

Gov. Christie's 'Jersey Comeback' in Cedar Grove

BY KATHERINE MILSOP | TUESDAY, JUN 19, 2012 4:30PM | COMMENTS (7)



Gov. Chris Christie addressed a packed gymnasium of over 300 people at Cedar Grove High School today in a Town Hall – style meeting, and spoke out against the “Corzine Democrats” in the legislature, called for income and property tax cuts and emphasized the fast approaching July 1 Constitutional deadline for the legislature to adopt a budget.

The governor’s 85th Town Hall meeting was heavy with rhetoric and peppered with jabs at Democrats in the state legislature.

Christie spoke in front of an “Only 12 Days Left for Legislature to Deliver Tax Relief” sign, in addition to a sign strung above the curtained entrance that read: “The Jersey Comeback Has Begun.”

An energetic crowd greeted the governor with a standing ovation and applause when he entered. Gov. Christie thanked them for the warm welcome and said that he is, “An Essex county kid,” who grew up in Livingston, and was happy to be home.

Cedar Grove officials and council members were in attendance, in addition to State Senator Kevin O’Tool and Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.

Gov. Christie spent the first part of the meeting focusing on the return of the “Corzine Democrats,” who he said are about “bigger government, higher taxes and more spending” which he suggested ultimately hinders the adoption of a budget in the legislature in 12 days.

“I think you thought you had slayed this type of Democrat in 2009,” said Christie. “But I am here to tell you today that I fear this type of Democrat has returned to the state legislature.”

“We have a \$30+ billion budget that they haven’t even responded,” said Christie. “Everything is supposed to get done in the last 12 days. Well, we’ll see.”

While he touched on bipartisan work such as pension reform and the 2 percent property tax cap, he said, that the long-anticipated property tax relief promised to New Jerseyans by previous governors would not be delivered by Democrats in this legislature.

Gov. Christie spoke briefly about Cedar Grove, citing a 31 percent increase his administration has delivered to K -12 public schools, in addition to pension reform. He did not mention the [drug abuse and gang-related problems](#) afflicting two local halfway houses, highlighted in a New York Times series this week.

The floor opened up to questions from audience members. Bob Pellegrini of Bayonne asked about imposing term limits in Congress. Christie agreed that it should be done, but said that there is a “slim prospect of it happening.” In a theme that ran throughout the meeting, the governor made a point to distance himself and his own actions from Trenton “lawmakers who don’t like to follow the laws.”

Lab owner Rose DeMeo asked about state or county assistance that was available for technological development and said it was difficult to compete with larger companies located out of state and overseas.

“We must make sure our rates are competitive with neighboring states... I push for lower tax rates,” said Christie. He said that lower tax rates are an incentive for bringing new businesses into the state and cited the “eight great years we had under Gov. Kean.” Christie directed DeMeo to call the Business Action Center to see what grants are available for her company.

One audience member who did not express her support or admiration for the governor’s policies, Madeline Hoffman of Bloomfield Peace Action, asked, “Why did you let the wealth tax expire?”

“Stop. I did not let the wealth tax expire,” said Christie. “It expired in 2009 when Corzine was governor.” He said that the Democrats could have signed it, but chose not to for political reasons. “They wanted me to take responsibility for it. I think it’s wrong, so I’m not doing it.”

Hoffman asked if the governor would support cutting the national military budget by 25 percent and having the money reallocated into other public services.





"I am simply not going to engage in the type of class warfare that the president is engaged in by blaming everything..." He was interrupted by cheers and applause. Christie said that we said that 1 percent of the population currently pays 40 percent of income tax, and that we have \$70 billion of "departed wealth" from high-earners who have left New Jersey for more wealth-accommodating pastures. With regard to the military budget, he said that he didn't know if that would be an effective way to gain revenue.

Local school board member Jean Pasternak commented on the "lack of accountability in school boards." Gov. Christie said that he has tried to hold accountability by capping the superintendent salary at \$175,000. He also emphasized judging teachers on merit and performance, rather than giving tenure to employees "simply because they are older and more experienced."

Towards the end of the meeting, one woman asked if the governor would accept a vice presidential nomination from Republican nominee Mitt Romney. Christie said he didn't think he would ask, but said, "If he called, I'd listen."

"The reason I didn't run for president is because it didn't feel right for me to leave," said Christie. "Bet on me being governor of New Jersey in January 2013."