

The Federal THRIVE Act for New Jersey's 6th Congressional District: How THRIVE Strengthens the Economy, Protects the Environment, and Creates Jobs

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This report describes the economic impacts that would result in New Jersey's 6th congressional district if the U.S. Congress were to pass the national THRIVE Act. The 6th district includes the coastal areas of Monmouth and Middlesex counties around the Raritan Bay.

The THRIVE Act was introduced in Congress in April 2021, aiming to “Transform, Heal and Renew by Investing in a Vibrant Economy”—i.e. THRIVE—through a range of investments to rebuild the U.S. economy. For the U.S. economy overall, the THRIVE Act would finance over \$1 trillion in investments per year for 10 years in four major areas: clean renewable energy and energy efficiency; infrastructure; agriculture and land restoration; and the care economy, public health and the postal system.

We estimate that New Jersey's 6th district would receive about \$2.3 billion per year in THRIVE Act support in these four investment areas. This level of investment will generate roughly 16,400 jobs within the district itself, equal to about 4 percent of the district's current employment level. The newly created jobs will be in a wide range of occupations, including electricians, roofers, bus drivers, mechanical and environmental engineers, environmental technicians, home-care nurses, truck drivers, accountants, bookkeepers, and lawyers. This higher level of employment in the 6th district would be sustained throughout the 10 years of the investment program (assuming no other major changes in the district's economy were to occur). These 6th district THRIVE investments will also generate an additional 1,600 jobs throughout the rest of New Jersey, and 1,700 in other U.S. states, for an overall increase of about 20,000 jobs. The table on

page 3 provides details on the breakdown in job creation within the district, within New Jersey, and for the overall U.S. economy.

Some of the major projects that the THRIVE Act could support in the district would include:

Solar installations. Installing solar panels on rooftops and other artificial surfaces, such as parking lots, will provide affordable clean energy to 6th district residents and businesses. The 6th district, as elsewhere, will also need to build large-scale solar and wind farms to deliver sufficient clean energy supplies throughout the district while also dramatically reducing CO₂ emissions in the area. The small-scale installations and large utility-scale projects can effectively complement each other. Among other factors, installing large numbers of solar panels on artificial surfaces will mean that less land needs to be devoted to utility-scale solar and wind farms in the area. Investing, for example, \$250 million to help finance small-scale solar installations throughout the 6th district could create enough electricity to meet roughly 25 percent of the district's overall electricity demand. This district-wide installation project will also generate roughly 800 jobs within the district and 1,000 jobs overall.

Energy efficiency building retrofits. In 2019, Governor Phil Murphy released an Energy Master Plan, outlining policies and strategies to reduce emissions and combat climate change. The plan outlined the need to enhance energy efficiency measures and decarbonize existing buildings, including most municipal and town

buildings like schools, police departments, and water facilities. Within the 6th district, following through on the policies in this Energy Master Plan will cut energy costs for the state and municipalities while also driving down CO₂ emissions. Retrofitting all of the low-efficiency public buildings in the district will entail replacing aging furnaces and air conditioners with electric heat pumps, tightening building shells through improving insulation and replacing leaky windows, and installing LED lighting fixtures throughout every building. Investing \$50 million per year in these projects will also generate about 230 jobs within the district and 350 jobs overall.

Expanding paid client-employed home-based care for elderly. There are approximately 8,000 residents of New Jersey’s 6th district age 65 and over who require personal care. The State of New Jersey offers a statewide program, Assistance for Community Caregiving, through which elderly people in need of care hire the provider of their choice for assistance with the activities of daily living. Adult children, spouses, other family members, neighbors, and friends are eligible to be hired under this type of program. At the same time, most hours of elder care support are still provided by family and friends on a voluntary basis. Expanding financial support for the Assistance for Community Caregiving through the THRIVE Act would enable these providers to be paid for at least some of the hours of work they now provide voluntarily. These family members and friends would then be better able to concentrate their paid working hours on care provision, rather than having to also be employed at separate paid jobs in order to earn sufficient income. For example, approximately \$120 million per year in support through THRIVE would enable all 8,000 elderly residents of the 6th district requiring care to pay family members or friends \$20 dollars per hour for an average of an additional two hours per day.

Repairing or removing dams. There are 11 dams in New Jersey’s 6th district. Of this total, 5 have been rated as having “significant-hazard potential” and a further 2 as having “high-hazard potential” by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. These are dams in which failure or mis-operation is expected to result in loss of life and cause significant economic damage. New Jersey does not disclose if or how its high-hazard dams have been evaluated with respect to their safety provisions, but both of the 6th district’s “high-hazard” dams, Matawan Lake Dam and Lake Lefferts Dam, are more than 90 years

old. Investments to evaluate the district’s dams would therefore be an important contribution to the region’s economy. Dams that are in poor condition could then either be repaired or removed with the THRIVE Act funding support. A 2019 study of the removal of nearby dams along the Raritan River—the Robert Street, Calco, and Nevius Street Dams—found that removing the dams enabled the rivers to return quickly to conditions close to their natural states, both biologically and physically. Investing \$20 million per year in the district to repair or remove high-hazard dams would generate about 200 jobs within the district and 260 jobs overall.

Toxic land remediation. New Jersey has more land areas under the federal government’s Superfund program, which prioritizes cleanups of dangerous contaminated sites, than any other state. Thirteen of New Jersey’s 114 Superfund sites are located in the 6th District. Moreover, the state’s Superfund sites represent only a small fraction of the roughly 10,000 locations that the state’s Department of Environmental Protection has identified as contaminated. Low-income residents throughout the state, and in the 6th district specifically, are much more likely to be living near a contaminated site for which no clean-up plan exists. The Superfund sites in the 6th district include the former Cornell Dubilier Electronics plant in South Plainfield, the Imperial Oil Company oil blending facility in Marlboro Township, and the CPS Madison manufacturing facility in Middlesex. Investing \$100 million per year through THRIVE to complete the clean-up of all Superfund sites as well as other contaminated areas in the district would dramatically raise public health standards, especially within lower-income communities. It would also raise property values and expand economic opportunities. Investing at this level would generate about 900 jobs within the 6th district and 1,100 jobs overall.

**THRIVE ACT Investments in NEW JERSEY'S 6TH DISTRICT:
Annual Investment Spending and Job Creation through U.S. THRIVE Act**

	THRIVE Investments in New Jersey's 6 th District	Job Creation through THRIVE Investments			
		Jobs in 6 th District	Jobs in Rest of New Jersey	Jobs in Rest of U.S.	Overall Job Creation
Clean Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency	\$850 million	3,274	474	500	4,248
Infrastructure	\$750 million	6,186	532	687	7,405
Agriculture and Land Restoration	\$450 million	3,070	339	268	3,677
Care Economy, Public Health, and Postal Service	\$250 million	3,855	289	222	4,365
TOTALS	\$2.3 billion	16,385	1,634	1,676	19,695

Sources: See: <https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/1397-employment-impacts-of-proposed-u-s-economic-stimulus-programs>; and <https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/1474-methodology-and-calculations-for-clean-energy-cost-estimates-in-proposed-u-s-thrive-agenda-and-related-policy-proposals>.

Further References

PERI THRIVE Report for U.S. Economy:

<https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/1397-employment-impacts-of-proposed-u-s-economic-stimulus-programs>

PERI THRIVE Reports for individual U.S. States:

<https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/1415-state-level-employment-impacts-of-proposed-national-thrive-agenda>