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In Case You Missed It: Governor Chris Christie on Good Morning America

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Governor Chris Christie on Good Morning America

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TRANSCRIPT

Governor Chris Christie and George Stephanopoulos Video from the ABC's Good Morning America January 13, 2011

George Stephanopoulos: Will the tragedy in Tucson usher in the year of civility that President Obama called for last night? How will both parties get back to the business of facing our common challenges? Here to take on those questions with us this morning, one of the rising stars of the Republican Party, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie. Thanks for coming in this morning.

Governor Chris Christie: Thank you George.

George Stephanopoulos: Did the president strike the right chords last night?

Governor Chris Christie: Yes. He did.

George Stephanopoulos: What did you think of his speech.

Governor Chris Christie: I said I thought it was excellent. I thought he did exactly what you want a leader to do at a moment like this which is to remind us of the things that we have in common. Remind us of the things that unite us, rather than divide us. And to not try to play politics at all, and the president hit all those things last night. So, I was really happy to see what he did.

George Stephanopoulos: You're out there all the time with your constituents. I know you're doing another town hall meeting today. Is this something that you expect -- does it feel to you like this is a moment for the entire country?

Governor Chris Christie: Yeah. Listen, I think we have to be reflective. I think we should be having this kind of reflection on a regular basis. Because as you know, this is not an unusual period of vitriol in our country. In politics you know, if you look back we can say almost every presidential campaign, that you've seen high levels of vitriol and anger, bitter things being said about people that they probably didn't deserve to have said about them. I think we have to constantly be examining ourselves for how we act as a civilized society. Doesn't mean we can't disagree, of course we disagree. But we should look at this all the time, not just have a tragedy to spur us to do it. Because we have to treat each other with some level of civility. Even when we disagree with each other.

George Stephanopoulos: Meanwhile, Sarah Palin coming under some criticism after using the term "blood libel." Do you think she knew what she was getting into with that?

Governor Chris Christie: I don't know. I have no idea. But what I would say is I think -- I don't think anybody really believes that Governor Palin was trying to make someone get hurt or bring violence on. And I think she just should have said that and left it at that.

George Stephanopoulos: Let's move on to your own state of the state. You were giving a big speech this week, as well. And in your speech, you took credit for turning New Jersey around. From being a basket case. But some of your critics, some of the top democrats in the state, say your priorities are misplaced. One counted the number of the times you used jobs in the speech, said it was only four. Your response?

Governor Chris Christie: Cause we're creating jobs not talking about it. When I came into office, unemployment was over 10% in New Jersey and above the national average. We're still too high, we're at 9.2 %. But we're down almost a full point in a year, and we're below the national average now. Last month in November one of every --

George Stephanopoulos: Still above 9%.

Governor Chris Christie: Yeah, I said we're not good enough. And what I said -- I didn't say we turned it around. What I said in the speech was, the state of the state is improving, getting better every day. And last month in November, the last month we have for jobs in New Jersey, one of every five private-sector jobs created in America was created in New Jersey. So, our policies are helping to create jobs and create a positive business environment where the private sector wants to grow again. You know you can talk all you want about jobs. It's about creating them and putting people back to work.

George Stephanopoulos: One of our big issues is also education reform. The former Chancellor of the DC Schools Michelle Rhee was in the audience, watching your speech. The president has hit on those themes of educational reform a lot. Is this an issue, where republicans and democrats can find common Cause?

Governor Chris Christie: Absolutely. Michelle Rhee's a Democrat. I had Mayor Cory Booker in the audience, as well. We're working on reforming the Newark public schools together, with Mark Zuckerberg for facebook and the Challenge Grant to the city of Newark. And I've said from the time of the campaign, when I was running in 2009, that President Obama and I agree on this issue. Agree much more than he did with my predecessor on issues of really education reform. This is the transformational issue that can also bring both parties together, if we just rise above the interests, the special interests that want to protect the failed status quo.

George Stephanopoulos: Tip O'Neill said all politics is local. You came under criticism after the post-Christmas blizzard, including from Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

/[Start of clip from MSNBC's Morning Joe]/

Mayor Rudy Giuliani: If he asked for my advice? I would have said, they elected you governor. They got an emergency. They expect you to be there. You know -- you've got to be there if you're a governor, a mayor or even a president, if it's important enough.

/[End of clip from MSNBC's Morning Joe]/

George Stephanopoulos: He said you shouldn't have been in Disney World.

Governor Chris Christie: Listen, I know you'll find it shocking that two, strong-willed Italian guys from the northeast disagree about something. I have great respect for the Mayor, we disagree on this one, but we agree on so many more issues that Mayor Giuliani and I, two former U.S. Attorneys, will disagree at times on things, this is one that we do.

George Stephanopoulos: Finally, Rush Limbaugh has something of a man-crush on you.

Governor Chris Christie:/[Laughter]/

George Stephanopoulos: He and many others are trying to get you into the presidential race. You've said time and time again you're not running. I take you at your word. But try to encapsulate what you think the Republican Party needs? Who they need to nominate? What kind of person in 2012?

Governor Chris Christie: We need to nominate someone who the American people believe will actually walk the walk, and not just talk the talk, on reducing the size of government, and bringing our tax structure and our spending, most importantly, under control. And that person has to prove they're willing to do the difficult things, not just talk about them. Because they've heard plenty of talk. Especially from our party. You know, I said this fall, when we were campaigning for republican candidates around the country. This is the Republican Party's last chance. It's put up or shut up time for us now that we have won the House. We better do what we said we were going to do, or we're going to get sent to the wilderness without a compass for a long time George, and we're going to deserve it. Because we've talked about it, now let's do it.

George Stephanopoulos: Okay, Governor Christie, thanks for coming in this morning.

Governor Chris Christie: Thank you, George.

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