EXHIBIT 125
Sen. Weinberg: Internal GWB Review is Premature

3-27-14

Sen. Weinberg is convinced Mastro's report on the internal review is premature.

The internal review of the George Washington Bridge lane closures was released with Gov. Chris Christie's attorney Randy Mastro discussing the findings from the report today. Co-Chair of the Select Committee on Investigation Sen. Loretta Weinberg told NJTV News Managing Editor Mike Schneider that she is convinced that Mastro's report was premature at best.

Weinberg said that the report parses words in a very inappropriate manner. For example, she said Mastro described the email from Executive Director of the Port Authority Patrick Foye as Foye being upset because he was not informed about the traffic study. She said that in fact the email says very clearly that officials did not follow any of the processes of the Port Authority and most importantly, that perhaps federal and state laws were broken.

"That email was shared with the Port Authority and with the director of the governor's own department of authorities and the reaction to that was 'well Bill Baroni said it was really a traffic study' and nobody looked into Foye's accusations that laws might have been broken here. What I find most disturbing about things like this is the way Mastro describes that email. He leaves out the most pertinent parts of the email," said Weinberg.

Weinberg said that she is convinced that Mastro's report at best was premature. "He draws conclusions without ever having the opportunity to speak to any of the main cast of characters in this drama — David Wildstein, Bridget Kelly, Bill Baroni, David Samson. Let's talk about the fact that Mastro describes that Wildstein said that he told Christie on Sept. 11 about the lane closures and he said that Christie does not recall that conversation and even if the conversation did take place, why should Christie take note of it?" said Weinberg.

"How can Mastro draw conclusions on what took place in a conversation? The best thing I can say about this report is it was premature, it was rushed and I suspect it had something to do with Christie's impending trip to Las Vegas with top national donors," said Weinberg.
Below is the rush transcript for "This Week" on March 30, 2014 and it may contain errors.

STEFANOPOLIOS: Good morning and welcome to This Week.

Showdown: Putin amasses more troops, Obama demands a pullback. Is a new invasion next, or will diplomacy prevail? We get answers from Putin's man in Washington, an ABC News exclusive.

Christie's comeback?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE, (R) NEW JERSEY: People do inexplicably stupid things.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STEFANOPOLIOS: Has the feisty governor put Bridgegate behind him, or will another shoe drop? We have exclusive interviews with the two dueling investigators.

Plus, baseball's opening day is here, and ESPN's Keith Olbermann joins us live.

ANNOUNCER: From ABC News, This Week with George Stephanopoulos starts now.

STEFANOPOLIOS: Hello, again. Lots of ground to cover this Sunday morning. So let's get right to the latest on the search for Flight 370.

With the clock ticking down on those black box batteries, more ships and planes have joined the massive effort to identify new debris.

ABC's David Wright is embedded in the search. Good morning, David.

WRIGHT: Good morning, George. From the deck of the Ocean Shield, an Australian vessel built to handle the roughest seas, sub-Antarctic conditions. This ship is now getting set to ship out into the search area.

http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/week-transcript-ambassador-sergey-kislyak/story?id=2... 10/21/2014
WRIGHT: It'll take three to four days just to reach the search area. Hopefully by then, search teams will have found the debris field from Flight 370. Today, ten planes are out looking, several of them reporting they have spotted objects in the water. But until surface vessels are able to retrieve them, we won’t know if they’re from the missing plane.

The Ocean Shield will be searching under the water, towing a U.S. Navy pinger locator like this one, listening for the beacons on those black boxes.

How big a noise does this thing make?

CAPT. MARK MATTHEWS, U.S. NAVY: You can see the size. If you were to put it in the water, you wouldn’t be able to hear it with your ear.

WRIGHT: The vessel is also carrying a U.S. Navy submersible robot to be used to map any underwater wreckage and plan how best to salvage it.

How long a journey are you preparing for?

CAPT. NICHOLAS WOODS, AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE VESSEL OCEAN SHIELD: We're preparing for anywhere up to 45 days.

WRIGHT: And in a sign that Malaysia is no longer calling all the shots, a retired member of Australia's equivalent of the Joint Chiefs of Staff took command of the multinational task force searching these waters. The essence now is not just because the batteries on those black box recorders are running out.

For This Week, David Wright, on board the Ocean Shield, Garden Island, Australia.

(END VIDEO TAPE)

STEPHANOPOULOS: And ABC's aviation consultant Steve Ganyard joins us now, Steve, we just heard from David Wright, the clock is ticking, those batteries could run out by early next week. This is make or break time.

GANYARD: It sure is, George. If you remember in the past couple of days down here in these lower search areas, we have really been chasing ghosts on satellite images. But 'round the past couple of days, an international body of aviation experts looked at the data and said, no, we think the best place to look is up here in this new search area. It's some 700 miles to the northeast of the old search area.

The good news is that those waters aren’t as rough, the currents aren’t nearly as difficult and some of the water is a little bit shallower.

But if you look at this, it's the size of the country of Poland. And really we're back to square one on the search area.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And if those black boxes go silent, we may never know what happened.

GANYARD: That's right. And the black boxes are going to be heard, as we've just saw coming off from a ship that will be -- have to transit out to this area. It will take three or four days to get out there. And then when they do their operations, they will work only as fast as a person can walk. So, think about that. Searching something the size of Poland at only a walking pace.

You can see that we have three to four days before that pinger runs out, and so the essence of the essence.

STEPHANOPOULOS: What a job ahead.

OK, Steve Ganyard, thanks very much.

STEPHANOPOULOS: We're going to turn now to the crisis over Ukraine. Overnight, Crimea moved clocks forward two hours to be on Moscow time, and with Russian troops continuing to mass on the Ukraine border, Secretary of State John Kerry will engage in some last-ditch diplomacy with Russia's foreign minister today in Paris.

ABC's chief foreign correspondent Terry Moran is there. Good morning, Terry.

MORAN: Good morning, George.

The very fact that Secretary of State Kerry has flown here for these talks is in and of itself a good sign, that is because there is so much tension right now and so much uncertainty on both sides about what the other side might do.
MORAN: This is the flash point of the world right now. Russian tanks and troops pouring up to the tense border between Russia and Ukraine. Routine military exercises, that's what Russia claims. But at the Pentagon, deep skepticism.

REAR ADM. JOHN KIRBY, PENTAGON PRESS SECRETARY: We don't have a full knowledge of their intent, but regardless of the intent it does nothing to deescalate the tension.

MORAN: U.S. intelligence agencies now estimate there are up to 40,000 to 50,000 Russian troops along Ukraine's eastern borders.

So what does Putin want? Across the lands of the former Soviet Union, there are millions of Ethnic Russians, just like in Crimea.

Putin now claims the right to defend all of them, whatever that means.

President Obama, in response, is relying European allies and warning of the dangers of Putin's new doctrine.

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: In the 21st century, the borders of Europe cannot be redrawn with force.

MORAN: Fine words, but Obama's real options are limited. The White House has ruled out a military response and some European leaders are deeply reluctant to impose tough sanctions on Russia that might derail their own fragile economies.

So Mr. Obama has tried another tack: belting Russia altogether.

OBAMA: Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors, not out of strength, but out of weakness.

MORAN: After Crimea, some analysts say, that sounds unconvincing.

JULIA IOFFE, SENIOR EDITOR, 'THE NEW REPUBLIC': The impression is that Putin has flipped the bird to the entire world and what can the U.S. do about it?

If he were to take Eastern Ukraine and Southern Ukraine, the U.S. wouldn't be able to do anything about that.

Is that really a position of weakness?

(END VIDEO TAPE)

MORAN: Well, at these talks here in Paris, Russia is demanding that Ukraine change its form of government, its constitution, to give more autonomy to pro-Russian areas and change its foreign policy, pledging to be non-aligned rather than join Europe.

The United States is insisting that only the Ukrainian people should decide all that -- George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: OK, Terry, thanks very much.

Russia's ambassador to the U.S., Sergey Kislyak, joins us now.

Mr. Ambassador, thank you for joining us.

The United States is making it very clear that any diplomatic solution must include a pull-back of Russian troops from Crimea.

Is Russia prepared to meet that condition?

KISLYAK: Well, first of all, thank you for having me.

Secondly, what kind of pull-back from Crimea are you talking about?

We are now in the territory of the Russian Federation, because there are a lot of things that have happened. And one has to be realist about it.

There was an expressed will of people living in Crimea to become a part of Russian Federation at that moment when there was an unconstitutional take-over of power with the use of force in Kiev.
So Crimea is a part of the Russian Federation and...

STEPHANOPOULOS: How about -- how about Eastern Ukraine, sir?

KISLYAK: Well, we have said so many times that we have no intent, no interest in crossing the border. Before...

STEPHANOPOULOS: But does that mean you won't do it?

KISLYAK: Well, we are not planning to. We have our forces conducting the exercises in the territory of the Russian Federation, I would like to remind you, in the territory of the Russian Federation. That is a normal exercise that we are conducting. Moreover, we have offered transparency over the issue. And there were a number of overflies done, including by our Ukrainian numbers and friends, just for them to be sure that there was nothing happening that would be considered threatening to their interests.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You heard President Obama label Russia a regional power acting out of weakness.

Your response?

KISLYAK: Well, if a -- you consider Russia a regional power, look at the region that we are in. It's from Europe to Asia. It's quite a significant region in the first place.

Secondly, I think that those categorizations are very artificial. We are a country with a lot of interests and a lot of things that we can contribute to throughout the world. But we certainly are not going to (INAUDIBLE) anyway.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Will there be a diplomatic solution to this crisis?

KISLYAK: I hope so. And it's something that we have been trying to work on for quite a long period of time. We have developed our own ideas. We understand what can be of help to the Ukrainian people, because the biggest problem -- and you need to remember this, is not between Ukraine and Russia, it's between Ukrainian temporary government and the rest of the country.

It's a country that certainly needs a revision of the constitution that would include a mechanism where the regions would be heard and the views will be taken on board.

And it's something that is important. And if the international community can help the Ukrainians to do this process, that would certainly be helpful.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Mr. Ambassador, thanks very much for your time this morning.

KISLYAK: Thank you very much.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Now to Chris Christie, back in the news and back on offense after an internal review cleared him of any wrongdoing in the Bridgegate scandal. The head of that investigation and a competing one in the state legislature are both here now.

First, the back story from ABC's Jim Avila.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE (R), NEW JERSEY: Excuse me, excuse me, stop.

JIM AVILA, ABC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Chris Christie got his mojo back.

CHRISTIE: Can you get to it already?

AVILA: It took nearly three months and a $1 million taxpayer dollars for a hand-picked law firm to find it, clearing the New Jersey governor of any responsibility for Bridgegate. The scandal had knocked some of the swagger from the governor.

Look at Christie's face 76 days ago when his deputy chief of staff's famous e-mail humiliated the then front-running GOP presidential candidate.

And look at him now, when asked why he was kept in the dark by staff.
AVILA: Chris Christie may be feeling pretty good about the investigation he could control. But the next two he cannot, including one underway here at the State House in New Jersey, and the next critical one, the U.S. attorney's probe.

The federal investigation could take two years to complete. But with the endorsement of his own lawyers, Governor Christie began a media blitz this week that began with an exclusive ABC News interview with Diane Sawyer.

CHRISTIE: This report says that I had no knowledge of it before it happened, nor did I authorize it or have anything to do with it. As that's the truth.

AVILA: The report and the governor blame that fired deputy chief of staff Bridget Kelly, who released a statement calling the report venomous and offering to cooperate with the federal investigation if granted immunity.

For This Week, Jim Avila, ABC News, Trenton, New Jersey.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

STEPHANOPOLOUS: We are joined now by the co-chair of the legislative committee investigating this matter, New Jersey assemblyman, John Wisniewski.

Thank you for coming in this morning.

You know, you have joined the critics of this internal investigations, calling it a whitewash. But has your own investigation turned up any bit of evidence that showed that Governor Christie even knew about this slowdown or authorized it?

WISNIEWSKI: We haven't had a chance to talk to some of the key players, as this report has not. Either Bridget Kelly who sent the email that said time for traffic InFort Lee. We don't know why she sent that, we don't know who authorized her to send(g)h. It's hard to believe, understanding how this governor's office works, that one morning she woke up and decided I think it would be a great idea to cause traffic.

STEPHANOPOLOUS: But she has not -- to be clear, you have not found any evidence yet.

WISNIEWSKI: We have not found any evidence, and are not finished.

STEPHANOPOLOUS: You're not finished yet, but why -- do you have any reason to believe that Bridget Kelly is going to talk by your investigation? She has made it pretty clear through her lawyer that she's only willing to go forward and speak to authorities, law enforcement authorities if she gets some kind of immunity.

WISNIEWSKI: We're waiting for Judge Jacobson's decision on the documents. She was a state employee. She has an obligation to make those documents available. We believe that we will have an opportunity to look at those documents.

I think they will speak volumes as to what we need to know to move the investigation forward. But it's far too early to start concluding that the governor knew nothing, had nothing to do with this. It's far too early.

STEPHANOPOLOUS: Well, you had the same documents from Mr. Wittstein that has gone to the Mastro committee again, nothing in those documents that shows he knew about it.

WISNIEWSKI: There's the email that goes between Mike Junak where he marks up the exit statement. For a man that only weeks earlier -- I'm sorry, weeks later the governor said he barely knew.

And so it really begs the question is the governor so deeply involved in crafting an exit statement for David Wildstein, yet had no knowledge.

What I'm saying, George, is it's far too early to draw any conclusive decisions about who knew what in this investigation.

STEPHANOPOLOUS: But if you're not going to get key testimony from these key players, why not just leave this to the U.S. attorney?

WISNIEWSKI: Well, we don't know what we're going to get. We are waiting for Judge Jacobson's decision. I think we ought to wait for that decision. We ought to look at the rest of the documents. We're still going through thousands of pages of documents.
STEPHANOPOULOS: OK, Mr. Assemblyman, thanks so much for joining us.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Randy Mastro, the head of the internal investigation, joins us now. You just heard Mr. Wisniewski say it's a rush to judgment.

RANDY MASTRO, PARTNER, GIBSON, DUNN & CRUTCHER: Well, George, we looked at 250,000 pages of documents, interviewed more than 70 witnesses, and as Mr. Wisniewski just admitted, we haven't seen a shred of evidence that the governor knew anything about the lane realignment decision beforehand.

If it were there in the hard evidence, we would have seen it. They have got all the documents responsive to our subpoena relating to the George Washington Bridge incident. They have the same information that we have. And Mr. Wisniewski and his committee have been at this for five months.

STEPHANOPOULOS: How do you respond to the charge of conflict of interest. Your own law firm was also working for the Port Authority. Isn't that a conflict of interest on its face?

MASTRO: No, it isn't, George.

The representation of the Port Authority, which has been cleared by the Port Authority, was something where both governors' offices agreed that my firm should represent the Port Authority. We had access to Port Authority documents as well.

Let me be clear. We have no incentive at our law firm to do anything other than get to the truth. We will be judged at the end of the day by whether we got it right. And, George, we believe we got it right. We had to work even harder to get it right.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So much hinges on Bridget Kelly. And her lawyers had a harsh statement on your report. Here's what it says.

It says: "This report's venomous, gratuitous and inappropriate sexist remarks concerning Ms. Kelly have no place in what is alleged to be an professional and independent report. The only credible investigation into the lane closings is being conducted by the U.S. attorney's office.

"If Ms. Kelly were provided with the appropriate procedural safeguards, she will be fully cooperative.'

She's not alone in saying that -- including some of these details about her personal life, describing her as emotional was sexist and gratuitous.

Your response?

MASTRO: I'm glad you asked because we treated both David Wildstein and Bridget Kelly exactly the same. They deserved the assessment that we gave both of them about their personal conduct and about their actions, exactly the same way, because they violated the public trust.

And that's what the evidence showed, George. All of it relevant to not only their consciousness and guilt, but their culpability. And in Bridget Kelly's case, if I say may say, Bridget Kelly not only sent the e-mail, but showed ulterior motive. Time for --

(CROSSTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: What is that ulterior motive?

MASTRO: Well, George, I'm glad you asked that, too, because we say what we know and what we don't know. We can't establish what the ulterior motive because we didn't have the chance to question Kelly and Wildstein.

But George, it is obvious there was one to target the Ft. Lee and the mayor of R. Lee because of Bridget Kelly and Wildstein's exchanges. And if I just may say this, George, Bridget Kelly not only sent the e-mail that said "Time for some traffic problems in R. Lee," she then, after the fact, when the governor sent his chief of staff to find out whether she knew about this beforehand, she called a subordinate that night and asked her to destroy incriminating evidence.

Bridget Kelly at the heart of the problem here, so is David Wildstein, and they were both treated exactly as they should have been in our report. They abused the public trust. And they should be held accountable.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Final quick question: are you confident that your report will not be contradicted by the U.S. attorney?
MASTRO: Thank you.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And coming up in just two minutes, star wars, the unexpected new frontier in American manufacturing. David Muir tracking what's made in America.

But can those jobs secure our country's economic future?

Our experts weigh in on that.

And Keith Olbermann breaks down baseball's new season in our Sunday spotlight.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Spartanburg, South Carolina got a big boost this week when BMW announced a $1 billion investment adding 800 new jobs. Another victory for made in America.

But how much can we count on manufacturing to fuel our economic future?

Our experts analyze that key question after this report from "WORLD NEWS WEEKEND" anchor, David Muir.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

DAVID MUIR, ABC NEWS ANCHOR (voice-over): We're first began asking the question three years ago -- does anyone in America check the labels anymore?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Made in China.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: No.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: No, I know, I know your show.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: No.

MUIR: An eye-opening number after World War I, the '50s and '60s, fewer than one in 10 products bought in this country were actually made outside the US. Today, more than 50 percent of what we buy is made elsewhere.

Three years later and the headlines that some manufacturing is actually coming back. Even the president with his made in America message in his State of the Union.

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: We also have the chance, right now, to beat other countries in the race for the next wave of high tech manufacturing jobs, new goods stamped, "Made in the USA."

MUIR: But this morning, a reality check.

Are manufacturing jobs coming back?

We were the first taken inside this factory, making computers in America again.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: These are the desktops.

MUIR: The computer maker, Lenovo, now with a factory near Raleigh.

(on camera): So you're making computers?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Oh, yes.

MUIR: That had been made in China?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Uh-huh.

MUIR: Now they're being made here?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Oh, yes.

MUIR: Did you think you'd see the day?
MUIR: Why bring jobs back?

Lenovo telling us what many companies are now saying, that once you factor in growing wages in China and fuel costs to ship products back to America, it now makes economic sense to bring some manufacturing back.

(on camera) A bit of people argue that the jobs lost in the '80s and '90s will never come back.

HAL SIRKIN, LENOVO: Well, there -- we're seeing different jobs now, more highly skilled jobs.

MUIR: Some of these jobs being created at Apple. CEO Tim Cook recently announcing in a tweet, "We've begun manufacturing the Mac Pro in Austin." -- Austin, Texas.

(on camera): How big of a deal is that to you?

TIM COOK, CEO, APPLE: It's a big deal, but we think we can do more. We -- we also announced a huge investment in Arizona. We haven't said what it's for.

MUIR: Is it the Sapphire Glass?

COOK: It's the Sapphire announcement and that's sort of all I'll say about it.

MUIR: When does that glass come off the line?

COOK: I -- I can't tell you that.

MUIR: For bigger iPhone screens?

COOK: I -- I can't tell you that either.

MUIR: An iWatch?

Or a ring?

You heard it here first.

(voice-over): And one more sign of high tech jobs coming back. South of Los Angeles, we arrived at SpaceX, where their flight plan is entirely made in America. They've already been hired by NASA to send supplies to the International Space Station.

(on camera): And this right here?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: This is a dragon capsule.

MUIR: And I think the windows are very telling, aren't they?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: The windows?

Yes.

MUIR: Because they don't just want to send supplies, they want to be the ones who send American astronauts back into space again.

(on camera): Right now, this is the only capsule actually made in America, making that trip to the International Space Station. And come on and I'll give you an idea of the scope of space inside. This is actually where they put the supplies and equipment for scientific research.

(voice-over): Thirty-seven hundred workers at SpaceX, more than 4,000 by year's end, they say. And when that next capsule takes off within days, it will not only be mission accomplished, it will be made in America.
STEPHANOPOULOS: And let’s dig into this now with our experts.

Steven Rattner, the former head of President Obama’s Auto Task Force, and Zachary Karabell, author of “The Leading Indicators: A Short History of the Numbers That Rule Our World.”

Welcome to you both.

And Steve, let me start with you first.

You know, you worked hard to preserve manufacturing jobs on that auto task force. But you also have written that we have to get real about the renaissance in American manufacturing.

What do you mean by that?

STEVE RATTNER, FORMER COUNSELOR TO THE TREASURY SECRETARY: George, when I served on the Auto Task Force, it was a real eye-opener for me. I had not spent a lot of time in the manufacturing sector.

And what I saw was a sector that’s under enormous pressure from competition. We lost six million manufacturing jobs from 2000 until 2009.

Since 2009, when the recession ended, we’ve gained back fewer than 600,000. We’ve actually gained manufacturing jobs back at a slower rate than we gained other jobs back in this economy.

And the paradox is that people don’t pay enough attention to is wages. A lot of those jobs that are coming back are coming back at much lower wages than the jobs we’ve lost.

In autos, the old line manufacturing workers got $28 an hour in cash wages plus benefits. In Chattanooga, where Volkswagen has 2,000 new jobs, they brought those jobs back at $14.50 an hour.

STEPHANOPOULOS: So does that mean we give up on manufacturing or do it better?

ZACHARY KARABELL, AUTHOR, “THE LEADING INDICATORS”: You know, there’s a real interesting problem today, which is that we can have a manufacturing revival of sorts, meaning we could have really high-tech factories producing lots of stuff without creating lots of jobs.

So in the segment that introduced this, 800 jobs in that BMW plant that opened. That same plant had it opened 30, 40 years ago certainly would have been 3,000, 4,000 jobs. They would have been higher paying, too, in adjusted wages.

So we could have the situation where you have got all these innovation hubs that President Obama is talking about, lots of high-tech, interesting output that adds to our GDP, make us look optically better without the kind of job creation that would have come with those factories.

(CROSSTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: So what’s the smart way, Steve, to source better jobs?

RATTNER: I think you have to again be realistic about what the future of our economy is going to be. As Zach said, we will have some more manufacturing jobs. There are some good proposals around for how to do the.

From education, training, these manufacturing innovation institutes that the president proposed, certainly dealing with our infrastructure problems, dealing with immigration, the same laundry list that you talk about every Sunday will help manufacturing.

The problem, of course, is that nothing’s getting done in Washington.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But Washington can make a difference here.

KARABELL: You know, I think Washington can make a marginal amount of difference in creating interesting little zones. States can make a bit more difference, and individual decisions can make the most amount of difference.

Unless Washington re-creates the Works Progress Administration of the 1930s and actually goes out and hires people to do stuff. I don’t think Washington as a job creator, even with stimulus, is necessarily what is going to lead the way between whatever economy we have now and the economy we need.
Because it is certainly true that a lot of these manufacturing hubs are actually having a hard time finding people who have the requisite skills, which are much more like software and innovation and creativity than they are like doing rote – the work like they way you would have in the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And these are the jobs we want to value and encourage in the future, right?

RATTNER: We certainly want these kinds of advanced manufacturing jobs. But remember this, manufacturing wages today in America on a per-hour basis are actually a bit lower than average wages in the economy as a whole.

