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ICYMI: Gov. Christie's Live Phone Interview With Harry Hurley On WPG Talk Radio

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Gov. Christie's Live Phone Interview With Harry Hurley On WPG T...

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Transcript:

Harry Hurley: Governor, welcome sir.

Governor Christie: Good morning Harry. How are you?

Hurley: I am well. How are you?

Governor Christie: I'm doing very well this morning.

Hurley: All right. Let's get into it. There's no question that the present financial situation in Atlantic City is a very serious matter, and before we get specifically into that, I want our listeners to just roll the wayback machine just a little bit and be fair and balanced about the Governor's record, your support of, and your support for Atlantic City during more than six years as Governor. I did some quick math overnight. You are my seventh governor since we've been having the privilege of signing on on a daily basis and there's no doubt in my mind, and I've said this many times to you and about

you behind your back, that you've been the most supportive governor for Atlantic City during at least the past 25 years. How do you respond to that?

Governor Christie: Well Harry, listen, you know, I made it a priority during the campaign back in 2009 to spend a lot of time in South Jersey, a lot of time in Atlantic County, and the fact is that I came to the conclusion that there were things that needed to be done with the state supporting Atlantic City, and we've done that, you know, whether it's creating the tourism district and assigning a former State Police chief to go down there and to help to create a greater safety net on the Boardwalk area, whether it's the amount of money that the EDA and others have encouraged to be spent and invested down there, bringing Bass Pro Shops to Atlantic City, bringing other shopping to Atlantic City and, and holding off. You can remember when I first ran for governor there was a big movement to try to expand gaming to the northern part of the state and I said absolutely not for five years, and I was the person who stood in the doorway to stop that for the last five years, to give Atlantic City an opportunity to take a deep breath and to be able to have the kind of opportunity to get the right number of casinos there. The support of the Revel project was unprecedented by anybody who had been in the governor's office before. In fact as you know that building stood half-built when I became Governor because Governor Corzine had abandoned Atlantic City. We made sure that got done. Now it turned out not to be a successful project. It may turn out to be a successful one in its next iteration, but we made sure that it got done. It created thousands of jobs for people building it, and then created jobs over a period of time for people who actually worked there so, you know, we've done all that we could do. We worked in conjunction with the great county executive in Atlantic County, Denny Levinson, to do things to make sure that the county was treated fairly, so I'm proud of the record that we have here, and this is the next piece we have to work on, which is bringing Atlantic City government into the real world.

Hurley: So let's go there Governor. What do you say to those, and there are thousands of people listening right now to you sir, what do you say to those who feel that that this critical tripping point, this moment of truth for Atlantic City, that they've lost your support?

Governor Christie: It's just simply wrong. I mean, if you look at what I've said we're willing to do, we're willing to set up a brand new type of tax system for Atlantic City that will end tax appeals that are adding to the financial woes of the city, getting a steady cash flow from new payment in lieu of taxes program, and we're ready to help them to control their finances. This city government has shown itself, and it's not just this administration but many administrations prior to this, have shown themselves absolutely unable to control the expenses of government, and Harry, let's be really specific about this: Atlantic City's cost of government is extraordinary. It's \$262.4 million, their budget for 2015. Just to give you some sense of comparison, there's 39,591 people living in Atlantic City. That's \$6,629 per person. How does that compare to other cities? Well, let's compare it to the city of Newark, our largest city. \$2,339 per person to run the government in Newark. You say well geez, Camden has had awful times, and comparison to someone in South Jersey. Well Camden, \$2,280 per person, compared to \$6,629 per person. How about the capital city, Trenton? \$2,229 per person. I mean, they are by almost three times a more expensive government. That's absolutely unacceptable spending to have on the backs of the people of Atlantic City, and I want to remind them that that's where the money comes from. The money comes from the people of Atlantic City, and that is absolutely unacceptable to have their government be two to three times more expensive, and so that's why when the Mayor says oh, he's cut \$25 million, well that's laudable in one respect, but \$25 million in the context of a \$260 million budget, and one last thing on this and we can talk more about it, but the entire cost of county government for the entire county of Atlantic is \$201 million. To Atlantic City, to run one city, one city within that county costs \$52 million a year more than running the entire county. In fact, Atlantic City's budget is larger than ten counties in New Jersey.

