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HERALD NEWS

NORTHJERSEY.COM

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Congratulations and good luck?



Graduates wait for their diplomas during Montclair State University's commencement ceremony for the graduating class of 2026 at the Prudential Center in Newark on May 12.

Immigrant advocates want more state money

Push governor to fully fund defense initiative

Ricardo Kalessar
NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

The New Jersey Legislature is working on the state's budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which has to be passed by June 30.

Immigrant advocates would like to see legislators make it a priority to ensure that the Deportation and Detention Defense Initiative is fully funded in the \$60.7 billion budget, introduced in March by Gov. Mikie Sherrill.



Sherrill The initiative, run by the New Jersey Office of New Americans, provides free immigration legal services to income-eligible New Jersey residents at risk of detention or deportation who lack access to legal counsel.

Sherrill has been talking about austerity in this budget, seeking about over \$2 billion in cuts.

Nedia Morsy, the director of the immigrants' rights advocacy group Make the Road New Jersey, said she wants to see the initiative is fully funded at \$20 million rather than at a little over \$8 million, as it has for the past two years, to deal with the federal government's crackdown on undocumented immigrants.

In New Jersey, there have been 2,636 arrests by ICE officers in the first three months of 2026, according to the Deportation Data Project. That is more than double the number of arrests during the same period in 2025, when there were 1,127 arrests.

"A few things exacerbate the need. The first is that the Trump administration will continue to escalate. Secondly, we are preparing for the Roxbury jail to open up," Morsy said. "Then, the [Sherrill] administration rolled out a portal where folks can report."

The Trump administration is looking at converting a warehouse in Roxbury Township into an immigrant detention center, which local and state officials are

See **BUDGET**, Page 6A

College grads face bleak jobs market amid economic unease, AI

Daniel Munoz and Mary Ann Koruth
NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Gap years and career pivots are replacing plans to move out and take a traditional job for newly minted college graduates, as Rutgers, Montclair State and other New Jersey universities celebrate commencement in May.

The impact of inflation, economic uncertainty and, to some degree, artificial intelligence on hiring are leaving many of New Jersey's college students disillusioned.

Rutgers senior and Kearny native Larissa Szemeta majored in animal science — a degree that would help her land positions in research labs. Even those were hard to find, despite having looked for internships since she was a sophomore, she said.

See **GRADUATES**, Page 5A



A graduate wears a decorated cap during Ramapo College of New Jersey's commencement ceremony for the graduating class of 2026 at the Prudential Center on May 14 in Newark.

PHOTOS BY JULIAN LESHAY GUADALUPE/NORTHJERSEY.COM

Will candidate's past slow his run for Congress in NJ?



Political Stile
Charles Stile
USA TODAY NETWORK

Dr. Adam Hamawy, a plastic surgeon from South Brunswick, brings a compelling biography to his first run for Congress.

The self-proclaimed "outsider" candidate spent two years in Iraq as a U.S. Army combat surgeon. During that ser-

vice, he saved the life of a Blackhawk helicopter pilot, Tammy Duckworth, now a U.S. senator from Illinois. Duckworth, who lost both legs and partial use of her right arm, returned the favor by endorsing his campaign back in January.

As a resident at New York Presbyterian, Hamawy treated first responders to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks at the World Trade Center buildings. And most recently, Hamawy was among a group of American doctors trapped near the Rafah border crossing after Israel seized

the territory in the war in Gaza. It was, in part, Duckworth's intercession that helped win their release.

These missions of mercy are prominently featured in his television ads and mailings for the Democratic Party primary in New Jersey's 12th Congressional District, which stretches across a deep-blue swath through parts of Mercer, Middlesex, Somerset and Union counties. It is also those experiences that have inspired and informed his progressive pitch for Congress.

The election to select a nominee to

replace retiring U.S. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman is June 2.

Hamawy's complex past and ties to Omar Abdel-Rahman

Yet, Hamawy's fast rise as the Bernie Sanders-endorsed front-runner in the crowded pack of 12 contenders has brought scrutiny to his past relationship with the Omar Abdel-Rahman, the militant Egyptian cleric, also dubbed the

See **STILE**, Page 7A

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