And what I mean by that is there are lots of really good, high-paying jobs in sectors like education, like tech, like health care, service sectors that don’t – are not just entry-level jobs, but really high-paying jobs. And this is our competitive advantage. And so I’m not saying we should tilt one way or the other. But a lot of these ideas for how to stimulate manufacturing, special tax rates and all this kind of stuff, I think, is a mistake.

KARABELL: Although, I mean, it is true that some of these higher-end manufacturing jobs at $6, $16, $20 an hour are certainly better then the entry-level Walmart job or the entry-level McDonald’s job, a lot of which are the jobs that are currently being created. I mean those are not good wage jobs.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And that is the last word today. Thank you both very much.

Up next, the powerhouse roundtable ready to go.

Is Chris Christie back on track or permanently derailed for 2016?

What is behind the surge in ObamaCare signups and President Obama’s NSA reversal?

Plus –

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Do managers matter?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Of course they do. I’m one of them, and I’m looking for a job.

STEPHANOPOULOS (voice-over): How important is a business manager? The stats are going to surprise you. And we’re back in just two minutes.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Let’s flip the script a little. Do something that goes totally viral. What we’re going to do, hold this healthcare.gov sign, and give you Pharrell’s hat. And an e-cigarette to vape on. All right? They are going to eat this up.

I don’t think we should do this. And it’s –

Three, two, one. OK. Got it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STEPHANOPOULOS: ‘Saturday Night Live’ having some fun with the president’s push for ObamaCare. The White House is touting a surge in enrollments, but does that really mean the plan will succeed?

The roundtable weighs on that and all the week’s politics in after this from ABC’s Jeff Zeleny.

(BEGIN VIDEO TAPE)

JEFF ZELENY, ABC NEWS SR. WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): From the courts to the campaign trail.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: ObamaCare –

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: ObamaCare –

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: ObamaCare –

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: ObamaCare –

http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/week-transcript-ambassador-sergey-kislyak/story?id=2... 10/21/2014
UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: There is no delay beyond March 31st.

ZELENY (voice-over): Well, not exactly. The Obama administration's now saying you can ignore tomorrow's deadline if you've had trouble signing up and need more time to buy insurance. That decision reignited Republican outrage.

JOHN BOEHNER, SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: What the hell is this, a joke?

SEN. MITCH MCCONNELL, MINORITY LEADER: It's basically become the legal equivalent of Swiss cheese.

ZELENY (voice-over): All this putting Democrats back on the defensive.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You have been very critical over the past months of the Obama administration's rollout. Why is this latest extension not the same thing?

SEN. HARRY REID, MAJORITY LEADER: The rollout was really bad, but let's look at what's happened since that. We have millions of people who have signed up, millions.

ZELENY (voice-over): The administration says at least 6 million people have already signed up, 1 million short of the original goal. All this adding fresh fuel to the fights already shaping the midterm elections.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I'll help repeal ObamaCare.

ZELENY (voice-over): For THIS WEEK, Jeff Zeleny, ABC News, the Capitol.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

STEPHANOPOULOS: The roundtable is here, our political analyst, Matthew Dowd; David Plouffe, he served as President Obama's campaign manager and senior strategist in the White House; Bill Kristol, editor of "The Weekly Standard" and democratic strategist, ABC consultant Donna Brazile.

Welcome to you all.

And Matthew, let me start with you. You just heard in the piece there Jeff Zeleny says the White House announces over 6 million. I saw some numbers this morning the signups could be approaching closer to 7 million by the deadline tomorrow.

So is this a sign of success?

MATTHEW DOWD, ABC NEWS SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT: Well, there is some sign of success. And for everybody that's criticized this, there are people that are getting access to this. There are people that are benefiting from this.

But I think the question on this, is I think first of all, that the political idea about this is its now become detached from the president. Even if this succeeds, I think the president's job approval and where he stands in the country has now become more attached to the economy and less attached to ObamaCare.

But the question becomes, I think Republicans and some Democrats have asked, is at what cost are these successes -- do we have these successes? Because when five years from now, there's the projections are that health care will still be rising, the cost of health care will still be rising and there will probably 30 million people without access.

STEPHANOPOULOS: David Plouffe, what's the answer to that?

DAVID PLOUFFE, DEMOCRATIC STRATEGIST: The law's working. And this was a seminal achievement. You're going to have -- by the way, if you count people who are going directly to private insurance companies, Medicare, children's health care, we're taking well more than 10 million people have health care, tens of millions of more have security.

And the politics of this are tough. They will always be tough. I think they'll get better over time. This law is working. And I think the Republican playbook of just repeal ObamaCare, repeal ObamaCare, repeal ObamaCare gets tougher as more and more people get health care. I think smart Republicans understand that.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Isn't that true?
KRISTOL: I don't think the Democrat Senate will do it. I don't think the Obama administration supports those proposals. They've resisted every attempts to do minor fixes and delays in Obamacare except for the ones they unilaterally decide on. So first of all, I think in the real world, the real politics, the Democratic senators know that it's a big problem for them.

But I totally agree, Republicans simply -- and I have looked at a lot of polling over the last week or two on this, some of it private polling, good polling, I think.

If Republicans simply say get rid of it and let Democrats have the "keep it and fix it" position, then -- even then it's sort of 50-50. But then I think Democrats neutralize the issue.

If Republicans run on repeal and replace or really let's say replace and repeal, it has to be done at once. You can't just throw people out. But we are going to give you tax credits, we're going to take care of pre-existing conditions as part of the repeal, then the polling shows that becomes very, very popular.

BRAZILE: I think the Republicans are going to have a hard time trying to find their voice and get a message on repeal or replace at the juncture.

And for Democrats who I think are running in these so-called tough states, they're going to have a tough time running from so-called affordable health care for all people.

I think the real problem right now, George, is these states where the Republican governors are still holding up Medicaid expansion. And soon enough there are going to be questions, why are you keeping people from getting the health care that they need to save their lives to save the state money? That's going to be the real conversation this fall.

No question Democrats, you know, at the retail level want to pivot back to the economy. They don't want to have to explain all of the so-called Republican talking points, but they're not going to be able to run away from this issue.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Echoing that point, Bill Clinton is coming out this week saying Democrats should not run away from Obamacare.

DOWD: I think in the end the 2014 election, if you look at the fundamentals of the election, it's not going to be about Obamacare. There's flaws in it, there's successes in it. I think everybody can debate that.

I think Republicans have made a mistake by not acknowledging some success in it. I think they're not even asking the right questions. The right question is at what cost? Not -- I'm going to agree with Bill on this is that they should be coming up with a plan.

But anybody can have success if you dump billions and billions and billions of dollars in this. But 2014 is about the direction of the country, the economy, and how people feel in their lives. It's not going to be about Obamacare.

I agree with that. I think the big issue for '14 is even less atmospherics, it's about where the contests are held. Democrats are playing a lot of away games in the senate.

PLOUFFE: But even in these tough states -- we did this against Mitt Romney. You know, you can have an argument about health care, which is about -- there are things we should fix about it, but you're going to have seniors now pay more for prescription drugs, you're going to kick kids off health care plan, you're going to kick millions of people off the health care plan. That is not a winning message.

I think Democrats are going to be need to be more aggressive about selling the positive parts of the law. And by the way, not just those that are covered. The people who already have coverage are getting a lot of benefits, saving a lot of money.

KRISTOL: But most of it hadn't gone into effect when you defeated Mitt Romney now it has gone into effect. Seniors are seeing cuts in Medicare Advantage that were only hypothetical when Mitt Romney run.

PLOUFFE: And they're saving thousands of dollars in prescription drugs.

KRISTOL: I'm happy to have a referendum on Obamacare. And I think it will be inadvisable. I disagree with Matthew on that. I think it will be a referendum on Obamacare and will be good for Republicans.
CHRISTIE: I am a passionate, loving, caring, direct, truth teller. That's who I am. And for some people, they love it. And I tell you, when I travel around New Jersey, I hear from most people that that's the thing they love the most.

DIANE SAWYER, ABC NEWS ANCHOR: And what about love?

CHRISTIE: I think they love me in Iowa too, Diane. I've been there a lot. I think they love me there too.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STEPHANOPOULOS: I know that caught your eye, Bill Kristol. Reality check of how much of a difference this has made. He says he's going to make the decision next year and it's not held him back. In fact, he's learned from it, could make him a stronger candidate.

KRISTOL: Well, as a fellow compassionate, loving, caring, truth teller...

STEPHANOPOULOS: Who is 'vetted in Iowa?

KRISTOL: Yeah. And I'm loved in Iowa and New Jersey and many of other places, you know, people tell me that all the time.

I mean, I don't know, maybe that's not the best way to approach your problem.

I'm struck by this, talking to some Republicans over the last week or two, this has hurt Chris Christie, there's no question. It doesn't mean he can't be a very strong presidential candidate. But the momentum he had two or three months ago, looked like he was going to be sort of the consensus choice of establishment Republicans, of a lot of the donor -- Republican donors. That has, I think, he's lost a lot of that.

Jeb Bush. I mean, everyone's now -- if you talk to your average Republican donor on the establishment side, it suddenly -- much more of the talk is about Jeb Bush and people are worried about Christie.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I want to get to that, because the "Washington Post" had a front page story this morning saying -- saying the GOP elite hoping to lure Jeb Bush many donors view him as the best 2016 pick.

And here's this nugget, Matthew Dowd, I want to say this to you, "many if not most 2012 GOP nominee Mitt Romney's major donors are reaching out to Bush and his confidants with phone calls, emails, invitations to meet, record interviews with 30 senior Republicans. One bundler estimated that the vast majority of Romney's top 100 donors would back Bush in a competitive nomination fight."

A lot of momentum here.

DOWD: Well, this is a sign of two things. Which is first of all the identity of Christie's fall, because if Christie hadn't fallen, then I don't think there would be this outreach to Jeb Bush in the midst of this.

The other thing is that the Republicans are so disorganized in which they're not used to that and who their nominee is, they're looking for the safe pick in their mind. Jeb did a very good job as governor. He's a very good candidate. He's a safe pick.

But to me, is does really want set the race up in 2016 where 340 million Americans live where it's Clinton versus Bush again. I think people are just tired of that. We have to have other candidates that don't have those two last names.

STEPHANOPOULOS: That may be, but you're seeing a lot of momentum behind both candidates right now, David Plouffe.

PLOUFFE: And listen, Bill and Matthew are the experts on the Republican nominating process, but my sort of amateur view of it is that I see the elites are gravitating to Bush now with Christie's fall and I agree with Bill he's not fatally wounded, but he's hurt.

But that's not where the energy is in the voters within Iowa and South Carolina. And I think there could be -- so think at the end of the day, there's a lane for a Christie or a Bush. They'll probably end up facing off against a more conservative candidate. I still think that more conservative candidate has the advantage in Republican primaries in 2016.
This is a danger to Democrats, isn't it?

BRAZILE: Well, look, Sheldon Adelson put a lot of money behind a lot of losing candidates. Next Gingrich, Mitt Romney, et cetera. He's looking for a winner. That's why the doors are now open to Jeb Bush.

The real energy on the Republican side -- I only know this because I travel in some Tea Party circles -- is Rand Paul. I mean, Rand Paul is the talk of the town. He's the one going on campuses out west at UC Berkeley, going to Howard University, visiting historical black colleges and universities. He's trying to open up a dialogue within the Republican Party.

Nobody wants to talk about him. But he has a network in all 50 states. So that's the game-changer in the Republican Party.

(CROSSTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: Every Republican going out and talking to Sheldon Adelson this week was kind of taking [jobs] at Rand Paul.

KRISTOL: Yes, look, I think Rand -- I think ultimately message trumps money or money follows message. And Rand Paul, I don't agree with him. I don't think he'll be the nominee, but I give him credit for having a real message that he pushes wherever he is.

DOWD: I do think you have to keep your eye on Rand Paul. He's very energetic. He's got a bunch of energy behind him. He's one of the only candidates where younger voters are enthusiastic about.

But I think I'm going to just go with something that Bill just said. I just think it's ridiculous that these candidates for president are running out to Las Vegas to go kiss the ring of a billionaire casino owner and they think that's somehow going help them get elected president.

They would be --

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, money is going to help them --

DOWD: I think money matters so much less than if your own capacity as a candidate, your own -- what is your message? What's your vision for the country? They'd be much better off spending time back in where they live instead of flying to Las Vegas and figuring out what's their message, what's their vision and they're going to convey it to the American public.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Final question I want to get to is this issue of NSA reforms. President Obama came out this week and announced that the government would no longer collect and hold this bulk phone data, said it would stay with the telephone companies absent a specific request from the government.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Some of the dangers that people hypothesized when it came to bulk data, there were clear safeguards against. But I recognize that people were concerned about what might happen in the future with that bulk data. This proposal that's been presented to me would eliminate that concern.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

STEPHANOPOULOS: Donna Brazile, the president answering the critics there. But has this "mend it, don't end it" approach enough to save the program?

BRAZILE: I don't think so, George. First of all, I'm glad that the president is ending the program. It was set to expire on Friday this past week. He's asking for a 90-day extension.

The ACLU said fine, but there are still other reforms that need to be taken. There are, of course, proposals on Capitol Hill that would not just end it but end it completely so the phone companies will not have to carry and hold on to this data as well.

STEPHANOPOULOS: This could be headed this way, couldn't it?

DOWD: Well, I watched some of this with some incredulousness. First of all, we're supposed to trust a government that didn't tell us what was going on for years and years and how many records they were accessing and what they were looking at in the American public.

http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/week-transcript-ambassador-sergey-kislyak/story?id=2... 10/21/2014
I think the country is just so fed up with so many different things, but the least of which, they don't trust anyone in Washington telling them what they are or are not doing in this case.

PLOUFFE: No, I think this is a smart accommodation. We still need access to this. George, you had a security clearance; I had it; I think Bill, you had it. You see these intelligence reports.

This is the fundamental first priority of any chief executive. So this still allows the administration any administration, if they have reason of concern, to access this information but now through a court order.

But I think it's a smart adjustment not to have the government hold this anymore. But I still think the phone companies have to have it, and the government has got to have quick access. But now Congress has to act here and it will be interesting to see what they do--

(CROSSTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: Will they act?

KRISTOL: I don't know. There's a good bipartisan proposal by the chairman and ranking member of the House Intelligence Committee which does try to protect the country. People should go back before they pop off about the NSA and reread the 9/11 Commission report, the failure to connect the dots.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Some good advice right there. We're going to be back with Keith Olbermann on baseball's new season.

We also have a baseball theme for our "Powerhouse Puzzler," who was the first president to throw a pitch on opening day?

We're back in two minutes with the roundtable's guesses and the right answer.

(MUSIC PLAYING)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: Who was the first president to throw a pitch on opening day?

I have to confess, I gave the roundtable an additional hint. I said this person could not actually play a game of baseball, which means you all got it right, right?

KRISTOL: Toff, most likely. Opening day tomorrow.

(CROSSTALK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: Washington Senators, April 14, 1910. We'll have a bit more baseball with Keith Olbermann when we come back.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Check out this baseball history unearthed this week at the University of South Carolina.

Babe Ruth at bat against another Hall of Famer, Walter Johnson. Johnson wins this one. And there's Yankee legend, Lou Gehrig. His second game in the lineup, the start of his incredible 2,330 game streak. There's his right there.

And that great video brings us to our Sunday Spotlight on the brand new baseball season. ESPN's Keith Olbermann here with his take first. ABC's Ron Claiborne sat down with Nate Silver's gang at FiveThirtyEight who have a surprising theory, managers don't matter much.
NEIL PAYNE: FIFTEENTHIGHT: They’re all pretty much interchangeable in their ability to make players play better or worse than their established baselines.

CLAIBORNE: Crunching data going back to 1901, Payne figures the average manager, and by his calculation, that’s the vast majority of managers, is responsible for between two losses and two wins each season, far fewer than a high-impact player, a Babe Ruth or Willie Mays, who were good for 11 or more wins a year at their peak.

Payne did find expectations. Bobby Cox of the Atlanta Braves, and Billy Martin who was hired and fired four times as Yankees manager.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Few managers could even match his strategic brilliance.

CLAIBORNE: But the rest?

PAYNE: Most of the guys that manage more a thousand games are right around zero impact on average.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It hasn’t happened...

CLAIBORNE: Yet it’s the manager who gets the credit when their team wins.

CLAIBORNE: And who takes the heat, and usually gets fired, when they lose.

So we ran it by former Major League manager Manny Acta, now an ESPN baseball analyst.

MANNY ACTA, ESPN ANALYST: It’s not only managing inning by inning, it’s what you do before and after the game.

CLAIBORNE: Acta says there are just too many things that managers do that just cannot be quantified.

ACTA: We are as good as the talent that is given to us. But there are so many things that happen through the course of the season that you just cannot measure.

CLAIBORNE: do managers matter?

ACTA: Of course they do. I’m one of them, and I’m looking for a job.

CLAIBORNE: For This Week, Ron Claiborne, ABC News, New York.

[END VIDEOTAPE]

STEPHANOPOULOS: And Keith Olbermann from ESPN joins us. Thanks for coming.

What do you think of the theory?

KEITH OLBERMANN, ESPN ANALYST: It’s nice that it’s been empirically proved. I think it’s been considered to the case that in a game a manager does almost nothing. A manager’s responsibilities almost end when the first pitch is thrown.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Let’s talk about the new season. We saw just before the season begins, these new penalties put on for drug violations inside the major leagues. Pretty harsh. But you say something has been missed here.

OLBERMANN: Well, the key ingredient to it is that all those guys who were suspended last year in the Biogenesis scandal, Alex Rodriguez and Ryan Braun and the others, they all beat the system. And sort of covered up in the fact that the Biogenesis scandal resulted because there was an unhappy employee and the nailing out of 10 or 12 Major League Baseball players who were then suspended for 50 to 162 games is the fact that they all passed the tests.

So the problem is you can literally increase the – the punishments for first-time offenders, second-time offenders twice what the Player’s Association agreed to, and I don’t know that you necessarily are increasing the disincentive to try, because, again, if nobody had told on Ryan Braun and Alex Rodriguez, they would have gotten away with juicing last year.

STEPHANOPOULOS: What are you most excited about this season?
OLBERMANN: The season, it’s the one - it’s the - this is one time of year, and it’s such a cliché, but it’s true, and ODOLBERMANN: And 132, there is still something symbolic even in the West, even in the warmer climates, even in the south, even in Florida there is something symbolic about the fact that the season is starting, which means all of us who were here have survived the winter, particularly in the northeast.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Spring maybe here.

OLBERMANN: Some value here.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And quickly, you know, I know you have spoken out about this, this is going to be the first season of the instant replay challenge. How do you think it’s going to work out?

OLBERMANN: It’s going to have a lot of bumps and it’s going to have a lot of inconsistencies. But I think we’re going to be able to deal with those a lot more easily than we are with things like completely blown calls with the 27th out of what would have been a perfect game if the umpire had gotten it right at first base.

There’s got to be a lot of refinement, but the whole idea that we have not been using this technology when it’s available, if a system could be used to those things quickly, has been ridiculous. And spring training showed they can get most of those things done in a minute and a half.

So why not? The average argument with a manager coming back - you can go back to the point what is a manager doing? He argues for the team thinks they’ve got somebody on their side. That will now be reduced. All that arguing time is now going to be devoted to actually getting the play right.

STEPHANOPOULOS: You seem excited to do be doing baseball again. Miss politics at all?

OLBERMANN: Pat - what was the word again? Thank you for bringing me in and remind me why I’m glad I’m back doing sports.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Look, it’s great to have you back. Keith Obermann, thanks very much.

And we’ll end by being right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

STEPHANOPOULOS: And we end with some good news this morning. For the third week in a row, the military reported no service member deaths in Afghanistan.

That is all for us today. Thanks for sharing part of your Sunday with us. Check out World News with David Muir tonight. And I’ll see you tomorrow on GMA.

FROM AROUND THE WEB

ISIS Militants in Syria BORDER TOWN BEGIN TO RETREAT AFTER TAURUS BATTLE (The New York Times) [Video]

Can You Pass The U.S. Citizenship Quiz? (Kiplinger)

Teacher Publicly Shames Boy By Showing Her Bikini Photo at School Assembly [Video]

Moderate Family Actress Elizabeth Pena Dead at 55 ‘This Week Was Not to Make Any Decisions’ [Video]

Cardinal Timothy Dolan

16 Ebola Facts People Need To Be Aware Of (Parts/edges)

Mystery Submarine Hunt Resurfaces Cold War Tensions

Jenny McCarthy: Siad Feels “Trans” Inside and Would Love If Her Son Came Out As Gay (USA Today)

Utility Workers Indicted Over Brain-Eating Amoeba Testing

Jessa Duggar Should Think Twice About the Family She’s Marrying Into (Silver Dime)

‘This Week’ Transcript: Ebola In America

As Gay (USA Today)

Government Urges Car Owners to Take ‘Immediate Action’ Over Defective Airbags

RECOMMENDED TOPICS: Russia, U.S., Ukraine, Poland, Crimea, Barack Obama, Chris Christie, John Kerry, Exercise.

Chris Christie Bridge Scandal

http://abcnews.go.com/ThisWeek/week-transcript-ambassador-sergey-kislyak/story?id=2...
EXHIBIT 127
Guests: Zeke Emanuel, John Wisniewski

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC HOST: Thanks to you at home for joining us the next hour.

The great Steve Kornacki sitting in for Chris Hayes for the last hour because Chris Hayes is at home with his adorable new baby boy.

And in a heartless and shameless act of thievery, because Chris is home with his new baby boy, I’m going to take advantage of the fact that Chris is not here in the building by stealing from him the greatest piece of tape, the greatest assemblage of visual evidence that anybody has ever put together on the subject of Obamacare. Oh, yes, Chris Hayes. You may be a brand new father and everybody think it’s adorable and I do, too, but while you’re away, I’m stealing your death spiral montage.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIPS)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: The exchanges don’t work and you wind up going into what they call sort of the insurance death spiral.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: What would you call it, death spiral?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Insurance death spiral, yes.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Obamacare is going toward a death spiral.

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UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: This is that death spiral.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Death spiral.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The death spiral.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The death spiral.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: What’s called an insurance death spiral.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You get into the death spiral.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: This could be the beginning of the death spiral.

It could potentially be the beginning of the death spiral.
UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The architect of Obamacare being interviewed by Megyn Kelly, she asked him, is this the beginning of the so-called death spiral?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Is that the beginning of the so-called death spiral?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: And he said, quote, "That could be the beginning of a death spiral," unquote.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That could be the beginning of a death spiral.

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UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: That’s the death spiral -- spiral.

(END VIDEO CLIPS)

MADDOW: Tada! That is so worth stealing. I’ve been waiting until he had to be home so I could steal it. The "ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" super-edit of Republicans and conservatives convincing themselves over and over and over again that no one was going to sign up for Obamacare.

If there are people in your life who watch FOX News all day long, you should know that they have had drilled into them over a period of months now these confident, no doubt claims of certainty that Obamacare would die. That Obamacare would become nonviable in numerical terms because Americans would just refuse to sign up for health insurance under the new guidelines set up by the Affordable Care Act. And when Obamacare, therefore, died in a death spiral, FOX News has been saying over and over and over again health reform would go down in history as not just a great policy failure but as a towering act of political folly.

Democrats would spiral to their political deaths, alongside the policy, itself. Republicans would laugh all the way to the ballot box. That’s been the story.

