



NJ Gov. Chris Christie: 'Government is out of control'

By NBC's Andrew Rafferty
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WASHINGTON -- New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie on Friday urged Washington lawmakers to speak honestly with the American people, warning the public may not like the solutions necessary to fix the country's economic woes, but "they know in their heart they have to accept it."

"Don't tell me the American people aren't ready to hear the truth. They know our government is out of control," Christie said at the CATO Institute's Milton Friedman Awards dinner. "They know our debt and our deficit is out of control. And don't confuse them liking the solution to them accepting it. They don't have to like it, but they know in their heart they have to accept it." The Garden State governor has found himself in the midst of speculation that he could be a top contender to be chosen as presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney's running mate. Since endorsing Romney in the fall, he has been one of the former Massachusetts governor's top surrogates, and his speech here to the conservative think tank sounded like a politician on the national stage.

Christie said his leadership in New Jersey should be an example for the country, telling the story of how his state is battling back from some of the bleakest of economic times. He used an executive order to overcome the \$2.2 billion budget shortfall he faced shortly after taking office in 2010.

The tough talking governor recalled for the crowd his options in overcoming the deficit. "I could sit down and negotiate with the Democratic leadership and the Democratically controlled legislature to try to come to an agreement on these cuts, or, thanks to New Jersey's unique Constitutional structure, cut spending through executive order," he said.

"Now, for those of you who watched me over the past two and a half years, if you believe I chose the former, then it is now time for you to leave. You are not smart enough to be here at the Milton Friedman Dinner."

The popular conservative, who mulled over his own presidential run, is often talked about in vice-presidential speculation because of his ability to excite the party base and record as a cost cutter in his home state. But he also is a lightning rod who could alienating independent voters with his in your face approach to politics.

"The great thing about operating by executive order is, first, that I didn't have to tell anybody," Christie said.

Christie has at times been a polarizing figure in New Jersey, but he maintains his way of doing business is something the federal government can learn from.

"Leaders have an obligation to make those tough choices. In New Jersey that is what we're trying to do. And in the process hopefully set an example for the rest of the country," he said.

"Believe me, if you can do this in New Jersey, you can do it anywhere."