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# Gov. Christie: Unlike Speaker Prieto, I Will Not Play Political Games At The Expense Of Taxpayers

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Gov. Christie: Unlike Speaker Prieto, I Will Not Play Political Game...

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### Transcript:

**Governor Christie:** If Atlantic City's finances go down the tubes, there is only one person to blame and that is Vincent Prieto. The fact of the matter is this, I negotiated a bipartisan agreement with the Democrats in the New Jersey State Senate and it passed overwhelmingly. This morning his own Majority Leader, Majority Leader Greenwald announced that he's canvassed his caucus and spoken with Assembly Minority Leader Bramnick and said there are enough votes to pass the takeover bill in the Assembly. The Speaker refuses to post it because he is playing public sector union politics on behalf of his political boss, Steve Fulop and on behalf of his own political ambitions. It is unacceptable. The solution is in the takeover bill and I'm not going to take responsibility for what happens in Atlantic City if I don't have the authority to fix the problem. And if the speaker thinks that the authority exists then it just shows that he has absolutely no experience in an executive branch position. You know so its very simple. The votes exist in the Assembly to pass this. Bipartisan votes have already been passed in the Senate, thirty of them, to pass the takeover bill. So I'm going to be really clear. Atlantic City is running out of money on April 8<sup>th</sup>. If this is not passed and put on my desk in the exact form that it was passed in the Senate, both the pilot bill and the takeover bill, then no action will be taken and Atlantic City will be out of money on April 8<sup>th</sup> and the public employees who will not be paid, the services that will not be provided, they can all come to the speaker's office and ask him why he will not agree with everyone else who has looked at this situation, including his own Majority Leader, who has said that the votes exist to pass it. Believe me, if I had the authority to do what I wanted to do in Atlantic City right now, I would do it. I do not. You know who else agrees with me? The Senate President, the Majority Leader of the Assembly, the Republican Leader of the Senate, the Republican Leader of the Assembly and the Mayor used to agree before he decided to get into the political game as well. If they all want to suck up to the public sector unions for their own political gain, that is their choice. But then they

are going to have to explain to the people of Atlantic City and Atlantic County why they are allowing that city to go into crisis when it can be averted. But I will not put a Band-Aid on this problem. Atlantic City costs over \$6,600 a person to run the government. We are standing the City of Newark, the state's largest city, it is \$2,800 a person to run the government in Newark. Never, Joe, did I think that Newark would be seen as a paragon of fiscal conservatism. Yet if you compare Newark to Atlantic City, it is nearly \$4,000 less person to operate the government in the City of Newark than it is in Atlantic City. In Atlantic City, a town of 39,00 people, the police chief makes \$212,000 a year. His deputy chief makes 193,000 a year and the deputy fire chief makes 183,000 a year. I would remind you that that is both more than I make and the county executive makes. And with all due respect to the police chief in Atlantic City I do not think his job is harder than the County Executive in Essex or the Governor of the State of New Jersey. They owe \$160 million to Borgata. I would ask the Mayor how does he intend to pay it? I would ask the Speaker how does he intend to pay it? Because I will tell you how Borgata is paying it right now. They are refusing to pay their property taxes. That is \$3.7 million a quarter that they are withholding as self-help against the \$160 million debt that they are owed. There is only one way to do this. To give broad authority to the state to renegotiate debt and to renegotiate public sector union contracts. And if we are not given the authority to do that then Atlantic City and the Speaker can do it on his own. So if he wants to continue to play politics and be dragged around by the nose by his Hudson County political boss, that is his prerogative. But I am not going to participate in that game. And by the way, neither is the Senate President or the majority of Republicans and Democrats in the New Jersey State Senate who voted overwhelmingly for this legislation.

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