That is not only the way that Republicans and conservatives have been talking with each other about this policy issue on FOX News and on every other Republican circle. It’s also in some ways the sum total of the whole Republican electoral strategy for this year’s midterm elections and beyond. The supposed death spiral, the expected death spiral, it has been everything to them. They have been banking on this spectacular and obvious failure of Obamacare due to Americans not signing up for health insurance.

That is not the way it has turned out.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)
UNIDENTIFIED MALE: What number are you?

REPORTER: It's been a rush going into this last day, lines around the block at enrollment centers.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Find out the most affordable coverage for you.

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REPORTER: The administration reports 2.5 million calls last week to its hotline, more than the entire month of February, and nearly 9 million hits last week on healthcare.gov.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: If yesterday's events were any indication of the crowds you will see today, you just might be in for a long wait.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You're seeing a huge uptick in the amount of people who are coming out.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I went to several other locations and they was overcrowded.

TV ANCHOR: ABC's chief White House correspondent Jonathan Karl now on the surge and the sprint to the finish.

JONATHAN KARL, ABC NEWS CHIEF WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT: In Dallas today, hundreds of people waited if line to sign up for health care.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We will be here until 9:00 or until the last person leaves today.

KARL: Long lines in Miami, too, and San Antonio. People started lining up at this mall in Miami at 3:30 this morning. By noon, more than 1,000 had come here to try to sign up for Obamacare.

REPORTER: In San Antonio, long lines filled the Alamo Dome. In Tampa, they crammed community center hallways. Administration officials say this has been their biggest enrollment day since signups began last October, three times their previous record.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

MADDOW: It's not a totally hard and fast deadline today because lots of people will be granted extensions including anybody who tried to sign up by today but had technical troubles for whatever reason.

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But on paper, at least, today is the day, the deadline, by which you
were supposed to have signed up for health insurance directly with an insurance company or through the health exchange Web sites that were set up by the new law or through a government insurance program like Medicaid. Today is the day.

And the Congressional Budget Office had projected initially that by today, 7 million people would have enrolled for health insurance through the exchanges. They revised that down to 6 million people when the federal Web site and a bunch of state Web sites had a super glitchy launch.

But only was there no death spiral, that projected 6 million people, that 6 million expected to sign up, that projection was hit and surpassed even before the deadline. The White House announced last week that they were already at 6 million signups. They were at that threshold four days ahead of today’s deadline. And then by all accounts, over this past weekend, and through today, including through tonight, right now, the last-minute surge of people trying to enroll, trying to get themselves health insurance, has been a substantial surge.

The Healthcare.gov Web site, that’s the federal Web site that works in 36 states that don’t have their own Web sites, healthcare.gov has been running pretty well over the past few months since they fixed the initial glitches. This morning, though, it went down for a few hours, again, because of a software glitch that they found overnight. They apparently fixed that glitch by this morning and had the Web site back up and running today. But then just after lunchtime, in the early afternoon today, the healthcare.gov Web site crashed, again, and this time it wasn’t a glitch. This time it was just overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of people who were trying to sign up for health insurance all at once.

The administration said they were dealing with more than 100,000 people all on the same Web site all simultaneously trying to enroll, and the site just got overwhelmed. They did get the Web site back up and running for a second time today, but throughout today, and into tonight, they say the volume is very, very high on the Web site. Volume is also high at the call centers where people have been trying to phone in in order to sign up that way.

At the federal exchange and at the call centers, they’re now saying that anybody who essentially gets in line between now and midnight, anybody who at least tries to get themselves signed up today will have the deadline stretched for them so they can at least try to finish the process. If you put it off until the last day and you are trying to sign up for health insurance before the midnight deadline tonight, yes, the fact that all the call centers are really crowded and there’s long lines and it’s taking a long time to get through the Web site because it’s really overwhelmed it’s
annoying to do that at the last minute.

That annoyance is not a death spiral problem. This is the opposite of that kind of problem. This is not too few people signing up. This is too many people trying to sign up.

If the health of our newly reformed health care system in this country depends on people agreeing to participate in the system, people agreeing to get health insurance when this is exactly the right kind of problem that you want to have. It may be annoying, but this is the type of difficulty that they dreamt of. It’s too popular.

We’ll get to some of what that means for the policy in just a moment with an expert guest who’s going to be here in just a second. But in terms of the politics here, what does this mean for the Republican Party? I mean, as far as anyone can tell, the whole Republican plan for the elections this November is that Republicans plan to crow about the obvious failure of health reform, right?

Well, now that health reform isn’t failing, what are they going to do this year? It turns out that their plan is to switch metaphorical birds. It turns out their plan now is less crow, less crowing, and more of the ostrich, as in sticking their heads in the sand.

The Republican plan apparently, if this weekend has anything to say about it, the apparently new Republican plan for dealing with the real reality on the ground is that Republicans are just going to pretend it’s not happening. La, la, la, la, la.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The White House announced this week more than 6 million people now total have signed up for private health insurance on the exchanges, including 1.8 million so far just in March. But they still have no numbers for how many people have paid for coverage, how many so-called young invincibles have signed up, nor how many people have signed up who were previously uninsured.

Senator Barrasso, given that, how much does this 6 million number actually mean?

SEN. JOHN BARRASSO (R), WYOMING: I don’t think it means anything, Chris. I think they’re cooking the books on this.

(END VIDEO CLIP)
MADDOW: They’re cooking the books. Really?

You are forgiven if you do not know who the man is who was speaking there. He is not contrary to popular impression, he is not a Stephen Colbert impersonator. In fact, that is a United States senator from the great state of Wyoming.

And it’s not like he’s brand new. I don’t know why no one can ever pick John Barrasso out of a lineup, but nobody can pick John Barrasso out of the lineup. That, however, is U.S. Senator John Barrasso, and he is not the only U.S. senator who thinks that maybe the Obamacare numbers are all fake.

Maybe it just can’t be true that this many million people have signed up for health insurance under Obamacare.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Your colleague, Senator Barrasso, says the White House is actually fixing the books.

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SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM (R), SOUTH CAROLINA: Totally they are.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You agree with that?

GRAHAM: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You have any facts to back that up?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: No. No, Lindsey Graham does not have any facts to back that up, but this is proving to be one of the more entertaining instincts that high-ranking Republicans have developed in the Obama era. You think they might have learned a lesson about publicly denying the numbers during the great Obama re-election great conservative punditry fail of 2012, right?

I mean, you’d think they would be embarrassed about ignoring the numbers, right? They were embarrassed by that episode. Weren’t they?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIPS)

NEWT GINGRICH (R), FORMER HOUSE SPEAKER: I believe the minimum result will be 53-47, Romney over 300 electoral votes, and the Republicans will pick up the Senate. I base that on just years and years of experience.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The wildcard in what I’ve projected is I’m
projecting Minnesota to go to Romney.

REP. JOHN BOEHNER (R-OH), SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: I think Ohioans vote with their wallets. That’s why I think Romney is going to win on Tuesday.

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KARL ROVE, GOP STRATEGIST: I think Ohio is going to be a squeaker, maybe 80,000, 100,000, 110,000-vote margin. But I think the Republicans are likely to take it.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Who`s going to win this election? Charles Krauthammer, your best prediction?

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, FOX NEWS: Romney, very close, but he`ll win the popular by I think about half a point. Electoral College, probably very narrow margin.

DICK MORRIS: It will be the biggest surprise in recent American political history. It will rekindle a whole question as to why the media played this race as a nail biter. Where, in fact, I think Romney is going to win by quite a bit.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I’m now predicting a 330 electoral vote landslide. Yes, that`s right, 330 electoral votes.

(END VIDEO CLIPS)

MADDOW: Yes. You guys, no one was skewing the polls. Nobody was cooking the books to make it look like President Obama was going to get elected. When, in fact, Mitt Romney was going to get elected and by a lot and was going to win Ohio and Minnesota and it was going to be beautiful -- you know what, it was a conservative fantasy:--And a very embarrassing one because it was conducted in public and that tape exists forever.

Also, the Department of Labor did not cook the books and make up new unemployment numbers before the election to help the president. Those really were the real unemployment numbers. And the idea that they were fake numbers that were made up, they were cooking the books. That was a conservative fantasy, and, again, an embarrassing one.

But now, Obamacare -- the Affordable Care Act has hit its projected numbers as well. They’re not cooking the books. There`s not going to be a death spiral where the law dies under its own actuarial weight because people have refused to sign up. In fact, people are signing up at exactly the rate they were expected to sign up at, if not a little faster.

Republican politicians really do hate this law, but it is doing what
it was supposed it do. The number of uninsured people in our country has dropped by 9.5 million people because of this law. And the new political reality of Obamacare is that wishing for Obamacare to go away can go longer be a wish that exists in an ideological vacuum. The policy exists now. And wishing for it to go away means now that you’re wishing that 9.5 million Americans who just got health insurance, you’re wishing that they would go back to being uninsured.

But perhaps the biggest political news of all about health reform right now, and if you are sick of people talking about health reform, this is definitely the most joyful piece of news for you. The most important thing probably to know about Obamacare and the way it affects our national politics from here on out is that today is probably the last day ever that Obamacare will be a big national news story.

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Paul Walden wrote about this today in the "Washington Post" and I think he’s right about this. "Today is the last of the law’s key dates when everyone’s attention turns to it. This is the end of major Obamacare-related news events. No big nationwide thing is ever going to happen again on Obamacare. It will, therefore, stop being a politics story and start basically just being a health care policy story."

Which means after today, in political terms, it’s OK for this subject to go back to being boring. From a personal perspective, I got to tell you, I have a degree in health care policy. That is what I did my undergraduate college degree in and I had a choice. I picked that. If anybody should find this stuff fascinating, I should.

But after today, we can all agree to go back to this being the story of how annoying it is to have to deal with your-health insurer and sometimes you have good experiences at the doctor, and sometimes you have annoying experiences at the doctor, and dealing with the private health insurance company is an annoying bureaucracy but better than not having health insurance where you go bankrupt and have to go live in a trailer. I mean, if you want those kind of regular everyday frustrations with health insurance, which those of us who were lucky enough to have health insurance have long dealt with and been bored by.

If you want that to be the hook in which you hang your whole congressional midterm election strategy, then good -- good luck. But after today, it is starting to look like anybody who was trying to say that they had real fire in the belly on this issue, it’s starting to look like it’s fizzling out. I mean, a death spiral would have been so cool. But that is not at all what happened.
Joining us now is Dr. Zeke Emanuel, former White House health policy adviser, currently chair of medical ethics and health policy at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Emanuel, I’m sorry that I said your field is boring.

DR. ZEKE EMANUEL, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA: Yes, you’re going to make me unemployed. Nobody is going to want to hear my boring things anymore. That’s, like, terrible.

MADDOW: Well, let me ask --

EMANUEL: Rachel, you’ll have to have me on, nonetheless. You’ve got to promise that. Otherwise, you know --

MADDOW: You’ve got to start coming up with health policy terms that are as cool sounding as death spiral. When this was going to be a huge conflagration, it was very, very exciting. Now it feels like less people being uninsured.

I mean, am I right to say it’s about to get more boring than it has been?

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EMANUEL: Yes, we’re about to go further into the weeds of how do you design a really good Web site, what do you have to do to make sure it’s vibrant and people want to come and shop? What do you have to do to make cost control work? Those tend to be in the weeds. They can even bore my children. So, I think you’re right.

MADDOW: Were the Republicans right to say that if -- and the conservatives more broadly -- were they right to say that if people didn’t sign up, that if the numbers stayed as bad as they were when the Web sites didn’t work and the first couple weeks when nobody was really signing up, if those numbers stayed terrible, in actuarial terms the whole system wouldn’t work. The whole idea of Obamacare would fall apart? Were they right to warn about that?

EMANUEL: Yes. That is true. If you don’t have enough people in the system, it will collapse of its own weight and other exchanges and other places did collapse and, you know, fortunately the 7 million which was as you point out the original projection without the two months of screwed up Web site has been -- will be reached by the end here pretty comfortably, and I think that shows it’s been a major -- there’s some really pent-up demand.

People really want insurance and they want affordable insurance. When
offered that possibility, they’ll come out of the woodwork. Of course, they’re going to delay until the end. We’re all procrastinators. But that there is really big demand and that is the bottom line here.

MADDOW: Well, that 7 million number was never, as far as I understand it, correct me if I’m wrong, but as far as I understand it, it was never set as an explicit policy goal. If we get that number, then this thing will work. That was essentially the projected number for how many people they thought would sign up.

In policy terms, is that enough people signed up to basically guarantee that it is going to work at least in a macro sense?

EMANUEL: Well, again, partly because the exchanges are state-by-state, you have to dissect each state, but certainly overall as an aggregate, it’s enough. Places like Connecticut have seen more than twice the estimated number. California’s well over a million. New York’s done extremely well.

So, you will see in these major pockets of where the uninsured are a very stable platform. But, again, you want a stable platform going forward, so God forbid someone loses a job or God forbid employers decide they’re not going to offer insurance, you actually have a place you can get affordable coverage, and so we really do need functioning vibrant exchanges in every state of the country.

MADDOW: As we move forward and as the implementation of this law shows things that need to be fixed, shows things that aren’t working, do you have faith, and we’ve talked about this earlier in the process, too -- do you have faith that those are things that can be fixed at the administrative level, at the executive branch level? Or do you think some of the fixes that are inevitably needed for this law are going to go to go through Congress which, of course, is still sort of a wasteland?

EMANUEL: There are some things that really do need legislation, but there’s a lot of things that can be done administratively. Remember, in Massachusetts, after they passed their bill, they had six more subsequent legislative revisions and they don’t think they’re finished with it. So there are things that everyone agrees, and, again, here the funny thing is if you talk to a policymakers on the right, conservatives, they agree with me about 70 percent of the time about things that we ought to be doing to improve the American health care system, changing off the fee for service payment system, getting more competitive on government provision of services so you can bring the prices down.

Having more administrative simplification so there’s not so much paperwork and you can save money that way. So, there are a number of
things. And again, this is bipartisan once we get past the election or whenever the Republicans are going to say, all right, we’re going to move off health care and on to something else, because the fact of the matter is we can do things to improve the health care system and improve this Affordable Care Act and how the whole system functions. And we should get on with it already.

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MADDOW: Dr. Zeke Emanuel, former White House health policy adviser. And a good --

EMANUEL: Soon to be irrelevant.

MADDOW: Yes, hopefully. If all goes well.

Thank you very much, Zeke. Nice to see you.

EMANUEL: Take care.

MADDOW: Thanks a lot.

All right. And I quote, "I could claw his eyes out." That was something that I did not think had been publicly released last week, but it turns out it had. Not only did I think he want to claw his eyes out, I wanted to pour gasoline in his eye sockets and light them on fire."

This is not somebody speaking literally. This is a new form of political insult and threat that I did not even know New Jersey was capable of, but they are.

Stay with us. That story’s coming up.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: It is bear o’clock all over the country -- whether you live out in the country or in the suburbs that are maybe adjacent to the country. Heck, even if you live in the Glendale neighborhood of Los Angeles, this is the time of year that you might run into a bear. Waking up from a long winter’s nap, obviously, looking for something to eat. Look at the guy, see, here comes the bear. Oh, geez, there’s a bear.

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This is the time to take in your bird feeders, lest they end up twisted into gnarled handfuls of wires and mess like the one in our front yard that Susan and I forgot to take down this weekend.
Last fall, we had on this show a Nebraska state senator named Ken Haar who invented something designed to foil the hungry bears in your life. He calls his inventions bear hooks. Basically two grappling hooks with a line between them. Put the hooks way up in a tree and use them to hoist your food or trash in the air away from your campsites so you’re not tempting bears to tear your stuff apart.

The senator was here on the show last fall because in addition to inventing bear hooks, he wrote legislation to get his state to look into how climate change was affecting Nebraska and what the state government should be doing to plan for those effects.

Now, this is not an academic exercise in Nebraska or anywhere else. Nebraska has recently had historic drought conditions. It’s also had historic flooding conditions, and experienced both of those things not that far apart.

When senator bear hooks put forward his idea to study climate change in the state, conservatives in the Nebraska state government blocked what he wanted to do. They said they would only let that climate change study go ahead if it did not study the fact that the climate was changing.

One Republican state senator said, quote, "I don’t subscribe to global warming." He wrote an amendment to the legislation insisting it not study anything that might have been caused by humans. So, the Nebraska legislature voted that the study of the climate change problem should not really study the problem, and all the state’s major scientists said they wanted nothing to do with it and so the whole thing got canceled in Nebraska.

This is called the see no evil, hear no evil approach to scary public policy problems. It’s a little like what we described with Republicans denying the Obamacare signup numbers. The technical term in political silence is la, la, la, la, la, I don’t want to know.

The same thing happened in Virginia in 2012. The idea was floated -- get it, floated -- for the study on the effects of climate change and sea level rise on the coastal portion of Virginia. The Hampton Roads area in Virginia is considered the highest major flood risk zone in the country after New Orleans. But the Republican state delegate from Virginia Beach at the time insisted Virginia should not study the effect of sea level rise on coastal Virginia because he said the term sea level rise is a left wing term.

And so, Virginia is not allowed to study it. La, la, la, la, la.

Same thing happened in North Carolina recently where Republicans in
the state legislature there set a ban on any decisions or any planning being based on estimates from a state-appointed panel of scientific experts which predicted how much sea levels might rise on the North Carolina coast over the next few decades. Those estimates exist. They were produced by a state-appointed commission of scientific experts, but the prediction they made for what was going to happen on the coast of North Carolina, those predictions were scary.

And so, North Carolina Republicans decided to ban the state, ban the state by law from paying attention to those scary predictions. La, la, la, la, la.

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If you stick your head in the sand this way, do you drown when the tide rushes up and covers the beach? We’re all about to find out, all of us, because tomorrow in the United States congress, the Republican-controlled House is about to take up a bill to have the whole country go la, la, la, la, la, when it comes to understanding what’s happening to the planet right now and how we might plan to survive it.

Today, the intergovernmental panel on climate change released its latest international consensus scientific report saying, in effect, that the effects of climate change are already being felt around the globe. Everything from droughts in the Mediterranean, to sea ice collapsing in the far north which is eroding the coastline. Adaptations around the world include everything from needing to raise flood walls already and sea barriers, to some coastal communities moving themselves away from the sea or at least making plans to move away from the sea soon.

So that international report came out today and it is scary stuff. The effects of global warming and climate change have already started. What hope to we have of reversing these changes? What hope do we have of adapting to deal with them if we can’t reverse them?

This is -- this is keep you up at night kind of stuff, unless you are a member of the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. Because the plan in congress tomorrow, tomorrow, the day after this big scary international report came out, what they’re going to do in Congress tomorrow is that they’re going to debate a new Republican idea that the United States government should stop working on this issue so much. We should at least stop studying it so we know less about it.

Republican Congressman Jim Bredenstine (ph) of Oklahoma is due to get a floor vote tomorrow, as early as tomorrow, on his bill that would instruct the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to stop studying climate change so darn much.
UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Mr. Speaker, global temperatures stopped rising ten years ago. Global temperature changes when they exist correlate with sun output and ocean cycles.

MADDOW: Congressman sun output says it is a scandal that U.S. government scientists spend time studying the impact of climate change. In fact, he says the people of Oklahoma are ready for an apology from President Obama because government scientists have been studying climate change.

This is what the Republicans did in Nebraska. This is what the Republicans did in Virginia. This is what they did in North Carolina. And now, under John Boehner in Washington, they are trying to take national this patented approach to worrying about climate change.

Don’t worry about it. In fact, don’t study it. Keep your heads in the sand.

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Congressman Bredenstein’s la, la, la, la, la bill is due up as early as tomorrow. We got word tonight from House Democrats they’re trying to at least change the language in the bill to soften it up because they believe the Republicans in the House will pass it.

But we will let you know how this thing goes tomorrow. Watch this space.

MADDOW: We have some breaking news tonight. This has been posted by "The Washington Post." It’s about the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report on the CIA, their interrogation and detention practices after 9/11.

Now, you know that this report is still classified, but this new reporting from the "Washington Post" tonight says officials familiar with the report are now describing its conclusions. They say the report concludes that the CIA misled both the Department of Justice and Congress. The report says, reportedly, that the CIA concealed some of their torture techniques, they overstated the effectiveness of their torture methods, and they claimed that torturing prisoners got them critical intelligence that actually was gathered by other agencies without the use of torture.

One U.S. official telling "The Post" tonight, quote, "The CIA
described its program repeatedly to both the Justice Department and eventually to Congress as getting unique otherwise unobtainable intelligence that helped disrupt terrorist plots and save thousands of lives."

"Was that actually true?" the official says. "The answer is no," end quote.

Senate Intelligence Committee is scheduled to vote on Thursday whether or not to submit this report to President Obama for declassification. We have been waiting to get public access to it for years.

But this is a major leak tonight about what is reportedly in the conclusions of that report. If this is what the report is, you can understand why the CIA has been fighting so hard to keep it out of the public eye.

Much more to come about this bombshell reporting undoubtedly in days to come. We`ll let you know as we learn more. We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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MADDOW: When you are an embattled governor, when you`re a governor known as a formerly rising star but now, you`re known as the governor who`s been under siege for six straight months with poll ratings gone upside-down and all the rest of it, and you just spent $1 million in taxpayer money on an internal investigation into yourself, and that report on behalf of your own office determines that you had not one thing to do with this big terrible mess in your state, but still the questions about whether you were involved keep right on coming.

When you`re a governor and you just can`t seem to get this thing put to bed, no matter how much you keep trying to put it to bed, there`s just one thing left to do. Release the surrogates.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHUCK TODD, MSNBC ANCHOR: You`re a former U.S. attorney. If somebody came to you with an investigation that came to a conclusion like the one that Christie`s investigation did, but it did not interview the five most important players in the investigation, including Bridget Kelly, Bill Stepien, David Wildstein, David Samson, Bill Baroni, all these people all involved in it, would you accept that as a complete investigation as a former U.S. attorney?

RUDY GIULIANI, FORMER NYC MAYOR: No, no, I would not accept it as a
complete investigation, but I would accept it for what it's worth. In other words, I would go through it in great detail because it can give you a tremendous amount of information.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Governor Chris Christie is having a hard time in the press. Look very shortly thereafter for Rudy Giuliani on TV defending him.

To the extent that Governor Chris Christie has traceable political DNA, that political DNA goes right back to Rudy Giuliani.

Rudy Giuliani's top political strategist when he ran for president, Mike DuHaime. Mike DuHaime became the top political strategist for Chris Christie.

The Rudy Giuliani for president national field director was Bill Stepien. Bill Stepien then went on to become Chris Christie's campaign manager. The Rudy Giuliani for president deputy communications chief was a woman named Maria Comella, went on to become communications chief for Chris Christie.

And when Chris Christie picked a lawyer to do a supposedly impartial and independent investigation of whether Chris Christie did anything wrong when those lanes on the world's busiest bridge for shut down on orders from at least one person working in his own office, Chris Christie picked a lawyer who just happens to have been a deputy mayor to Rudy Giuliani.

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And then this weekend, Mayor Giuliani once again stood up for Chris Christie and stood up for his former deputy mayor's report saying that that gushing, over the top, total exoneration of Governor Christie which most other people are treating as suspect if not a laughingstock, he Rudy Giuliani says he sees that report as something that should be gone over in great detail because he says it can give you a tremendous amount of information.

If you have got a case of brand new highlighters, and several boxes of binder clips, this report from the Chris Christie lawyers is, in fact, fascinating reading. It is filled with documents that we haven't seen before. Last week, I mistakenly said that attorney Randy Mastro, the guy who did this report, didn't include the raw e-mails or raw text messages when he published the results of his investigation. That was wrong on my part.