Hurley: And Governor, on this program for the entire past quarter of a century we have been very intellectually honest to say that in the very best of times, you know, things have been tight in certain spots. When you're worth \$21 billion in ratables, you know, you shouldn't have a government apparatus this big, but you can sort of hide some of the problems when you have that kind of ratable base, but when your ratable base is cut by two-thirds down to 7 billion it becomes gaping and then it becomes significant in terms of a city problem, a countywide problem, and Governor, I'm sure you'll agree, a statewide problem.

Governor Christie: Of course, and that's why the state has been there to help over the last number of years as that decline has occurred, and we've supported Atlantic City in every way that the state possibly could, but the fact is that we can't any longer. It's irresponsible of me for the people who pay taxes, not only in Atlantic City but across the entire state, to say well, let's just put another Band-Aid on this. Let's send a check, and let's count on the fact that a government that has been unwilling and unable to control itself—I mean, Harry, listen: as Governor of New Jersey, I make a very good salary. I make \$175,000 a year as Governor of New Jersey, but the chief of police in the city of Atlantic City makes \$212,000 a year. Now as difficult as the job of chief of police of Atlantic City is certainly on some days, the idea that the chief of police makes, you know, \$37,000 a year more than the governor of New Jersey, I think most people would say that's absurd, and his deputy chief makes \$192,500 a year. The deputy fire chief makes 197,500 a year. It is—and the salaries for municipal employees in, in Atlantic City are out of sync with the rest of the state and significantly higher, and so we need to be able, and what the takeover bill permits is to give us the tools to save Atlantic City government. It allows us to go and renegotiate all the debt they have. I mean, let's not forget the city owes Borgata over \$160 million, just Borgata. There's hundreds of millions of dollars in debt that needs to be

renegotiated with those lenders, but we also need to renegotiate with the public sector unions because their salaries, the cost of their benefits are completely out of control and are a major contributor as well to bankrupting the city.

Hurley: We're visiting with Governor Chris Christie. It's 45 minutes past the hour, and you're listening to WPG Talk Radio 1450's Early in the Morning with Governor Chris Christie. As Governor, how do you assess Governor Christie the very latest regarding the financial crisis in Atlantic City insofar as literally in a few days basically, less than a few weeks, probably April 8th, literally they will not be able to pay anyone, salaries, bills due, taxes, taxes to the state. What are your thoughts?

Governor Christie: Well that's why I sat down with Mayor Guardian and with Democrats in the Legislature to try to negotiate a way out of this mess, and I was proud when the Senate President, Steve Sweeney, and Don Guardian and myself a month or a half or so ago, stood up and said we have reached an agreement. Now I don't know what changed Mayor Guardian's mind, and I know he's used a lot of colorful adjectives to describe what the state takeover bill is, but let me be very clear with what it is: it is allowing us to have all the tools that are necessary to do what he has shown himself unable and unwilling to do, what the council has shown themselves unable and unwilling to do, and that is to balance Atlantic City's budget, and so, you know, is it everything I wanted? No, but it's the result of a negotiated agreement with Democrats, and we have what I unfortunately think is a game being played by Mayor Guardian and by Speaker Vincent Prieto of chicken, and they somehow think that, you know, playing public sector union politics that they're going to get me to change my mind and here's why I won't: because if I take off the table the ability to renegotiate public sector union contracts, which is what the Speaker is proposing, I take away one of the important authorities we need to be able to balance this budget and to make Atlantic City fiscally responsible, and I'm not going to do a job of one hand tied behind my back. I'm not going to doom this to failure before we start, and so unfortunately I think it's the politics of public sector union politics and the Democratic Party. I think it's 2017 gubernatorial politics which is getting into this and the Senate President to his credit has put this aside to find a solution for the people he really cares about in South Jersey, as have I, and the Mayor was involved in that at one time but he's now turned his back to it and he's succumbing to the politics as well.

Hurley: Governor, you know I love to make news on Hurley in the Morning, and I think we're going to make some news right now. I have confirmed from multiple sources that New Jersey Speaker Vincent Prieto was for the Atlantic City takeover legislation before he was against it. True or false?

Governor Christie: Well what I will tell you is that we had negotiations and discussions back in January and the Speaker made clear that he was willing to post the takeover bill. Let's be fair to him: he never told me he would vote for it. He told me he still was considering that, but what he told me and others was that he would post the bill and let his members decide and he's now, you know, hesitating to do that. I don't understand why, but the fact is that, you know, the Senate President has said that. I've said it. The fact is he committed to posting the bill and letting people vote for or against it. I believe if he posted the takeover bill in the Assembly that the bill would pass and, and I want to be clear about this: I am not going to sign either bill unless I sign both bills together in their current form, and I've told this to the Speaker since January, so this is no surprise to him. This is no new position on my part, and that's why I vetoed the bills previously.

Hurley: So on April 7th, on April 7th if you get one but not the other, or even a single word is changed, you're, and I've known you for a long time now Governor, you're unambiguous when it comes to these things, and I think in your position you have to be so the people know whether you're going to sign something or not. If anything changes here, or they don't give you both the PILOT and the takeover legislation, you are not signing them?

Governor Christie: I won't sign them and I won't sign any one of them individually, I have to sign them together, and let me explain to the people of the region who are listening why. Because you've seen failed attempts to fix this problem before. I do not want this to become one of those failed attempts and if I don't have all the authority I need to as Governor to be able to bring Atlantic County's finances into balance, then it will fail and we'll be back in the same position we're in now six months from now, nine months from now, a year from now, and the problem will get no better. In fact it will get worse for the people of Atlantic City and for the people of the region. Because remember, for all you folks who are listening who live in Atlantic County, the longer Atlantic City doesn't get its act together the more it costs Atlantic County and all the citizens who live in all the municipalities of Atlantic County, and it hurts the region even more broadly. And so, I'm not doing this just because I want my way. I know that this is what's needed to be able to get their finances into order and to exempt an entire class of people, public sector union workers, from having to be part of the solution is just bald politics. That's all it is and I'm not going to engage in it.

Hurley: Governor, Bob McDevitt—full disclosure, he's a lifelong friend of mine. I think he's a very thoughtful leader. He leads the largest union in South Jersey, UNITE HERE Local 54. Not only has he said it on this program and elsewhere. He put it out in writing yesterday. He supports the state's takeover of Atlantic City and all the things basically that

you've been outlining as the reason that it's required. I don't want to bring you into one union leader or anything, but are you moved by that? Do you have a comment about that?

Governor Christie: Well listen, I commend, I commend Bob for putting the interests of Atlantic City ahead of any other considerations, and it's courageous of him to do it, and not only did he put out a statement yesterday but he went to the Legislature on the day the Senate considered the takeover bill, and he testified in favor of it, and that takes a lot of guts and it's leadership is what it's called, and what he said for the men and women that he represents, is that a broke, nonfunctioning Atlantic City is not good for the members of UNITE HERE Local 54, and he's putting the interests of Atlantic City and the interests of his members in the right context. Other people just say I want what I want and that's it and, you know, for the Mayor to do a 180 on this is disappointing but listen, in the end, you know, this isn't about personal rivalries. It is about getting the job done the right way and I take no joy in having to do this, believe me. This is not what I was looking to have happen in Atlantic City government, but Atlantic City government under previous mayors have been so irresponsible, so irresponsible in the way they spent, so irresponsible in the way they've given out public benefits, exorbitant health benefits, huge salaries, big pensions, that it's contributing mightily to bankrupting the city. That, combined with the enormous debt that the city has taken on, both of those need to work, so not only will union workers have to sacrifice in the city but also, you know, bondholders who hold debt in the city are going to have to make sacrifices as well, so everyone, public sector, private sector, are all going to have to be part of the sacrifice here as is the casino industry.

Hurley: Two quick programming notes, one because one good turn deserves another. For more than seven years, because he promised it as a candidate, you know I interview a lot of people then they get in office and you never see them again, you never hear from them again. Governor Christie always said as a candidate, and Harry I'm not just here because I'm running, when I'm governor, I will be on your show regularly and there is not anybody out there that can say that Governor Christie did anything other than keep his word. I mean big time, personally and professionally appreciate the Governor's collegiality and his willingness on tough issues, on any issues to address the public. And he's always told me, if you ever need me or if there's an issue down in your area and people need to hear from me, I will be there and today is evidence of that. And the other thing I wanted to say in terms of one good turn deserves another, Governor Christie's great monthly program Ask the Governor, which is on all of the Townsquare News networks, including WPG Talk Radio 1450, where Governor Christie is appearing right now on the early in the morning program. The Governor's next program is Wednesday March 30. We will be carrying it live, right here on WPG Talk Radio 1450 on March 30, Wednesday, this upcoming Wednesday in the seven o'clock hour. Governor, if Atlantic City files for bankruptcy protection, I would imagine this is very complicated because no one has done it in a like hundred years or whatever, but and I used to even remember the one city that did it all those you know decades ago, but the state would have to approve that. So they can't just apply- they can't just file for bankruptcy protection, I guess they could begin the process, but you would ultimately, the state would have to approve it, would you not?

Governor Christie: Absolutely correct Harry. The- no municipality or county in the state of New Jersey could file for federal bankruptcy protection without the authorization of the Governor of New Jersey. And so you know, this is, all this conversation that folks in Atlantic City and the government are having about they are going to do this or that, right now they cannot do it without state permission. And so the fact is, we need to pass the takeover legislation, pass the pilot legislation, get it to my desk, and let's get to work fixing Atlantic City. Let's get to work negotiating that debt down. Let's get to work negotiating reasonable contracts. Let's get to work, getting things done. And that's what I want to do. You know, in the end, you know, I think the mayor just doesn't understand the ramifications of the things he's threatened. I know that when he threatened bankruptcy a few weeks ago, he got telephone calls from suppliers to the city, saying that they refused to supply heating oil to the city because of his threat, because they didn't want to give it to him on credit. You know, I don't think sometimes he understands the ramifications of the words that come out of his mouth.

Hurley: And Governor, not to pile on Mayor Guardian but one of things that we were critical on this program about was just the threat, the mere threat of you might possibly see the city of Atlantic City filing for bankruptcy protection cause the rating agencies to drop an already junk status Atlantic City municipal bond level four grades lower, it is at like the second to lowest possible, in the you know in the basement rating that you could possibly get, so that's the issue with these kinds of things, if you say certain things, markets react, people that might want to put millions of dollars into the city might say whoa, I got to pull back here because they are filing for bankruptcy, where's my money going. So this has to, this has to get fixed and the stability of Atlantic City is on the line right now Governor. And you started to mention some of things a moment ago. I think part of the fear here is, people don't know what will Atlantic City look like if the state of New Jersey formally takes over Atlantic City operations, financial operations, so on and so forth, what will the city look like in the terms that you can share, sort of broad, going into this?

Governor Christie: Sure, well first Harry, before I get to that let me just say this about the rating agencies. The rating agencies, you said, responded very poorly to the mayor's really ill advised, shoot from the hip comments. Sometimes I think he does not understand the power of the words that come out of his mouth when he is the Mayor of Atlantic City. But secondly, the rating agencies also said they examined the takeover legislation and the PILOT legislation and they said that if both of these pieces of legislation were passed and put into effect that it would significantly stabilize Atlantic City's finances. It would help with their ability to be able to borrow money in the future. It is not just us. It is not just me

and Steve Sweeney and Bob McDevitt and others who say this is the right thing to do. But the rating agencies have also said that this is the right thing to do. From my perspective we need to look into all the things that are being said publicly, and those who are talking about a stable Atlantic City, not just an Atlantic City that stays the way it is now, but a stable one are saying that the takeover legislation is the right thing to do. On what Atlantic City will look like- that is going to very much depend, Harry, upon how all the interested parties in Atlantic City react. I am ready to sit down and have my representatives sit down with all of the interested parties in the city. The casino industry, the public sector union workers, the folks in other businesses in Atlantic City who are owed money. The bondholders who are owed debt by Atlantic City and try to negotiate fair and reasonable agreements with all of them. To be able to do that and in many ways, if we are able to do that, which I think we will be able to, then people will no no significant difference in Atlantic City as we go forward except that we will shed hundreds of millions of dollars of this debt and employment obligations. On the other hand, if people are unwilling to cooperate then you will see some differences. But the fact is I think at this point if those bills pass and I sign them, everyone should understand that we have the authority to do whatever it is we need to do, and when you have someone who has the authority to do it and when you have someone like me who has shown over time that I am willing to utilize that authority in a way that is aggressive on behalf of the taxpayers. Well then I think we will be able to get things done.

Hurley: Governor, I know you have to go in just a moment. In terms of what the region, and in particular there is so many people not just those that live in Atlantic City, forty thousand people, but all of Atlantic County, Cape May County, the jobs, if there is instability, you know and talk of all this other stuff we are not even going to get into this today we will talk about it another day. The North Jersey encroachment, if that happens, and what that would mean. We will not even get into that today but, I think the key is for investors to see that Atlantic City is solvent again, stable, the people that are selling Atlantic City at a record level and bringing in tens of millions of people every year, that is one of the other complexities. I know it gets compared to other cities but thirty million people do come here, that is a complexity that I know you understand and acknowledge very well Governor Christie. But, if April eighth comes along and the city literally does not have a penny, can you even process the specter of that?

Governor Christie: No, I cannot., and that is why I do not understand why the Speaker and the Mayor are putting political games ahead of the people of Atlantic City. There is nothing in this for me Harry. It is not like I need another job. You know, running the State of New Jersey is complex and difficult enough, it is not like I need on a day-to-day basis to also be running the City of Atlantic City. I have no interest in this, this is not in my interest to do personally. But it is absolutely my obligation as Governor to stop a train wreck when I see it coming, and that is what this is. It is an absolute train wreck –

Hurley: Hey, Governor, if I could squeeze this in because I know we are already on over time it is WPGG talk radio 1450 Atlantic City it is eight o'clock. When, I was thinking, and I have been inundated over the past, since I put it on Facebook and copied you actually on Facebook as well and on Twitter and the station did a lot of promotions and things, so I have been inundated with questions. One that came up again and again and again and everybody thinks it is a got you question but I think it is a meatball. So I am going to tee it up like a beach ball for you to take a whack at this with your ping oversized driver and hit it five hundred yards, because people say to me, well Harry, you know, I know you love the Governor but the State has always been here, everything they did, the state approved. I think there is a different story behind that then some people have interpreted that statement. So how would you respond to those that say, hey you have been here the whole time, so if you take it over how is it going to be any different?

Governor Christie: Because Harry we have not had the authority to make decisions. We have had the authority to reject certain decisions but I have tried to respect the sovereignty of Atlantic City. And the people have elected different Mayors, you know, since I have been here and Council members and you have to respect what they want to do with their City. But the fact is now they have shown that the decisions that they have made, which they assured us would work out, have not worked out. And so when you are confronted with that, you know, absolute reality that they do not have the money to pay their bills that by the way, Borgata is not paying its property taxes. Because it has owed a hundred and sixty million dollars and the city does not have the money to pay it. So Borgata is withholding its property taxes to credit against the hundred and sixty million dollars it has owed. I mean when you have a city that is in that condition then the state has to step in and take more aggressive steps. You have to say to the Mayor and to the Council, you failed, you failed. And not just this Mayor and Council but scours of Mayors and Councils before them, some people who are still in public office today. You know the fact is that they failed and so we need to come in and solve the problem and so, you know, while the state has oversight capability over a number of different cities in the state, the fact is that the state does not have the right to tell them what to do. And Atlantic City made the decisions it made, and they have turned out to be failed decisions, bad decisions, and despite whatever advice we might give them at the time, they have the right to do those things. What the takeover legislation says is, listen, you failed at this, the State has to come in and take it over because lets face it too Harry, you know, a potential bankruptcy can have ramifications for other municipalities in this state as well. And the effect that it has on their potential credit if the state were to authorize Atlantic City to go bankrupt, well then, you know, other folks may think and other creditors in the state may think that we might authorize other municipalities to go bankrupt. Now that would not be true but you said markets control these things and we cannot always control what a market is going to think, believe, or act on as the ratings agencies showed. So, from my perspective Harry, the state has tried to let Atlantic City run its own affairs, and I have a state to run. But once it got to this crisis proportion, and they are going to be asking police, fire and municipalities, municipal employees to work for free. And they are adding to the debt because they are going to be issuing them

