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# Jennifer Davenport is the attorney general NJ deserves | Opinion

*3-minute read*

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Sometimes, the right thing happens in government for all the right reasons. When it does, it restores faith in our political system and reminds people that public institutions can still choose the most qualified, most decent and most capable leaders — not because of politics or connections, but based on experience, integrity and smarts. Gov.-elect Mikie Sherrill's [selection of Jennifer Davenport](#) to serve as New Jersey's next attorney general is one of those moments.

I have known Davenport for many years, having worked closely with her in some of the most challenging, high-pressure settings that government-related service can produce. In every instance, she has shown the same hallmarks of leadership: she is steady, open-minded and extraordinarily effective. What distinguishes her is not volume or theatrics, but the quiet authority that comes from expertise rather than ego.



NJ Deputy Attorney General Jennifer Davenport speaks during a press conference where Ocean County Prosecutor Joseph Coronato announced a massive drug bust and seizure in Toms River, NJ, Friday, March 9, 2018. The Jersey Shore pipeline investigation involved seven other counties, 30 law-enforcement agencies including DEA. Seizures: \$900k cash 27 high-end vehicles worth \$700k 90k doses (1,800 bricks) of heroin and cocaine. *Thomas P. Costello*

## **Jennifer Davenport has a strong commitment to public service**

Davenport's career reflects a lifetime commitment to public service. Before rising to the top ranks of the state Department of Law and Public Safety, she served for years as a federal prosecutor and as a senior lawyer with the Drug Enforcement Administration. That combination — deep experience at both the federal and state levels — is hard to find. It gives her a full understanding of how to combat violent crime — by working closely with law enforcement, partnering with federal agencies when appropriate and building cases that are strong, ethical and fair. In these prior roles, Davenport also forged deep bonds with faith and community leaders. As a former attorney

general, I cannot overstate the importance of having the trust of both law enforcement officers and the diverse communities they serve.

The experience Davenport brings to the role could not be more timely. As [the Dec. 13 shooting at Brown University](#) shows, our nation continues to confront widespread gun violence, violent crime and complex public-safety challenges that demand a sophisticated and coordinated response. Jen has been doing this work her entire career. She understands the demands placed on detectives, troopers, prosecutors and police chiefs. In fact, many of New Jersey's most innovative and successful initiatives, such as ARRIVE Together (Alternative Responses to Reduce Instances of Violence and Escalation), which pairs mental health professionals with law enforcement in crisis response, have only come to fruition because of Jen's leadership.

Davenport will inspire the thousands of civil-service professionals who make up the Department of Law and Public Safety. They are dedicated, hardworking public servants who show up every day to enforce the rule of law, protect consumers, safeguard the environment, defend civil rights, handle complex financial transactions and represent the State in court. She understands and respects their work, and her leadership will motivate them to work even harder.

**A leader who does not embrace the spotlight**



At the State Police Technology Center NJ in 2016, then Attorney General Christopher Porrino with State Police Superintendent Col. Rick Fuentes and State Police Lt. John Pizzuro. *CHRIS PEDOTA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER, CHRIS PEDOTA / THE RECORD*

And while Davenport has held some of the most demanding roles in government, including serving twice as first assistant attorney general, she has also worked in the private sector. This experience will help her navigate complex challenges involving the business community in a practical and commonsense manner.

Davenport has never been someone who seeks or enjoys the spotlight. That is precisely why she excels. Her focus will always remain on getting it right and helping to ensure the safety and well-being of the New Jersey residents she will serve.

At a time when trust in government across the nation is teetering, Jen Davenport is exactly the kind of leader who will help restore public confidence. Governor-elect Sherrill has made a brilliant selection and deserves a standing ovation for this decision.

I will be proud to call Jennifer Davenport our attorney general.

*Chris Porrino was the 60th attorney general of the State of New Jersey and is chair of the Litigation Department at Lowenstein Sandler LLP.*