



[Home](#)

[Newsroom](#)

[Media](#)

[Administration](#)

[NJ's Priorities](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Press Releases](#)

[Public Addresses](#)

[Executive Orders](#)

[Press Kit](#)

[Reports](#)

[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [Press Releases](#) > 2010 > [In Case You Missed It: Governor Christie Six Months Into Term: "Blunt, Energetic, Clearly Enjoying Himself."](#)

In Case You Missed It: Governor Christie Six Months Into Term: "Blunt, Energetic, Clearly Enjoying Himself."

Monday, July 12, 2010 • Tags: [Property Taxes](#)

New Jersey Governor Defies Political Expectations

Richard Pérez-Peña

New York Times

Published: July 11, 2010

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP, N.J. - A momentous deal to cap property taxes was all but done, but Gov. Chris Christie was taking no chances, barnstorming the state to commiserate with squeezed homeowners and keep pressure on the Legislature.

Outside a farmhouse here in central New Jersey last week, buttoned up in a dark suit despite the triple-digit heat, Mr. Christie promised to tackle rising pension costs, transportation financing, municipal spending - all while poking fun at his opponents, the news media and, mostly, himself.

When a reporter suggested that the governor do a rain dance, he said, "Don't want to miss that, baby." And in the rare instance of his withholding judgment on an issue, he said he preferred to know something about the issue before opining, although, he added, tongue in cheek, that actual knowledge was not necessarily a requirement.

It was a model taste of Mr. Christie, six months into his term as governor: blunt, energetic, clearly enjoying himself.

And having his way.

Mr. Christie has turned out to be a far more deft politician than his detractors - and even some supporters - had expected, making few compromises as he pursues a broad agenda for remaking New Jersey's free-spending political culture. So far, polls suggest, the public is giving him the benefit of the doubt.

"The most important thing in public life, in a job like governor, is for the people you're representing to know exactly where you stand," Mr. Christie said in an interview on Friday. "People who disagree with me on things at least have a sense of comfort in knowing where I'm coming from."

...

Instead, he confronted the powerful public employees' unions and won, cutting future pensions and benefits, and persuaded voters to defeat hundreds of local school budgets. He got nearly everything he wanted in the state budget, making the deepest cuts in generations. And the Assembly is expected this week to give final passage to one of his cherished goals: a cap on local property taxes.

...

"I think we all underestimated his political skill coming in," said Brigid Harrison, a political science professor at Montclair State University. "You can't deny that he's been a tour de force in Trenton. He has managed to control the legislative agenda more than other governors, despite having a Legislature controlled by the opposite party."

The governor has a direct, pithy speaking style - the sharp rise in property taxes in the past decade, he said, "is not a mystery; it's a mandate" - often leavened by humor. And he is relentless, willing to hammer any message repeatedly and take on any critic, and he rarely meanders or evades a question.

...

"He's a much better communicator than we realized, and people seem to be willing to go along with him for now," said Patrick Murray, director of the Monmouth University Polling Institute. "He uses clear language, he doesn't mince words, he's funny, and he says what he thinks."

Mr. Christie has become a favorite of conservatives across the country, and some talk of him as presidential material, though he insists, "No way is it going to happen."

So far, circumstances have worked in Mr. Christie's favor. The State Senate has a new president, Stephen M. Sweeney, who is seen as less liberal than his predecessor, Richard J. Codey, and more inclined to work with the governor. The recession, rising taxes and New Jersey's perilous financial situation give persuasive power to the call to rein in government, and give Democrats who might disagree little room to maneuver.

"I think the tough times have dictated straight talk and forceful moves, and that fits him quite well," said George Norcross III, a Democratic power broker from Camden County.

But lawmakers in both parties say the governor and his team - a mix of old Trenton hands and people who worked for

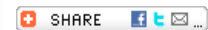
Stay Connected
with Social Media



Stay Connected
with Email Alerts

Sign Up

**LIKE THIS PAGE? SHARE IT
WITH YOUR FRIENDS.**



him in the United States attorney's office - have been strategically smart as well as lucky. Mr. Christie chose top aides, led by Richard Bagger, his chief of staff and a former legislator, who have been able to smooth private negotiations when people are battling in public.

...

But on controlling local government spending and taxes, he acknowledged that "yes, absolutely," there was a political strategy to doing things in a particular order. The governor's budget reduced school aid, leading to predictions that districts would raise property taxes. He blamed the teachers' union for any increases and proposed capping property tax increases. Now he is using that cap as leverage for a package of bills, which has met union opposition, to help towns and school districts control spending.

The governor even pointed to areas where he might, uncharacteristically, tread lightly rather than face fierce resistance, like banning the holding of two or more government jobs simultaneously, a common practice among legislators.

It remains to be seen how well Mr. Christie will wear on New Jersey voters. Over the next year, people will begin to see the effects of his policies in their schools and towns, in his cut in funds for family planning or, for government workers, in their paychecks. The need to focus on fiscal issues has obscured some other areas where his positions are less popular, like his opposition to abortion.

It is also unclear how he would govern in boom times, when austerity is a harder sell. The governor said he would have preferred not to make some of his budget cuts, but suggested that in any climate he would have pushed for less government.

He said, "It's more philosophical than a matter of necessity."

...

[View entire article here.](#)

###

Press Contact:
Michael Drewniak
609-777-2600



Statewide: [NJ Home](#) | [Services A to Z](#) | [Departments/Agencies](#) | [FAQs](#)
Office of the Governor: [Home](#) | [Newsroom](#) | [Media](#) | [Administration](#) | [NJ's Priorities](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2012
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000

[Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Legal Statement & Disclaimers](#) | [Accessibility Statement](#) | 