

# The Star-Ledger

October 16, 2013

## **Christie, Buono clash in fiery final debate before gubernatorial election**

Squaring off in a spirited debate Tuesday night, Republican Gov. Chris Christie and Democratic challenger Barbara Buono took aim at each other on all the issues that showcase their many differences, including gun control, gay marriage and global warming.

But the heat really turned up during their televised debate at Montclair State University when the two clashed over Republican Christie's many deals with the Democrats.

Christie defended the alliances he made with Democrats. Buono called him the master of backroom deals made with "party bosses."

Buono referred to Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo, a Democrat who endorsed Christie and is accused of misusing campaign funds, but never used his name.

"You're not interested in cleaning up that boardwalk empire of back room political bosses," Buono said.

"Joe DiVincenzo is sitting in the front row and I'm proud to have his endorsement and you wish you did," Christie said. "You want to start throwing stones tonight you better get out of your glass house."

The spat set a combative tone for their second and final debate, held at Montclair State University. They went on to stake opposite positions on gay marriage, climate change and how best to run the government.

When asked to defend his endorsement of U.S. Senate candidate Steve Lonegan, who supports the federal government shutdown, Christie invoked the state shutdown of several years ago.

"It very much is reminiscent of what happened in Trenton under Senator Buono and Governor Corzine when they shut down the government because they couldn't decide how much to raise taxes," Christie said.

Buono shot back: "I'm no Jon Corzine and you know it."

Christie threaded the needle on the Dream Act, a law that would permit students who entered the country illegally to pay in-state tuition rates. Two years ago he said the state couldn't afford to extend tuition equality to "people who haven't followed the rules." A few days ago in front of a largely Hispanic crowd, he said it's time to reconsider the measure. "I've never been opposed to tuition equality," Christie said.

Buono supports the measure, which has not gone to a vote in the Legislature yet. "Be careful, this governor has a history of saying one thing and doing another," Buono said.

With the first anniversary of Hurricane Sandy weeks away, Christie defended his position that "climate change is real and human activity plays a role," but he wouldn't say if it caused the super storm.

Buono jabbed at Christie for hiring AshBritt of Florida to remove debris after his political mentor Haley Barbour suggested the company, which was also a client of the former Mississippi governor's lobbying firm.

Christie stood by his decision to pull New Jersey out of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, which was intended to control emissions.

"We know the conservative base of the Republican Party doesn't like cap and trade programs," Buono said.

Christie blamed the Obama administration for slow payouts through the federal flood insurance program, but a few minutes later praised the Democratic president for the White House's swift response to victims.

"I'm not going to have a fight with every person that Senator Buono wants me to have a fight with," said Christie.

Christie and Buono also clashed on marriage equality. Asked how he would react if any of his children told him they were gay, Christie maintained his opposition to legalizing same-sex marriage.

"If my children came to me and said they were gay I would grab them and hug them and tell them I love them," Christie said. "I would also tell them that your dad believes that marriage is between one man and one woman."

Buono, whose daughter is gay, said the governor's position on marriage equality makes him like Sarah Palin and the GOP caucus in Iowa.

On gun control, Christie explained why he vetoed an outright ban on the powerful Barrett .50 caliber rifle, even though he initially proposed a ban on future purchases. He blamed Democrats for going back on their word during negotiations with him. "If they break a deal with me, then there's going to be ramifications," Christie said. "They didn't keep their word on this."

Buono said she believes Christie changed his mind after he received a letter from gun rights advocates in New Hampshire, the site of the nation's first presidential primary.

Even though Christie maintains a huge fundraising advantage and a lead of up to 33 points the polls, he said he's running as hard as he can.

"I know she is a serious and formidable candidate," Christie said.

"Well, we agree on something," Buono said. "That's great."

[View Original Article](#)