

## ***Sue Altman Opposed Granting Tax Credits To Businesses That Were Struggling To Hire Workers In The Wake Of The COVID Pandemic And Said The Business Should Just Pay More Instead***

### **Altman Bitterly Opposed Renewing Tax Incentive Programs For Companies To Create Or Retain Jobs In New Jersey**

**In February 2019, The New Jersey Legislature Considered Whether To Renew The Grow New Jersey Assistance (GrowNJ) And Economic Redevelopment And Growth Grant (ERG) Programs –State Tax Incentive Programs That Had Awarded \$11 Billion To Companies To Create Or Retain Jobs In New Jersey.** “The \$11 billion in taxpayer-funded incentives awarded to New Jersey businesses were under a microscope on Monday as protesters gathered at the Statehouse to demand change and lawmakers questioned state officials about how the tax breaks are doled out...The administration of New Jersey's tax incentives programs has become a flash point between Murphy, a Democrat, and a Democratically controlled Legislature that worked with Murphy's Republican predecessor, Chris Christie, to approve the most controversial and expensive of the initiatives. Those initiatives -- the Grow New Jersey Assistance and Economic Redevelopment and Growth Grant programs -- are set to expire at the end of June, setting the stage for a political battle over whether they should be renewed, replaced or scrapped. Supporters in the Legislature say tax incentives, totaling \$8 billion under Christie alone, are needed to convince companies to create or retain jobs in New Jersey and have spurred historic levels of investment in cities like Camden. Companies cannot cash in on the credits until they fulfill job or investment targets.” (Nicholas Pugliese, “\$11B In Corporate Tax Breaks Under Scrutiny As Gov. Phil Murphy Pushes For New Programs,” [The Record](#), 2/11/19)

**Supporters Of The GrowNJ And ERG Programs Said They Were Needed To Encourage Investment In Poverty-Stricken Areas Like Camden, New Jersey.** “Supporters in the Legislature say tax incentives, totaling \$8 billion under Christie alone, are needed to convince companies to create or retain jobs in New Jersey and have spurred historic levels of investment in cities like Camden. Companies cannot cash in on the credits until they fulfill job or investment targets.” (Nicholas Pugliese, “\$11B In Corporate Tax Breaks Under Scrutiny As Gov. Phil Murphy Pushes For New Programs,” [The Record](#), 2/11/19)

**Governor Phil Murphy Opposed Continuing The Tax Incentives, Saying They Were Too Generous To Big Business And Crowded Out Investment In Other Priorities Like Infrastructure And Education.** “Murphy, however, has criticized those breaks as too generous to big businesses and argues that they crowd out investment in more pressing priorities, like infrastructure and education. While only a small fraction of the \$11 billion in promised tax credits has been paid out, Murphy has said the state will lose more than \$1 billion in revenue next fiscal year as companies cash in. Murphy wants new incentive programs with award caps and rules that would direct investment into ‘high-wage, high-growth sectors’ and urban communities.” (Nicholas Pugliese, “\$11B In Corporate Tax Breaks Under Scrutiny As Gov. Phil Murphy Pushes For New Programs,” [The Record](#), 2/11/19)

**Altman Spoke Against The Tax Incentives, And Accused Lawmakers Of Using “The Poverty And Challenges Of Places Like Camden As An Excuse To Subsidize Corporations.”** “Sue Altman, a board member with the grass-roots group South Jersey Women for Progressive Change, accused lawmakers of using ‘the poverty and challenges of places like Camden as an excuse to subsidize corporations’ and criticized them for holding a hearing where only invited guests were able to testify. That restriction prevented most of the opponents from speaking. ‘Today's hearing is more of the same: It favors the credentialed, the powerful and the politically connected and it leaves out the voices of the people who these policies most directly affect,’ Altman said.” (Nicholas Pugliese, “\$11B In Corporate Tax Breaks Under Scrutiny As Gov. Phil Murphy Pushes For New Programs,” [The Record](#), 2/11/19)

