

# Taking No Prisoners

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## [Chris Christie's Pity Party](#)

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By Roger Witherspoon

*"I'm Stunned."*

*"I'm Incredulous."*

*"I'm a sad guy."*

*"I'm humiliated."*

*"What did I do wrong to have people think they could lie to me?"*

With that Chris Christie – who prefers everyone to genuflect and call him THE GOVERNOR – stood alone on a podium and did something that was, to observers, stunning and incredulous. He acted almost like a normal politician.

He answered questions without his trademark snarl. He answered repeated queries without telling reporters to shut up, change the subject, or resorting to crude name calling. For once, he wasn't a hulking schoolyard bully. And he admitted that he had been wrong and his callous disregard for mounting evidence, his disdain for legitimate inquiries, and his

derisive, mocking comments had not been warranted.

But what was most stunning about The Governor's prayerful pity party was that he spent two hours expressing incredulity and remorse because his staff and political henchmen and women lied to *him*. He was *not* chagrined that they lied to the people of New Jersey. He was *not* chagrined that they played a mean-spirited, dangerous political prank on hundreds of thousands of people using the George Washington Bridge or living and working in Fort Lee. He was *not* chagrined that they deliberately blocked firemen, police, and ambulances from serving people in need in Fort Lee. He was *not* chagrined that they lied about possibly contributing to the death of a 91-year-old woman who did not get emergency medical attention as soon as possible.

No, that was not the priority. Today was all about Chris Christie, The Governor. What mattered first and last with The Governor was that his chosen operatives and representatives, who acted and bullied in his name had, apparently, misled him.

The question he should have asked was this:

*"What did I do wrong to have people think they could play with the lives of the citizens of New Jersey?"*

If he had, just once, indicated that that was his primary concern, then maybe it would be possible to accept his oft-repeated apology to the people of New Jersey. The atmosphere which Christie created, and which his operatives thrived in, was a mean-spirited, spiteful, above-the-law, us vs. them, winner take all political hothouse in which the only thing that truly mattered was continually elevating the national stature of Chris Christie.

What was evident as one watched Christie's televised tour de farce, was a desperate despot throwing one close friend after another overboard to keep his rickety political lifeboat afloat. There was his "stupid" and "deceitful" deputy chief of staff, Bridget Anne Kelly. Really? If she was that bad, how had she continued amassing ever higher titles with increasing amounts of authority as she sat a couple of feet from him on a daily basis?

And Bill Stepien, who ran his successful reelection campaign and who he named earlier this week to head the state Republican Party and serve as his point man at the National Republican Governors' Conference, an organization intended to be Christie's springboard to national office. Stepien was suddenly "no longer trustworthy" according to the governor. Really?

Christie would have us believe that in the space of five years two people who were his closest confidants, who helped twice put him in the governor's office, and created the image and

record that is enabling him to seriously consider running for President of the United States morphed into petty political tricksters without his knowing about it. They worked right next to Christie and felt it was fine to plan and implement a traffic jam that tied up most of the city of Fort Lee for four days. They worked right next to him and saw nothing wrong with blocking kids from their first days at school, or commuters from getting to work or emergency workers from getting to those in dire need.

And then there was David Wildstein, and Bill Baroni his top two appointees to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Wildstein was usually referred to as the Governor's longtime friend, dating back to their years in high school.

But there was Christie, sincerely declaring that "I barely knew David in high school...We ran in different circles." To hear him tell it, they rarely spoke. But if their connection was that tenuous, why did he appoint Wildstein to a six-figure job with few specified duties other than to carry out the wishes of the Governor? So how did his classmate act in office?

*"Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee," wrote Kelly in an August 13 email to Wildstein.*

*"Got it." Wildstein replied.*

*On September 9 Wildstein ordered Port Authority staff to close two lanes from Fort Lee to the bridge, causing the traffic backup that tied up the bridge and the town.*



A cryptic message like that could not have been made in a vacuum. There must have been preliminary discussions about ways to cause havoc in Fort Lee to punish Mayor Mark Sokolich, a Democrat, for not endorsing Republican Christie's reelection. How could such a discussion and planning take place without Christie knowing about it? Just what sort of tone did he set as governor?

Christie announced he was going to Fort Lee right after his press conference to personally apologize to Sokolich. That move would have seemed a lot more sincere if he had first called

Sokolich and *asked if he could meet with him* instead of just showing up and expecting the Mayor to drop everything and cater to Christie's televised moment of simulated sincerity.

There is something unseemly about a man who claims to run an honest organization and demands unwavering loyalty from his well-rewarded staff and then deliberately trashes their reputations and publicly disgraces them in an effort to salvage his own wavering prestige. At least the mobsters he used to prosecute considered loyalty a two-way street.

From the comments in his two hour apologia, Christie wants people to believe he will be spending quite a bit of time in introspection, pondering how all this could have happened to him. He is "hurt" and "humiliated" by the actions of those around him. He is a victim of their deceit.

What nonsense.

Christie has spent the past four years reveling in the well-deserved reputation as a bully and street fighter, one who is quick with insults and penalties to anyone who challenges him – a politician, a probing journalist, and frequently when convenient, a teacher.

The only victims in this sad political tale are the residents of New Jersey.

The only question Christie should be asking during this period of introspection is why someone like him deserves to retain the respected title of The Governor.

