

## As budget deadline looms, Gov. Christie pushes to reform teachers' tenure, lower N.J. taxes

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**MaryAnn Spoto/The Star-Ledger**

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**FREEHOLD TOWNSHIP** — With fewer than two months before the state budget is due, Gov. Chris Christie said this morning he wants the state Legislature to deliver laws changing the tenure system for public school teachers in a way that will result in decreased taxes for New Jersey residents.

"I want to make one thing really clear to the state Legislature: Do not send me watered down B.S. tenure reform," he told a crowd of more than 450 at a town hall meeting in Monmouth County.

In this Republican-heavy county that delivered big for his election in 2009, Christie delivered his usual criticism of Democratic lawmakers who he said have finally agreed to cut taxes.

"Now the Democrats in Trenton, are not arguing with me anymore about whether they should cut your taxes," he said. "They just argue about how we should cut your taxes."

But he saved the majority of his rant at the National Guard Armory in Freehold for teachers unions, who he said spent tens of millions of dollars in attack ads against him the past two years "because I have dared to speak out against their monopoly."

"Well, \$20 million later, here I am," he said to an enthusiastically supportive crowd.

He called state aid to failing school districts, including nearly \$30,000 per pupil in Monmouth County's Asbury Park "an obscene waste of money" and reiterated his call for merit pay for teachers rather than automatic tenure after three years on the job.

"No one in this state should be guaranteed a job after three years and one day on the job without regard to how they do their job," he said.

In the portion of the meeting open to public questions, a woman from Howell told Christie tearfully how her home floods so often.

To a question posed by a woman from Berkeley Township in Ocean County, Christie defended the credentials of his state Supreme Court nominee, Chatham borough Mayor Bruce Harris. Harris, an attorney for 20 years, has been primarily a finance attorney with little courtroom experience.

**Video: Gov. Chris Christie calls for true teacher tenure reform and not "B.S."**

Speaking at a town hall meeting in Freehold, New Jersey on May 8, 2012, Gov. Chris Christie calls on the New Jersey legislature to pass teacher tenure reform - and not a "B.S." watered down version.

But Christie said Harris' resume, which includes years as an elected official and a private attorney, gives him "practical" experience for

someone in the "ivory tower" of the state's highest court.

A businessman from Freehold complained about involvement by the state Department of Environmental Protection in his contract dispute with another business.

A young boy from Freehold asked Christie if he plans to run for re-election.

Christie said he hasn't yet made up his mind, but said he has to make a decision by the end of this year or the beginning of next year.

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