The report and the exhibits supporting the report went out separately
that morning, and in fact, in the exhibits, there's the raw stuff, as you can see. This is, for example, the raw text message in which the Christie deputy chief of staff who ordered traffic problems for the town of Fort Lee, this is the text message in which she apologizes to her staffer. Bridget Kelly apologizing right after she has been fired. She writes, "I’m sorry to tarnish the office." her staffer replies, "we did amazing things to be proud of for four years. Never forget that." Then she says, "Hang in there, B.K." Raw stuff.

Some of the report’s conclusions have become more curious as we’ve gotten new clues about them. The Port Authority official who arranged for the bridge lanes to be closed and for Fort Lee to choke on traffic for a week is this guy, David Wildstein. According to the report, David Wildstein says he told Governor Christie about the lanes being closed while they were still closed. He says he told them at a 9/11 memorial service on day three of the traffic jam.

If that is true, that would mean that Governor Christie learned about the traffic lanes being shut down and about Fort Lee’s nightmare while it was still going on.

Now, the authors of the report, Chris Christie’s lawyers spent a lot of ink playing that down. Iterating and reiterating that Governor Christie remembers nothing about that conversation.

Quote, "Whatever brief exchange they had occurred in a public setting where they were surrounded by many including other Port Authority officials and the governor’s wife and a steady stream of spectators requesting photographs and handshakes with the governor. Not surprisingly, Governor Christie has no recollection of such an exchange."

Well, since the report was first published, WNBC here in New York has obtained these new pictures of Governor Christie and David Wildstein together at that memorial that day. Although we cannot hear what they are talking about by looking at these pictures, they do not appear to be interrupted by a steady stream of spectators requesting photographs and handshakes with the governor. It’s not like David Wildstein was on a receiving line. They hung out.

Also in this report, the sort of astounding e-mail from Governor Christie, himself, in which he edits the press statement about David Wildstein’s resignation. This happened back in December. You can see here, the statement as proposed by Governor Christie’s spokesman, Mr. Christie writes back personally adding a line, thanking David Wildstein for his service to the people of New Jersey and the region. Governor Christie’s tried to keep his distance from this story from the beginning, but you can see him wading in to these particular details himself, directly
and personally.

Both David Wildstein and Bridget Kelly have indicated now that they are willing to testify. They are willing to talk and explain everything they know if they get immunity from prosecution.

On Friday, lawyers for Bridget Kelly said if she gets immunity, quote, "She will be fully cooperative and provide true and complete answers to any questions asked of her by the appropriate law enforcement authorities."

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Well, today the Democratic co-chair of New Jersey legislative committee that’s investigating the scandal said his committee is going to subpoena the notes and the records and the transcripts of interviews that were used in making the Christie internal investigation.

Assemblyman John Wisniewski telling reporters today if this report is, quote, "Truly an unbiased report, then the governor should have no problem turning over that raw material." The lead investigator responded to Assemblyman Wisniewski today by saying basically, yes, send us the subpoena and we’ll think about it.

Assemblyman John Wisniewski joins us live, next. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Final quick question. Are you confident that your report will not be contradicted by the U.S. attorney?

RANDY MASTRO, ATTORNEY: George, we are because we have no incentive to do anything other than to get to the truth. I have to say this, for the skeptics out there, there are some who have a visceral reaction to this bridge controversy. Reminds me of the movie line, they can’t handle the truth. We believe we got to the truth, George.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Could this story get any more New Jersey? Yes, it could. That’s attorney Randy Mastro, a former deputy mayor to Rudolph Giuliani. He’s the man who the Christie administration hired to investigate the bridgegate scandal. That was him speaking on ABC’s "This Week", asserting his internal investigation into this scandal got to the truth and nothing but the truth.

Joining us now for the interview tonight is New Jersey Assemblyman
John Wisniewski. He’s co-chair of the legislative panel that’s been investigating these lane closures from the start.

Mr. Wisniewski, thank you for being here.

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STATE REP. JOHN WISNIEWSKI (D), NEW JERSEY: Good to be here, Rachel.

MADDOW: You have said you’re not satisfied essentially with this report on behalf of the Christie administration. Why not?

WISNIEWSKI: There are no significant support for the arguments that are made in the entire report. So the report talks about summary testimony that was given, but there’s no footnotes. There’s no reference point to what was actually said.

We’re asked to take Randy Mastro’s summary of an interview he had and take it at face value. The committee ought to see the interview notes. If there’s a transcript, the committee ought to see the transcript of the interview. So, we hear a lot of conclusions, we hear a lot of summary, but we don’t see any support for that.

MADDOW: When you said today that you would like to see those interview transcripts and in fact that you will subpoena them under the subpoena power that you have in the legislature, what did you make of the response from Mr. Mastro, and do you think you’re going to get those documents?

WISNIEWSKI: I certainly hope we will, but I was disappointed by the response. The governor started this whole process when this issue first became known, that he was going to cooperate fully with all of the investigations.

I think cooperating fully means turning over the material that the internal investigation developed and used during their preparation of this report. To have anything short of that means the governor’s backing away from his commitment to fully cooperate.

MADDOW: Are there particular sort of dark spots in the record that were either highlighted by this report or alluded to by this report that you’re focusing on, that you’d really like to -- if you had to prioritize what you’d like to get that you found out exists from this report, are there specific things?

WISNIEWSKI: Well, I know what is not in this report, and that is any substantive interview with Bridget Kelly or Bill Stepien or David Samson or Bill Baroni or Mr. Wildstein. And these are the key actors in this entire
episode. And so, how you come to a conclusion that the governor had no knowledge, in fact he may not have, but how you come to that conclusion without actually having the opportunity to interview these people, without having the opportunity to look at the documents they have, just seems like an incredible rush to a conclusion without all the facts.

MADDOW: What`s the status of your investigation right now? I know you said that a lot of the documents that you subpoenaed you expected to come in on a rolling basis and that there would be thousands of them and it would take a long time to go through them. What`s the status and the sort of overall timeline on what you`re doing?

WISNIEWSKI: Well, obviously we`re waiting for Judge Jacobson`s decision on Bridget Kelly and Bill Stepien`s production of documents. We don`t know when that will come. We`re hoping it will come soon.

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We just received thousands of pages of documents from Randy Mastro as a precursor to the delivery of this report. We haven`t gone through them all, but clearly, we`re getting a lot of press summaries in the documents we`re getting from the governor`s office.

That`s not relevant to the inquiry of the committee. We want to know what people were saying to one another. We want to know what they were communicating to one another. We don`t want to know the summary of what "The Bergen Record" and the "Wall Street Journal" and "New York Times" had on these stories. But that`s what we`re getting a lot of.

So we need to get a lot more documents. We`re ultimately going to have to take testimony. There are some very fundamental questions about why people were compelled or felt compelled to close these lanes even though they`re internal e-mails and you`ve seen them that said this is not going to end well, this is a big mistake, why are we doing this. But they went ahead and did it anyway.

MADDOW: Do you believe that Governor Christie will be one of the people who will have to testify in this matter? You`re your co-chair Loretta Weinberg suggested as much this weekend.

WISNIEWSKI: I think we may ultimately need to ask the governor to come and answer questions. We need to have his full cooperation. We need to know what Randy Mastro knows in preparing this report. We need to know what the governor said as part of his interview with Randy Mastro. That may involve having the governor come before our committee.

MADDOW: New Jersey Assemblyman John Wisniewski, thank you very much.
for keeping us up to speed. Nice to see you.

WISNIEWSKI: Good to see you again, Rachel.

MADDOW: Thank you.

All right. We’ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: So I missed Friday night’s show. I had a thing to do. Missed the show.

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It’s great to have a day off. Except if you work in the news business and your news show is at night and the day you get to take off is a Friday. And the reason that’s bad is because every freaking Friday, it seems like, there is now a Friday night news dump of some magnitude. Including this past Friday, when I was not here.

After the close of business on Friday night, North Carolina, the state government in North Carolina dumped a huge trove of documents, 13,000 pages, 900 different documents, all released in response to public records requests, all posted online without comment after the close of business on Friday. There are so many documents that when the local CBS station, WRAL, posted them on their Web site they essentially tried to crowd-source them.

They called on their viewers to search through the files themselves and flag anything that might be newsworthy. The agency in question here is the North Carolina Department of the Environment. They’re the state agency where more than a dozen of their employees have received federal criminal grand jury subpoenas and the U.S. attorney’s investigation into the recent giant coal ash spill in North Carolina and the relationship between the company responsible for that spill, Duke Energy, and the state government.

The administration of North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory. Pat McCrory happens to have worked at Duke Energy for 30 years before he became the state’s governor and before Duke Energy’s toxic gunk pouring into the Dan River became the third largest coal ash spill in the history of this country. On Friday, the state posted those 13,000 pages related to Duke Energy’s coal ash all across the state.

Also on Friday that same state agency announced that they’d found poison, a poison called thallium, in surface water at two of Duke’s other coal ash sites across the state. This is not them finding toxic chemicals at Dan River, at the place that had the spill. This is them finding this poison at these other sites where there hasn’t been a spill with the
implication that even in the absence of a catastrophic breach like they had at Dan River the intact coal ash dumps that Duke has around the state, the intact ones are themselves leaching highly toxic metals into North Carolina rivers. At the Cliffside plant in Gaston County. At the Asheville plant that drains into the French broad river, they found levels of thallium above what the federal government says are safe.

WRIL helpfully noting that thallium, quote, "was commonly used as a rat poison until the U.S. banned it for consumer use in 1975 due to its high toxicity."

So it’s too toxic to be used as rat poison but not too toxic to be dumped into North Carolina rivers by Duke Energy.

I’m not sure if the people of North Carolina knew that this is what they were going to get when they hired a nearly 30-year Duke Energy employee as their new governor, but this is what they got.

And if you want to help with the crowd-sourced efforts on those documents, there’s a link to the documents posted at Maddowblog.com right now. And the hashtag for posting on Twitter what you find in those documents is #coalashdocs.

That does it for us tonight.

Now, it’s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O’DONNELL."

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EXHIBIT 128
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING: NO TAPES, TRANSCRIPTS OF MASTRO INTERVIEWS

MARK J. MAGYAR | APRIL 9, 2014

Legislative investigators may be headed toward a legal showdown with Gov. Chris Christie and his team of lawyers to obtain the documentary evidence that was used to clear the governor and his top aides of wrongdoing in Bridgegate and other Port Authority-related scandals.

But the “evidence” may be of little value.

Assemblyman John Wisniewski (D-Middlesex), cochairman of the Joint Select Committee on Investigation, said yesterday it is his understanding that Randy Mastro and his Gibson Dunn & Crutcher firm not only failed to conduct the 70 interviews under oath, but also failed to videotape, audiotape, or have a stenographer make transcripts of any of the interviews.

“If this was supposed to be a transparent 360-degree examination of what happened, the lack of any hard evidence of what people said and how they responded to questions means that this report is based upon nothing more than the (Mastro team’s) mental impressions of what people said,” Wisniewski noted. “That’s the classic definition of hearsay,” he said, dismissing the conclusions of the $1 million taxpayer-funded study.

Nevertheless, Wisniewski and Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg (D-Bergen) said the committee wants whatever interview memos or other documentary evidence that does exist. They said the panel would give the governor’s office and Mastro’s firm only until Friday to provide the materials voluntarily before issuing a subpoena.

Wisniewski also announced that the governor’s office, Christie’s reelection campaign and former Port Authority Chairman David Samson are the only three entities and individuals who have yet to fully comply with the wave of 28 subpoenas issued by the panel in late January.

Wisniewski said he did not believe the panel has received records of Christie’s cellphone, emails, and text messages, and added that the committee has received little from Samson, who refused to be interviewed by the Mastro committee and whose alleged conflicts of interest at the Port Authority are the subject of a probe by the U.S. Attorney in the Southern District of Manhattan and of complaints to the state Ethics Commission.

Weinberg and Wisniewski announced the prospective subpoena and the absence of any tapes or transcripts of the Mastro team interviews in a press conference after a meeting of the investigative committee that followed four days of explosive developments in the Bridgegate scandal:

- U.S. Attorney for New Jersey Paul Fishman is presenting witnesses to a 23-member federal grand jury empaneled for 18 months that is apparently investigating both the George Washington Bridge lane closures and Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer’s allegation that the Christie administration threatened to withhold Sandy aid if she did not support a high-rise development project represented by Samson. Christie press secretary Michael Drewniak
testified last Friday.

- David Wildstein, Christie’s political lieutenant at the Port Authority who directed the George Washington Bridge lane closures and claims to have told Christie about them while they were happening, met with Fishman’s investigators for three days last week, a reporter who used to cover Christie’s U.S. Attorney’s Office reported on the Main Justice website. It is the latest evidence that Wildstein may be close to the immunity deal he has been seeking.

- The Main Justice story also reported that Charles McKenna, Christie’s chief counsel, met secretly with Fishman’s office in mid-January. This was just a few days after the release of Deputy Chief of Staff Bridget Kelly’s infamous “time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee” email first tied the scandal directly into the governor’s office. McKenna, who now heads the Schools Development Authority, can provide inside information on the internal response of the Christie administration to the Bridgegate scandal: It was McKenna who questioned Port Authority Deputy Executive Director Bill Baroni, Wildstein’s boss, at Christie’s direction after the Wall Street Journal published Port Authority Executive Director Patrick Foye’s email alleging that the lane closures may have broken federal and state law.

- Finally, Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester) on Monday undercut the legislative investigation when he told the Star-Ledger editorial board that the committee should suspend its Bridgegate probe if a federal judge declined to order the cooperation of Bridget Kelly and Bill Stepien, Christie’s former deputy chief of staff and campaign manager, who have invoked their Fifth Amendment rights in the Bridgegate case. While Sweeney recanted later in the day after Wisniewski protested, his initial statement cast doubt on his commitment to the ongoing probe.

Weinberg yesterday shrugged off Sweeney’s assertion as a “miscommunication” or an “inartful” response to a question, and both she and Wisniewski expressed confidence that the powerful Senate president was fully supportive of the continuation of their probe.

Nevertheless, Sweeney’s statement came as Republican leaders, including GOP members of the Select Committee on Investigation, have been urging the committee to focus on enacting legislation to reform the Port Authority and to leave investigation of the machinations of the Bridgegate scandal to the U.S. Attorney’s Office and the grand jury.

Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi (R-Bergen) made that case on MSNBC over the weekend, and Assemblywoman Amy Handlin (R-Monmouth) took the lead yesterday in urging the Democratic majority on the committee to pass a 16-bill package of legislation that she and other GOP lawmakers have sponsored, some of which are similar to those Wisniewski and Weinberg have sponsored in the past.

“What is stopping us from moving forward on our bills today?” Handlin asked, holding up a three-inch stack of legislation for the bank of 12 TV cameras covering the hearing.

Handlin said she didn’t understand Wisniewski’s insistence on completing the committee’s investigation of the causes and coverup of the George Washington Bridge lane closures before enacting reform legislation.

“I don’t understand the notion of ‘no culprit, no reform,’” she said. “If I’m walking down the street and see a stabbing victim, don’t you think I should stop the bleeding and not wait for the police to catch the culprit first?”

“We don’t know who the culprit is, who closed the lanes or how far this goes,” Wisniewski shot back, noting that Christie vetoed legislation two years ago sponsored by Weinberg that would have implemented reform measures similar to some of those Handlin was pushing. “Maybe you’re content with the way the governor’s office treats the Port Authority as just another desk in the governor’s office, but I’m not.”

Wisniewski opened the committee hearing with an impassioned defense of the need for the investigative committee to continue its work -- a defense that seemed to be aimed equally at Sweeney’s statement Monday and at the growing barrage of Republican criticism. He noted that the committee’s job is “to understand how these politically motivated lane closures could have happened and to develop a legislative response.
"To suggest that the Gibson Dunn report provides all of the information that we need to know is to frankly deliberately ignore its critical deficiencies, which are numerous," Wisniewski said. "To suggest that the U.S. Attorney's work will suffice is to deliberately ignore the strictly criminal focus of the U.S. Attorney's probe and the limited public disclosure that comes along with it."

He reminded the panel that "our investigation had its genesis in its examination of the Port Authority and its deficiencies," adding that it was the Assembly Transportation Committee's original "painstaking work" that led the Bridgegate investigation to the governor's office.

Wisniewski got into a shouting match at the end of the short public session with Sen. Kevin O'Toole (R-Essex), Christie's closest ally on the investigative committee, and made it clear that he was exasperated with Mastro's firm for holding back thousands of pages of documents subpoenaed by the committee until the evening before the release of the report.

Kevin Roberts, the governor's press spokesman, did not respond to an emailed question asking whether Wisniewski was correct that no tapes or transcripts existed from the 70 interviews, but that appears to be the case based on Mastro's statement, which referred only to interview memos.

"We reached out to counsel for the committee over a week ago to discuss sharing voluntarily the interview memoranda regarding the lane realignment upon which our report was partially based," Mastro said in a statement forwarded by Roberts. "In light of the committee's statements this afternoon, we will look forward to continuing that cooperative dialogue."

Wisniewski acknowledged that the committee's legal team has had discussions with Mastro, but noted that it has been 12 days since the release of the Mastro report.

"The ultimate tool the committee has is subpoena authority that would compel production of the documents," Wisniewski said. "We're willing to wait a moderate amount of time for cooperation," he said, but added, "The deadline is the end of the week."

Wisniewski dismissed Handlin's complaint that the committee has already spent more the $200,000 on legal bills for its special counsel, Reid Schar, the former assistant U.S. Attorney from Illinois who successfully prosecuted Democratic Gov. Rod Blagojevich on corruption charges.

"What is the price of truth?" he asked.
Port Authority cops told to 'shut up' about GWB lane closures, memo says

GWBconesJenBrown.jpg

Port Authority Police officers patrolling the George Washington Bridge during the September 2013 lane closures were told to keep their concerns about traffic to themselves, according to a memo summarizing the officers' accounts. (Jennifer Brown/The Star-Ledger)

Steve Strunsky I The Star-Ledger By Steve Strunsky I The Star-Ledger

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on September 03, 2014 at 7:39 PM, updated September 04, 2014 at 8:23 AM

FORT LEE — Port Authority police officers working at the George Washington Bridge last September say they were told by superiors to keep quiet after expressing concern that closing local access lanes would snarl traffic, according to a summary of the officers' accounts.

In one case, according to the summary, a veteran officer who reported over his police radio that the closing of two of three access lanes was creating a hazardous condition and asked that the lanes be reopened was told by a supervisor to "shut up," then visited at his post and told his radio comments had been inappropriate.

The officers' accounts were summarized in a memorandum prepared by Michael W. Khoo, a lawyer for the New Jersey Legislative Select Committee on Investigation, a joint Senate-Assembly panel convened in January to investigate the lane closings and other Port Authority matters.

The contents of the memo, a copy of which was obtained by The Star-Ledger, were culled from a conference call involving Khoo; Reid Schar, a lawyer for the investigative committee; and Daniel Bibb, a lawyer hired by the Port Authority Police Benevolent Association to represent the officers in the investigation of the controversial closings.

The existence of the document was first reported on the Record website, northersey.com. A Port Authority spokesman declined to comment on the memo, and neither Bibb nor Khoo returned calls.

One account that was summarized had originated with Officer Steve Pisciotta, a 12-year veteran of the department who was assigned to the bridge for five years.

The memo says: "On Tuesday, September 10, 2013, while stationed at the corner of Bruce Reynolds Boulevard and Martha Washington Way, he used police radio to report that the severe traffic was creating hazardous conditions. He further requested that the cones come down and that the Fort Lee lanes be reopened."

According to the memo: "Deputy Inspector Darcy Licorish replied to Pisciotta by radio, telling him to 'shut up' and that there could be no further discussion of the lane closures over the air. Pisciotta also recalls that Lt. Michaels and Sgt. Rhem visited him in person at his post to tell him that his radio communication had been inappropriate."

Ironically, Michaels’ and Licorish’s names appeared in connection with the lane closings in subpoenaed documents released in January. A Sept. 8 email exchange revealed both had knowledge of the closings at least a day in advance, and that both expressed concern.

"Will this affect our normal rush hour operation?" Michaels emailed Licorish.

"Most likely. Concerns were made to no avail (sic) locally," Licorish said.

Several Port Authority police officers reported seeing Lt. Thomas "Chip" Michaels — an officer on the force who grew up in Livingston with Gov. Chris Christie and David Wildstein, an executive at the agency — driving Wildstein around the borough’s snarled streets, conduct that is the subject of an internal review.

Neither Christie’s office nor the Port Authority immediately responded to requests for comment.

The controversy surrounding the lane closings, on Sept. 9-13, and other Port Authority matters is being looked into by the legislative panel as well as the U.S. Attorney for New Jersey, the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office.

The lane closings were ordered by Wildstein after he received an email from Bridget Kelly, a deputy chief off staff to Christie. The email surfaced in January, and a law firm hired by Christie to review the matter said the governor had no advance knowledge of the closings.

Officers on the morning shift at the bridge were told during roll call on a Monday that the lanes were being closed for a traffic study and that cones used to squeeze the normal three access lanes into one should not be moved, according to the memo.

The memo also said what Democrats have been claiming for months — that several officers had heard the closings were the result of a political dispute between Mayor Mark Sokolich of Fort Lee, a Democrat, and the Republican governor, who was seeking an endorsement for his re-election.

Assemblyman John Wisniewski (D-Middlesex), co-chairman of the investigative panel, said in an interview that the accounts summarized in the memo parallel previous testimony from Port Authority officials, who said under oath that they knew about the lane closings but kept quiet out of fear.

"There seems to be a pattern of people who see things that are wrong and were either told to be quiet or knew they should be quiet," Wisniewski said. "That pattern is troubling at an agency as large as the Port Authority."

Wisniewski said his committee, which hasn’t held a public hearing in more than a month, might look into the matter.

"The fact we haven’t had public hearings should not be interpreted as the committee no longer looking into the issue," he said. "We are doing things behind the scenes, the kind of work that is not often reported on the evening news but is adding to information we are collecting."
A spokesman for the Police Benevolent Association, Robert Egbert, said hiring Bibb was not an unusual move.

"In this case, you have police officers being asked to come in and to discuss what they may or may not know about a situation, and in a case like that you would want to have representation," Egbert said.

Egbert said he could not comment on whether the officers had been subpoenaed by the legislative panel or anyone else investigating the lane closings.

But he said, "every member of the PBA who has been subpoenaed, asked to testify or somehow involved in the different investigations has cooperated fully."

Star-Ledger staff writer Brent Johnson contributed to this report.

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EXHIBIT 130
August 30, 2014

To: File

From: Michael W. Khoo

Re: New Jersey Legislative Select Committee on Investigation

Subject: August 27, 2014, Teleconference with Dan Bibb

On August 27, 2014, Reid J. Schar and Michael W. Khoo spoke by telephone with attorney Dan Bibb. Bibb is retained by the Port Authority Police Benevolent Association ("PAPBA") to represent officers employed by the Port Authority Police Department ("PAPD"). No PAPD officers participated in the call; rather, Bibb previewed information that certain officers could provide if interviewed or called upon to testify by the New Jersey Legislative Select Committee on Investigation (the "Committee"). This is not a verbatim transcript of the conversation nor is it intended to be. Rather, what follows is a summary of the information that Bibb provided, arranged by potential PAPD witness.

