

October 13, 2026

3rd Annual

Garden State Conference on Food Security



**Office of the
Food Security
Advocate**

Craig J. Coughlin

Special Address

**Assembly Speaker, 19th Legislative District
General Assembly, New Jersey Legislature**

The Honorable Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin has served in the General Assembly since 2010, representing the 19th Legislative District. He is the longest serving Speaker in New Jersey history, now in his fifth term.

Highlights of the Speaker's legislative tenure include raising the state's minimum wage, delivering property tax relief, investing in childcare and mental health programs, increasing public school funding, ending surprise medical bills, and improving the state's environmental remediation programs to provide a cleaner, safer future. These initiatives were made possible by the responsible state budgeting and fiscal stewardship during his time as Speaker.

Speaker Coughlin has spent his legislative career fighting for the working people of New Jersey. The first bill passed in his tenure as Speaker was the Equal Pay for Women Act. Under his leadership, the Democratic caucus has spearheaded numerous bills to provide tax relief for the people who need it most— middle-class families and seniors. After securing passage of the ANCHOR program, the largest property tax relief program in state history at the time, Speaker Coughlin authored the StayNJ program, which will cut seniors' property taxes in half. Coupled with expansions in prescription drug assistance programs of PAAD and Senior Gold, New Jersey seniors will see real savings and improved affordability.

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The issue closest to Speaker Coughlin's heart is the fight against hunger. His policy agenda has prioritized food security for New Jersey families and ending childhood hunger.

He has worked to expand free school lunches and sponsored four expansive anti-hunger bill packages, including increasing aid to food banks by 500%, and creating a first-in-the-nation Office of Food Security Advocate. His ultimate goal, in concert with a coalition of community leaders on this issue, is the elimination of hunger in New Jersey by 2030. Speaker Coughlin stresses the importance of local engagement on food security to highlight the needs in every community—including his annual bowling fundraiser to benefit local food pantries in his district, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars and recruiting volunteers.

Speaker Coughlin is a lifelong resident of Middlesex County. He was born in Perth Amboy on January 31, 1958 and attended public schools in South Amboy. He attended St. John's University for his B.A. (summa cum laude '80) and J.D. ('83). Before running for the Assembly in 2009, Coughlin was a member of the South Amboy Board of Education and served as a South Amboy City Councilman for six years.

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Speaker Coughlin has also served in various legal capacities including as a municipal court judge, prosecutor and public defender.

Coughlin is a partner in Woodbridge-based law firm, Rainone, Coughlin, Minchello LLC. He and his wife, Letitia, live in Woodbridge and have three sons—Craig Jr., Vincent and Nicholas. He is also the proud grandfather of Claire, Jameson and Carter.