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Gov. Christie: If Speaker Prieto Wants To Close The Government, It's Going To Be His Decision

Thursday, June 29, 2017

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Gov. Christie: If Speaker Prieto Wants To Close The Government, It's Going ...

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Transcript:

Governor Christie: Good afternoon, I want to first thank the members of the state Senate for their movement today in passing the Vitale bill on Horizon and the lottery bill to give greater solvency to our pension. Let you all know, I'm pleased that we have bipartisan agreement with the Senate on those two issues and on the budget. And so now it's up to Speaker Prieto. If Speaker Prieto wants to close the government, this is going to be his decision. I don't want to see Speaker Prieto keeping people out of Liberty State Park this weekend for 4th of July weekend. I don't want to see Speaker Prieto stopping people from going to Island Beach State Park this weekend, during 4th of July weekend, but this is purely up to him now. We have Democrats and Republicans agreeing on three major priorities: on the Vitale bill, on the bill to make our pension system stronger and more solvent, and on a budget. And I intend to stand by that agreement that I have with the Senate. It's time for Speaker Prieto to stop obstructing, put the Vitale bill and the lottery bill up for a vote. He put the budget up for a vote, and in a chamber with 52 Democrats he only got 24 votes. I think it's a pretty clear sign that what people want is what we've had for eight years, predominantly in this administration, which is agreement with the Legislature on a budget before it hits my desk. Only one time in the last eight years, have I had a budget come to my desk without agreement with the Legislature, and I had the ability to do what I needed to do with my constitutional authority. I do not want to do that. I would much prefer to have an agreement. I agree with the budget

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as it's been presented. It should be presented to me, but it must be presented to me holistically with Horizon and with the lottery bill. So this is now up to Speaker Prieto. I would much rather execute the budget as presented by the budget committees but I cannot do that without all of these things happening at the same time, and the Speaker knows that he's known that for well over a week, and I was very clear with he and Senator Sweeney a week ago Tuesday. Nothing has changed. My position hasn't changed and it won't change. So, Steve Sweeney and the folks in the State Senate and the Governor's office have done what we needed to do to make sure the budget will be done on time and other priorities will be met, and I hope that now that the budget has been put up without the Vitale bill and there were only 24 votes for it, that Speaker Prieto goes to the will of his caucus and puts the Vitale bill and the lottery bill up for a vote. Those will be approved, I'm confident they will be and then I believe a budget would be approved and then we could all get on with the rest of the work we need to do this summer and not be worried about any of this. So very gratified by the work that was done in the senate it was a lot of hard work for us to work with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to get this done, and this now, so everyone understands, represents a bipartisan agreement. Republicans and Democrats voting together on this issue, and the only obstruction left is the Speaker, who for some reason has decided that the interests of a multibillion dollar insurance company are more important to protect than the people's ability to have their government remained open and operational. I don't understand it, but the Speaker will have to explain it for himself and the best thing for him to do at this point, in my view, is to put the bills up for a vote, let them be voted on by the Assembly, and then we sign the budget. We sign those bills, and we let people go for their holiday weekend. I'm prepared to do that, and I'm prepared to stand by my agreement with the Legislature to do that with the budget but it's all a package. It all needs to be done together.

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Press Contact:

Brian Murray
609-777-2600



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Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000