



FOR RELEASE

April 25, 2025

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The Honorable Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin Named 2025 Commencement Speaker at Ramapo College of New Jersey

Mahwah, N.J.- Ramapo College is pleased to announce that **The Honorable Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin** will address the Class of 2025 at its **Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony**. [Speaker Coughlin \(D-19\)](#) is the longest serving speaker in New Jersey history. Throughout his tenure, he has supported efforts to meet the needs of students who face food insecurity, which led to increasing the number of food pantries on campus as well as the purchase of commercial refrigerators and freezers to provide fresh food access as part of the [We Care Program](#). In 2024, the College was able to launch the [Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing](#) program and enroll more students, thanks to Coughlin's advocacy for appropriations, resulting in the expansion of simulation labs and program resources in order to help mitigate the nursing shortage in New Jersey.

"The Ramapo College Class of 2025 has benefitted from the Speaker's service in large part because he understands that public higher education isn't just a policy—it's a promise to future generations, and he has been steadfast in his commitment to keeping that promise," said Ramapo College President Cindy Jebb.

The ceremony will be held at Prudential Center in Newark on **Thursday, May 15, 2025**. Doors will open at 7:30 a.m. The ceremony will begin with the academic processional at 8:40 a.m. Persons unable to attend may enjoy the ceremony via livestream on ramapo.edu/commencement.

The Class of 2025 includes more than 1,160 degree candidates. Social work major and Equal Opportunity Fund (EOF) scholar **Nikita Hanover** of Hillside, NJ, will address her classmates as the Undergraduate Student Speaker.

The Honor Guard comprises graduates selected by their respective school deans for their scholarship and contributions to Ramapo College. The following students will lead their schools during the ceremony:

- **Olivia Romano '25** of Franklin Lakes, NJ, Anisfield School of Business
- **Kayla Brand '25** of Wall Township, NJ, School of Contemporary Arts
- **Stefanie Viera '25** of New Milford, NJ, School of Humanities and Global Studies



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- Victor Oluwagbemi '25 of Browns Mills, NJ, School of Social Science and Human Services
- Leah Payne '25 of Newfoundland, NJ, School of Theoretical and Applied Science

The Ramapo College [Graduate Programs Commencement](#) will be held on its beautiful Mahwah campus on **Thursday, May 22, 2025**. The degrees of more than 300 [master's and doctoral](#) students will be conferred this year. Doors will open at 4 p.m. and the academic processional will begin at 5:15 p.m. Tickets are required for all guests. Additional information can be found on the Ramapo College Commencement website: ramapo.edu/commencement.

Speaker Craig Coughlin

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 fourth 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.

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



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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. 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 and Jameson.

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ABOUT RAMAPO COLLEGE

Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The comprehensive college is situated among the beautiful Ramapo Mountains, is within commuting distance to New York City, was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *Condé Nast Traveler*, and boasts the best on-campus housing in New Jersey per Niche.com. Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Applied Mathematics, Business Administration, Contemporary Instructional Design, Computer Science, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice.