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## Governor Christie: When Camden's Successful, So Is New Jersey

Wednesday, September 24, 2014

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### Transcript:

**Mayor Redd:** The Governor's visit today is about highlighting the progress and the efforts that are underway in the city of Camden as we endeavor to make Camden a shining urban anchor in the state of New Jersey. Moving Camden forward we knew we had to deal immediately with the issue of public safety and we did that in the term along with some of the other fiscal issues that we were able to address with the team from the Governor, again providing technical assistance. But we're so delighted and we've heard time and time again how public safety is now making a difference under the leadership of our Chief John Scott Thomson and all of his men and women and how we see our children at play in our parks and community members and residents feeling safe again to come out of their houses. Ladies and gentlemen please welcome our Chief, John Scott Thomson.

**Chief of Police Thomson:** This past summer, we recorded a thirty year record low in violent crime. When you compare the summer of 2014 to the summer of 2012, we reduced shootings 71 percent. Over a two year period, murders have been cut more than in half and in one year we've driven down murders 46 percent. But what's more important than the statistics in and of themselves is the feedback that we get from the community. Because statistics mean nothing to you if you live in this neighborhood and you don't feel safe walking to the corner store. Statistics can be hollow and they can make outsiders and us feel good, but if the children that live in this community can't enjoy their front yards or their backyards, or their playgrounds, then everything we do is for naught. So we charged the men and women of this organization when they went out and hit the streets to get out of their squad cars, walk beats and ride bicycles. And to leverage the greatest force multiplier there is in public safety and it's not cameras, it's not cops and it's not S.W.A.T. teams, it's the people of the community. And when you have the neighborhood, everything is possible. So the public safety gains that we have seen in such a short period of time, the police department and the men and women who are here today, we played a valuable role but make no mistake about it, we were facilitators. We were conveners. The true credit goes to you all. It goes to the people that live in the neighborhoods and said enough is enough. And we were there for you but it's you that's made the community safer and that's going to sustain the efforts and the successes we've had thus far. So please give yourselves a round of applause with that.

**Wakill Cromer:** I lost my son to the streets of Camden at 18 years old. So I have a passion to do this work right here and to get it done. And it's a job that we have to get done together. But we can't get it done until we have people like this to stand up for us. When you have people like this to stand up for you. So today, today can we make a history today. Can we forage our way today? Can we make a change today? Can we make the safe corridors for our children's sake? What we do today is what we stand on tomorrow. If you don't build a good day today then tomorrow is nothing. So build a good day for today. So let's do the work today. Let's get behind the people that's doing the work today. Today, not tomorrow. Don't go in your houses and hide, come out. Come out to the meetings that you need to come out to and make this happen with us.

**Governor Christie:** When I got out of the car today Dana said, welcome back to your city. And I'm here more than I'm in any other city in New Jersey. And so as I've been here I can not only get reports, but I've watched, myself, the change in the atmosphere in this city driven by the community policing that's going on by the Metro Division each and every day and the interaction with the citizens. You can see it as you drive around this city, you can feel it as you drive around this city. None of that happens without strong leadership, and Chief Thomson you've provided that leadership with the men and women of your division and I thank you very, very much for what you're doing. There's a whole bunch of other stuff they wrote down for me to say but everybody else already said it, all before me. That's the danger of going last. So I'm not looking at the paper, I'm just telling you that I know we have lots more work to do. But there's no penalty for standing up and appreciating what's already happened even when there's more work to be done. We need every once and a while to remind ourselves that we're making progress and that things are going better. And I've been here, both as U.S. Attorney and now as Governor, in times that were pretty dark and dangerous and sad in this city. And these are not those times. I've been involved with the city of Camden now for 12 years as the Chief Law Enforcement Officer on the federal level in this state and now as the Governor. And I can tell you that I have never seen a more hopeful time based not on words but on deeds, in this city's history in the last 12 years. So we have a lot more to do. Let's not waste this moment or this opportunity. We could do it together. What you need to know is that the state, as long as I'm Governor, is going to be here as an active participant, supporter, funder, cheerleader and partner in making this happen. When Camden becomes more successful, prosperous, safe and educated, New Jersey becomes more prosperous, safe, educated, and hopeful.

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