I. BACKGROUND

By way of background, Bibb said that the PAPD has had a manpower shortage for some time and that, as a result, it is standard for PAPD officers assigned to the George Washington Bridge ("GWB") to work mandatory overtime. These overtime shifts are scheduled in advance and take the form of an early call-in ("ECI"), in which case the officer arrives ahead of his or her normal duty shift, or a hold-over, in which case the officer stays beyond normal work hours.

Bibb then discussed eleven PAPD officers¹ who were stationed at the GWB during the week of September 9-13, 2013, during which time two of three access lanes from Fort Lee, N.J., were temporarily closed.

II. PAPD WITNESSES

A. Mike Barnable

Mike Barnable has been a PAPD officer since August 2000 and has been assigned to the GWB for ten years. He works the midnight shift, which typically runs from 10:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m.

¹ These eleven officers were not the only ones assigned to the Bridge that week. However, per Bibb, they are the ones whose duties that week most directly permitted them to observe the effects of the lane closures on Fort Lee traffic.
morning. Barnable works the “construction-alpha” post, meaning he provides security while Port Authority civilians cone off construction sites and while work crews are on the Bridge.

On the first day of the lane closures, September 9, 2013, Barnable was held over for an additional 4 hours beyond his normal shift and was assigned to a traffic post. However, this was a pre-planned hold-over which would have happened regardless of the lane closures. Barnable would describe the traffic in Fort Lee as “horrible” and would state that it took much longer than normal to clear. He also heard many complaints from motorists.

Barnable recalls that during the lane closures there was talk in the PAPD break room that the closures were part of a dispute between Gov. Chris Christie and Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich. However, to his knowledge, the break room talk was just “cheap cop chat” and speculation.

B. Jim Camus

Jim Camus has been a PAPD officer since November 1993 and has been on the GWB since April 2003. Camus normally works the 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. overnight shift. During the week of the lane closures he worked no hold-overs or ECIs and incurred no overtime. He heard rumors that the closures were part of a dispute between Gov. Christie and Mayor Sokolich but has no first-hand knowledge regarding the origin or accuracy of the rumors.

C. Jim Cronin

Jim Cronin has been a PAPD officer since August 1999 and has been assigned to the GWB since September 2004. Cronin normally works the day shift, which runs from 6:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Typically, he reports for roll call at 5:45 a.m., after which dayshift officers immediately take a one hour breakfast break. At 7:00 a.m. he and other day shift officers then begin traffic duty. When the Bridge traffic breaks, Cronin performs administrative work preparing responses to discovery requests.

On the first day of the lane closures, September 9, 2013, Cronin recalled Lt. Chip Michaels or Sgt. Rhem2 advised the incoming shift that there was a new traffic pattern on the GWB as part of a traffic study. The officers were directed not to move the cones. When Cronin walked out onto the Bridge to begin his traffic duties he saw that Fort Lee’s access lanes had been reduced from the normal three down to one, and he immediately recognized there would be traffic problems. He further noted that the cones were physically touching one another, whereas typically they are placed 3-4 feet apart.

Also on the first day, Cronin observed Lt. Michaels driving David Wildstein into Fort Lee. Cronin recognized Wildstein because the PAPD officers keep pictures of senior Port Authority figures posted in the break room so that they are aware if anyone from headquarters visits the Bridge.

Cronin would describe the traffic as horrible. While he normally works traffic on the Bridge until about 9:30 a.m., on the first day of the closures he was out until 1:00 p.m. Cronin observed that the extent of traffic issues tapered somewhat during the week as motorists adjusted to the new pattern, but it never returned to normal levels.

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2 Bibb did not know Sgt. Rhem’s first name, but identified her as a female officer on the GWB.
As a result of the traffic tie-ups, Cronin was delayed in getting to his normal administrative duties. However, he did not require any overtime to catch up.

D. Lou Capulano

Lou Capulano has been a PAPD officer for 20 years and has been on the GWB since 2004. He works the 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. day shift. His daytime administrative duties include logging and storing evidence collected in previous shifts.

Capulano first learned of the lane closures during Monday morning roll call. He recalled that either Lt. Michaels or Sgt. Rhem explained the new traffic pattern and instructed officers not to touch the cones.

Following the breakfast break, Capulano was posted to traffic duty on Hudson Terrace. He observed significant traffic delays, which incrementally improved over the week without ever returning to normal. At some point during the closures, Capulano and another officer, who may have been Russ Van Wetering, spoke to Fort Lee Police Chief Keith Bendul. Capulano is not certain what day this occurred, but believes it was on Tuesday, September 10. He recalls that Chief Bendul attributed the lane closures to a political disagreement between Gov. Christie and Mayor Sokolich.

Subsequently, Capulano related his conversation to other PAPD officers and explained that, based on what he had heard from Chief Bendul, the lane closures were politically motivated.

Capulano was assigned to traffic until 1:00 p.m. on the first day of the closures. Capulano did not earn any overtime and was not held over during the week. He was delayed in performing his normal administrative duties, but did not require overtime or additional hours to catch up.

E. Chris Hackett

Chris Hackett has been a PAPD officer since 1995 and has been on the GWB since 2012. He works the 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. day shift. His administrative duties include processing vehicle accident reports, summonses, and expungements.

During morning roll call on the first day of the closures, September 9, 2013, Hackett learned from Lt. Michaels or Sgt. Rhem that there was new traffic pattern on the Bridge. He recalls being told the closures were part of traffic study and that PAPD officers were not to move the cones. He observed significant traffic delays which never returned to normal despite slight improvements over the course of the week.

Hackett earned no overtime and was assigned no hold-overs. He heard rumors that the closures were connected to a political dispute, but he has no first-hand knowledge of any such dispute or the origin of the rumors.
F. Christian Orscher

Christian Orscher has been a PAPD officer since 2002 and has been stationed at the Bridge since 2009. He worked a slightly modified overnight shift from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.. He is usually posted to the security car, in which he checks on other posts and patrols the Bridge back-and-forth.

On the first day of the lane closures, September 9, 2013, he was held over for three hours until 10:00 a.m. in order to work traffic on Bruce Reynolds Boulevard. However, this hold-over was pre-planned and was not a result of the lane closures. Orscher also saw Lt. Michaels driving Wildstein in and around Fort Lee and recognized Wildstein from his picture in the PAPD break room.

On September 11, 2013, Orscher was again held-over until 10:00 a.m., but this, too, was a planned event that was not a result of the lane closures. He would describe the traffic during the week as “horrible,” and, though slightly improved, still bad by the time the lanes reopened on Friday, September 13.

Orscher heard rumors linking the lane closures to a political dispute between Gov. Christie and Mayor Sokolich, but cannot specify the source of the rumors.

G. Steve Pisciotta

Steve Pisciotta has been a PAPD officer for 12 years and has been assigned to the Bridge for 5 years. Pisciotta works the 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. day shift. After working traffic duty during morning rush hour, Pisciotta then works any of various posts on the Bridge. He does not have administrative duties.

Pisciotta is typically one of the first officers to arrive for duty. He recalls that on September 9, 2013, he arrived early and bumped into Lt. Michaels. Lt. Michaels informed him of the new traffic pattern and instructed him not to move the cones — instructions that Lt. Michaels repeated during the morning roll call.

Pisciotta observed that the lane closures were creating serious traffic disruptions. On Tuesday, September 10, 2013, while stationed at the corner of Bruce Reynolds Boulevard and Martha Washington Way, he used police radio to report that the severe traffic was creating hazardous conditions. He further requested that the cones come down and that the Fort Lee lanes be reopened.

Deputy Inspector Darcy Loricish replied to Pisciotta by radio, telling him to “shut up” and that there could be no further discussion of the lane closures over the air. Pisciotta also recalls that Lt. Michaels and Sgt. Rhem visited him in person at his post to tell him that his radio communication had been inappropriate.

H. Ray Rodriguez

Ray Rodriguez is now retired from the PAPD, but initially joined the force in June 1994. He was stationed at the GWB since 2004. During the lane closures, Rodriguez worked the overnight 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. shift. His primary duty was to patrol the Bridge and its approach roads in the “sector car.”

Rodriguez was off-duty on the first day of the lane closures, September 9, 2013, but learned of the resulting traffic from his son, who was interning at the Fort Lee Police Department. Rodriguez’s son was
caught in the traffic while attempting to drive to school in Westchester, and he called his father to ask what had happened. Rodriguez then called the Bridge and learned of the lane closures. He then directed his son to use a Bridge entrance reserved for Port Authority personnel.

On the second day, September 10, 2013, Rodriguez reported for duty and was held over a total of six hours. The first four had been pre-planned and were not a consequence of the lane closures. However, Rodriguez stayed on the Bridge for an additional, unplanned two hours while PAPD determined if he was needed to help regulate traffic.

Also on September 10, Rodriguez observed a motorist jump a traffic island in response to the congestion. He issued the driver a summons.

On Thursday, September 12, Rodriguez was held over for a pre-planned court appearance in Fort Lee. Rodriguez entered the court building through a restricted entrance for police and staff. Inside, Rodriguez shared an elevator with a man on a cell phone who was saying that he had spoken to the Christie administration and that no one knew what was going on. He also said he had spoken to PAPBA president Paul Nunziato, who likewise did not know what was going on. Afterwards, Rodriguez identified the man on the cell phone as Mayor Sokolich, based on his later appearances in news coverage of the lane closures.

Rodriguez also heard rumors among PAPD officers that the lane closures were politically motivated, but does not know how the rumors started.

1. Rajiv Sama

Rajiv Sama has been a PAPD officer for more than 20 years; however, Bibb was unsure of when Sama began working on the GWB. Sama works the 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. day shift. His administrative duties involve processing and securing impounded vehicles. During morning rush hour traffic, his normal station is “Post 10,” which is the post that monitors Fort Lee’s three access lanes. Sama is typically the officer who puts the cones out each morning to segregate Fort Lee traffic from other Bridge traffic.

On September 9, 2013, however, Lt. Michaels instructed Sama during morning roll call that the lanes had already been coned off and that he was not to touch the cones. When Sama later saw the new cone configuration, he noticed the cones were physically touching each other and immediately realized the lane reduction would create “a nightmare.” Sama would say Lt. Michaels instructed him that for that day and the rest of the week he was not to report to Post 10 but, instead, he was to help manage traffic at the corner of Central Avenue and Bruce Reynolds Boulevard. Sama described the traffic as “horrific,” with only modest improvement during the week. To Sama’s knowledge, no one was assigned to replace him at Post 10.

During the first day, Sama noticed Lt. Michaels driving Wildstein into Fort Lee, and he surmised that the lane closures must have been ordered by Port Authority headquarters.

Sama received no overtime, hold-overs, or ECIs on account of the lane closures.
J. Angela Tait

Angela Tait has been a PAPD officer since December 2002 and has been stationed at the GWB since 2009. Tait normally works the 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. day shift. Her morning station is at the corner of Martha Washington Way and Bruce Reynolds Boulevard; however, she was off-duty on the first day of the lane closures.

Tait recalls that when she reported for roll call on Tuesday, September 10, Lt. Michaels instructed shift personnel not to touch the cones. Tait heard from other officers that the situation had been the same the day before.

Tait was present with Pisciotta when he made his radio request to remove the cones and re-open the Fort Lee lanes. She was also present when Lt. Michaels and Sgt. Rhem visited Pisciotta in person and instructed him not to further discuss the closures on air. Tait believes Dep. Insp. Licorish also gave a similar command in person.

Tait recalls telling upset motorists that they should call Mayor Sokolich's office to complain. However, she would say she did so because she believed that, if Mayor Sokolich personally called the Port Authority, the matter would be resolved relatively quickly. Tait would say she did not direct people to the mayor’s office because she thought the lane closures had political overtones.

For the rest of the week, Tait was assigned to the New York side of the Bridge and had no further involvement with the Fort Lee traffic. Tait received no overtime, hold-overs, or ECI’s on account of the lane closures.

K. Russ Van Wetering

Russ Van Wetering is a 20-year veteran of the PAPD. Bibb was unsure how long Van Wetering had been stationed at the Bridge, but said it had been for some time. Van Wetering works the 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. day shift and serves as the “captain’s clerk,” essentially supporting the GWB commander.

Van Wetering remembers that on Monday, September 9, 2013, Lt. Michaels announced the change in lane alignments and instructed the officers not to touch or move the cones. During the morning rush hour, Van Wetering was stationed at Central Avenue and Bruce Reynolds Boulevard alongside Sama. He remembers that Fort Lee traffic did not break on the first day until around 1:30 p.m. While conditions improved during the week, they never returned to normal.

Van Wetering received no overtime, hold-overs, or ECI’s on account of the lane closures.
Bridgegate? Chris Christie’s national ambitions could be hurt by GWB controversy

Bridgegate: The George Washington Bridge lane closure controversy

Ledger Live for December 13, 2013 - Ledger Live with Brian Donohue - On today’s episode Donohue dissects the controversy sparked when a close ally of New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and top appointee at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey ordered bridge operators to close two lanes of the local entrance ramp to the George Washington Bridge. The closures caused traffic bedlam, the resignation of the official, David Wildstein and a pair of investigations into whether the closures were designed to punish town officials in Fort Lee. (Video by Brian Donohue/The Star-Ledger)

Jenna Portnoy/The Star-Ledger By Jenna Portnoy/The Star-Ledger

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By Jenna Portnoy and Brent Johnson/The Star-Ledger

TRENTON — Not too long ago, Chris Christie was joking about it.

But as the controversy over lane closures at the George Washington Bridge continues to swirl, Democrats in Washington are pouncing on the Republican governor in the hope that they can stop his potential quest for the White House before it begins.

For Christie, it’s the first taste of what it’s like to be his party’s front-runner for the next presidential sweepstakes.

"National Democrats will make an issue about everything about me so get used to the new world, everybody," Christie said at a news conference Friday. "We’re not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy."

In Jersey’s form of Oz, the bizarre tale of September traffic jams and a supposedly punished small-town mayor makes the cable news. A group looking out for Hillary Clinton creates a graphic out of Christie’s unsmiling face, a picture of a bridge and a sign that reads: "Lane closed. Expect Christie?"

And the Democratic National Committee issues a campaign-style attack ad asking if the facts add up to "Chris Christie’s political payback?"

"When you run for president, you will be questioned about absolutely everything, and you can’t bluff your way past something like this. It’s not personal life or his weight; it’s related directly to his conduct in office," said
Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia.

No one has publicly accused Christie of ordering two of his top appointees at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to close lanes to the world’s busiest bridge to get back at a Democratic mayor who wouldn’t endorse his re-election bid.

But questions about the incident have fueled a scandal that even Christie’s masterful team of brand managers can’t make go away.

HURTFUL TOUGH TALK?

"One of the concerns voters will have about Christie is New Jersey’s reputation for rough, take-no-prisoners politics. It isn’t known as the Soprano State for nothing," Sabato said.

At first, the governor laughed off the insinuation he played a role in the traffic mess: "I worked the cones actually. Unbeknownst to everybody, I was actually the guy out there. I was in overalls and a hat, but I was the guy working the cones," Christie said, joking with reporters at a Statehouse news conference.

Last week, Christie was still trying to put the issue to rest. He said the resignations of his two top appointees to the Port Authority, Bill Baroni and David Wildstein, signaled a fresh start. He put former federal prosecutor Deborah Gramiccioni in Baroni’s place, saying: "We’re gonna turn the page now. We’re sending new leadership over there in Deb."

The governor went on to entertain reporters and people watching online — Statehouse news conferences are streamed live — for an hour, taking questions on every facet of the investigation.

"He wants to present himself as an independent and a tough executive," said Julian Zelizer, a professor of history and public affairs at Princeton University. "A lot of Democrats and a lot of Republicans want to present him as a real rough and unfair and somewhat explosive politician. It’ll be a competition between which story wins out."
DEMOCRATS DIG IN

The Democrats in Washington are using the tale of the bridge to undermine the narrative Team Christie perpetuated in all manner of media: He’s a bipartisan straight talker and principled leader. They’re eager to present the bridge controversy as part of a pattern, noting that Christie has given seemingly conflicting statements about whether he wants to extend in-state tuition to the children of people who came to this country illegally.

"This of course gives any political opposition that he has either now or in the future, fodder, which is exactly what he does not want," said Brigid Harrison, a professor of political science and law at Montclair State University. "He does not want questions raised about his qualifications or experience in office."

Just as Christie is flipping on the look-at-me national media switch, state Democrats appear to have finally found their mojo, landing punches on a governor who-bobbled and weaved with ease during his first term.

"This is really in my view the first time that the Democrats have effectively held Christie’s toes to the fire," Harrison said. "In my view, this is a different Democratic Party than we’ve seen for the past four years."

Two public hearings gave Democrats in the Legislature more ammunition to keep the issue on front pages.

Next up? Documents from seven Port Authority officials are due on the desk of Assembly Transportation Committee Chairman John Wisniewski (D-Middlesex) on Thursday.

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EXHIBIT 132
Newsmax

Hillary Group Attacks Christie Over 'Bridgegate'

Wednesday, December 18, 2013 08:55 AM

By: Melanie Batley

A group linked to Hillary Clinton has joined the fray to attack New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie over the bridge closure controversy that has dogged his administration for weeks, already resulting in the resignation of two officials and a firestorm of accusations from state and national Democrats.

Correct the Record, a group formed by top supporters of the former first lady, created a graphic showing the Republican governor’s frowning face, a highway sign that reads "Lanes Closed. Expect Christie?" with another road sign saying "political retribution." The bottom of the ad says, "...the emerging facts aren't lining up with the administration's story," CNN reported.

"Welcome to the world that is 2016," Adrienne Elrod, communications director for the group, told The Washington Post.

"We're watching every word that comes out of his mouth... He's been able to enjoy for the most part being a pretty popular governor, but he's never really been tested on the national stage."

The organization is an offshoot of Democratic super PAC American Bridge, and is a research and response project dedicated to mobilizing against possible 2016 Republican presidential hopefuls, as part of a larger push to lay the groundwork for a 2016 Clinton candidacy.

Democrats allege that Christie ordered a September closure of lanes onto the George Washington Bridge from New Jersey to New York as retribution for the refusal of Fort Lee Democratic Mayor Mark Sokolich to join other New Jersey mayors in endorsing Christie for re-election.

This week, Democrats in Washington D.C. turned up the heat on Christie with Jay Rockefeller, chairman of the Senate's transportation committee, asking Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx to investigate the closures.

"You've got the DNC, some of the Hillary-tied PACs diving into this story," Kevin Hagan, a New Jersey-based Democratic strategist told the Post. "You don't want to continue to give your perceived opponent a pass."

Democrats have also created a politically-charged YouTube video with a narrative designed to raise the profile of the issue and link it to questions about Christie's character and integrity.

"It undercuts his key argument that he's a straight shooter," Democratic National Committee spokesman Michael Czinz said of the controversy, according to the Post.
"It highlights the worst about his bombast and his condescension."

And in a signal that Democrats intend to continue to escalate the issue, one Democratic leader told the Post that the "Bridgegate" episode reveals the Christie administration's "Nixon-like dirty tricks," while another compared it to Watergate, and a third speculated about impeachment.
Christie has continued to downplay accusations of wrongdoing, suggesting they are politically motivated and have been "sensationalized."

"National Democrats will make an issue about everything about me, so get used to the new world everybody, you know?" Christie told a news conference Friday.

Related stories:

- Christie Leaps to 5-Point Lead Over Hillary in Iowa
- Cuomo Backs Christie in Bridge Lane-Closure Flap
Democrats Blast Christie's Bridgegate Report As An 'Expensive Sham'

HUNTER WALKER
MAR. 27, 2014, 1:52 PM

Democratic National Committee Communications Director Mo Elleithee issued a statement Thursday hours after attorneys for the office of Republican New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie released their internal review of the allegations surrounding last September's lane closures on the George Washington Bridge and the administration's distribution of Hurricane Sandy aid. Elleithee criticized the review, which found the governor was not involved in any wrongdoing, as a waste of public funds.


The attorneys from the firm of Gibson, Dunn, and Crutcher that conducted the review received over $1 million in fees that were paid by New Jersey taxpayers. In their report, the lawyers said they reviewed over "250,000 documents" and interviewed "more than 70 witnesses." However, Elleithee said the report included "no real evidence."

"What we didn't get for that hefty price tag to New Jersey taxpayers were any interviews with the key figures who executed the plan or any insight into why this happened," said Elleithee. "There was no real evidence, no real findings, no real answers, and definitely no exoneration. This report was nothing more than an expensive sham."
Democrats: Christie Bridgegate Report 'Expensive Sham' - Business Insider

Some Democrats have alleged last September's lane closures, which led to days of traffic in Fort Lee, N.J. were an attempt by Christie's allies to retaliate against a mayor who declined to endorse the Governor's re-election bid.

The report found allegations made by Hoboken, N.J. Mayor Dawn Zimmer in January that officials in the Christie administration threatened to withhold Sandy relief from her city unless she approved a real estate project were "demonstratably false." However, it concluded Christie's former deputy chief of staff and David Wildstein, an ex-official at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which oversees the George Washington Bridge, "knowingly participated" in a scheme to "target" Fort Lee's mayor by shutting the lanes.

Elleithee dismissed these findings as having already come out during the course of the ongoing investigation into the closures.

"For a million taxpayer dollars, we heard a lot of things that we already knew—that there was a troubling culture in Christie's office that led to the lane closures. That there was a months-long cover-up by close Christie aides and allies. That Christie's office broke the public trust. That Christie denied involvement, despite claims from David Wildstein to the contrary. That the Christie practice of bullying and attacking those who challenge him and scrutinize his administration continues," said Elleithee.

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EXHIBIT 134
DNC RELEASES SUPERBOWL ATTACK AD ON NEW JERSEY GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE

NUZHA NUSEIBEH @ZNUSEIBEH
02.02.2014 NEWS

Christopher Gregory/Getty Images News/Getty Images

Just when we thought Chris Christie’s week couldn’t possibly get any worse, the Democratic National Committee released a Super Bowl-themed attack ad on the New Jersey governor, poking fun at the Bridgegate scandal and his likely-to-be doomed 2016 possible presidential run.

The embattled governor, who’ll be attending the Super Bowl today, has of course repeatedly denied having any knowledge that his aides caused the life-threatening lane-closures in Fort Lee, N.J. in a game of political retribution. Recently, he’s also been accused of using Sandy funds as political slush money, and, only yesterday, it was revealed he may have willfully delayed implementing a law that would have made sure the aid
money was properly used.

Adding fuel to the already-burning controversy, on Saturday, the New Jersey governor’s political team sent an odd email to donors and columnists, bashing David Wildstein, the former Port Authority official at the center of the Bridgegate controversy, and the New York Times, who on Friday published Wildstein’s allegations that Christie knew of the bridge closures at the time. Far from helping the governor’s case, the email seems to have just cemented the governor’s position as bully.

The online ad opens with “THE BIG GAME IS ABOUT TO BEGIN. A RISING STAR SHOWS PROMISE,” moving to a shot of Christie during an Election Day 2013 victory speech, telling his supporters: “Maybe the folks in DC should tune in their T.V.s right now and see how it’s done.” More writing then comes up on screen — “THEY SAY HE IS UNSTOPPABLE. UNLESS HE CHOKES” — after which the shot switches to a television news report on Wildstein’s allegations that Christie knew of the closures at the time.

Have a look at the ad below:
DNC Chair, Currie, Watson Coleman slam Christie on 1st anniversary of Bridgegate

By Mark Bonamo | September 8th, 2014 - 12:49pm

FORT LEE - Gov. Chris Christie might hope that any remembrance of the September 2013 George Washington Bridge access lane closures, known colloquially as the Bridgegate scandal, be forgotten as he gears up for a potential run for the 2016 presidential nomination.

