



A Message From
Tom Churchelow, President & CEO

The summer and fall months brought no shortage of issues for New Jersey's utility companies. Each week seemed to create a new challenge for the industry. As always, our Members stepped up in a big way.

Hurricane Ida caused significant damage to our infrastructure, creating outages and water issues for many across the state. Fortunately, New Jersey's utility workers were there, in the rain, in the flood waters, in the worst of it, to restore services as quickly as possible. The work that you were able to achieve is truly remarkable. On behalf of the NJUA and the millions of New Jerseyans assisted, I want to thank you for all you did and will continue to do.

We saw more than just the storm though. There was legislation signed into law that provides \$250 million in utility assistance to New Jerseyans. Meanwhile, we await word from Washington on a pending infrastructure bill. All in all, it has been a remarkable last few months.

We hope you enjoy this latest addition of the newsletter and that it finds you well as we near the end of 2021.

2021: A Summer & Fall of Action



NJUA Submits \$300M Funding Request out of American Rescue Plan for Arrearages

In August, NJUA submitted a recommendation to the Governor's Office for a minimum \$300 million allocation of ARP funding, as a starting point to help pay down utility arrearages that continue to grow by the day. In September, NJUA followed up directly with the Governor's Office who assured us that they plan to move through the decision-making process this fall. Previously, NJUA participated in the Governor's July hearing on ARP funding and advocated that as much ARP funding as possible be allocated toward paying down utility arrearages that have accumulated during the pandemic.

NJ Rental & Utility Assistance Bill Signed into Law

In August, Governor Murphy signed the rental and utility assistance bill, S3691, into law. Originally, the bill provided financial relief to certain landlords and tenants in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Due to significant lobbying efforts and the Legislature's recognition of utility relief as an emergent issue, the bill was amended to include an allocation for utility assistance. The law requires the Department of Community Affairs to establish the Eviction Prevention Program and appropriates \$750 million in federal funds for the purpose of providing relief to tenants affected by the pandemic. The DCA shall use \$500 million as assistance for very-low, low-, moderate-, and middle-income tenants. The remainder of up to \$250 million may be used as utility assistance.

Lead Service Line Replacement Bill Signed into Law

In August, Governor Murphy signed the Lead Service Lines legislation into law. Throughout the legislative process and going back three years to previous iterations of the bill, NJUA remained engaged with bill sponsors and legislative leadership to ensure our members' best interests were represented. Ultimately, amendments were made that: clarified that the proportionate share of project costs for the replacement of the system side of a lead service line may be incorporated into the PCWS's rate base as capital assets, or may be recovered through the use of a Distributed System Improvement Charge; provided that PCWSs can recover the costs of the replacement of the property owner side of a lead service line through a separate, semi-annual lead service line expense surcharge; provided that PCWSs may complete a partial service line replacement during the course of a water main replacement; and clarified that PCWSs are to undertake partial service line replacements only as a last resort.

NJUA Holds 2021 Conference

On September 9 and 10, NJUA held its 106th Annual Conference. The virtual conference was well attended, with over 200 participants, including representatives of NJUA's member and associate member companies, all five Board of Public Utilities' commissioners, and a number of BPU staff and legislative staff. The conference was highlighted with a keynote address by New Jersey Assembly Telecommunications and Utilities Committee Chairman Wayne DeAngelo, a one-on-one discussion with New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn LaTourette, remarks by BPU President Joe Fiordaliso, and a presentation of the Distinguished Service Award to former Atlantic City Electric President Vince Maione. For registrants, you may view the recording of the conference [here](#) or via <https://njua.com/conference-2021-schedule>.

What We Are Keeping An Eye On

As always, NJUA will advocate for implementation of sound utility policy and coordinate sharing of best practices on numerous issues through our standing committees. These are some of the issues we are most excited to work with our Members on as we head towards 2022:



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.



Ensuring there is a comprehensive solution to resolving arrearages once the moratorium is over; also working with elected representatives and Members to highlight the more than \$375 million in federal funding and New Jersey Department of Community Affairs' administered programs that can help customers pay their bills and decrease arrearages.



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

NJUA in the News



Op-Ed: We need to foster NJ's next generation of utility workers

"Events of the past year and a half — from the pandemic to the devastating impact of Hurricane Ida — have shown the continued importance of utility workers. Their dedication and commitment during these times are shining examples of what New Jersey is all about. That is why, as we celebrate New Jersey Careers in Utilities Week this third week of October, we as a state must do all we can to encourage the next generation of utility workers."

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Association leaders applaud signing of eviction prevention, utility assistance bill

"...New Jersey Utilities Association President Tom Churchelow applauded the anti-eviction legislation signed by Gov. Phil Murphy on Wednesday, saying it struck the proper balance between assistance for residents and businesses.

"...This new law provides sorely needed assistance to help pay down the well over \$700 million in utility arrearages that exist in New Jersey," he said."

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NJUA Statement on Energy Efficiency Day

"We have long held and maintained that the cheapest and cleanest unit of energy is energy not used. That is why utilities have led the way in developing and deploying energy efficiency programs, both individually and in partnership with the New Jersey Clean Energy Program."

