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Christie: N.J. has 'too much government'

By Cynthia Burton

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Former U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie said yesterday that New Jersey has so much corruption because "we just have too much government."

> Christie, who resigned Dec. 1, is taking a few weeks to figure out whether he will fulfill the dreams of the New Jersey Republican establishment and run against Democratic Gov. Corzine.

> Speaking to business leaders in Cherry Hill yesterday, Christie sounded as though he were trying out a plank in a campaign platform.

> He said that with more than 600 school districts and more than 500 municipalities splitting up billions in tax dollars, "it's hard to find hardworking, honest people to oversee all these pots of money."

> The state has "too much government spending too much money out there and it tempts people," he said.

> At some point, he said, New Jerseyans will have to decide whether stopping corruption is more important than the many layers of government in the state.

> Asked how to curtail the size of government, Christie said, "I'm giving that some thought and I'm sure at some point in time I'll have something to say about it."

> The breakfast meeting was sponsored by the New Jersey Business and Industry Association and the Cherry Hill Regional Chamber of Commerce.

> Since 2002, Christie's office has convicted or gotten guilty pleas from 132 elected and appointed state officials.

> This was Christie's first appearance since leaving office and his first stop in Camden County since the conviction of former State Sen. Wayne Bryant (D., Camden) on corruption charges. He called Bryant "the poster boy for what is wrong with the New Jersey political system."

> Political analyst Sharon Schulman said that although she did not hear Christie's speech yesterday, "it sounds to me like he's drawing the link between his experience as a prosecutor and translating that into management of government."

> Schulman, who directs the Hughes Center for Public Policy at Richard Stockton College, said that Christie did well as U.S. attorney but that if he wants to run for governor, he has to draw the connection "between what he saw as U.S. attorney and how to fix it."

> Christie has said he will decide about running for governor in a few weeks. Since leaving office, he has traveled the state, talking with business and political leaders as well as potential employers.

> After speaking in Cherry Hill yesterday, Christie went to Woodbridge to another association event, where the keynote speaker was Corzine. It was yet another opportunity for a citizen or candidate-in-waiting to make some good connections and check out the other side.

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