to obtain.

In July, Governor Murphy signed this Act into law. The PEA extends certain governmental permits, approvals, and deadlines for the duration of the "COVID-19 Extension Period." The Extension Period began on March 9, 2020 and continues until the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The PEA also provides an additional six months of tolling.

## What We Are Keeping An Eye On

As always, in 2021 NJUA will advocate for implementation of sound utility policy and coordinate sharing of best practices on numerous issues through our standing committees. Looking ahead, these are some of the issues we are most excited to work with our Members on:



Promoting **stimulus projects** that will help **bolster economic recovery** through the creation of thousands of jobs and improvements to our energy, water, and wastewater infrastructure.



Advocating for **innovative regulatory mechanisms** to address challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic and assisting customers in need.



**Essential utility workforce safety measures** in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This includes priority vaccination efforts along with sharing of best practices on continued application of PPE and workplace safety protocols developed through NJUA's Preparedness Workgroup in 2020.



New **programming and opportunities for engagement** for our valued Associate Members.

# NJUA in the News



## ***Op-Ed: Smart energy is smart policy***

“Gov. Phil Murphy’s Energy Master Plan (EMP) lays out an ambitious agenda for the future of energy in New Jersey. It’s a cliché, but meeting the goals as outlined in the plan will require outside-the-box, innovative thinking. Fortunately, that kind of thinking already exists in New Jersey through smart energy systems. These systems will not only help us meet the EMP’s goals, but also give customers relief on their energy bills and create jobs for the state’s economy.”

→ [READ MORE](#)



## ***Utility Shut-offs Suspended to Ease Financial Impact of Coronavirus***

“As community partners, New Jersey’s investor owned utilities understand the impact this is having on households and businesses. That is why we are suspending shutoffs to ensure that everyone can benefit from and enjoy the essential services utilities provide,” said Tom Churchelow, executive director of the New Jersey Utilities Association. “At times like this, it’s important that we all come together as companies and customers to take care of each other in our communities.”

→ [READ MORE](#)



## ***Statement of NJUA President Thomas R. Churchelow, Esq. on Utility Payment Assistance***

“New Jersey’s investor-owned utilities are the State’s partners in its response and recovery – by voluntarily suspending shutoffs since March, working with customers experiencing difficulty through enhanced deferred payment arrangements and assistance programs, and donating millions of dollars to health care facilities, food banks and other frontline charities. They have donated PPE from their own stockpiles while still protecting their workforce and customers – all while continuing to provide safe, reliable and essential services. New Jersey’s investor-owned utilities are fully engaged with the State and utility customers and want to help those who are truly in need.”

→ [READ MORE](#)

# Getting To Know You



The pandemic has made face-to-face meetings virtually impossible and seeing someone on Zoom just doesn't have the same feeling. This prevents us from getting to learn more about one another and sharing in the moments and interests that bind us. That is why each newsletter will profile NJUA members and give us all an opportunity to learn a little more about one another. To get things started, we decided to profile, well, us! Hope you enjoy learning more about NJUA President Tom Churchelow and NJUA Director of Government and Public Affairs Christina Farrell (and keep an eye out, because NJUA will be actively reaching out to members to include in profiles).



**Tom Churchelow,**  
President of the New Jersey Utilities Association

#### **Where did you grow up?**

The Brass City - Waterbury, Connecticut

#### **Any family information you would like to share (siblings, children, pets, etc)?**

11-year-old boy and 7-year-old boy/girl twins – remote learning is dramatic! Fortunately, their mom is a champ.

#### **How did you get into this field?**

I was always interested in policy and law. I went to work for the New Jersey Legislature as a non-partisan attorney working on energy and utilities issues, among other things. I jumped at the opportunity to work for NJUA in my previous role and was very fortunate to be here to serve as President. While it's been a challenging year for sure, it really is an honor to represent our Members who provide critical services.

#### **What accomplishments, either personal or company/organizational, are you most proud of?**

Being a dad to three amazing kids.

#### **What are some of the biggest challenges your company/organization will face in 2021?**

Continuing to coordinate our Members on preparedness and helping to move forward policy that will enable more investments in our infrastructure. Infrastructure investments not only improve reliability – but they create jobs which are sorely needed.

#### **What are you most looking forward to in the year ahead?**

My kids being back in school full time (I hope) and seeing everyone, our Members and friends, in the Trenton world in person.

#### **What is your current Netflix obsession/what book are you reading?**

*Cobra Kai* on Netflix like almost everyone else. Reading, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*.

#### **If you were only allowed to listen to one singer/band for the rest of your life, who would it be?**

I love music so that is an impossible question to answer! But in the spirit of cooperation, I'd say Tom Waits covers all the bases.

#### **Can you be found on social media?**

**LinkedIn** [Thomas Churchelow, Esq.](#)



[@TomChurchelow](#)



## Christina Farrell, Director of Government and Public Affairs at NJUA

### Where did you grow up?

Vineland, NJ (proud Southern New Jerseyan)

### Any family information you would like to share (siblings, children, pets, etc)?

I am married to my college sweetheart, Ryan

### How did you get into this field?

I have a degree in Environmental Policy and was a former Senate Staffer for the Senate Environment and Energy Committee. I have always maintained an interest in utility related policy and sought out the opportunity to work in this field.

### What accomplishments, either personal or company/organizational, are you most proud of?

Most of my time working with NJUA has been during the pandemic. I am proud that I was able to jump right in, learn new things, and adapt. My ability to comprehend complex issues and easily connect the dots has helped me succeed in my role here at NJUA.

### What are some of the biggest challenges your company/organization will face in 2021?

From a policy perspective, ensuring utilities can continue providing essential services and play the vital role they will need to play during the next phase of the pandemic; coordinating company alignment on preparedness and best practice efforts as it relates to workplace safety measures; and coordinating on priority vaccination efforts.

### What are you most looking forward to in the year ahead?

I am looking forward to gathering with Members and Associate Members in person.

### What is your current Netflix obsession/what book are you reading?

You're more likely to see me doing something outdoors than sitting in front of a TV, but if I am turning something on, I prefer that it is light and comedic, like *Schitt's Creek*. I am reading *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power* by Jon Meacham.

### If you were only allowed to listen to one singer/band for the rest of your life, who would it be?

Luke Combs, or anything country music related.

### Can you be found on social media?

**Linked**  [Christina Gordillo Farrell](#)

## For More Information on

The New Jersey Utilities Association is the statewide trade association for investor-owned utilities that provide essential water, wastewater, electric, natural gas and telecommunications services to New Jersey residents and businesses 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. NJUA has provided a forum for the exchange of ideas and a unified voice in the public policy arena for its members since 1915.

NJUA's 13 member utility companies are dedicated to the delivery of essential services to nearly seven million residential customer accounts and one million non-residential customer accounts across the Garden State. Most of our companies have been in existence serving customers for more than 100 years. Not only do New Jersey's utility companies help to maintain the wellbeing of the state and provide services that support the state's quality of life, but they are also a driving force behind New Jersey's economy.

For further information on NJUA, please visit [www.njua.com](http://www.njua.com) or follow us on Twitter [@NJUtilities](https://twitter.com/NJUtilities). You can contact our office at **609-392-1000** or by emailing [csweeney@njua.com](mailto:csweeney@njua.com).