**In June 2019, The New Jersey Legislature Considered Extending The GrowNJ And ERG Programs Until Early 2020.** “The two New Jersey tax incentive programs at the heart of multiple investigations may be extended before their June 30 deadlines, as two Assembly committees voted Thursday to keep the programs alive until some point in 2020. Meanwhile, thousands of union

members and activists rallied outside the Statehouse in favor of a millionaire's tax and against Senate President Stephen Sweeney's proposed changes to public pensions and health care. Two tax credits meant to spur development and create and keep jobs in the state, GrowNJ and the Economic Redevelopment & Growth (ERG) programs, are set to end at the end of the month, around the same time when the Legislature and governor must agree on a budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1. The Assembly Commerce and Economic Development committee and the Appropriations committee considered a bill that would push the deadline from June 30, 2019 to Jan. 31, 2020, proposed by Budget Chair Eliana Pintor Marin, D-Essex.” (Ashley Balcerzak And Stacey Barchenger, “Lawmakers Vote To Keep NJ Tax Breaks Alive, While Thousands Protest Outside,” [The Record](#), 6/13/19)

- **New Jersey Business Leaders Had Warned That Allowing The Programs To Expire Without New Ones In Place Would Signal That The State Was “Out Of Business.”**  
“Members of the New Jersey business community said it would be unwise to make hasty changes or let the programs timing run out. ‘Recognizing that the current programs took approximately 18 months to effectuate, we cannot create a new, more effective, functioning program within the next two weeks,’ said Michael Egerton, executive vice president of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce. ‘Nor can we allow for the current ones to expire. A state that lets its economic growth incentives lapse signals that it is ‘out of business.’” (Ashley Balcerzak And Stacey Barchenger, “Lawmakers Vote To Keep NJ Tax Breaks Alive, While Thousands Protest Outside,” [The Record](#), 6/13/19)

**Altman Opposed Extending The Programs, Interrupting A Legislative Hearing And Alleging That There Had Been Malfeasance In Their Original Approval.** “Activists with the group Working Families, a group critical of the tax incentives, interrupted the start of the hearing by placing seven cardboard boxes on the witness desk to submit as public testimony in protest. The boxes contained more than 50,000 pages of emails between a lawyers at Parker McCay and officials at the Economic Development Authority. The New York Times, ProPublica and WNYC reported that an attorney with Parker McCay named Kevin Sheehan suggested language into late drafts of the legislation that created the tax incentives and frequently communicated with members of the Economic Development Authority, which issues the credits, as the bill was being written. “These emails are a representation of unregistered lobbying between a politically connected corporation and until every single one of these emails have been reviewed by this committee, this law should not be extended,’ said Sue Altman, head of Working Families. ‘It is unprecedented that today there is no public testimony.’” (Ashley Balcerzak And Stacey Barchenger, “Lawmakers Vote To Keep NJ Tax Breaks Alive, While Thousands Protest Outside,” [The Record](#), 6/13/19)

**In July 2019, Altman Testified Before Gov. Phil Murphy’s Task Force Investigating The Tax Incentives Programs And Continued To Criticize Them.** “Members of the public got to testify for the first time yesterday before a task force convened by Gov. Phil Murphy to investigate the state’s economic-development tax-incentive programs, and witness after witness lined up to air concerns about mismanagement and alleged insider dealing... But Sue Altman, director of New Jersey Working Families, returned to the concerns about the potential gaming of the incentive programs by those with political connections, calling it ‘an elegant study in New Jersey politics.’ ‘We are not saying zero tax incentives ever, but rather we must conceive of a community development program that puts people first, that puts the community first,’ Altman said. ‘We can raise a city from the bottom up, not from the top down.’” (John Reitmeyer, “Public Gets To Weigh In On State’s Embattled Tax-Break Programs,” [NJ Spotlight News](#), 7/10/19)

- **Altman: “We Are Not Saying Zero Tax Incentives Ever, But Rather We Must Conceive Of A Community Development Program That Puts People First, That Puts The Community First...We Can Raise A City From The Bottom Up, Not From The Top Down.”** (John Reitmeyer, “Public Gets To Weigh In On State’s Embattled Tax-Break Programs,” [NJ Spotlight News](#), 7/10/19)