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Federal money might go to help thousands behind on utility bills

"Tom Churchelow, president of the New Jersey Utilities Association, welcomed Murphy's willingness to allocate federal funds for helping customers pay down arrearages. "We strongly urge the Governor and his administration to develop a way to directly leverage some of the more than \$6 billion toward helping pay down arrearages," Churchelow said."

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Getting To Know You



The pandemic has made face-to-face meetings difficult 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. We hope you enjoy learning more about Melissa Orsen, President, SJI Utilities; Senior Vice President, SJI and Christina "Chrissy" Sweeney, NJUA Manager of Administrative and Member Services.



Melissa J. Orsen

SVP, SJI & President, SJIU

Where did you grow up?

Marlboro, New Jersey

Any siblings, children, spouse, pets?

I grew up in Marlboro, New Jersey with my parents and brother, who works as a Partner at Sherman, Silverstein, Kohl, Rose and Podolsky. I met my husband while we were in law school and we now reside in Manalapan, New Jersey with our three children, Daniel, 16, Rachel 15, and Michael, 9 and dog, Cooper.

How did you get into this field?

I spent over 17 years in government in various capacities. I didn't anticipate entering the energy industry, but through conversations with SJI's leadership, I quickly could see myself helping drive the company's vision to support our State's clean energy efforts.

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

From a personal perspective, I am proud that I survived living and working at home during COVID with 3 children and a dog. From an organizational point of view, I am proud that our company is investing in innovative technologies that will enable our utilities to deliver cleaner-burning, lower-carbon energy. Last April, we released a comprehensive plan to reduce our company's carbon footprint, reduce energy consumption and costs for our customers and advance the clean energy goals of our state and region. I look forward to seeing our plans come to fruition to benefit the communities we serve.

What were or are some of the biggest challenges your company/organization faced this year?

Similar to other companies, COVID had a profound impact on our customers and employees. Our employees have shown tremendous resilience, and our teams came together to deliver critical energy safely and without interruption to the homes, businesses, schools and hospitals that depend on us. Recognizing that the pandemic has put customers in financial distress, we continue to utilize every channel available to inform them about energy assistance programs, and we provide direct assistance through community partnerships.

We're certain natural gas and the solid infrastructure we have in place will continue to play a role in the future of energy delivery. Every day we look for ways to create cleaner fuel sources through renewable energy.

What are you most looking forward to in 2022?

About a year ago, SJI acquired a minority interest in REV LNG, LLC (REV), along with the rights to develop anaerobic digesters at a portfolio of dairy farms to produce renewable natural gas. I'm looking forward to seeing how this cutting-edge clean energy venture will allow hundreds of thousands of natural gas and dairy customers to share in carbon reduction benefits.

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

Maid and The Great Gatsby.

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

I can't answer this, I love listening to all music!

Can you be found on social media?

LinkedIn [Melissa Orsen](#)



Chrissy Sweeney

Manager of Administrative and Member Services
at the New Jersey Utilities Association

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Hamilton (Mercer County), New Jersey and have lived in this town all my life.

Any siblings, children, spouse, pets?

I am a proud mother of an amazing 6-year-old boy named Brayden. We have two dogs named Cami (10) and Luci (1), who is a "pandemic rescue", that we absolutely adore.

How did you get into this field?

After 8 years as an Executive Assistant to the CEO at a non-profit family services agency, I found myself looking for something new. I found this job opportunity during the pandemic, which was a very challenging time for everyone. I have learned so much in this role, and I am excited to continue to grow with NJUA.

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

I am most proud of being able to tackle this new role while working completely remote during the pandemic. It is very different when you are in the office and have coworkers surrounding you, guiding you along the way. I had worked many weeks with my coworkers without ever even getting to meet them off camera. My whole first year was so unique and different for me, but we made it work! I am lucky Tom and Christina were so creative and accommodating in this new virtual world.

What were or are some of the biggest challenges your company/organization faced this year?

I believe NJUA's biggest challenge (and most disappointing for everyone) was holding our annual conference virtually again. We struggled with making this decision because we were so excited to see everyone, but we knew it was best to be safe during these uncertain times.

What are you most looking forward to in 2022?

Piggybacking on my answer above, I am really looking forward to meeting everyone in-person! I work very closely with our board members' assistants every day, so it will be refreshing to finally put a face to the names. I think I am most excited to plan the 2022 in-person conference (fingers crossed).

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

Being a single mom, 80% of my TV and reading time consists of Disney Channel and Dr. Seuss books. In the past year, I did manage to binge-watch every season of Stranger Things, Cobra Kai, and You. I am currently reading Liane Moriarty's Big Little Lies.

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

This is a tough one because I LOVE so many. I was a singer in multiple bands and have a deep appreciation for music. At the moment, I would say Billie Eilish. Ask me tomorrow, and it will be a totally different answer.

Can you be found on social media?

LinkedIn [Chrissy Sweeney](#)

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 or follow us on Twitter [@NJUtilities](#). You can contact our office at **609-392-1000** or by emailing csweeney@njua.com.