

Search

[Home](#) [Newsroom](#) [Media](#) [Administration](#) [NJ's Priorities](#) [Contact Us](#)

[Press Releases](#) [Public Addresses](#) [Executive Orders](#) [Press Kit](#) [Reports](#)

[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [Press Releases](#) > 2014

Governor Christie: What Happened Was Absolutely Unacceptable

Thursday, March 20, 2014 Tags: [Other](#)



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfIFR9X98U8>

Transcript:

Audience Member: You look better in person than you do on TV.

Governor Christie: God bless you, you want to come home for dinner tonight?

(Laughter)

Audience Member: On that very subject --

Governor Christie: Yes.

Audience Member: -- you mention that you're not a regular guy, you can't just go out and pick up your dry cleaning.

Governor Christie: Yeah, no, I can't.

Audience Member: -- me and my buddies would be glad to go out and pick up your dry cleaning every Saturday, and then come back to your place --

Governor Christie: Hangout?

Audience Member: -- down a few beers --

Stay Connected
with Social Media

Stay Connected
with Email Alerts

LIKE THIS PAGE? SHARE IT WITH YOUR FRIENDS.

[f](#) [t](#) [e](#) ...

Related Content



March 20, 2014 Flemington Town Hall

[View More Photos](#)

Governor Christie: Sure.

Audience Member: -- watch TV, play pool.

Governor Christie: Alright, that's good, okay.

Audience Member: And you know, for the shirts, we'll wash and iron them.

Governor Christie: You're nice, you want to get married? *(laughter)* *(silence)* I think that's a no.

Audience Member: You got me, you've silenced me. *(laughter)* After Bridget Kelly told you that she had lied to you about her involvement with the closing of the lanes, the next day you had a press conference and said you fired her because she lied to you. And I know that if a subordinate lies to you, that's a big blow to your ego, esteem, self-respect and everything like that. Um, I think that is a very self-centered reason to firing somebody. The real offense was being involved in the shutting down of the George Washington Bridge. I don't know if it's illegal, it sure smells bad. I would think that you'd fired her for what she did. And in the obverse, if you had come to the conference and she had said: you know, I did close it, I told you the truth. And you say: great Bridget, you told me the truth, you get a raise and a promotion, and a two-week vacation. If she lied to you, she gets fired, if she tells the truth, because you made the firing contingent on the lie, at least that's what you said in the press conference. The firing should be contingent on the involvement in an illegal act.

Governor Christie: Well, first off, there are lots of reasons for the firing and what I said the day afterwards was that I can't have somebody who works for me that lies to me, because that stuff can extend to a whole variety of subjects that are much broader than just the one that you talked about.

Audience Member: Agreed.

Governor Christie: Do not take from my silence, on the act, that the act was countless, in fact the whole press conference was about the fact that what happened was absolutely unacceptable and that I didn't know anything about it and if I had, I wouldn't have permitted it. So my view was that, inherent in what I was saying, was that I disapproved of the act also. And I did, and do. But don't take from the fact that I said I fired her because she lied, that that means if she had told me the truth—if she had told me the truth she would have gotten fired too because of what she did. But I never had the chance to hear the truth. And the offense -- the offense, first and foremost, is not being honest with the person you're working for.

The secondary offense was if she had been honest and told me, yeah she would have been fired anyway. But the fact is that when you're trying to run a government with 65,000 people that work for you—I used to say this at town hall meetings all the time, and I really didn't know how prophetic I was being, I used to say that the most frightening thing about being the Governor of New Jersey is that you have 65,000 people with letterhead with your name on it, and you don't know what they're doing. I found that out in real time on January 8th. But the fact is that you have to be able to trust the people that work with you. And if you don't, they have to go. Regardless of -- if she had lied to me about something I approved of, she would have been fired. So that was the point I was trying to make.

And I thought that the point of the entire discussion that day, for an hour and fifty minutes, was that I did not approve of what happened. I did think that what happened was wrong and abusive, and that it shouldn't have happened. Now I'm going to put aside the question of whether it's legal or illegal, because there are prosecutors looking at this and all the rest of it, and I've said all along as Governor, since I used to be a prosecutor, that I don't talk about that kind of stuff because I want the prosecutors to do their job and we're letting them do their job. But you shouldn't misunderstand, nor should anybody else, that by the fact that that's what I fronted as the cause for her firing that there weren't also sub-causes that I thought was part of the whole conversation I was having, that people who listen to it would understand.

I don't approve of what happened, I didn't approve of what happened, and I'm doing everything I can right now to make sure that something like that never happens again. One of the steps you do is get rid of the offending folks who thought that was ok, and who thought that it was ok that when asked directly: do you know anything about this? Did you have anything to do with it? And they say no, well then, that's the end of the ball game.

So, thanks for giving me the opportunity to expand on it. I thought -- and this is part of the challenge of communication in normal circumstances, but in a crisis it's an even bigger challenge is -- little did I know that in an hour and fifty minutes of answering questions, I didn't say enough. But, let me be really clear, let me be really clear -- and I thought I was really clear that day -- that what happened in that circumstance is unacceptable, not approved by me, would never be approved by me, and the folks who were involved in that absolutely would have lost their jobs, whether they told the truth or lied about it. But I will tell you, as the guy in charge, that when you can't count on people to tell you the truth in an enterprise this size, you're sunk. And so that's I think why I made the emphasis on it that I did, but please don't take from it that I thought the underlying conduct was somehow ok because it was not.

(applause)

Audience Member: Understood. Understood, but today you told us all that you're an open, you tell it like it is, you say it -- I think something was needed to be said there. I fired her because she was involved in an illegal action.

Governor Christie: Well, listen --

Audience Member: We all understand that.

Governor Christie: Well, first of all you're, again, saying something that I'm not willing to say at this point, because I'm not willing to prejudge what a prosecutor's going to do. It's inappropriate for me to do that. You as a citizen can clearly come to the conclusion that's an illegal act and it may turned out to have been one. But when you're standing in this

circle, and you're the Governor of New Jersey, you don't have the luxury to give your opinion on that when there's an investigation going on that you have to cooperate with in every way. (*applause*)

Secondly, I know what you heard. But you also had to hear, during that hour and fifty minutes, how many times I said that what was done was wrong, and abusive, and unacceptable. Well, I didn't say that just because I thought it was a nice thing to say, I said it because it's what I believed. And if she in fact, which it has shown, was involved in it, that she would have been fired for that reason too. So I think, you know, you're taking my words and just taking some of them and not all of them. Because all of them that day made it very clear that this was something that I did not approve of, would not approve of, and thought was wrong and abusive. And so, you know, you can narrow in on just the one part of what I said, but if you look at what I said over an hour and fifty minutes, there would be no doubt in anybody's mind that I thought that what happened was wrong and unacceptable conduct for anybody entrusted with authority inside a government.

Audience Member: Thank you.

Governor Christie: Thank you.

Audience Member: I'll do the dry cleaning, but not the shirts.

Governor Christie: What was that? I didn't hear that. The shirts?

Audience Member: I'll do the dry cleaning, but not the shirts.

Governor Christie: Alright I understand, and you turned down my proposal of marriage, as well, by your silence.

###

Press Contact:
Michael Drewniak
Colin Reed
609-777-2600



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

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, 1996-2017
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000