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Chris Christie Delivers Inaugural Address as 55th Governor of New Jersey

Tuesday, January 19, 2010 • Tags: [Other](#)

Trenton, NJ - Today, Chris Christie was sworn in as the 55th Governor of the State of New Jersey and Kim Guadagno was sworn in as New Jersey's first Lt. Governor. Governor Christie's inaugural address as prepared for delivery is below:

**Remarks of the Honorable Chris Christie
Governor of the State of New Jersey
Inaugural Address
War Memorial Building
Trenton, New Jersey
January 19, 2010**

Lieutenant Governor Guadagno, Senate President Sweeney, Speaker Oliver, members of the 214th legislature, Chief Justice Rabner and the members of the supreme court, to all the former Governors, to my former U.S. Attorney colleagues, to my dear family and friends, and most of all to the hard working men and women of New Jersey, I stand here today as your Governor. I understand the task before me and I am well aware of your expectations for me and this government. You voted loudly and clearly for change and you have entrusted us with what may be our last, best hope for a stronger New Jersey—the New Jersey of our youth, full of hope and opportunity. New Jersey, you voted for change and today change has arrived—right here, right now.

I stand before you at an historic moment for New Jersey, a State rich in history.

It was, of course, in this very city, in the midst of a cold winter such as this one, and tremendous hardship for his troops, that George Washington crossed an icy Delaware some 233 years ago to win a battle that contributed so much to our history as a free people, and ultimately to the idea that a better life was possible in America.

Today, our challenges are different. We do not face the hardship of Washington's troops. But our economy is struggling. Our budget is in deep deficit and our State is losing ground. Our people are dispirited and wondering if our best days are truly still ahead of us.

So let me begin with the spirit of those giants who have preceded us in mind.

First, I say to the people of New Jersey, while the economic hour is dark, there are brighter days ahead. We have the tools to win the battle for a better future. More than our forefathers had; even more than we realize ourselves.

And second, to all the people of the State, whether you voted for me or not, whether we have agreed or disagreed in the past – today, I am your governor. Young or old, republican or democrat, rich or poor, regardless of color or heritage – I promise you this: I will work every waking hour of every day for a better life for all of our citizens.

To governor Corzine, I thank you for your decade of service to the nation and to the people of New Jersey. Your focus on the health of our children is something for which many New Jerseyans will long be grateful.

Rarely in New Jersey's history have we faced the challenges we face today. There is fear and uncertainty. But fear and uncertainty are not necessary and do not have to be permanent. We have the tools for a brighter future, if we change direction.

To the people of New Jersey, I say this: you voted for change. And today, change has arrived.

One thing is clear: the old ways of doing business have not worked.

The era of partisanship and acrimony has not served the people well. Problems have festered while too much of the time of our leaders has been spent assigning blame instead of assuming responsibility. Today, we are taking a new direction. Today, a new era of accountability and transparency is here. Today, I will sign executive orders that will make our finances, our budgeting, and our processes more transparent for all citizens to see. Today, change has arrived.

The era of runaway spending and higher and higher taxes has not worked. We have the largest budget deficit per person of any State in the Union. We have the highest tax rates in the nation. We have the highest unemployment rate in over a quarter century. Our economy is stagnant and our people are suffering under the burden government has placed on them. And we cannot continue to mortgage our future if we hope to improve it. Today, we are taking a new direction. Today, a new era of lower taxes and higher growth will begin. Today, change has arrived.

The era of broken schools and broken streets and broken dreams in our cities has not worked. Too many urban school districts have failed despite massive spending per pupil. Crime is too high, and hope is too low. Today, we are taking a

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new direction. Today, a new era in which parents have choices, in which charter schools can help young people pursue excellence, in which we work to attract people to cities instead of driving them out, begins. Today, change has arrived.

Many have commented that our problems are large. Some say they are insurmountable.

But I disagree.

As I have traveled this State, I have indeed seen people struggling.

I have seen moms who put their kids on the school bus worried about whether they are getting a 21st century education.

I have seen dads who went to work hoping for a good day but worried that their week might end on the unemployment line.

I have met parents who tuck their children into bed, wondering whether New Jersey can once again be a place where *our* kids can afford to raise *their* kids.

But I have also seen something else. All across our State, I have encountered strong and determined mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, students and their grandparents. Accepting the hand they have been dealt – by the economy, by fate, but also by our own past choices and policies – but anxious to work, together, to forge a new direction – to fix the problems we face. So, to all those with hope in their heart, with determination in their soul, and with a willingness to pitch in and work together, I say—keep going; have faith; for today, change has arrived.

The people of our State are nothing if not determined. Families overcoming unimaginable burdens to hold together. Workers training for their second or third career. Students working two jobs to help pay for the hope given to each of them by a college education.

Certainly if they can do that, we can come together to do the people's work by accomplishing the long overdue task of fixing our State's problems and governing it with more foresight. By your example, you the people have shown us the path to change.

The greatest thing about New Jersey has always been New Jerseyans themselves. To truly understand this, you need only look at the New Jersey heroes we have with us today.

There is Carolyn B.T. Wallace of Newark. Forty years ago, she and her late husband James founded the international youth organization as a way to help kids in Newark. She has dedicated her life to transforming lives through education and community service.

There is Dave Girgenti of Cherry Hill, who three years ago began the wish upon a hero website. Using the power of the internet, he brings wishers and granters of wishes together. In these three short years, the power of Dave's idea has made the wishes of 48,000 people come true.