**In September 2019, Altman Led A Press Conference Calling For The State Legislature To Pass Major Reforms To The Tax Incentive Programs, Including More Oversight And Caps On The Size Of Tax Incentives.** “A major rewrite of controversial state tax-incentive programs is still pending from lawmakers, but several liberal groups say there’s no need to wait any

longer before enacting reforms they consider to be no-brainers. In fact, many of the policy recommendations highlighted during a news conference in Trenton yesterday echoed testimony that a panel of national experts gave to lawmakers earlier this month, including calls for more oversight and controls on the size of tax incentives. The news conference was organized by New Jersey Working Families, New Jersey Policy Perspective and several other liberal groups. ‘I think we can do this,’ Sue Altman, state director of New Jersey Working Families, said at the news conference. ‘I think we have the moral high ground.’” (John Reitmeyer, “Liberal Groups Call for Reform of State Tax Incentives Now, Not Later,” [NJ Spotlight News](#), 9/19/19)

**In January 2020, Altman Called For The New Jersey Legislature To Pass Gov. Murphy’s Suggested Reforms To The Tax Incentive Programs.** “Many progressive groups backed Murphy’s push for a millionaire’s tax, as well as his proposed reforms to the state’s economic incentive programs, including New Jersey Policy Perspective, New Jersey Working Families, New Jersey Citizen Action and 32BJ SEIU, a union which represents several thousand service workers in the state. ‘Governor Murphy took office promising to change the culture in Trenton, and the bold ethics proposals he outlined today will help ensure that state government serves working families and not powerful special interests,’ Working Families State Director Sue Altman said on Jan. 14. Governor Murphy took office promising to change the culture in Trenton, and the bold ethics proposals he outlined today will help ensure that state government serves working families and not powerful special interests.- Sue Altman, Working Families state director ‘We also call on legislative leaders to listen to the governor and enact the necessary reforms to the state’s broken tax incentives program to ensure that it works to benefit working families and not politically connected businesses.’” (Daniel J. Munoz, “Familiar Positions,” [NJBIZ](#), 1/20/20)

- **Altman: “We Also Call On Legislative Leaders To Listen To The Governor And Enact The Necessary Reforms To The State’s Broken Tax Incentives Program To Ensure That It Works To Benefit Working Families And Not Politically Connected Businesses.”** (Daniel J. Munoz, “Familiar Positions,” [NJBIZ](#), 1/20/20)

**In December 2020, The New Jersey Legislature Advanced – And Gov. Phil Murphy Indicated He Would Sign – A Package Of Tax Incentives Totaling More Than \$14 Billion, Including Additional Funding For The Controversial Economic Redevelopment And Growth (ERG) Program.** “The price tag on a controversial tax incentive package designed to bolster the state’s post-pandemic economic recovery rose from \$11.5 billion to more than \$14.3 billion with 142 pages of amendments sent to members of the relevant Senate and Assembly panels as they were discussing the bill and hearing testimony. Lawmakers expressed concern that they were not able to fully digest the changes before voting. But the package ultimately cleared the committees. But both chambers are expected to approve the measure, known as the New Jersey Economic Recovery Act of 2020, on Dec. 21. And Gov. Phil Murphy is likely to sign it. The Dec. 18 amendments add \$2.6 billion in film tax credits over a 13-year period and \$220 million in additional funds for the Economic Redevelopment and Growth grant program for any applications submitted before Dec. 1, 2021, according to the Office of Legislative Services.” (Daniel J. Munoz, “New Incentive Package Grows To \$14.3B With Votes Looming,” [NJBIZ](#), 12/18/20)

**Altman Opposed The Tax Incentive Package, Complaining That It Was Being Pushed Through Too Quickly.** “The bill is being fast-tracked through the state Legislature, having been introduced and passed through both chambers in a matter of days. The process angered progressives and good government groups. “We need details before we can have a vote on this and we should push the floor vote back,” Sue Altman, director of the progressive advocacy group New Jersey Working Families told Senators. ‘It should not happen in 2020. I haven’t gotten any good answers as to why it needs to happen this calendar year.’” (Daniel J. Munoz, “New Incentive Package Grows To \$14.3B With Votes Looming,” [NJBIZ](#), 12/18/20)

