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WITH YOUR FRIENDS.SHARE    **Remarks of Governor Chris Christie as Prepared for Delivery
Ceremony in Honor of Assembly Republican Leader Alex DeCroke**The State House
Trenton, New Jersey
January 10, 2012

Speaker Oliver, President Sweeney, Leader Kean, Betty Lou and your family, friends gathered here today:

As you know, I had intended to come before you today to give a report on the State of our State.

And I will fulfill that constitutional obligation by addressing you and our citizens more fully next week. For today, it is enough to say that the State of our State is getting better, but today our hearts are filled with sadness.

Unfortunately, tragedy struck late last night. Our colleague, our friend, Alex DeCroke passed suddenly. Our State House flag is at half mast today in his honor.

He passed doing what he loved – serving the people of New Jersey.

But it does not lessen the pain.

To Betty Lou, to PJ and Christopher, to Jessica and Erin, and to Alex's grandchildren Connor, Kayla and Noah, we offer the most sincere condolences possible. We join you in deep sadness. And we express to you thanks for supporting Alex in a life well lived.

For me, Alex was a close family friend and a mentor for almost two decades. He helped me get my start in elective office as a freeholder in Morris County back in 1994. And ever since, he was a valued advisor, an unshakable ally, and a source of all that is good in politics and in public service. I had no more loyal friend in Trenton than Alex DeCroke. Mary Pat and I will miss him greatly.

Alex devoted much of his life to the public – to making Morris County and New Jersey a better place. He did it through business, as a partner with the late Congressman Dean Gallo. He did it through his service to many charitable boards and foundations. And he did it through government service. He was a Morris County Freeholder. And, since 1989, he was a member of this legislature.

He was loved by his constituents enough that he was re-elected eleven times. And he was respected by the members of his caucus enough that he was elected Republican Leader.

In government service, just as he was in business and in the community, Alex was incredibly hard-working.

He was a leader in this body on transportation issues – a former Chairman of the Transportation Committee, a sponsor of the laws to renew the Transportation Trust Fund and to dedicate the gas tax to transportation projects.

He fought hard for the rights of victims of crime and their families. He was, in many ways, the pioneer in this chamber of the modern victims' rights movement. His commitment was born out of his sense of fairness and his huge heart for those who had suffered a great personal loss. The victims of crime and their families have lost their greatest advocate.

He was a fierce competitor in the political arena. While Alex always had a smile and a kind word for everyone in this business, behind that genuine friendliness was the ferociousness of someone who had deeply held convictions. Alex was a fighter. He knew how to win and lose in this arena gracefully. He knew how to wage a good battle. But unlike many in this business today, waging that good battle did not prevent Alex from inviting you out after the battle was waged for a steak and a drink. He was a representative of an era that is slipping away and that his passing I hope motivates us to revive—that we are all in this together, disagreements and all, and none of it should make us forget our essential humanity or who we were sent here to fight for every day.

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Frankly, in all that we have accomplished together in these last two years—we owe a major debt to Alex DeCroce. None of it would have been possible without his help.

Perhaps his greatest accomplishments were personal. In a business that is sometimes rough and tumble and replete with broken commitments, he was one of the kindest, most gentle and most trustworthy people I have ever known. Due to all of these extraordinary traits, you couldn't find anyone, on either side of the aisle, that didn't like Alex DeCroce.

He was a friend to all of us – regardless of our position, regardless of our party, regardless of our station in life, regardless of whether the political winds were at our back or squarely in our face. Alex was a man who understood loyalty. When you were his friend, you were his friend—regardless of whether he thought it helped him or hurt him politically. Having caused him both over the years, believe me, I speak from experience.

He was dedicated, honest and down to earth. A source of advice. A source of insight. A source of consolation for friends, and the object of admiration even from political adversaries.

Somehow, standing here, it seems fitting that we should honor Alex in the chamber where he spent so much of his life, the chamber to which he was so dedicated, and in which he accomplished so much.

He loved this chamber. He loved all of you. He loved the people of New Jersey. And we loved him back.

Alex had intended to speak here today. I was given his planned remarks this morning when I arrived at the State House by his former colleague Rich Bagger. Here was his message: "We will solve more problems by working together than apart."

Alex had planned to tell us to "reach across the aisle to work cooperatively toward solving our biggest problems." His closing words were to be: "We owe our constituents nothing less."

God has a way of taking the best away from us before we are ready to see them go.

The Prophet Isaiah says, "Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest even as they lie in death."

Alex walked uprightly to the end. Last night, he fought the good fight on this floor right to the very end of his life. That is often said metaphorically about some in our business. For those of you who were here last night, you know it was literally true about Alex.

He fought for his beloved colleagues, for his steadfast principles, for his belief in this chamber and for the people he was elected to serve until the very last moments of his life.


When his work was done last night, the Lord took Alex, still hard at work on behalf of the State, still giving his all to the people of New Jersey. And we know that He took him in peace, and will care for him gently in the palm of His hand.

To Betty Lou, and to Alex's family, we send our condolences. And to Alex, no doubt watching down on us as we sit here now, we send our love, our respect, and our eternal gratitude. We will do our best to make you proud.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the good and kind soul of Alex DeCroce.

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