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Governor Chris Christie Calls On State Legislature To Act On Tax Relief At Special Session

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Tags: [Taxes](#)*Remarks As Prepared For Delivery*
 Trenton, New Jersey
 July 2, 2012

Good afternoon, Lt. Governor Guadagno, Senate President Sweeney, Speaker Oliver, and all the members of the Legislature. I take my constitutional powers and responsibilities seriously, as I know you do. When there are pressing matters that I believe must be addressed, it is my responsibility to call our Legislature into special session.

Giving the certainty of tax relief to our citizens and making our state more competitive with our neighbors in job creation—today—will allow us to put more New Jerseyans back to work this summer. What could be more important for us to do today?

I know it's been a long year and I know over the last few weeks each of you have been working hard to bring this legislative session to a successful conclusion. We did many great things together. But there is one greater thing left to do—lock in tax relief today that will help to create new jobs tomorrow.

Over the last two years we've done something pretty unprecedented, not just for New Jersey, but for the country. Despite our differences, we've managed to buck the conventional wisdom and actually get things done.

Now, that doesn't mean we haven't disagreed. But in the face of our disagreements, we've shown that you can fight, you can argue and then you can still compromise and get things done.

You can do it when you decide not to care when the pundits, the media and the rest of the world tell you things have to be done in a certain way. In fact, when they tell you it has to be done in a certain way, it's pretty much a guarantee that we should do the exact opposite.

New Jersey and its people have never been one to blindly do what they're told to do. Our work over the last two and a half years is proof of that.

Yet, there are some who want to play politics as usual with this issue. Some believe that the old Trenton games that Democrats and Republicans have played over the years should be our game plan on this issue today. I reject that approach and so do many of you. Let's not give in to the ordinary—let's continue to provide bipartisan leadership.

Just this year alone, we've accomplished some landmark reforms for New Jersey...together. We did it because in the end it didn't matter who the pundits say won or lost the political day, it mattered what we got done for the people of New Jersey.

If you had told the old time political players in January that this Legislature would pass bipartisan teacher tenure reform for the first time in 100 years, they would have rolled their eyes. But, together, we defied expectations. And because we worked together and we put the substance of the issues first, a significant tenure reform bill sits on my desk.

When I spoke about the need to change our drug rehabilitation system based on the principle that everyone deserves a second chance and every life is precious, we put principle ahead of politics. We worked together to save lives and to make sure that people who need a helping hand, get it. The result is that mandatory drug rehabilitation for non-violent offenders is now a reality. It happened because of us.

The July 1st deadline for reforming our higher education system was deemed arbitrary and unachievable by members of the chattering class. It couldn't be done. What did we do? We proved them wrong again. The result is a historic reorganization of our higher education system that not only improves the system, but also makes us more economically competitive. Our state's future and the men and women who come here and who stay here to seek an education and a quality, good-paying job are better off because of our bipartisan accomplishments with this

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reorganization and our higher education bond initiative. Where other leaders failed over the last 30 years, we succeeded—together.

Since the beginning we've made the tough decisions together in a fiscally difficult environment to achieve historic pension and benefit reform, to cap property taxes so that New Jersey homeowners saw the lowest increase in property taxes this past year in two decades and to provide critical tax relief for job creators to invest, expand and come to New Jersey.

Whether it's the accomplishments of this year or the work of the last two years, we've proven one thing: If we can make it happen in New Jersey, real leadership can make it happen anywhere.

Now is not the time to stop the progress of the last two years. Now is not the time to change course and reverse our hard work.

This is a moment. But it's not a moment where we should take a cue from Washington, DC and begin emulating the politically shameful performances we see down there. Washington, DC has been paralyzed because people talk at one another not to one another. No one stops for a second to think about how what they fail to do today will lead to failure for our citizens tomorrow. Instead it's a constant fight to see who wins the next 24-hour news cycle. Is that really who we aspire to be here in New Jersey?

No, here in New Jersey we aspire to talk to each other; we aspire to like the people we work with across the aisle; we aspire to take the time to figure out how to reach a place of compromise to improve the lives of all of our citizens.

So, let's do exactly that today.

We believe that the people of New Jersey deserve a tax cut.

I have used my veto authority on the budget you sent me to create a \$650 million surplus. Can't we afford to send just one-third of that surplus back to our citizens and to give them that guarantee today? I say yes. We have the money available to fund a tax cut that gives relief to middle-class New Jerseyans.

