



MBI·GluckShaw
Martin • Bontempo • Matacera • Bartlett, Inc.

212 West State Street · Trenton, NJ 08608 ☎ Tel: 609/392-3100 · Fax: 609/392-6347

State of the State Recap

This afternoon, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie delivered his fifth annual State of the State address in Trenton. The State of the State - a constitutional mandate requiring the governor to report the condition of State annually to the legislature - came as speculation in New Jersey and around the nation grows that Christie may soon launch a bid for the White House.

Christie's speech represented a report card of his five-year tenure as governor and stressed strong themes of bi-partisanship leadership, renewal ("a New Jersey renewal and an American renewal"), and touched on both New Jersey-specific as well as national themes. The Governor's address focused on several key policy areas, including:

ECONOMY

Christie touted consistent growth over the five years since he became governor, specifically highlighting that unemployment has decreased by one-third. He lauded reduced state spending and smaller state government as tools utilized to help pass five consecutive balanced budgets. The Governor specifically mentioned the Economic Opportunity Act as one example of his pro-growth policies over past five years. The Governor reaffirmed his commitment to veto new tax measures that cross his desk, specifically any proposed income tax increases. Christie called on the Legislature to lower taxes even more to avoid additional losses of companies like Mercedes-Benz (who just last week announced it is relocating from Montvale, NJ to Atlanta, GA).

EDUCATION REFORM

Christie touted reforms to teacher tenure, performance-based pay, a rehabilitated education system in Camden, expanded charter schools, and increased aid to public schools as his signature education achievements. He called in his speech for additional educational reforms, including passage of the Opportunity Scholarship Act to provide parents with more school choice.

DRUG ABUSE

The Governor spent a significant portion of his speech discussing drug abuse. Citing addiction as a disease that must be treated, the Governor called for mandatory treatment for drug offenders. He also requested the State to integrate employment services with treatment to help people get back to work and for programs to give non-violent offenders access to education opportunities. Christie announced a new drug treatment program in his speech: making all addiction services and resources available through one point of entry, instead of forcing victims and their families search for different state and local programs.

PENSION REFORM

Calling New Jersey's pension system "in much better condition" than before he was elected five years ago, Christie lauded the work of his administration - specifically for contributing more money to the State pension system than any preceding administration. The Governor conceded that much more work is needed to be done, with a \$90 billion unfunded pension liability. The Governor's remarks on pensions were panned by Democratic leaders in the Legislature, setting up what is expected to be a heated debate on pension funding during the budget debate this spring.

WASHINGTON

Criticizing national leaders in Washington for their "indecision", Christie stressed the need for new leadership and an "American renewal". He specifically mentioned his travels throughout the country over the past year and referenced interactions with voters in Chicago, Maryland, Kansas, Colorado, Maine, Arkansas and Florida.

CAMDEN

Governor Christie touted the renewal of Camden as a signature achievement during his tenure and attributed a significant drop in the murder rate, shootings, other violent crimes and a resurgence of Camden's schools to increased state investments, private sector investment, changes in city leadership and state intervention in the school system. Christie brandished his bipartisanship in discussing his partnership with the Democratic Mayor of Camden, Dana Redd.

PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS

Governor Christie held a closed door briefing for the national media before his speech. This briefing reportedly included representatives from the Wall Street Journal, ABC News, NBC, CNN, the New York Times and the Associated Press, but not members of the New Jersey media. During his speech, the Governor quipped that he would be standing before the Legislature this time next year, perhaps hinting that he does not plan to resign his office should he announce a bid for President.

AMONG THE ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED....

The Governor did not mention one of the most pressing policy issues facing New Jersey, namely the Transportation Trust Fund which is nearing insolvency. Democratic leaders in the Legislature took the Governor to task for not discussing this important issue. They also criticized the speech for being short on content and a vision for the next year in New Jersey and more a presentation of Chris Christie the presidential candidate to a national audience.