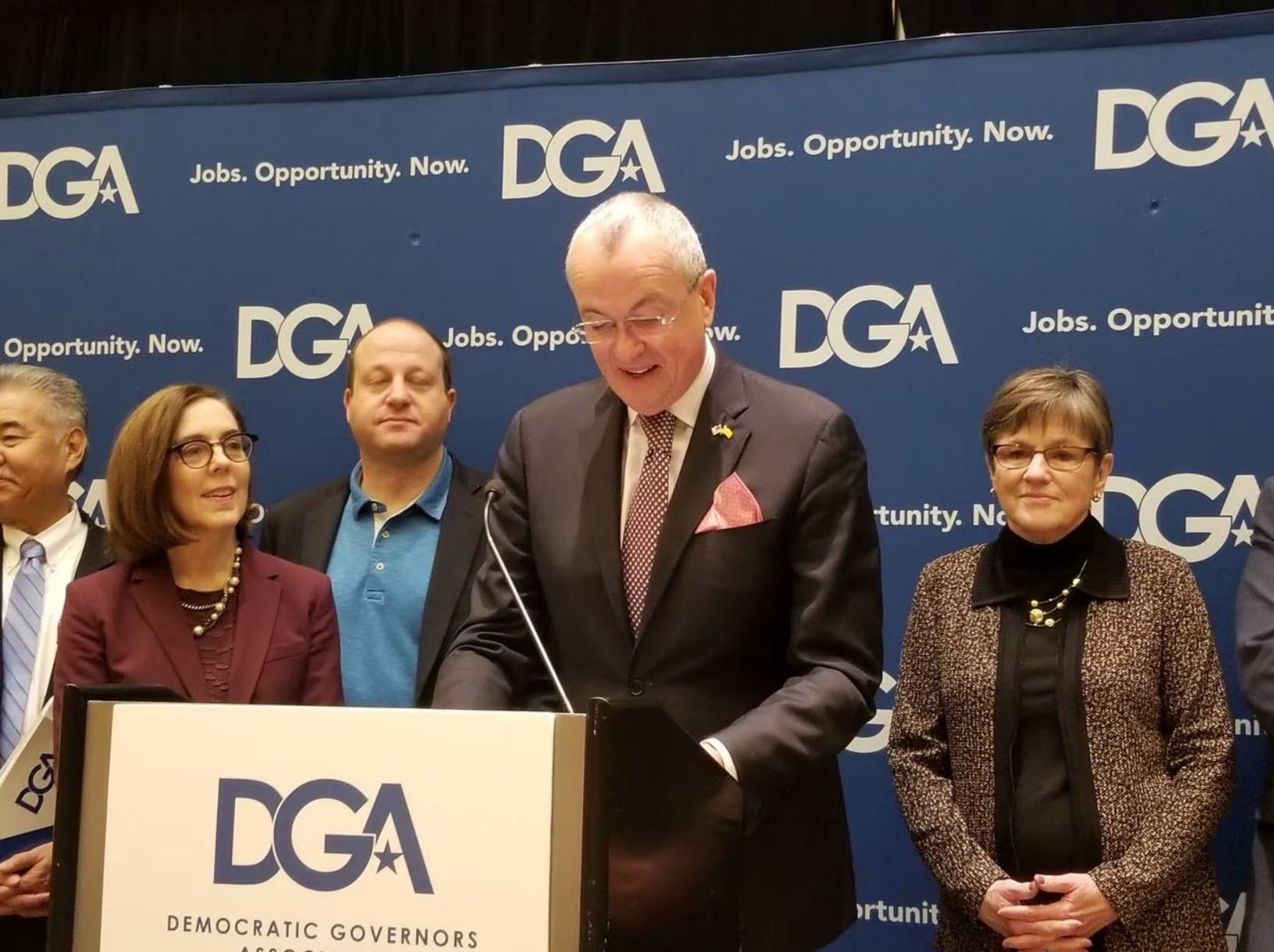


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OPINION

Murphy's fake apology to women | Moran

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Gov. Phil Murphy speaks at a Democratic Governors Association press conference in Washington on Feb. 8, 2020.

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By [Tom Moran | Star-Ledger Editorial Board](#)

When is an apology meaningful, and when is it a fake political stunt? Folks, we just got a tutorial on that.

Start with Senate President Steve Sweeney. A decade ago, he acted like a Neanderthal during an argument with Fran Ehret, a union official who opposed him politically, telling her: "If you were a man, I would take you outside right now and kick your ass."

After stumbling at first, Sweeney offered a [full-hearted mea culpa](#). "I will not dispute her statement.. Therefore, I extend my unequivocal apology."

Granted, we don't know the secrets of Sweeney's heart. But the apology served a purpose either way. Ehret felt vindicated, and appreciative. And there was a lesson for men who needed it: Don't threaten women. Don't even go close.

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For the fake version, consider Gov. Phil Murphy's "apology" last week for the behavior of the boys on his 2017 campaign. "We absolutely must get better moving forward and we will," Murphy said. "To those we failed in that mission, I apologize."

Notice what's missing? He didn't name a single woman. In fact, he acknowledged at a press conference Tuesday that he has not apologized to any of the women who say they were mistreated by his team.

Not to Katie Brennan, who asked for a meeting with Murphy to tell him she was raped by a senior campaign staffer, and was ignored, while the man she accused was given a high-paying job and a fat raise.

Not to Julia Fahl, who was frightened when Joe Kelley, now Murphy's deputy chief of staff, threw a chair against a wall near her during a wild temper tantrum.

Not to Allison Kopicki, who quit her job after she says she faced retaliation for complaining about mistreatment of women.

Not to Julie Roginsky, who was threatened with a lawsuit if she went public with her charge that Brendan Gill, the campaign manager, screamed the C-word at her -- a charge that Gill vehemently denies.

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At least three other women say they were mistreated -- from unwanted touching to talking about strip clubs at campaign meetings -- but are afraid of retaliation if they step forward. The one who was touched says she told Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy, and still got no help.

Murphy recently cut ties with Adam Alonso, a Murphy campaign veteran who was accused of mistreating women during his work in Milwaukee preparing for the Democratic National Convention. But the governor was asked repeatedly Tuesday why he cut ties with Alonso based on those accusations, while Gill and Kelley remain in his inner circle. He dodged, over and over, then cut off questions.

All this came during a press conference when Murphy announced a series of promising reforms aimed at better protecting women. He seems determined to do the right thing in the future and says this has been a period of personal reflection for him.

But he will not take responsibility for his own complicity. Worse, he has been dishonest about this over and over.

He's spent months saying women were free to talk about the work environment on the campaign, even those who signed confidentiality agreements. That's not true. Even as Murphy made the claim, his campaign attorney, Paul Josephson, sent Roginsky a letter warning her to keep quiet about everything. The governor also said he received no complaints about a toxic work environment during the campaign, and that's not true either. Roginsky sent an email complaining about "rank misogyny" and offering to provide names of several others if they could be protected from retaliation. It's in writing, and Murphy concedes he read it.