

The Christie Way

By [THE EDITORIAL BOARD](#) JAN. 14, 2014

Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey tried to change the subject on Tuesday with his annual [State of the State](#) speech, talking about longer school days and reducing urban crime. But there is no diverting attention from the unanswered questions about how Mr. Christie and his close advisers have used his office to mete out rewards or punishment for political reasons.

The give and take of politics is one thing. But Mr. Christie's team crossed that line into political abuse.

New Jersey lawmakers announced on Monday plans to create two investigative committees and a special counsel to look into the growing scandals. Their original mission was to find out why the governor's appointees to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey closed lanes leading to the George Washington Bridge, creating a four-day traffic jam in Fort Lee, N.J. Mr. Christie denies knowing that this scheme was revenge against the Democratic mayor of Fort Lee, who failed to endorse him in November's election. It is hard to imagine that he did not somehow encourage this type of conduct.

Now there is even more to investigate. Mr. Christie and his advisers were clearly eager to get Democratic endorsements — no doubt to show that he's a Republican who would be able to win bipartisan support on the national stage. But, apparently, making his case that he was the best candidate wasn't sufficient. Democrats who endorsed him received big financial payouts for their towns; Democrats who did not suffered reprisals.

As Kate Zernike [reported in The Times](#), the Democratic mayor of Harrison, who endorsed Mr. Christie, received \$250 million in Port Authority money for a new transit station. The Democratic mayor of Union City, another endorser, got \$3 million for his town even though the authority doesn't operate there. The Democratic county executive of Essex County, who rounded up a number of endorsements for Mr. Christie, received \$7 million in Port Authority funds for a park.

The Democratic mayor of Jersey City, Steven Fulop, appeared poised to reap similar rewards — until he told Mr. Christie's aides that he would not endorse the governor. After that, all meetings with Christie administration officials were canceled and requests for help with Hurricane Sandy recovery went unanswered.

The new legislative committees, which are expected to issue subpoenas this week, will need to investigate these matters in detail. They should demand all the pertinent documents unredacted and interview Mr. Christie's entire inner circle under oath — including Bridget Anne Kelly, the former deputy chief of staff, and his former campaign manager, Bill Stepien, who were both fired last week — as well as Kevin O'Dowd, the chief of staff. And it is time to examine how Mr. Christie's patronage hires at the Port Authority, including the two who resigned in this scandal, conducted business and used authority money.

Besides the legislative inquiries and investigation by the United States attorney in New Jersey into the Fort Lee traffic plot, Mr. Christie and his political advisers are also facing a separate federal inquiry into

the use of Hurricane Sandy relief dollars on the “Stronger Than the Storm” advertising campaign to promote New Jersey tourism last summer. After questions were raised in The Asbury Park Press, Representative Frank Pallone, a New Jersey Democrat, asked the Department of Housing and Urban Development to investigate. He wants to know why the Christie administration chose a \$4.7 million ad contract that featured Mr. Christie in a TV spot, when another bidder offered to do the ads for nearly \$2 million less.

Mr. Christie’s office has called this ad campaign “routine and standard,” but that money could have been put to better use by helping people whose homes are still damaged from that storm. He said Tuesday that New Jersey’s citizens “deserve better.” He is certainly right about that.