Tammy Evans-Colquitt of Pennsauken created "image and attitude" in the year 2000 to help improve the self-image of disadvantaged men and women in Camden county. She helped women transitioning from welfare to work and men from incarceration to the workplace. Tammy's hard work has proven once again that no life is disposable and that everyone deserves a second chance.

Jim Benedict of freehold started and runs a lunch kitchen out of St. Peter's church, serving hot meals to 200 people, three days a week. With no formal funding from Gov't, Jim calls on the generosity of New Jerseyans to feed the hungry.

Finally, Chip Paillex of Pittstown is the founder of America's grow-a-row, a non-profit that feeds the hungry by encouraging the donation of fresh produce to food banks all over new jersey. He started in his own garden and last year, over 700 volunteers donated 225,000 pounds of produce to area food banks.

These folks are just a few examples of what New Jerseyans are all about. When faced with tough problems, you choose hard work over giving up. You rise to the challenge, not shrink from it. For all of us on this stage we must now resolve to use all of you as our example. We in office must not shrink from the challenge, we must rise to it.

So today, right now, I ask Senator Sweeney and Speaker Oliver to come and stand with me and join in a handshake of resolve and friendship. In a handshake of commitment to stand for our principles—but to never abandon our duty to serve the people. Let us shake hands as a symbol for our citizens of all that is possible in a future that demands that who gets the credit finally takes a back seat to doing something worth getting credit for. Senator Sweeney and Speaker Oliver—I offer you my hand and my commitment.

For my part: I asked to serve as governor to help solve our State's problems. I asked to serve because I believe we can do it – we can chart a new course and write a better history. I stand here today as governor supremely confident that we are up to the challenge.

Why am I confident? Because we have the tools to grow again. Because we have resources that few other States can match.

In an economy powered by knowledge, we are home to one-fifth of all the researchers and scientists in the country.

In an interconnected world powered by trade, we are home to one of America's greatest transportation hubs –one of the largest ports in the world, an unparalleled network of highways, and one of America's busiest airports.

In a time of historic medical innovation, we are the number one home of life sciences in the nation.

In a society that draws strength from diversity, we are one of the most diverse States in the nation – home to mountains and beaches, to cities and farms, and to people of every background, color and creed imaginable. This diversity is our strength.

Now, we must once again be the home for growth. We can become that through the choices we make. Together, we must take the future in our own hands and shape it to our liking. We are not a State of passive observers; we are a State

of builders and doers.

Together, we can build a stronger economy. Yes, we will have to cut some programs and transform others to get our budget in balance. Yes, we will have to curb spending in municipal governments where there has been too little control. Yes, we will have to restrain State government, even as we invest to be prepared for the economic competition ahead. But we can do these things—and once again be a home for growth.

Together, we can build better schools that train our students for a brighter future. Yes, we will have to make better use of the resources showered on education. Yes, we will have to hold schools accountable and give people the choice to pursue alternatives to schools that fail. Yes, we will have to reward excellence, and not tolerate failure. But we can do these things—and once again be a home for growth.

Together, we can cut red tape and make it easier for the entrepreneur to create new jobs and the business owner to keep them. With Lt. Governor Guadagno in the lead, we must revisit the complex web of rules woven by various special interests over many years. But that is a long overdue visit if we are once again going to be the home for growth.

Together, we can help our national government be a friend and not a barrier to growth. The era of expensive and sometimes thoughtless mandates from Washington must end. After all, the States are supposed to be "laboratories of democracy", not guinea pigs for failed federal experiments.

Most of all, together we can restore pride in our State. We have the talent, the natural beauty, the rich history, and the even richer character as a people, to be proud of New Jersey again. It is time to bring our pride back.

If we can do these things, New Jersey can indeed again be a home for growth.

It will not happen overnight, for our problems did not accumulate in a day. They have been decades in the making.

The problems will not be solved if we retreat into a corner, or if we shrug our shoulders in the belief that one person cannot make a difference. This is not a time for just another season of cynicism. With a State in crisis, we must cast aside blame and embrace action. One person can make a difference. I will make a difference. And each of you will make a difference too, if you believe in a better tomorrow. Believe me, I did not come to this office for failure. I came here for success, the kind of success that only comes from putting public service ahead of self-service.

These problems will be solved by the force of our people. By a shared vision, from all of us, that New Jersey can once again be a place where one can find opportunity and a great job. A place to raise a family and find excellent schools. A place to call home with pride and confidence in the possibilities ahead.

For the choice before each of us now is clear: either to work together to move our State forward, or to get out of the way of those who will.

I am not going to pretend to have all the answers myself, because I do not. But I am ready to work with all of you. I am ready to make change happen. And like the people of this great State, I believe that real change can bring us real hope for a better tomorrow.

As for me, I will heed the message I have heard over and over again from our citizens as I have traveled around the State in the last 11 weeks—simply put, they have told me to do what I said I would do. So let there be no doubt in this hall, or in any corner of this State: I will treat that promise to the people of our State just as solemnly as I will treat my oath of office. I will do exactly what I said I would do over the last year, no matter the obstacle or trial.

And to all of you, I ask you to build this better future with me. I ask for your help.

When Abraham Lincoln came to New Jersey in February of 1861, awaiting his swearing in as president of a nation on the verge of rupture, he said while visiting the people of Newark: "Without the people I cannot hope to succeed; with them I cannot fail."

So today, the time for change has arrived. Today, change is here. And I ask not only for God's blessing, but for *your* help.

God bless New Jersey, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

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