

Gubernatorial candidates make overtures to business

By Martin C. Daks

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Republican gubernatorial candidate **Chris Christie** spent Friday morning telling some 200 entrepreneurs and executives how he'd make New Jersey a better place for them to do business.

The audience at the **Woodbridge Hilton**, in the township's Iselin section, gave Christie a standing ovation, but in private conversations made it clear that the **candidates** will have to work hard for the business vote.

"If you hired a CFO to scrub your budget and find savings, and he ended up increasing spending, would you renew his contract?" Christie asked, referring to Democratic incumbent **Jon S. Corzine**, a former chief executive officer at Wall Street firm **Goldman Sachs**.

Under Corzine, New Jersey is losing business to lower-tax neighbors like Pennsylvania, argued Christie, a former U.S. attorney. He also blasted the size of state government, saying, "We need to reduce and control state spending, and cut income taxes. It's a competitive imperative."

The Corzine campaign did not respond to a reporter's repeated requests for comment.

Besides costly government, much of the problem in New Jersey stems from too many regulations, Independent challenger **Chris Daggett** said in a telephone conversation with **NJBIZ**.

"We have to make difficult choices about balancing the state budget while boosting the local economy," said Daggett, a former commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Protection. "Right now, though, the problems are being compounded by a sea of regulations that have to be cut."

Regardless of who wins in November, some business owners at [this morning's event, which was sponsored by the New Jersey chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth](#), wondered how much change they'd really see.

"It's a big job, and I think it'll take years to straighten things out," said **Thomas E. Deller**, a business consultant with Fairfield-based **Danicose Inc.** "Part of any solution will involve letting the marketplace work."

Entrepreneur **Stuart E. Lipkin** also had some doubts.

"I'm not a big Corzine advocate," said Lipkin, a partner with business advisory firm **B2B CFO**, who is based in Middlesex County's Monroe. "But a Christie administration might be limited in the change it could bring **about in New Jersey. There's a lot to be done here, and corruption is just the tip of the iceberg.**"

Four years ago, "I was hopeful that Corzine's Wall Street background would be good for New Jersey and its business climate," said **David Rehrer**, first vice president of **The Rehrer Group**, a **Merrill Lynch** wealth management firm based in Westfield. "Now I'm disappointed with Corzine. But can Christie really make a difference? It's a big job."

But one person can make a difference, Christie told **NJBIZ**.

"If you're the governor, you have to get things done," he said.

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