

OUR POINT OF VIEW

With few specifics, speech just another press event

As far as feel-good speeches go, rank Chris Christie's State of the State address last week up there with the best of them. It had all the right references to first responders who gave their all during and after Hurricane Sandy struck, and it continued his wildly popular excoriation of the federal government's foot-dragging on the hurricane relief bill.

But that could — and has — been done in press conferences. The State of the State is supposed to aspire to be something bigger than just a call for bipartisanship and talk of comebacks. At least in the days of the short-lived, and much-flogged, Jersey Comeback, there was a real point on the table — the 10 percent income tax cut. Perhaps Christie has merely learned his lesson about making such grand promises, but it would

have been preferable to the campaign speech we got last week. At least his opponents have been as ham-handed as Elmer Fudd; Steve Sweeney's comment that Christie got "lucky" with the disaster is as asinine as you can get.

A stronger economic record would serve Christie better than Sandy tirades.

While we're on learning lessons, the governor needs one in optimism, too. In making his case for the income tax cut, he relied upon economic forecasts so rosy that "Garden State" seemed to be more than a motto — it was a revenue target. Instead, there's a budget gap of some \$700 million

to deal with. Now, he expects a post-Sandy building boom to be a major revenue generator. We will undoubtedly see an uptick as rebuilding gets under way, but the outlook for tourism is far from assured — and if people don't return to the Shore in droves come Memorial Day, it'll be the death knell to local business and the state economy.

The economy has taken steps forward under Christie, but it's not doing so fast enough. It would have been a much bolder course to see the governor lay out his plan for creating more jobs and fixing our endless revenue problems. Giving voters plenty of red meat from Sandy is a way to get those approval ratings up now, but fixing his spotty economic record will pay better dividends in November — and will assure business owners that there's some kind of plan going forward.

READER FORUM

Keeping N.J. residents connected in Sandy aftermath

Withstanding storms and responding to the aftermath is nothing new to Verizon. With operations around the globe, a year doesn't go by that Verizon doesn't respond to a disaster like Sandy. Even so, hurricane Sandy demonstrated just how overwhelming a major storm can be. It will take a long time before communities in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut fully recover.

Not surprising, however, Sandy also demonstrated the other side of a disaster — first responders, utility workers, relief agencies, elected officials and ordinary citizens all coming together to tackle the huge challenges facing many communities devastated by the storm.

I am proud of the thousands of dedicated men and women who work at my firm, Verizon, who ran to this crisis, not away from it. They were among the first to move into the region's hardest-hit communities working round-the-clock to re-establish critical phone and Internet links for residents, first responders and relief agencies.

Across the Northeast, Verizon has completed 560,000 post-Sandy repairs, re-

placed more than 6,700 poles and 6,000 cables. That effort was conducted in close cooperation with power companies and local officials who were dealing with problems caused by flooding, downed power lines, trees and other debris.

In addition, Verizon deployed its emergency fleet of vehicles, mobile communications command center, satellite trailers and self-contained emergency inflatable-air shelters to hard-hit areas in places like Long Beach, Queens and Staten Island in New York and Hazlet, Hoboken and Ortle Beach in New Jersey.

As the recovery moved from days into weeks, we saw an outpouring of help that extended from simple acts of kindness by neighbors to the massive coordinated response by private industry, charities and government agencies.

Sandy reminded us at Verizon of our great responsibility to those left most vulnerable by the storm. Our disaster recovery teams and crews from around the country were on the scene until the job was done. Crews continue to support local residents as well as the agencies conducting relief efforts in the area. But despite all of the progress that has been made, we

know that for many this will be a long recovery effort.

As we continue to rebuild and help friends, families and neighbors put their lives back together, Sandy has given the public and private sectors the opportunity to work collaboratively to replace lost infrastructure with more durable, modern and easily repairable technology should another fierce storm hit the East Coast. Reliability is in our DNA, so whether we utilize better building supplies or leverage advanced communications networks like fiber or 4G LTE technology, we will build smarter and better than before.

Recovery won't happen overnight. Even though the impact of this storm will be felt for months or even years to come, Verizon, in partnership with government, private industry and other stakeholders, remains focused on getting residents back on their feet with reliable products and services. Our commitment is as strong as ever and you can be sure we are in it for the long haul.

*Jim Gerace, New York region president
Verizon Communications Inc.
Newark*

QUOTE MARKS

"The adults are in charge."

GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE, ADVOCATING BIPARTISANSHIP IN HIS STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

"His jobs package is a hurricane. I guess he prayed a lot and got lucky a storm came. I shouldn't say that."

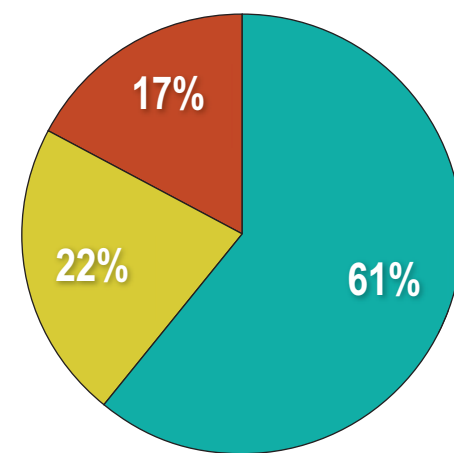
SEN. PRES. STEPHEN M. SWEENEY, ABOUT CHRISTIE DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE

"No one 'prayed' for what New Jersey has endured."

CHRISTIE SPOKESMAN MICHAEL DREWNIAK'S RESPONSE, IN THE STAR-LEDGER

NJBIZ.COM READER POLL

Your opinion on the fiscal cliff deal struck by Congress:



■ Bad for business owners, who will pay higher taxes
■ Good for business, since it removes uncertainty
■ A fair compromise

The majority of responders to our most recent online poll panned the deal, saying it would be bad for business owners who will pay more taxes. But the response wasn't all negative. Nearly a quarter of responders favored the deal because it removes uncertainty, while 17 percent called it a fair compromise, perhaps a nod to the acrimonious lead up to the accord.

**Next question:
How did the governor do in his State of the State speech?**

- Excellent. Once again, Christie nailed it.
- Good delivery, but I wanted more specifics.
- Poor. Just another politician spouting off.

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