We can accomplish this before you leave this building today. To show you my commitment to compromise, I have today conditionally vetoed a bill that would make New Jersey less competitive and have instead turned it into a law that would give middle class New Jerseyans a tax cut.

And I did it today, not with my own proposal from January, but based upon a compromise plan presented by Senate Democrats. One supported by Steve Sweeney and Jeff Van Drew. One campaigned for by Loretta Weinberg. Imagine that—a tax cut plan endorsed by Sweeney, Van Drew, Weinberg and me?

Let's not let a moment that comes with the frequency of Halley's Comet pass us by. A bipartisan tax cut plan is on all of your desks right now. Let's show our state we can work together and finish the job before we leave for this holiday weekend.

Because this isn't about whether I win. It's not about whether Steve wins. It's not about whether Sheila wins. It's not about whether any of you win. It's not about us. It's not about polls or conventions or speeches or TV sound bites.

It's about the people of New Jersey. It's about them winning. It's about their families winning.

It's about the family paying the bills on time and saving every penny to make sure they can go away this summer to the Jersey shore. It's about the young couple wanting to put down roots in the community and buy their first home. It's about the single mom in Camden doing everything she can to make sure her kid goes to a good school.

So I ask all of you today, what are we waiting for? What are we waiting for?

We are better than this. I know we are. I know you know we are. I know because we have proven it not by what we have said over the last two and one-a half years, but by how we have acted. I know by what we have accomplished. Our state is a better place because of what we have done and our people can feel it. Let's not stop now.

We know that we have the means after the years of shared sacrifice to give the people of New Jersey relief. They trusted us when we said this would be hard and that we needed them to step up and join us in the sacrifice. They did exactly that.

And they trusted us again when we said—when we all said-- that this year they would share in the benefit and see a tax cut.

We cannot let them down when they have trusted us this far.

Now, you sent me a budget this past week that was enacted with only Democratic votes. You refused to negotiate a budget with me. This is your budget. You used my revenue projections to spend on programs throughout the state. If my revenue projections were good enough for your spending, why are they not good enough for the people's tax cut? This makes no sense to me and I can assure you it will make no sense to the taxpayers of New Jersey. You cannot have it both ways.

New Jersey has stepped back from the fiscal cliff it was teetering over when we were faced with closing \$13 billion in budget gaps in the first year, with billions of dollars in wealth leaving the state, with thousands of lost jobs for our citizens.

Today, we have a balanced budget with a sound surplus. We have added nearly 85,000 private sector jobs since February 2010, seeing the best year of private sector job growth in 2011 in over a decade and with 2012 already on pace to be even stronger.

Our 12 month job increase was the sixth highest in the nation and we're seeing housing sales, car sales and personal income increasing at higher rates than the nation.

We're seeing this New Jersey Comeback because of the determination of the people in this room and because the people we work for have given us their faith. Now, is the time to accelerate the New Jersey Comeback, not reverse course and take a step backwards.

We owe it to the people who went out on a limb and trusted us to give them the certainty of tax relief today, not some vague promise of tax relief in the far off future which they fear, rightfully, based on the failures of the past, will never reach their wallets.

Let's give them a guarantee today—a future in New Jersey that will include three years of taxes falling, not rising.

I am the Governor and while it's not a bad title, I'm also a guy from New Jersey. I'm a father, a husband, a son.

The same goes for each of you in this room. That's who we all are at the end of the day, when you strip away the titles, the offices and the cameras.

We know that when we leave this Chamber the stakes are high. Not the political stakes for each of us. But the real life stakes for the fathers, and mothers, husbands, and wives, children and grandchildren, sisters and brothers who wake up each day just trying to make a good living, to provide for their families and to be happy.

So, I ask you again, what are we waiting for?

I asked all of you to come here today and you did. Showing up today means you understand your constitutional duties.

Now, let's open the board, vote for a middle class tax cut and show that bipartisanship is alive and well in New Jersey.

I have come to the center of the room and agreed to the Senate Democratic tax plan. Will you join me? Will you act today to guarantee a summer of tax relief, job competitiveness and increased confidence in state government for our citizens? I am ready. Are you? I leave this Chamber full of hope that you will put aside politics and join me in leading our state to a better tomorrow.

Thank you for your dedication, your respect and your time. To all in this room and to all of our citizens, let's head to the shore and enjoy a happy and more prosperous 4th of July. God Bless you and your families, God Bless America and God Bless the great State of New Jersey.

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