But at a Monday morning news conference overlooking the bridge, nearly drowned out by the roar of traffic and an occasional screaming cliff hawk, a troika of prominent national and state Democrats made it clear they hadn’t forgotten, nor should the American public.

"One year ago today, Chris Christie was running for re-election on his so-called Jersey comeback, and on promises that he was a consensus builder, someone who worked across the aisle, who championed compromise and who could get things done," said Democratic National Committee Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL-23). "One year later, we know that those promises were false. They were a sham. What has Chris Christie delivered instead? Gridlock."

The Bridgegate scandal bloomed after the revelation in January of email exchanges between a deputy on Gov. Christie’s senior staff and Port Authority executives that link the two parties to controversial local access lane closures in September 2013 on the George Washington Bridge.

The email exchange, which included "time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee," created chaos in the Bergen County borough for four days, whose Democratic Mayor Mark...
Sokolich failed to endorse Christie in last year’s gubernatorial race. The Christie administration has been accused of exacting political retribution on Sokolich for not backing the governor’s re-election effort. Christie has denied that any retaliation took place, and both state and federal authorities still seek answers in separate investigations of the matter.

The Democrats slammed Christie's record on matters other than Bridgegate, including slow private sector job growth in New Jersey, high property taxes and repeated state credit rating downgrades. But party stalwarts consistently turned their focus back to the bridge.

"Was it a political score to settle? An effort to be a big bully? Part of a real estate conspiracy? Or just because he could?" asked New Jersey State Democratic Committee Chairman John Currie. "We would like to know who issued the order, and why. One year after Bridgegate, we know still very, very little about what happened. Many questions remain unanswered. Chris Christie called Bridgegate just a distraction. Bridgegate is more than a distraction. It put people in harm’s way. This is the wrong message to send. Either the governor should know better, or he should admit that he's involved."

State Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson-Coleman (D-15) made it clear what she believes should happen regarding Christie's political present and future.

"I called for his resignation early, and this is why I stand by that call today," said Watson-Coleman, the Democratic candidate for Congress in New Jersey's Twelfth Congressional District. "In what world do you failures promote you to a higher office?"

When asked by the press if Christie's potential presidential run poses a threat to Democrats, Wasserma Schultz posited her answer in a local framework.

"I view Gov. Christie as someone who is ignoring his constituents," Wasserma Schultz said. "He is willing to spend time on anything other than moving New Jersey forward. He only cares about one thing: Chris Christie and his own ambition."

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Sep 8 2014
EXHIBIT 137
Chris Christie is a bully and a failed leader, top Democrat says on bridge scandal anniversary

Wasserman Schultz.JPG

U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, speaks to reporters in Fort Lee this morning. The George Washington Bridge towers behind her. (Brent Johnson/NJ Advance Media)

By Brent Johnson | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com
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FORT LEE — The chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee marked the one-year anniversary of the George Washington Bridge lane closings this morning by traveling to the site of the controversy and slamming Gov. Chris Christie — a potential Republican candidate for president — as a bully and a failed leader.

U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.) gathered with state Democratic leaders in a park overlooking the bridge in Fort Lee, the town that suffered five days of traffic gridlock because of the closings — a scheme Democrats have accused members of Christie's staff and inner circle of hatching in a case of political revenge on the town's mayor. The governor has vehemently denied any personal involvement.

UPDATE: Chris Christie calls Dems highlighting Bridgegate anniversary 'nakedly partisan'

"While we may be here today to commemorate one year since the Bridgegate saga began to take effect, Chris Christie's gridlock reaches much farther than right here in Fort Lee," Wasserman Schultz said, with the bridge towering behind her. "What Bridgegate did was raise the curtain on the culture of intimidation, bullying, and incompetence that pervades the Christie administration."

The visit coincides with a local ad campaign that the Democratic National Committee is launching today to remind voters of the scandal as Christie continues to mull whether to seek the Republican nomination for president in 2016. Commuters on both the Fort Lee and Manhattan sides of the bridge will be able to see a web ad criticizing the governor on their cell phones and hear a 15-second audio spot on the Pandora radio app.

The controversy caused Christie's poll numbers to plummet over the past year and top Republican donors to question whether to support him for the White House. But his numbers have stabilized recently, and Christie has boosted his profile by traveling across the nation to campaign for GOP gubernatorial candidates as chairman of the Republican Governors Association. He also spent three days in Mexico on a trade mission last week.

Asked repeatedly whether her appearance was a sign that Democrats consider Christie a threat and are thus stepping up their attacks, Wasserman Schultz said she was simply highlighting the governor's shortcomings.

"I don't think Chris Christie is going to be president of the United States," the congresswoman said. "He needs
to focus on what's going on in New Jersey."

On Friday, Wall Street analysts at Fitch Ratings **downgraded the state's bond rating** for the second time this year. Wasserman Schultz also noted that New Jersey has among the highest property taxes in the country and ranks toward the bottom in the nation in job growth. Those issues, she said, should keep Christie from leaving the state so often.

"I would think the responsible thing to do is you'd be parking yourself in the state capital or move around the state of New Jersey to do anything to stop that decline," said Wasserman Schultz, who will also headline a fundraiser today for Bergen County Freeholder James Tedesco, the Democrat nominee for County Executive.

State Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-Mercer) — who called for Christie to resign last year as the scandal escalated — stressed that the governor is not primed for the presidency.

"In what way do the governor's failures promote him for a higher office?" said Watson Coleman, a congressional candidate who stood next to Wasserman Schultz at the news conference, along with New Jersey Democratic Party Chairman John Currie. "Let's all wake up and wise up."

Christie dismissed the news conference.

"I always love when the chairman of the DNC comes and proves my point on something," the governor said during an appearance in Atlantic City later in the day. "There are just certain folks in this instance who just want to be nakedly partisan for whatever reason, and I think the trio that you had up there proves (that)."

Both a state legislative committee and federal prosecutors in the U.S. Attorney's Office in New Jersey are investigating who closed the lanes at the bridge and why.

Wasserman Schultz shot down the notion that it's time to give up the cause because nothing has emerged linking Christie directly to the plan over the last year. --

"He's just throwing up his hands and claiming to know nothing about it," she said. "His indifference is demonstrative of his utter lack of leadership."

Christie's office hired a law firm to conduct a separate investigation into the matter. Its report cleared the governor and his current staff of wrongdoing, but Democrats say the review was flawed and incomplete.

The governor also fired his Deputy Chief of Staff, Bridget Anne Kelly, after an email appeared to link her to the plan and cut ties with his former campaign manager, Bill Stepien. Christie and New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo also formed a panel to help reform the Port Authority, the bistate agency that oversees the bridge.

*NJ Advance Media* staff writer **Matt Arco** contributed to this report.

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EXHIBIT 138
Dems Troll Christie on Bridgegate

One year after Bridgegate, Democrats try to keep the scandal alive. But they’ll likely meet the same fate as that other troll and the billy goats.

On Monday, for perhaps the first time in history, modern-day trolling will meet its old-fashioned inspiration, when the Democratic National Committee travels to the entrance of the George Washington Bridge to troll Governor Chris Christie.

Perhaps you’re familiar with the storybook troll from the fairy tale, “The Three Billy Goats Gruff.” That creature threatened the goats until the biggest one butted him off the bridge, never to trouble pedestrians again. Today, the term is used to describe a person—often on the Internet—who says or does something for the purpose of getting an emotional reaction. Trolls aren’t necessarily contrarians or bullies; they just gratuitously poke at the world, trying to make someone, anyone, snap.

Which brings us to the current fable. Once upon a time, in early September 2013, access lanes to the GWB in the Hudson River town of Fort Lee were closed, without warning or explanation. The closures paralyzed traffic in the area, to the extent that emergency responders were said to have been forced to attend to incidents on foot.

To get to the bottom of what happened, the New Jersey Transportation Committee began subpoenaing documents from the Port Authority of New Jersey and New York, which controls the bridge. In January, it was revealed
that the lane closures were ordered—seemingly with the intention of wreaking traffic hell on Fort Lee—by a top official in Christie’s cabinet. Thus, “Bridgegate” was born, and Christie’s political career has been in recovery ever since.

Christie apologized, fired his offending staffers, commissioned an internal investigation (which was exorbitantly expensive and ridiculous, to be fair) and has, mostly, successfully moved forward—much to the dismay of Democrats, for whom a weakened Christie meant a better shot at the White House in 2016. Christie, with his Jersey Boy charm and willingness to butt heads when necessary, has long been a threat to the left wing. His political skills are Clinton-esque, and he appeals not just to his fellow Republicans, but to the working class, who are so blinded by the power of his personality that they cannot see his policies. Because of that, after neglecting to run in 2012, he was seen as the obvious front-runner for the GOP presidential nomination this time around.

Bridgegate was supposed to change all that. But despite an expensive and drawn out investigation by Garden State lawmakers, no evidence has emerged to suggest that Christie even knew about the plot to close the lanes, let alone orchestrated it. And although investigations by the U.S. Attorneys in NJ and NY are ongoing, at least politically, the scandal seems to have mostly blown over.

So, Democrats are trolling.

DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz, New Jersey Democratic Chair John Currey, and Assemblywoman and candidate for Congress, Democrat Bonnie Watson Coleman, will appear at Fort Lee Historic Park, the scene of the (so-far-not-legally) crime, on Monday, where they will reminisce about the good old days of Christie being dead in the water beneath the bridge.

“We’ll just be highlighting what’s happened over the last year,” Michael Czin, a spokesman for the DNC, told The Daily Beast. “Exactly a year ago, Chris Christie was hitting the final stretch of his reelection campaign. ... He was saying, ‘I’m the guy who can get things done, and work across party lines.’ ... Bridgegate showed not only gross misconduct on one end, but it showed his inability to work across party lines.”

Then, Czin said, “We still don’t know why it happened.”

But it shows his inability to work across party lines. I guess.

Bridgegate, the DNC knows, punctured the bubble from within which Christie ran his governorship—the one that protected him from any meaningful
criticism of his record. Until Bridgegate, the national media and Christie were in a love affair that no amount of sinking jobs numbers or economic downgrades could interfere with. So on Monday, the DNC will use the anniversary to highlight Christie's record on pension reform (it's not going great) and the economy (not so hot either).

“The DNC doesn’t need to do this to embarrass itself,” Republican Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll, a former Christie rival, told The Daily Beast. “But if the best they can come up with against [Chris Christie] is that one of the people he appointed to an independent agency thought reallocating lanes was a good idea, he should start measuring curtains in the Oval Office.”

Carroll is one of the members of the legislative committee investigating Christie. As I outlined in July the committee, stacked with Democrats despite a few Republican members, has uncovered approximately nothing damaging to Christie. But it has succeeded in keeping its Democratic members on cable television and the story of the Bridgegate scandal on the minds of many—not that it's had much impact in New Jersey. Almost half of registered Garden State voters still view the governor favorably, and even if his reputation as a bully has been somewhat bolstered by the scandal, even more voters now view him as a “fighter.”

Christie’s office did not have any comment about Monday’s event. Why would they?

Schultz will, presumably, stand at a podium and say that Christie is not the leader he claimed to be, and Bridgegate is a perfect example of that, even though they don't know what actually happened. But that doesn’t matter, because his whole record sucks.

She will beat the dead traffic jam to a small group of reporters, including me, and then we will all go home, some stories will be written about the Big Production at the Bridge, and Christie will continue to ignore the whole thing.

Schultz’s presence in the Garden State, Carroll argued, would actually benefit state Republicans: “I strongly encourage her to spend as much time in NJ as possible. … The more she talks, the better the GOP should do.”

Now that’s trolling.
DOJ Clearance of Christie Unlikely to Sway Bridgegate Committee

Michael Booth, New Jersey Law Journal

September 19, 2014

New Jersey lawmakers reviewing last September's closure of local access lanes to the George Washington Bridge said they are unlikely to change the focus of their investigation regardless of whether federal prosecutors ultimately clear Gov. Chris Christie of any criminal wrongdoing.

On Sept. 18, WNBC television in New York reported that, nine months into their investigation, federal prosecutors have yet to find any evidence that Gov. Chris Christie had prior knowledge of the lane closures in Fort Lee, N.J.

But despite that report and angry demands from Christie earlier on Sept. 18 for the Legislative Select Committee on Investigation to "wrap up" its activities, legislators said the committee is likely to continue to focus on who ordered the Sept. 9-13 lane closures and why.

"This is not an investigation into Chris Christie," the co-chairman of the committee, Assemblyman John Wisniewski, D-Middlesex, said Sept. 19. "It's about who ordered the lane closures and for what purpose."

"The report that the governor has been cleared could be true, but it might not be true," Wisniewski said.

Rebekah Carmichael, a spokeswoman for U.S. Attorney Paul Fishman, declined to confirm or deny the WNBC report.

"The investigation is not over," she said.

Even one of the four Republicans who make up the minority of the committee, Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll, R-Morris, acknowledged that little is likely to change even if Christie is ultimately cleared.

"I agree with [Wisniewski] that this was never designed as an impeachment committee," Carroll said, but added that he would rather have the committee start looking at various ways to reform the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owns and operates the bridge and other Hudson River crossings, the region's airports, seaports and other real estate holdings.

An internal review conducted by lawyers at the New York office of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher

http://www.njlawjournal.com/printfriendly/id=1202670738766
previously found Christie and most of his inner circle had no prior knowledge of the lane closings.

Rather, the report placed the blame on Christie’s former deputy chief of staff, Bridget Kelly, and one of Christie’s appointees at the Port Authority, David Wildstein. It has been alleged that they orchestrated the closings as retaliation against the town’s Democratic mayor, Mark Sokolich, who declined to endorse Christie for reelection last year.

In August 2013, Kelly sent Wildstein an email saying it was “time for some traffic problems” in Fort Lee. Wildstein initially claimed the closures were part of a traffic study, but that claim has since been refuted. Christie forced Wildstein to resign and fired Kelly in January after learning of the email.

During a press conference with reporters early Sept. 18 to discuss nominations, Christie was asked about a story that appeared in The Record of Hackensack earlier this month while Christie was on an official visit to Mexico. The Record’s story said a Port Authority police officer was told by a superior to “shut up” when he said the closures were creating hazardous conditions.

“They’ve been digging for nine months and they’ve found nothing,” Christie said, referring to the committee. “It’s absolutely partisan. It’s a completely partisan act.”

Christie accused the Democrats on the committee of “being addicted to MSNBC and the front page.”

“You know what, wrap up your work,” he said. “Do your job.”

Wisniewski said the committee is, indeed, doing its job and will continue to do so. “There are still a lot of unanswered questions,” he said.

Later on Thursday, WNBC television in New York reported that federal investigators have so far found nothing to suggest that Christie was involved in planning the lane closures or knew anything about them in advance.

The story broke just before Christie made his regular appearance on WKXW’s “Ask the Governor” program. He was asked by host Eric Scott about the WNBC report.

“Obviously we’ll wait to hear whatever the authorities have to say, but certainly this is a report that comes as no shock to me because as you know, Eric, the day after these events were uncovered, I came out and told people that I had no knowledge of this going on and no involvement or any role in its planning,” Christie said.

The WNBC report did not say that federal prosecutors have conclusively cleared Christie of any wrongdoing, only that they have found nothing to implicate him during their nine-month investigation.

“You have to be wary of some of these reports,” Ben Dworkin, the director of the Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics at Rider University in Lawrenceville, N.J., said.

Dworkin pointed to an “exclusive” report in Esquire in June that said indictments were expected soon.
“Until anything happens, you have to be careful,” Dworkin said. “We’ve been burned on this before.”

Dworkin said the legislative committee has two missions—the partisan act of keeping the investigation in the public arena while Christie contemplates whether to run for president and to actually find out who was responsible for the closures and the motive behind them.

“The leaders—Wisniewski and [Sen. Loretta Weinberg, D-Bergen]—seem to have no intention of stopping,” Dworkin said. “The committee still has to look into who ordered the closures and why, and it is looking into how to reform the Port Authority.”

But Republicans seem to still be weary of the drive to continue to place blame for the closures on someone.

“We’ve dug a whole lot of dry holes,” Carroll said. “We should be less focused on Bridget Kelly’s emails and a lot more on what the Port Authority spends its toll dollars on.”

Sen. Kevin O’Toole, R-Essex, agreed. “We’ve been at this for nine months,” he said, adding that the focus has become too partisan.

“It’s time to refocus and start working on some meaningful legislation,” O’Toole said.

A spokesman for Christie declined to comment further and referred instead to remarks Christie made in the WKXW interview.

Contact the reporter at mbooth@alm.com.

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EXHIBIT 140
Guest: Dave Helling; Matt Wells, John Wisniewski

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC HOST: Good evening, Chris. Thanks, man. And thanks to you at home for staying with us for the next hour.

As Chris said all eyes are on Scotland right now. The polls there closed about four hours ago at 10:00 p.m. local time which was 5:00 p.m. on the east coast of the United States. Only the very first returns are in. We don’t know the exactly when a full result will come in but the count is under way right now. It’s expected to go all night overnight in Scotland.

We’ll have live coverage from Edinburgh tonight including some of what the coverage looks like on Scottish television tonight which is fascinating. We have got that coming up ahead. We will be updating you on the poll results as they come in from Scotland. So that’s happening.

Also, the NBC station here in New York tonight broke some big news about the federal criminal investigation that has dogged New Jersey Republican governor Chris Christie for nearly a year now. WNBC’s Jonathan Dienst reporting late tonight that while federal prosecutors in New Jersey continue to investigate the shutdown of lanes onto the George Washington bridge last year, as some still unexplained act of political retribution, federal officials tell WNBC tonight that those investigations thus far have found no evidence that governor Chris Christie personally had advance knowledge of the shutdown plot nor have they found evidence that he took part in the plot personally.

Again, the investigation continues. But that is the first substantive leak from the federal criminal investigation of the bridge shutdown in New Jersey. The U.S. attorney’s office in New Jersey has been incredibly tight-lipped. That’s the first reporting we’ve had from that. We are going to have more that story coming up in just a few minutes including governor Christie’s own reaction to that leak tonight from just a few moments ago. So that’s coming up.

There’s also news tonight out of Washington, news that prompted this perfect headline from the Huffington Post late today. Congress ashamed of Congress. Members of Congress willing to go On the Record to "Huffington Post" today about how embarrassed they are by their own institution and what it did today as Congress makes a surprise and sudden decision today to bale, to leave. They decided today to bale on all their remaining workdays
between now and mid-November. They just gave themselves every day off work from now until a week after the election. So they made the surprise announcement today they’re canceling all this work for the next seven weeks and then they ran for the exits. While leaving one really important thing undone.

President Obama changing up his schedule late tonight to make this statement about Congress on short notice. We’ve got more on that including excerpts from the president’s late address tonight. That’s all ahead on what has been a pretty amazing day in the news today.

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Any one of those things happening this afternoon and tonight would have made today a really big news day, right? But then not only are all those things happening all at once. In addition to all of them at 6:00 p.m. eastern time tonight, the Supreme Court in the great state of Kansas decided they wanted to make some big national news, as well, news that frankly has turned on its head the national expectations for control of the United States Senate.

Now, what’s been going on in the Kansas United States Senate race so far has basically been this big national surprise, right, that in such a deep red state, in the state where Mitt Romney beat Barack Obama by 21 points a state that hasn’t sent anybody other than a Republican to the United States Senate since 1932, it has been a shock to the national Republican party and to a certain extent to the whole political system that an incumbent Republican senator in the state of Kansas has been in trouble this year.

Incumbent Republican senator Pat Roberts it turns out is having the race of his life to try and keep his seat in the Senate right now. Pat Roberts is not the most popular Senate in the world. His numbers are not great at home. He did have to fend off a pesky tea party challenge in his primary this year.

But up until a couple of weeks ago, it looked like those problems were behind him and he is going to be able to hold on to his seat in the general election mostly because of this, this dynamic. He had the great fortune of running in a three-way race.

So people who want to vote for Pat Roberts can vote for Pat Roberts. But people who want to vote against him, they were splitting their vote between the democratic candidate and a well financed pretty popular independent candidate.

That dynamic, that vote splitting among opponents is how Pat Roberts was going to limp to reelection in Kansas this year. That’s how they were
going to keep that seat in safe Republican hands and help the Republican party on its way to try to take over control of the U.S. Senate this year.

That whole thing changed two weeks ago on September 3rd when that three-way race became a two-way race because this guy, the Democratic candidate who had been running, he got persuaded that he should drop out. And if you take away that vote splitting phenomenon, if it turns out there’s only one major candidate in the race against Pat Roberts instead of two, then the polling looks like Pat Roberts is going to lose his seat. Maybe the most Republican state in the country arguably but they’re about to lose their Republican Senate seat.

And that was born out in the polling before the democrat actually made the decision to drop out. It has been born out in the polling ever since he dropped out September 3rd and that polling has caused the national Republican party to hit the panic button on this race.

They flew in Washington campaign staff to replace the long-time local staffers for Pat Roberts. They started running ads in the race. They got the NRA roped into the race for the first time. And they started paying very close attention to one weird sort of undercover dynamic in Kansas. So this is the polling that shows Pat Roberts losing to the independent candidate Greg Orman, right? A couple different polls same result in both cases.

But what Kansas Republicans started noticing and have now grasped on to with all their might is that even though the democratic candidate has withdrawn, the Democrat is no longer running, if you put his name back on the ballot and make people think that there’s a Democrat still running in the race, well that bamboozles voters enough that maybe Pat Roberts has a chance.

And so the day after the Democrat withdrew from the this race and had his name taken off the candidate list, his name taken off the ballot, the following day the Kansas Republican secretary of state, the crusading conservative hero Kris Kobach put the guy’s name back on the ballot. It’s more convenient to have the democrat on there and so the Democrats on there.

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And that led to today’s ruling by the Kansas Supreme Court at 6:00 p.m. eastern time, 5:00 p.m. local time in Kansas. And what this ruling has set off tonight is kind of crazy. It’s like an outlaw wild west by any means necessary kind of situation right now in Kansas. It’s nuts. It’s like remember the brooks brothers riot in Florida during the 2000 recount? It’s like that except it’s the one guy rioting. It’s just Republican secretary
of state Kris Kobach.

Look at this. At 5:00 p.m. local time in Kansas, close of business on the deadline, that’s when they handed down the ruling. The reason today was the deadline for the ruling is because tomorrow the ballots have to be printed in Kansas. So says Kris Kobach, so says the Kansas secretary of state, Republican Kris Kobach, he told the court that that’s the deadline. He explained in his court filings by law Kansas’s ballots have to be sent out to members of the armed forces serving overseas. They have to be sent out by Saturday which is the day after tomorrow in order to get them sent out on time by law. That means the ballot has to be finalized by September 18th, 2014. That’s today. Has to have the final list by today because they’ve got to print tomorrow because they got to send them out on Saturday. That’s the law. So says secretary of state Kris Kobach. That’s what he told the court.

So when the Supreme Court ruled today, they were right up against that deadline. And what they ruled is that Kris Kobach does have to take that democratic guy’s name off the ballot. That guy properly withdrew from the race no matter how much of Kansas Republicans want there to be a Democrat on the ballot, that guy withdrew properly. Kris Kobach trying to force him to stay on the ballot is not within Kansas law. So ordered by the Supreme Court of that state.

Now, of course, Kansas Republicans desperately want there to be a democrat on the ballot, right, to hopefully siphon votes away from the independent guy who is challenging Pat Roberts. That dynamic having three people on the ballot that looks like the only way Roberts could hold on to his seat at this point.

