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Corzine, Christie Attend Mass, Discuss Transition



NEWARK (CBS) — Bitter enemies met in the holiest of places Thursday. New Jersey's next governor came face-to-face with the man he'll replace in January.

They sat side-by-side inside the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark. Democratic Gov. Jon Corzine and the Republican who beat him in the election, Governor-elect Chris Christie.

The two men were at the annual Blue Mass honoring members of law enforcement who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

Right after mass, Corzine and Christie, along with staff members met privately inside Archbishop John Myers' residence.

"All we talked about is how we can make that transition as smooth as possible," said Corzine.

Christie, a devout Catholic, didn't speak to the press. He said he was rushing to a teacher-parent conference at his child's Catholic school. But just yesterday, the governor-elect told reporters one option to deal with New Jersey's financial troubles would be to call a fiscal state of emergency.

Political scientist Pete McDonough of the Eagleton Institute said that would give Christie extraordinary powers.

"State contracts could be canceled, I would imagine that the raises for state employees could be suspended. It would be a pretty dramatic action although one you'd have to take when you're facing a \$10 billion budget hole," said McDonough. "I would imagine layoffs are in the future, but I don't know that that would happen in the fiscal emergency."

Corzine, looking tanned and relaxed from a vacation, said he wants Christie to succeed. As to rumors he may go back to the corporate world and head Bank of America, he said no one's approached him.

"I haven't given it a great deal of thought. When I figure it out, you'll be the first to know," he said.

The governor then walked off after a reporter asked him why he couldn't excited his base, a base that may have turned to Christie, who now inherits a huge budget crisis. In fact, a new survey suggests New Jersey is one of 10 states headed into fiscal abyss.

Another issue facing New Jersey is same sex marriage, which Christie opposes. Sources tell CBS 2 that sponsors of the bill to legalize it will try to push it through before Corzine leaves office. Corzine has said he will sign it.



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Gov. Jon Corzine (l) and Gov.-Elect Chris Christie (r) talk while attending the Blue Mass inside the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark on Nov. 12, 2009. CBS

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