- **Altman: “This Deal Violates Fundamental Principles Of Good Government And Transparency, While Devoting Money The State Does Not Have To Pad The Pockets Of Corporations And Prop Up A Cottage Industry Of Politically Connected**

**Consultants And Attorneys.”** (Marcia Brown, “Can Corporate Tax Incentives Revive a Pandemic Economy? New Jersey Thinks They Can,” *American Prospect*, 12/18/20)

**Less Than A Week After The Tax Incentives Bill Was Introduced, It Was Passed By The New Jersey Legislature With Murphy’s Blessing.** “No issue has defined Gov. Philip D. Murphy’s first term in office more than corporate tax incentives. He railed against them as a Democratic candidate for governor and, once elected, initiated an investigation that exposed the program he inherited from his Republican predecessor as a poorly managed boon for politically connected firms. Yet on Monday, the State Legislature, with Mr. Murphy’s blessing, approved a new tax incentives bill, and the sheer size of it — as well as the breakneck speed at which it was introduced and passed — was shocking, even in New Jersey...The program, known as the New Jersey Economic Recovery Act of 2020, was introduced just last Wednesday and passed both houses on Monday in less than an hour, after brief speeches citing the need to jump start an economy decimated by the coronavirus.” (Tracey Tully, “N.J. Approves \$14 Billion in Corporate Tax Breaks in Less Than a Week,” *The New York Times*, 12/21/20)

**Altman Complained Bitterly About The Bill’s Passage, Asking “Why Must New Jersey Always Be An Outlier, In A Bad Way, When It Comes To Democracy And, In A Terrible Way, When It Comes To How We Spend And Provision Money?”** “It is considered one of the largest packages of corporate tax incentives in the country and comes a month after New Jersey borrowed \$4.28 billion to plug a pandemic-related budget gap. ‘Why must New Jersey always be an outlier, in a bad way, when it comes to democracy and, in a terrible way, when it comes to how we spend and provision money?’ Sue Altman, the leader of New Jersey Working Families, a progressive group backed by Mr. Murphy, said in a Senate budget hearing on Friday. ‘Trickle-down economics doesn’t work and it hasn’t worked since the 2013 bill,’ she said.” (Tracey Tully, “N.J. Approves \$14 Billion in Corporate Tax Breaks in Less Than a Week,” *The New York Times*, 12/21/20)

- **Altman: “Trickle-Down Economics Doesn’t Work And It Hasn’t Worked Since The 2013 Bill.”** (Tracey Tully, “N.J. Approves \$14 Billion in Corporate Tax Breaks in Less Than a Week,” *The New York Times*, 12/21/20)

**After Murphy Signed The Bill, Altman Suggested That He’d Betrayed His Principles, Saying “The Governor Came In As A Reform Governor And Did A Lot Of Great Things. He Was Criticized For Not Knowing The Trenton Handshake... Now It Seems He Is Doing It.”** “The activists who clutched Murphy’s coattails are now seething and baffled at his capitulation to the Trenton-style Art of the Deal. ‘The governor came in as a reform governor and did a lot of great things. He was criticized for not knowing the Trenton handshake,’ said Sue Altman, director of the New Jersey Working Families Alliance, who was memorably wrenched by state troopers from a Statehouse hearing on the credit program. ‘Now it seems he is doing it, and I’m not sure how siding with [Senate President Stephen] Sweeney on a bill of this magnitude leaves the state in a better shape,’ Altman said.” (Charles Stile, “Murphy, Eyeing Reelection, Inks Tax Credit Deal,” *The Record*, 12/23/20)

**Altman Indicated That She Still Supported Murphy.** “The governor came in as a breath of fresh air in Trenton — a reformer, a progressive,’ Ms. Altman said in an interview. ‘Looking ahead, we’ve got an election on the horizon and hopefully a next term. It’s a good opportunity for the governor and progressive movement to get back in step about what priorities are best for New Jersey.’” (Tracey Tully, “N.J. Approves \$14 Billion in Corporate Tax Breaks in Less Than a Week,” *The New York Times*, 12/21/20)