But we’re at the deadline. I mean, if the ballots have to be finalizes today because they have to be printed tomorrow, there’s really no change that that could happen after this ruling today, right? Kris Kobach had been making noise about trying to force the Democrats to put another name on the ballot even if their initial candidate was allowed to withdraw. But if the ballots are being printed tomorrow, there’s no time for that. There is no time for the Democrats to do that. There’s no way that Kris Kobach can force the Democrats to pick somebody overnight? Quick, convene a convention. Because the court ruled today at the close of business at 5:00 p.m., on the deadline.

The matter pretty much looks settled. It’s going to be Pat Roberts against the independent guy Greg Orman on the ballot. And just so you know, the polling right now if the election were held today makes it look like Pat Roberts in that dynamic would lose his seat.

But after the court handed down this ruling today at 5:00 p.m. local time,
6:00 p.m. east coast time that is when things really got weird because at a press conference following the ruling today, Kris Kobach announced that actually it turns out tomorrow’s not the deadline. Who said it was the deadline?

Despite everything he told the court, despite this law that he is citing about when you have to get ballots out to overseas service members, Kris Kobach is now saying the deadlines when I told the court those were the deadlines, he’s now directing the Kansas state Democratic Party that they have to pick another name to put on the ballot so it can go back to being a three-way race.

And he has decided to push all the deadlines back. He said he is giving them eight days to make this decision because those old deadlines, I made those up. Now he says he’s not going to print the ballots till the 27th of September and he says that will give them plenty enough time to pick somebody else so this can go back to being a three-way race. Amazing.

So what happened to the deadlines that he told the court were so hard and fast and determined by law? I mean on the military ballot’s is he now saying Kansas is going to have people in the military vote on a totally different ballot for a totally different candidates than everybody else is voting on in the state? Really? I mean, is this as desperate as it looks by Kansas Republicans. This really kind of looks like a by any means necessary radical move here.

And to that end, what happens if the Democrats just say no here? If they say no, Kris Kobach, we’re not going to pick somebody for that line on the ballot. This is not just a United States Senate race which itself is a big deal. This potentially is the United States Senate race that decides who controls the United States Senate and it’s total chaos right now.

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It has become the most important Senate race in the country at least right now and it is complete chaos, just insane.

Joining us now is Dave Helling political reporter for the "Kansas City Star." He is been following the story right from the start.

Dave, every time we talk, I congratulate you how much fun this race has been to cover. And then it gets crazier.

DAVE HELLING, POLITICAL REPORTER, KANSAS CITY STAR: Yes. We don’t get any days off covering politics in Kansas unlike Congress, Rachel.

MADDOW: The way that -- yes, another seven weeks off at their own
discretion.

HELLING: You bet.

MADDOW: The way I sum this up in terms of the order of those events, the way that Kris Kobach responded to this Supreme Court ruling and the changing of those deadlines an everything, am I summarizing that accurately?

HELLING: Well, fairly closely. It’s a federal law that requires there ballot printing Rachel, because the national government has some interest in getting the ballots to the military overseas and Kris Kobach said tonight that he has been given a waiver by the justice department so they can wait another week.

Whether that week will change the fundamentals is not clear at all. You talk to Democrats and Republicans. You’re exactly right. It isn’t clear how a, Kris Kobach can order a political party to do anything. He’s just the secretary of state. And b, how they would do it. You know, would they meet in a convention? Would it be just party chairs by county how it would work? It does seem like a pretty desperate move at the end. But you know, he’s not ready to give up yet. He’s very convinced that there needs to be a democrat on the November ballot in Kansas. And so he made the announcement that he did.

MADDOW: So two questions following on that. One, is there any indication of what the Kansas Democrats will do? Is there a chance they just won’t go along with this? And two, is some of this still due to be decided in court? Is this going back to the Kansas Supreme Court or going to be litigated in any other way?

HELLING: We’ll see. Kobach said this evening that if the Kansas Democrats don’t respond by his deadline, he will examine his legal options. We reached out to the Kansas Democratic Party tonight. They have no intention of nominating anybody. They’re very critical of Kris Kobach. He cannot be trusted they said. You know, Kris Kobach has his own race for secretary of state which is also very close. So I do get the sense that Kris is trying to pursue whatever last-minute options he might have, but I think virtually everyone in Kansas now understands that this race is Greg Orman and Pat Roberts going forward.

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MADDOW: It’s fascinating. And the fact that Kobach is on the ballot, as well, I mean, I saw recent polling from PPP in Kansas. They were polling obviously on the Senate race. But they also polled on what Kansans think about how Kris Kobach is handling this. And you know, he does have his own
race. It’s a really close race. The Democrat has a chance of knocking him off for secretary of state. He’s underwater by tens of points in terms of how people view his handling of this. Is he in a position where he doesn’t care about public opinion? This is so desperate he needs to do it anyway or is he susceptible to that sort of criticism?

HELLING: You know, if you know Kris Kobach, he doesn’t -- I mean, he plays to the crowd but he doesn’t always listen to the crowd. I mean, he sort of blazes his own trail. And there is a segment of the Republican party in Kansas and across the country that loves this kind of thing from Kris Kobach. I think that’s why he pursues it to a certain degree.

But you didn’t know that -- what you didn’t note in your introduction, but your viewers should know, is that this opinion today from the Kansas Supreme Court was unanimous or at least there were no dissenting opinions filed. It was per curium which Bush versus Gore people will remember of the court. And so even the Republicans on the Supreme Court arguably went along with this decision against Kris Kobach. That’s why I say you get the sense even some Republicans are saying let’s give up, let’s just now focus on the race was Greg Orman and you will find Republicans, Rachel, frankly who say this helps us focus now on Greg Orman. That we can now turn our attention to one candidate to really make him the issue and this decision in some ways clarifies the campaign for the next six weeks.

MADDOW: Dave Helling political reporter for the "Kansas City Star." I keep thinking it’s not going to be as exciting the next time we talk but who knows. Looking forward to talking to you next twist. Thanks a lot.

HELLING: You bet.

MADDOW: All right. As you can tell, there’s a ton of news going on. The world is soon going to find out if Scotland has-voted to become an independent country. That’s just one part of it. We are going to have live reports from Edinburgh.

There’s major breaking news about Chris Christie and the George Washington bridge scandal.

Plus, Congress did something today I’m still choking on. Please stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: So hey, as of tomorrow, Congress is going to be doing one thing it is really, really good at, and that is the thing that is not done in Washington anywhere near the capital. Congress made amazing surprise decision today, one I’m still choking on a little and I don’t feel I’m
choking up because it makes me feel emotional. I mean I’m choking on it like I’m gagging. That story is coming up.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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MADDOW: Between 1814 and 1905, this was Sweden Norway. All one place. Much to the chagrin of Norway it turns out. In 1905, Norway said to heck with that and they seceded from Sweden. And now, instead of being one big Scandinavian country, they are two still sort of big but separate Scandinavian countries.

In 1863, similarly, what had been Virginia instead became West Virginia and Virginia. One big thing devolved into two smaller but separate states. In 2006 -- Serbia and Montenegro were like hey, we`re going to drop the and. We`re actually Serbia and Montenegro three different words don`t capitalize the a. We`re two different countries.

In 1993, same deal with Slovakia and the Czech Republic when they decided they were each going to go their own way and instead make Czechoslovakia something that people just say all the time now by mistake.

Breakups happen. And tonight we`re waiting to see if it`se going to happen to our best and closest ally in the world, the United Kingdom. This is a live shot of ballots being counted tonight in Ingliston, in Scotland which is just outside of Edinburgh, just after 2:20 in the morning there.

Voters in Scotland today participated in a countrywide referendum on independence. There`s one very simple on their one beautifully simple ballot. This is the ballot. Look. Should Scotland be an independent country? Yes or No. If the vote is yes, ha means the UK will go from being like this to instead being like this. Losing essentially a third of their land mass and over eight percent of their population and all of their Scotishness (ph).

The polls heading into tonight`s vote were too close to call but maybe leaning toward a no vote in the last round of polling. About 97 percent of the electorate registered to voting in this referendum, according to the University of (INAUDIBLE) in Britain, the highest ever turnout in a referendum anywhere in the world when it wasn`t against the law to not vote in the referendum. The highest was when Quebec voted on independence from Canada back in 1995. The Quebec independent vote got over 93 percent turnout in the referendum. So that`s the record that Scotland is trying to beat tonight. They might do it although the early returns suggest probably not.
The polls in Scotland were open for 15 hours today from 7:00 in the morning till 10:00 at night. They closed 10:00 local time which is 5:00 p.m. here on the east coast. The votes get counted in each of the 32 local authorities one by one across the country. So there’s a decentralized collection of ballots in Scotland. And that is easy in some places but hard in others.

For example, it was apparently a bit of a challenge tonight in places like the Shetland Islands way up there on the top of your screen and also some of the western islands way out there on the west part of your screen. There was heavy fog today. That threatened to disrupt a chartered plane that was supposed to pick up ballots from the western islands and fly them to their local authority counting center in a place called Stornaway (ph). Should the fog be so heavy to disrupt that flight, they made a plan b. They are going to transport the ballots to Stornaway (ph) instead by way of a shellfish boat.

The fishing boat is slower than the plane obviously. But there’s also the fact if the mist is really too misty, maybe even the boat would be slowed down by that. So there’s any number of reasons that could have delayed some of the more far flung Scottish votes tonight. In terms of the early returns, the first results so far two out of the 32 local authorities have announced their vote counts, not just their turnout but how people voted.

If you add the two of those local authorities together, they’re reporting 42.2 percent in favor of the referendum to secede while 57.8 percent where is voting against.

Early returns in at least 13 of the local authorities report the just voter turnout so far. So voter turnout in the mid to upper is sort of within the normal. Just over 90 percent in at least two others. But we’re still awaiting further results. That which meant that there are a lot of folks in Scotland who is not going to be getting very much sleep tonight including lots of local reporters who are hard at work with up to the minute updates throughout the night. They’re saying to expect the results to be announced sometime around breakfast which depending on what time they eat breakfast we’re expecting sometime in the couple of hours after midnight tonight here in New York.

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Joining us now is Alastair Jamieson and he is a reporter with NBC News. He is in Edinburgh tonight along with the Matt Wells, assistance U.S. editor for "the Guardian" who is here with us in the studio. Thank you both for joining us.

Alastair, I want to start with you. Edinburgh right now, if you can give
us a sense what it’s been like there tonight and what the early results are
telling people about the overall polling.

ALASTAIR JAMIESON, NBC NEWS REPORTER: Absolutely. As you said, Rachel,
with a turnout at that high, it just goes to show the intensity of the debate
that’s taken place and the real passion with which Scots have voted for
either side. And with opinion polls really suggesting the vote could go
either way even at this stage, neither side to really making any confident
prediction about how they’re going to perform.

Those twos early results, although they’re interesting, don’t really give
us a full picture. We’ll have to wait till bigger cities declare their
results later on such as Glasgow and Edinburgh. Those results expected
maybe two or three hours from now.

Now, what is clear perhaps, is that the most recent polls of the last
couple of days giving a slight edge to the no campaign to keep the United
Kingdom but really it’s within the margin of error. So neither side
willing yet to jump and say either concede defeat or say they have likely
won this.

And this is where all the results from around the country are being fed in
and there’s a real intense atmosphere here tonight. Really, Britain is
really just holding its breath for the outcome of this result because it is
entirely possible, entirely possible, even at this late stage, that there
could be a vote to split apart from the United Kingdom. And that is such a
significant constitutional change for Britain.

MADDOW: Alastair in, terms of the sort of late turn toward no that which
we saw indicated in some of the very last polls in which people I think
anecdotally are starting to use as part of their analysis for what we’ve
seen thus far even if it is relatively premature to extrapolate in the two
local authorities.

But in terms of the late surge on the no side if there’s been one, is that
because of new arguments being made or new energy on the no side or is that
simply the emergence of people who weren’t very vocal about their
preferences deciding to turn out to vote even if they hadn’t been
expressing themselves local little about it before doing so?

JAMIESON: I think it’s definitely the latter, Rachel. The thing is, if
you’re promoting the yes campaign, you have a very positive and exciting
message, one of opportunity of what things could be like. And you’re
painting a picture of a country that could be liberated from Westminster
government and make its own decisions. And that’s a very engaging message
and one that found a lot of favor.
And it’s been difficult I think for the no campaign the better together pro-UK campaign really to find a message that is exciting and sonorous passion. And really, that hasn’t happened until the last week or so when we found opinion polls that put the sides medication and neck. And I think a lot of people, they woke up to the very real possibility that eight yes vote could win. And that really has got, I think, a lot more people out on streets.

And although there really hasn’t been much in the way of new substantial campaign developments in terms of new information or new argument, it certainly has got people energized and has brought more people out. And I think you’ve seen that reflected in the massive, massive turnout.

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MADDOW: Alastair Jamieson for NBC News in Edinburgh tonight. Alastair, thank you. I appreciate you being there for us.

I want to bring in Matt Wells assistant U.S. editor for "the Guardian." Matt, do you agree with Alastair that there’s no reason to extrapolate from those two early results from two local authorities of the 32, that that’s not necessarily indicative of way things are going to go?

MATT WELLS, ASSISTANT U.S. EDITOR, THE GUARDIAN: Well, it’s -- those are the compulsory health warning that we put on all these results. But you know, it is all we got to go. So we might, as well do extrapolation.

And there are two -- the two results that we’ve got so far, one of them is from (INAUDIBLE) island in the north of Scotland and that went very much as expected very hard in favor of the union. But completely unexpected was Clackmannanshire in the middle of Scotland, very small county, only 9.9 percent of the vote but 54, almost 54 percent for no and just 46 percent for yes.

The yes campaign were really hoping to get Clackmannanshire. It was number one on their list of areas they should get if they were going to win the whole country. They didn’t get it. So the no campaign is jubilant and the yes campaign not very happy at this moment.

Still early stages. It could go either way yet but it’s not looking good if you add that with the latest polling, you go poll of people who actually voted today, not quite an exit poll but it was a poll of people who went into polling stations and exited. So you could still -- you, very nearly an exit poll, they just went back to their panel of people they have previously polled after they voted and that was 54-46 too so the same as Clackmannanshire. So it really isn’t looking good for the yes campaign as we speak right now.
MADDOW: And in terms of the dynamic changing over time, we saw this panic in Westminster, all this panic in the British government in the UK over some polling results that suggested a lot of momentum on the yes side. And eventually, it is essentially it felt like they were blindsided by the fact that yes was doing we after it hadn` done well leading up to that. Is there anything you can tell us about why the momentum may have shifted back in the no campaign`s direction if in fact it did.

WELLS: So that poll that you mentioned two weeks ago for the "Sunday Times" newspaper in London which gave it for 51 percent for the yes campaign --

MADDOW: That is right.

WELLS: Yes. That sent London into a total panic. They rounded up all the spare kitchen sinks in London and threw them at Scotland in the past two weeks. They announced that -- Well, the government in London announced that a program of reform and deep further devolution of powers to Scotland would be undertaken immediately after a no vote. So, that is what we will hear tomorrow, Friday, if the results go the way we expect.

There is expected to be announcement in London that further powers will be significantly devolved to the Scottish parliament. A consultation will get underway in November. A bill will be published by Burns Night, a national day in Scotland, on the 31st of January.

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That has got all of England`s MPs into something of a tizzy. Because if you grant more powers to the Scottish parliament, what does that mean for the rest of England? Should it be set up a kind of federal system in Britain?

MADDOW: Right.

WELLS: So, constitutional catechism and chaos is on the cards whatever happens.

MADDOW: Whichever either way, and it defends if the catechism is tonight or the catechism is in January.

WELLS: You got them.


WELLS: My pleasure.
MADDOW: This is going to be fun to watch. It is one of those huge news nights that is before we got on the air and is going to keep getting bigger overnight. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: It has been a big news day already on top of everything else. We also have some late breaking news out of New Jersey to bring you. It is a big update of the ongoing investigation of the forced lane closures that happened this time last year on the busiest bridge in the world.

And what, if anything, Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey had to do with this now very famous e-mail. Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee. There is a big development in that story tonight. That is coming up next with the man who has been leading the investigation since the beginning. Please stay with us.

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(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Yes. It is that kind of day. There is yet more breaking news to report tonight. It is just one of those days in the news. And, tonight’s breaking news from New Jersey concerns the ongoing investigation swirling around Republican Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey. It was almost one year ago exactly that aides to Governor Christie for reasons still unknown orchestrated a massive traffic disaster at the world’s busiest bridge.

Starting the first day of school last September, members of Governor Christie’s inner circle planned and executed a week-long shut down of access lanes heading onto the George Washington Bridge. That shutdown, gridlocked the town of Fort Lee, New Jersey, caused a four-day long traffic nightmare on the New Jersey side of that bridge.

Eventually, it launched a blizzard of investigations into who decided to cause that traffic jam and why. The who as far as we know turned out to be a pair of Chris Christie officials, his Deputy Chief of Staff, Bridget Kelly and a Christie appointed Port Authority Official named David Wildstein. Those two at least are known to have conspired to create that traffic jam on purpose.

But there have remained a few key questions. Why did they do it? Who else was involved? Who else knew they were doing it? And, did someone above them order it? Because he is the Governor and because this apparently emanated from his office, there is the question of specifically whether Chris Christie knew anything about it, whether he ordered it as some sort of political payback scheme.
In this picture, you can see Governor Christie during that shutdown last year, standing and chatting with David Wildstein, one of his aides who ordered the shutdown. Governor Christie as first mocked to the idea that his administration had caused this thing. Then he was forced to acknowledge that, "Yes. They did cause it." Then he apologized for the incident and said he felt betrayed. Then he fired his top aide who was directly involved in it.

Since then, since Governor Christie came out and expressed public contrition for the actions of his administration, there have been these ongoing investigations to try to find out if something criminal happened here. One of those investigations has been the inquiry conducted by the New Jersey State legislature, special bipartisan committee tasked with figuring out what happened here and why.

That investigation has been going on for months now and it has not yet wrapped up its work. The other investigation that has been on going is the investigation from federal prosecutors and from the U.S. Attorney's office in the state of New Jersey. The U.S. attorney in New Jersey is a man named Paul Fishman.

Paul Fishman's office has been investigating this bridge scandal since January. And, other than confirming that they are investigating, the U.S. Attorney's office has not confirmed much else. They have been really tight-lipped about where that investigation stands. That kind of a no leak office.

Earlier this year, we did learn that federal investigators have been taking testimony from top Chris Christie aides including his chief spokesman, but we learned that by staking out the courthouse, right? Local reporters staking out the courthouse really has been the only real means of getting information about what is going on.

Tonight, though, the first leak. Tonight, there has been a development in what has been an investigation that before now was essentially leak free for months. The development tonight is that somebody is now leaking. Somebody is leaking the news specifically that New Jersey Governor Chris Christie is basically off the hook in federal criminal investigation. Our NBC Affiliate in New York, WNBC broke the news earlier tonight. Watch.

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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED WNBC MALE CORRESPONDENT: Federal sources briefed on the criminal investigation say prosecutors and the FBI have found no evidence
Governor Christie knew or had played any role in the plan to shut down traffic lanes approaching the George Washington Bridge.

Officials caution the investigation being led by U.S. Attorney Paul Fishman is not yet complete, but we are told that the federal investigation on going since January simply put has turned up nothing to indicate the Governor had any involvement in Bridgegate.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: So, again, federal sources now leaking word that Governor Christie has essentially been cleared of wrongdoing in that investigation. There is no confirmation of that by the U.S. Attorney’s office. Governor Christie’s office is not commenting on it formally, yet. But, federal sources are now putting out word that the Governor, himself, had nothing to do with the bridge scandal, nothing to see here.

We spoke with the U.S. Attorney’s Office in New Jersey tonight. They told us in no uncertain terms, quote, "The investigation is not over," end quote. They tend to speak in sentences that short. But, Governor Christie, as he is tried many times in recent months is trying right now to put a book end on this scandal.

Earlier today he publicly called out the state legislature for their on going investigation into this matter telling them at a press conference today, quote, "Wrap up your work." And, then tonight, the Governor for the first time in three months appeared on a local radio call-in program in New Jersey, where he was perfectly positioned to comment on this new reporting from WNBC.

Governor Christie said tonight on the radio, quote, "This is a report that comes as no shock to me. I am not surprised by it" and then he again criticized the legislative investigation into this incident that is being headed up by Democratic State Assemblyman John Wisniewski.

Joining us now is Democratic State Assemblyman, John Wisniewski, the chair of the New Jersey legislative panel that is investigating this. Congressman - Assemblyman Wisniewski, thank you very much for being with us. Appreciate you being here.

JOHN WISNIEWSKI, (D) NEW JERSEY STATE ASSEMBLYMAN: Thank you.

MADDOW: So, first, your reaction tonight to this reporting from WNBC that federal investigators have so far found no evidence that Governor Christie had any knowledge of or played any role in the bridge shutdown. What do you make of that reporting?
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WISNIEWSKI: Well, it could be true or it could not be true. We noticed that we have federal investigators saying that but then Mr. Fishman’s office when contacted had no comment. Look, the fact is that this is not an investigation into Chris Christie.

This is an investigation into why these lanes were shut down; who authorized the lanes to be shut down, because I do not think anybody believes that Bridget Kelly on her own decided one morning that it would be a fun thing to do to shut these lanes down.

So, we need to get answers to some very basic questions. Who gave her the authorization and what did they hope to accomplish? Because only by knowing those answers, we will be able to make sure it cannot happen again.

MADDOW: The other key player in all of this implicated thus far is former Port Authority Official David Wildstein. He is alleged in writing through his attorney that in his words, quote, "Evidence exists tying Governor Christie to having knowledge of the lane closures." That has been his contention since he got nailed for his role in this, basically.

We reached out to David Wildstein’s attorney tonight to get his reaction. We have not heard back yet. But has your committee been able to essentially substantiate that allegation from David Wildstein? Have you been able to figure out what that evidence might be that he is saying exists?

WISNIEWSKI: There is a lot of e-mails out there, Rachel. There are documents that we have not yet gotten from this administration, because they are relying on executive privilege as a basis to not turn them over to the committee. So, it could very well be in documents that they are withholding, that there is more proof that would make some conclusive determinations. We do not know that yet.

And, do not forget, we also have this shifting timeline of when the Governor knew what he knew. So we know that on December 13th, he said that he knew nothing about this; but we do know that literally the day before, he had meetings with his senior aides about this very issue.

MADDOW: I want to play a clip for you if I can, just because it is specifically about you.

WISNIEWSKI: Sure.

MADDOW: Governor Christie addressed you personally, went after you
personally in a press conference that he held on this matter earlier today about what you have been able to turn up so far in your investigation. Listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

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GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE, (R) NEW JERSEY GOVERNOR: Unfortunately, Assemblyman Wisniewski is attempting to just keep his name in the newspaper. We have fully cooperated -- absolutely fully cooperated with him and I am really growing tired of him.

You know, I have known all along that this is a partisan pursuit, an absolutely partisan pursuit. And, the leaking that is being done by about the legislative committee is just further evidence of the fact that this is a partisan pursuit.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: So, Governor Christie saying about you today, "I am really growing tired of him," accusing you of running a partisan pursuit and I guess I got to ask for your response to that.

WISNIEWSKI: I am crushed. The reality is, is that this is a legislative inquiry. And, I understand why republicans are unhappy about it. It is embarrassing. It makes the Governor look bad. It makes the Republican Party look bad. So, certainly they are going to try to characterize this as a partisan pursuit.