IOU's, this is irresponsible. And what the Mayor, and I would hope some responsible member of Council do in the intervening couple of weeks here, is to stand up and say what I know they believe to be true. Which is, while this is an unfortunate situation, that the state needs to take over, that they are unable to do what the state could do in negotiating away this problem. And I am ready to help, and ready to do it and take on additional responsibility but not with one hand tied behind my back, and I am not interested in playing 2017 gubernatorial politics with the Speaker or anyone else.

Hurley: What would it mean to local home rule if the state takes over and you, the state would have the authority to renegotiate contracts, MUA maybe goes to the county or wherever, this goes here, this goes there. We are going to open up this agreement, that agreement, what would happen with the local elected officials?

Governor Christie: Well they would still be in place and they would still be executing some responsibilities, significantly less than they have right now. But also there is a five year cap on this Harry –

Hurley: That is true.

Governor Christie: So the state would not be there forever, the state could only be there for a maximum of five years and I would tell you my goal would be to have us out much sooner. I do not want to have to do this a day longer than I have to do it. I have got five hundred and sixty-five other municipalities in this state to be concerned about. Twenty other counties... Twenty other counties. A state government that we have to continue to run. We have so much good news going on in this state right now. The unemployment rate is down to 4.5% statewide. It is three-tenths of a point under the national average. We have the lowest unemployment rate of any state in the region. Lower than Pennsylvania, lower than Delaware, lower than New York, lower than Virginia, lower than Massachusetts, lower than Connecticut. Our policies have worked and things are going really well in the state right now. I do not need to do this. But I am doing it because to not do it would be irresponsible and I am trying to help the people of Atlantic City and Atlantic County, not hurt them.

Hurley: You have entertained five extra questions past our allotted time. Would the county play a more visible role in a takeover?

Governor Christie: No question that that is one of the things that I would want to see happen. But as with everything else, that would be a product of negotiations with Dennis Levinson. But I will tell you that the County Executive, for years, for years, has been concerned about the path that Atlantic City has moved down. But he has no authority to change it. I think that if you look at the way that Atlantic County governs the county. The way he practices fiscal conservatism. The way that he has fought to keep the interest of all the counties taxpayers being held into account. He talks to me about that all the time. I would hope that the County Executive would help and play a role in all of this. I suspect that he would. But I would tell you, he will always make those decisions based upon what he believes are the best interests of all the people of Atlantic County. So I am not going to speak for Dennis. He does a great job speaking for himself. But you can be sure that his number would be on speed dial with me if this takeover legislation passed to make sure that I understand fully what is going on and get the advice of a veteran elected official who has done an extraordinary job running Atlantic County.

Hurley: Governor, absolute last stretch, and I promise you have been very, very cooperative beyond the time. But I know people want to hear this. You are on board that if the legislation for a payment in lieu of taxes, the PILOT and the state takeover legislation comes in the currently written form, not a single word changed, that you will sign it.

Governor Christie: Yes sir.

Hurley: That is on the record, you have made that very, very clear. People know that when you speak, you speak unambiguously and they can take your word on that. The Senate President is on board, the Governor is on board, the Speaker, we do not know what he is going to say but I know you know this, he is having a press conference today at 1. The Mayor of Atlantic City, Don Guardian, is having a press conference today at 2. I am talking to the most significant person involved in the equation, and that would be the Governor of the state of New Jersey, my good friend Governor Chris Christie and I would ask you this: If we get to April 8th, Atlantic City is broke as a joke and they cannot pay a parking ticket. Everybody is working for free that can. Other people are furloughed or who knows what happens. They cannot pay bills. They cannot pay anybody. The speaker stands firm, and I agree with you completely, he wants Steve Fulop to be the next governor, so he is playing politics here. I also am willing to say, I have multiple sources that say that he wants to follow in the path of Albio Sires, who I do like, who was speaker and then became the congressman. That he wants to go to the United States House of Representatives. I see a lot of politics here,

Governor. And what could be a stake would be the future of Atlantic City, rippling to the county, rippling to multiple counties throughout the twenty-one municipalities around the state and causing big time problems. If this goes down this way and the speaker refuses to come on board and put the legislation up for a vote by April 7th, what is going to happen?

