

Balancing principles and compromise is key to success, Christie tells Washington think tank audience

Friday, May 4, 2012 Last updated: Saturday May 5, 2012, 11:31 AM

BY HERB JACKSON

WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT

The Record

[Governor Christie](#) regaled supporters of a free-market Washington think tank with some of his best hits from past speeches on Friday night, making light of his weight and the state's tough image while touting his recipe for success in dealing with a Democratic Legislature.

The keynote speaker at an economic awards dinner hosted by the Cato Institute, Christie touted the importance of compromise, as long as principles aren't sacrificed.

To overcome partisan and special interests, he said, public officials need to have the courage to educate the public about the scale of problems and get them to accept that tough measures are needed, even if they don't like them.

"I'm not looking for the people of New Jersey to love me," he said. "When you go looking for love in this job, that's when deficits get rung up."

Christie stressed the importance of being honest with the public, but he also used exaggerated figures to make the deficits he closed and the tax cuts he's enacted and proposed seem larger. For example, he cited the multiyear value of tax cuts.

Christie noted that registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by 700,000 in New Jersey, and that the state has not elected a Republican to the U.S. Senate since 1972.

"So I don't want to hear any other state crying their state's so hard, we can't do this," he said. "Come to New Jersey and be a Republican, then you'll know hard. But it can be done."

A sought-after surrogate speaker for the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, Christie mentioned President Obama only in a dismissive reference to the “hope and change” theme of the president’s 2008 campaign.

Notably, he did not mention Obama at all while discussing the anniversary of the death of Osama Bin Laden, who was killed on May 2, 2011. But Christie said he “broke up two major terror plots” while serving as the state’s top federal prosecutor before he ran for governor.

On economics, Christie said leaders need to find ways to reduce the scope of government and cut taxes so the private sector can thrive, a message that was well received in the vast ballroom of the Washington Hilton.

“The United States will only be able to sustain its leadership position around the world if the resources are there in our society to produce a society others want to emulate,” he said.

The speech marked Christie’s second visit to the Washington Hilton in less than a week. On Saturday, he attended the White House Correspondents’ Association dinner at the hotel. The host, comedian Jimmy Kimmel, joked about Christie’s weight, but Christie said it was worth it because he sat at a table with the actress Sofia Vergara, who stars on the ABC program “Modern Family.”

The governor’s recent treks to the nation’s capital come as he continues to stoke speculation about being a possible vice presidential candidate. Though Christie used to mock the idea of being any president’s No. 2, he said during a question-and-answer session with students in Plainsboro on Monday that Romney “might be able to convince me.”

A Republican who’s maintained his popularity in a largely blue state, Christie has been on some political analysts’ short lists. But one poll showed that having Christie on the ticket would do little to improve Romney’s chances in New Jersey, so many analysts believe the vice presidential candidate will more likely come from the South or a battleground state.

The Cato Institute, which sponsored Friday’s dinner, is a think tank devoted to promoting small government, individual liberty and free markets. Every other year, it awards the \$250,000 Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty, and this year’s recipient was Mao Yushi, a Chinese dissident who has criticized China’s centrally planned economy.

There had been a concern that Mao would be detained in China and not allowed to travel to Washington to receive the prize, especially last weekend when the website he helped found was down during a crackdown on pro-democracy websites. He was allowed to leave China on Wednesday, however.