Governor Christie: I do not know Harry. And the problem is the Speaker does not know either. And neither does the Mayor. This is uncharted territory and I want to avoid it. I want to avoid this uncharted territory. But I will tell you what we are not going to do. We are not going to write a blank check to Atlantic City and its government. We are not going to put a Band-Aid on this and have the same problem recur three months from now, six months from now. We are simply not going to do it. It would be irresponsible of me to do so and I think most people, reasonable folks in Atlantic City and in the region know that they have seen this act before and that they do not want to see it again. They need to know for sure that I would not, under any circumstances, allow a Band-Aid to be applied here. We just simply cannot do it. We need to finally bite the bullet and fix this. And we can do it. It is also really important for folks to note that we have already had bipartisan agreement on this. The Senate President's bill, which I supported, got thirty votes in the New Jersey state senate. It got Republican and Democratic votes after vigorous debate. We have a bipartisan agreement here so this is not an issue of politics by party. Because there are plenty of Democrats who have stood up and said they are for this, as there have been Republicans who have said it as well. This is individual personal politics now that is being played by the speaker and by the mayor. But the facts are pretty simple. When government has become this expensive, over \$6,600 per person. Almost three times more what it cost to run the City of Newark, a larger city, then things have gotten out of control and they need a firm hand to fix it. And that is what I intend to be. And I will tell you what the people in this state know for sure, the ones who agree with me and the ones who disagree with me, and there are plenty of both. When I say something I mean it and when I say I am going to do something, I will do it, and when I say I am not going to do it, I will not. So they should not play chicken with me or test me because I will not change my view on this. I have negotiated a bipartisan agreement and that is what I expect to get on my desk and if I do not, then everything that happens after that will be the responsibility of Speaker Prieto and Mayor Guardian.

Hurley: And Governor, I know you are leaving now. I asked that last question knowing it was an impossible question, because we cannot possibly know. But I think we can agree on this. Whatever happens if that scenario occurs we know it will be very, very bad. It is just a matter of how bad would it be.

Governor Christie: It is something that we do not want to see happen but I will not permit politicians of this state to blackmail, which is what they are trying to do for their public sector union buddies, the people and the taxpayers of the state of New Jersey. I am just not going to let them do it. I know who I represent every day. My job is to represent the people who pay the taxes, who work hard and play by the rules in this state. And especially when you have a \$212,000 a year chief of police. Please, the people of New Jersey should be outraged at that kind of salary for a town of 39,000 people. We cannot allow these kind of excesses to continue and I am not going to sit by and let it happen. I am ready to avoid that awful alternative, as is the Senate President, and as are 30 of the 40 members of the New Jersey State Senate who voted in favor of the PILOT bill and the takeover bill.

Hurley: We have the had the privilege of presenting the distinguished governor of the state of New Jersey, Governor Chris Christie. And what I believe, just speaking the truth, is an extraordinary, candid, open and honest discussion about a very, very significant financial crisis that is facing not only Atlantic City, but of course the state. For your programing notes, everybody out there listening, Governor Christie's next program, he has a great monthly program on the Town Square News Network, Ask The Governor. He is set for Wednesday March 30th. This upcoming Wednesday in the seven o'clock hour. Governor, thank you for the generosity of your time this morning and I wish you continued success because, when you succeed, we succeed.

Governor Christie: Harry I appreciate it. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to answer your really direct questions. To all the folks who are listening this morning, I wish them all and their families a happy Easter this coming weekend. Let them know, we are on the job, we are going to work hard to get this fixed and if some people would put politics aside, we will be ready to not only sign those bills before April 7th, but to then get to work to get the job done.

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