This is an abuse of power that started on his watch. The fact that he is claiming to have been fully cooperative just does not meet with the facts on their relying on executive privilege to withhold documents. I mean, if the Governor truly believes that there is no culpability here and take the Governor at his word, so, what is he afraid of? Why does not he turn all the documents over and stop parsing words and holding back documents?

MADDOW: Democratic State Assemblyman John Wisniewski, Chair of the legislative panel looking into Bridgegate in the state legislature there. Thanks for your time tonight, sir. It is nice to see you.

WISNIEWSKI: Thank you.

MADDOW: All right. Again, the breaking news tonight WNBC in New York reporting that sources say the federal investigation into the Bridgegate scandal in New Jersey has as yet turned up no evidence tying Mr. Christie to -- Governor Christie to knowledge of or playing any role in the bridge
shutdown.

That is the first leak of really any kind from the federal prosecutors looking into this in New Jersey, as yet unconfirmed by the U.S. Attorney’s office, but that is news. Lots more ahead. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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MADDOW: So, we are looking live at footage from Edinburgh, Scotland right now, where the votes in Scotland’s independence referendum are currently being counted. Polls closed in Scotland at 10:00 P.M. local time, which is about five hours ago, almost five hours ago. Right now, almost 3:00 A.M. local time, we are beginning to get some results.

Voters in the Shetland Islands were expected to vote no. They appeared to be doing that by 36 percent yes to 64 percent no. That is the most recent results we have just got in. In the Orkney Islands, way up north, voters again were expected to vote no there. And, they appeared to be doing that by 33 percent yes to 67 percent no. No has a big two to one lead there in the Orkney Island.

And, then this was the first local authority to report its results. Clackmannanshire voters there had been expected to vote yes for independence. This had lead to a lot of pessimism on the yes for independence side tonight when this was the first result that came in. Again, it is a small local authority. There are not very many people there. A very small proportion of the population, but this is a place that was expected to vote yes.

And, tonight, the no vote there came in ahead, 53 to 46. So, there are 32 local authorities altogether, who are going to report results. Those are the first three out of the 32 that are due to report. They are not the biggest in terms of population by any means. Those are just the first three. Do not extrapolate like you do not in American elections either. But, this is fascinating to watch as this comes in. We will keep you posted as this develops. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PRES. OBAMA: Today, our strikes against these terrorists continue. We are taking out their terrorists. We are destroying their vehicles and equipment and stockpiles, and we salute our dedicated pilots and crews, who are carrying out these missions with great courage and skill. As demander
in chief, I could not be more proud of their service.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: President Obama making a statement just a couple of hours ago, changing up his schedule today to make those remarks, praising U.S. military pilots flying air raids in Iraq, thanking congress as well for passing an amendment today to OK the administration’s plan to arm and train rebels fighting the Syrian government and who hopefully can be persuaded to fight ISIS, too, while they are at it.

The senate voted for that by about 78 to 22 today. The house passed the same thing yesterday. And, tonight President Obama said thank you to congress for that. The CIA is already training rebels in Syria, but the expanded effort that congress just approved will start some time in the next three months or so.

And, in completely unrelated news, the United States military continues to wage a war against ISIS. Centcom today announced U.S. air strike number 176 against ISIS targets in Iraq. Congress is yet to say anything about that use of force by the U.S. Military in Iraq, let alone the 1,600 American troops who have been deployed back to Iraq to take part in that fight.

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Congress has not weighed in on that at all. And, then today, they left. The house announced today, surprise, that they are calling in sick for the next two months. They were supposed to be back at work tomorrow, but they canceled that day of work tomorrow.

Then they canceled all the rest of their days at work for the rest of this month. Then they canceled all the days they were going to work next month in October. And, now they are not planning on coming back to work until after they run for election in November plus another week after that.

To be clear, they just took five weeks off for all of August and the beginning of September. Since their five-week vacation, they have worked a grand total of two four-day weeks. And, now, today they made the surprise announcement that they are giving themselves the next 54 days in a row off work. Because it is not like there is anything going on they ought to be interested in, right?

Air strikes started August 8. They have been going on for five weeks now. They are about to extend into Syria. The President announced a 40-nation coalition involved in this effort. He announced tonight that France is going to start dropping bombs in Iraq alongside our pilots who are
already doing.

There is a war under way already, which congress has not said anything about. And, today, they decided that war will apparently continue for another two months while they go home and take two more months off work. The house announced it first, then the senate followed suit. They are gone.

1,600 U.S. Military families have gotten the call. They have had their loved ones deployed to Iraq. They are flying those missions right now, but congress is heading home for another seven-week break, because they cannot be bothered to think about that right now. They have got more important business to attend to. They have got to get re-elected, because that is the most important thing they do, right?

There is a reason the American public finds this congress repellent. There is a reason why this congress has the lowest approval ratings in the history of congress and the spectrum of all major institutions in our country. There is a reason congress -- this congress, repulses the people of the United States.

But, a decision like this today stretches the bounds of even the low standards of decency that they have sunk to already. Amazing. That is for us tonight. We will see you again tomorrow. Now, it is time for the "Last Word." Ari Melber sitting in for Lawrence tonight. Good evening, Ari.

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED.
END

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WATCH 'THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW' WEEKDAYS AT 9:00 P.M. ON MSNBC.
EXHIBIT 141
Stepien's lawyer says GWB investigation illegally released e-mails, text messages

MARCH 18, 2014, 7:00 PM
THE RECORD

Full coverage: Chris Christie and the GWB lane closure controversy

A lawyer for Governor Christie’s former campaign manager said Tuesday that a panel of lawmakers investigating the George Washington Bridge scandal illegally released e-mails and text messages as part of court papers filed on Monday.

In a letter to the investigative committee's attorneys, Bill Stepien’s lawyer, Kevin Marino, wrote that release of the documents required a court order, and it was improper and irresponsible for releasing the records and said they could be deemed

A co-chair of the committee, Loretta Weinberg, a Teaneck Democrat, waved away the letter’s claims.

"It’s lawyers doing what lawyers get paid to do: muddy up the water for their clients," she said. "He’s the one who asked for this, and the documents were released."

Most of the messages had been made public weeks ago, but more than a dozen were new, including some to or from Stepien. They showed he was updated on media inquiries after the lanes were re-opened and that he was immediately notified of the Fort Lee mayor's complaints while the lanes were still closed.

The special investigative committee is locked in a court battle with Stepien and Christie's former deputy chief of staff, Bridget Anne Kelly, who have refused to comply with a subpoena for documents related to the lane closures. It was Kelly who wrote the e-mail: "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee."

Stepien and Kelly are the only two among dozens of people subpoenaed by lawmakers who have declined to turn over any documents. The committee has asked a Mercer County Superior Court judge to force them to hand over the records.
Stepien and Kelly say it would violate their Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination.

At the first hearing in the case last Tuesday, Reid Schur, special counsel for the committee, referred to additional e-mails that he said the committee had collected that showed that Stepien and Kelly were "central" to the lane closures. The next day Stepien's attorney sent a letter demanding that those additional unreleased messages, provided by other individuals, be turned over to him. In response, the committee attached more than a dozen new e-mails and text messages to its court filing on Monday. That filing was available to the public, prompting Marino's letter on Tuesday.

In it Marino, says that he will "take steps necessary to have each of those individuals" responsible for the release of the messages "ajudged a disorderly person." Marino, who provided a copy of the letter, did not return a call for comment.

The judge presiding over the case is expected to make a decision near the end of this month at the earliest.
EXHIBIT 142
May 2, 2014

VIA EMAIL AND REGULAR MAIL

Reid Schar, Esq.
Jenner & Block LLP
353 N. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60654

Re: New Jersey Legislative Select Committee’s Subpoena of January 27, 2014

Dear Mr. Schar:

We write on behalf of our client, David Samson, in response to your recent request that we inform you by this date whether and when Mr. Samson will produce additional documents in response to the New Jersey Legislative Select Committee’s (the “Committee”) subpoena. As you know, we have been confronted with complex issues in responding to the subpoena due in large part to the fact that Mr. Samson's emails include communications that are unrelated to the subpoena and/or are protected by the attorney-client privilege of Wolff & Samson PC’s (“WS”) clients. You have dealt with us in a professional manner as we worked through this process and we appreciate your recognition, in your letter dated March 17, 2014, of the cooperation we have shown.

We initially produced certain responsive documents on February 21, 2014. As we discussed with you on several occasions, however, and as reflected in our letter dated March 13, 2014, immediately after we provided these materials to the Committee, those materials were discussed with the press, replete with criticism of our client and conclusory statements suggesting that some members of the Committee had prejudged the matter or exhibited evident bias. See, e.g., Christopher Baxter, Bridge scandal records reveal hands-on David Samson at Port Authority, N.J.COM, Feb. 24, 2014, http://www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/02/bridge_scandal_records_reveal_hands_on_david_samson_at_port_authority.html; Ken Serrano, Documents show Samson 'highly involved' in Port Authority's operations, ASBURY PARK PRESS, Feb. 24, 2014, http://www.app.com/article/20140224/NJNEWS1002/302240095/Documents-show-Samson-highly-
involved-Port-Authority-s-operations?nclick_check. These and other public statements have made it impossible for us to believe that the Committee is actually awaiting the results of a full and fair proceeding. Instead, it appears that the Committee reached conclusions long ago and has since been searching for reasons to support them.

Indeed, the Committee has repeatedly disregarded its own required procedures. The Code of Fair Procedures appended to the subpoena to Mr. Samson imposes confidentiality requirements on the Committee. As the attorneys for Mr. Samson we anticipated that the Code of Fair Procedures would be the hallmark of how this Committee would conduct its work. Instead, by intentionally disseminating and discussing material produced by Mr. Samson in response to the subpoena, the Committee has violated its own rules. See Code of Fair Procedures, N.J.S.A. 52: 13E-8 (“Except in the course of a subsequent hearing open to the public, no testimony or other evidence adduced at a private hearing or preliminary conference or interview before a committee or other multimember investigating agency shall be disseminated or made available to the public by any member of the agency, its counsel or employees, except with the approval of a majority of the members of such agency. Any person who violates the provisions of this subdivision shall be adjudged a disorderly person”) and N.J.S.A. 52:13E-1 (defining “hearing” to include “the production of other evidence [that] may be compelled by subpoena or other compulsory process”). When we raised this concern previously, you informed us in your letter of March 17, 2014 that the Committee had not taken a “formal position” with respect to the specific statutes governing its procedures. Since that time, the Court in New Jersey Legislative Select Committee on Investigation v. Kelly made clear that the provisions of the Code of Fair Procedures apply to documents produced in response to the Committee’s subpoena power. Thus, the Committee’s practices call into question the fairness and legitimacy of the entire proceeding.

Moreover, recent public reports reveal that the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey, having subpoenaed the Committee itself, is effectively treating the Committee as a conduit for the Government’s own investigation, exacerbating the concerns we expressed with regard to the protected and privileged nature of the communications the Committee seeks.
Reid Schar, Esq.
May 2, 2014
Page 3

Unfortunately, the way this Committee has conducted itself, combined with Mr. Samson’s constitutional rights to fundamental fairness, now compel him to decline to produce the documents requested by the Committee’s subpoena for a number of reasons.

First, Mr. Samson will not produce documents pursuant to his rights against self-incrimination under the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution and New Jersey’s common law analogue, which protects personal privacy. To be clear, Mr. Samson has done nothing wrong and has violated no laws -- quite the opposite -- but as the Supreme Court has emphasized, “one of the Fifth Amendment’s ‘basic functions...is to protect innocent men... who otherwise might be ensnared by ambiguous circumstances.’” Ohio v. Reiner, 532 U.S. 17, 21 (2001) (internal citation omitted); cf. Matter of Grand Jury Proceedings of Guarino, 104 N.J. 218, 231 (1986) (“New Jersey common law privilege against self-incrimination protects the individual’s right ‘to a private enclave where he may lead a private life’”). In this situation, the statements and behavior of certain Committee members thus far, as well as the fact that numerous law enforcement agencies are conducting investigations, present a classic case of a situation in which an innocent man might be ensnared by ambiguous circumstances. The Committee provided a textbook example: on previous occasions, members have cited the furnishing of documents pursuant to a broad subpoena as some kind of factual concession that a particular meeting related to the George Washington Bridge traffic closures. See http://www.wnyc.org/story/atlantic-city-airport-samson/ (Committee member citing to fact that David Wildstein produced a document in response to Committee’s subpoena means he must have thought it related to the GWB traffic closure issues).

Second, the breadth of the subpoena intrudes on other legal rights of confidentiality, including the attorney-client privilege and work product doctrine; executive privilege; and privileges belonging to the Port Authority.

Finally, as the Court recognized in the Kelly case, the Committee’s subpoenas’ “exceedingly broad scope,” even as modified, are no more than “a fishing expedition.” Kelly at 33, 40. As the Court held with respect to the subpoenas in Kelly, the Committee’s subpoena to Mr. Samson violates the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution, and Article I, paragraph 7 of the New Jersey Constitution, particularly as it calls for ali calendars, diaries, etc.
Reid Schar, Esq.
May 2, 2014
Page 4

and as it calls for actual physical devices including smartphones and tablets. Even though you agreed to hold off enforcing that request, the Court in *Kelly* held that that did not remedy the subpoenas's Fourth Amendment infirmities since the Committee reserved the right to renew its improper requests. *Kelly* at 75-76.

Sincerely,

COVINGTON & BURLING LLP

GENOVA BURNS GIANTOMASI WEBSTER LLC

MICHAEL CHERTOFF

ANGELO J. GENOVA

C: Anthony Barkow, Esq.
EXHIBIT 143
May 5, 2014

Mr. John Hoffman  
Acting Attorney General  
State of New Jersey  
P.O. Box 080  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Attorney General Hoffman:

Following my previous two letters to your office (February 7, 2014 and March 19, 2014), I write to you today after the SCI Committee received a letter from the law firm of Genova Burns Gianomasi Webster, LLC which represents Mr. David Samson—a subpoenaed witness. In their letter (enclosed), Mr. Genova along with Mr. Chertoff allege that the Committee has violated the law through its conduct. This is not the first time we have heard such allegations.

Mr. William Stepien’s attorney, Mr. Kevin Marino, has made similar allegations in open court and in a brief filed with the court in the matter of *New Jersey Select Committee on Investigation v. Stepien*. The similarities in nature of the allegations by multiple lawyers in this matter are very troubling.

In the letter, dated May 2, 2014, Mr. Samson’s attorneys allege that the committee has violated the Code of Fair Procedures N.J.S.A. 52:13E-8 by “intentionally disseminating and discussing material produced by Mr. Samson in response to the subpoena”.

Recently the minority members of the SCI Committee wrote to the Co-Chairs of the committee (see enclosed) to express, among other things, our concerns with not only public statements made by members of the committee but also the consistent and persistent leaking of confidential committee information as they relate to subpoenas to.

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1 Genova Burns Gianomasi Webster letter to SCI Committee, May 2, 2014
various media outlets. Judge Jacobsen has already cited these statements in her ruling to deny relief to the Committee in *New Jersey Select Committee on Investigation v. Kelly*.\(^2\)

Now we come to learn that committee members may have potentially broken the law.

As you are aware a violation of NJSA 52:13E-8 is a disorderly persons offense, carrying penalties up to six (6) months imprisonment and up to $1000 in fines – for each offense.

As such, I ask that your office, through the appointment of an independent prosecutor, conduct all necessary investigations into these claims that the Committee has violated the law by releasing subpoenaed documents. I also renew my request that the independent prosecutor investigate the allegations outlined in my February 7, 2014 and March 19, 2014 letters. While all involved seek to carry out the charge of this Committee by uncovering the truth, there can be no place for those who break the law to do so.

Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. O'Toole
Senator, District 40

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\(^2\) *NJ Legislative Select Comm. on Investigation v. Kelly, No. L-350-14 and NJ Legislative Select Comm. on Investigation v. Stepien, No. L-354-14, slip op. at 19 (Law Div. April 19, 2014)*
Christie bridge scandal: Recipients of 18 new subpoenas revealed

Loading Photo Gallery

Christopher Baxter | The Star-Ledger By Christopher Baxter | The Star-Ledger
Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on February 10, 2014 at 6:00 PM, updated February 10, 2014 at 9:21 PM

TRENTON — The state legislative committee investigating the George Washington Bridge scandal will issue 18 new subpoenas, including to Gov. Chris Christie’s office, his inner circle and officials at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, The Star-Ledger has learned.

Recipients include the State Police aviation unit, which oversees Christie’s helicopter travel, four new members of Christie's office, and his failed state Supreme Court nominee, Phillip Kwon, who now works as deputy general counsel at the Port Authority.

Some of the recipients were also subpoenaed in past rounds, including the governor’s office, his re-election campaign and Bill Baroni, the former deputy executive director of the Port Authority who resigned last year as the scandal unfolded.

The names were included on a document titled, "Recommended additional subpoena recipients," which was circulated to committee members. The document was obtained by The Star-Ledger, and a source close to the investigation confirmed the list matched those who will be issued subpoenas.

The source was not authorized to discuss the investigation and declined comment.

A co-chairman of the committee, John Wisniewski (D-Middlesex), confirmed after the committee's meeting today that more than a dozen additional subpoenas would be issued, but he declined to say exactly how many or to name the recipients.

He said they would begin being issued tonight or Tuesday morning.

The full list of those to be subpoenaed is:

- Chris Christie for Governor, the governor's re-election campaign
- Christie's office
- Regina Egea, director of the authorities unit, governor's office
- Nicole Crifo, senior counsel to the authorities unit, governor's office
- Jeanne Ashmore, director of constituent relations, governor's office
- Rosemary Iannacone, director of operations, governor's office
- Barbara Panebianco, executive assistant to Bridget Anne Kelly, governor's office
- Custodian of records, State Police aviation unit

- William "Pat" Schuber, commissioner at the Port Authority
- Bill Baroni, former deputy executive director at the Port Authority
- Custodian of records, Port Authority
- Steve Coleman, deputy director of media relations, Port Authority
- Phillip Kwon, deputy general counsel, Port Authority
- John Ma, chief of staff to Executive Director Patrick Foye, Port Authority
- Matthew Bell, special assistant to former Deputy Executive Director Bill Baroni, Port Authority
- Gretchen DiMarco, assistant to Baroni, Port Authority
- Arielle Schwarz, special assistant to former Director of Interstate Capital Projects David Wildstein, Port Authority
- Mark Muriello, assistant director of Tunnels, Bridges & Terminals, Port Authority

*Star-Ledger* staff writer *Susan K. Livio* contributed to this report.

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- Complete coverage of bridge scandal

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Guest: John Wisniewski, Amy Adams

CHRIS HAYES, "ALL IN" HOST: THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW starts right now.

Good evening, Rachel.

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC HOST: Good evening, Chris. Thank you, my friend.

And thanks to you at home for joining us this hour.

When you take Amtrak on the northeast corridor, when you’re heading north, the way you know you have reached New Jersey is when you see this sign. "Trenton makes, the world takes." It probably used to say, "The world takes, Trenton makes." But obviously, this version is fairly better.

It’s an old Chamber of Commerce slogan designed to market Trenton, New Jersey, as a manufacturing hub with international aspirations.

But now when you see that sign, it mostly just means that you have successfully crossed the Delaware River from Pennsylvania, into New Jersey, especially into Trenton, which is New Jersey’s state capital. The historic state capitol building in Trenton is just a hop, skip and a jump from that "Trenton makes" bridge.

It’s also right there on the banks of the Delaware River bordering Pennsylvania. New Jersey’s state capitol is on the Delaware River. Not on the Hudson River. It’s on the other side of the state from New York City. And so, you have to think about your options and think about the weather and think about, say, traffic if you want to get from some place like Trenton, way down on the Pennsylvania border, all the way over and up into Manhattan. It’s a ways.

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The office of the governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie, told reporters today that in order to get to the commemorative events at Ground Zero this past September 11th, Governor Christie traveled to Lower Manhattan via Jersey City. He went to Jersey City and from there, he took a ferry into Lower Manhattan. It was 96 degrees that day. So the breeze on the ferry probably felt great on the over, and, of course, helped avoid all that bridge and tunnel traffic into Lower Manhattan.
Well, when Governor Christie left the events at Ground Zero on September 11, he did not return by the same route used to get there. Instead of taking the ferry back the way he came, Governor Christie’s office says he flew back to Trenton. He flew back to Trenton by helicopter.

So think about the geography here for a second. If the governor traveled the route that his office says he traveled, there’s no legitimate reason why he should have been anywhere near the gridlock that day that was caused by the shutdown of access lanes on to the George Washington Bridge in Fort Lee.

Look at the -- see how much further above ground zero Fort Lee is? Fort Lee is up there. Trenton is down there. So, there’s no reason why you would go past Fort Lee if you were going home to Trenton.

This past September 11th was day 3 of the manmade traffic disaster in Fort Lee. The manmade traffic disaster in Fort Lee that appears to have been ordered up by Governor Christie’s deputy chief of staff and carried out by David Wildstein at the Port Authority. This is Mr. Wildstein with Governor Christie on that day, on September 11th, on the third day of the manmade traffic jam in Fort Lee. They’re there together at the commemorative events at Ground Zero.

Governor Christie’s office said today that although the governor did fly back from ground zero that day through Trenton by helicopter and although he did spend part of the day at Ground Zero with Mr. Wildstein as these photos show, the governor’s office says today that David Wildstein didn’t get on the helicopter, himself, David Wildstein did not accompany Governor Christie on the helicopter ride back to New Jersey, the governor’s office said today, that David Wildstein has never flown on a helicopter with Governor Chris Christie.

So, one, is it true? Is it true that Mr. Wildstein did not take that helicopter ride with Governor Christie during the bridge lane shutdown after they spent the day together at the 9/11 event?

Number two, whether or not David Wildstein was onboard with Mr. Christie during that helicopter ride, was this the route back to Trenton that the governor took? Was this the as the crow flies logical route that as you can see steers well clear of Fort Lee and the traffic gridlock that had been bestowed on that town on purpose as some sort of as yet unexplained political punishment? We do not yet know.

When "The Newark Star Ledger" asked Governor Christie’s office today if the governor’s helicopter flew over the George Washington Bridge on its way back from Lower Manhattan to Trenton, the governor’s office would not
comment today, so we don’t know.

But we may be about to find out for sure, anyway, because the New Jersey legislative committee investigating the bridge shutdown is tonight sending out 18 new subpoenas and among these 18 new subpoenas is one to the state police aviation unit which oversees Governor Chris Christie’s travel by helicopter.

"The New York Post," "The Newark Star Ledger" and "The Bergen Record" all reported today in advance of these subpoenas coming out today that the records of Governor Christie’s helicopter travel would be demanded by the legislature in conjunction with the investigation. We do not exactly know why, but obviously, speculation about the governor potentially doing a fly-by inspection of the traffic gridlock in Fort Lee while it was under way led today to some rather lurid headlines. And to some heated anticipation about who else would be subpoenaed tonight and why.

Advertise

In addition to this state police aviation unit, here’s what we know about the new subpoenas that are going out tonight. So, we’ve got that state police aviation unit, the new subpoenas to the governor’s office, new subpoenas to the governor’s re-election campaign as well. They were subpoenaed before. They’ve got new subpoenas now.

There are also four new people inside the governor’s office who are receiving subpoenas tonight for the first time. One is executive assistant to Bridget Anne Kelly, the governor’s deputy chief of staff sent that e-mail that said time for traffic problems in Fort Lee. Bridget Kelly’s executive assistant has now been subpoenaed, so has the director of constituent relations in the governor’s office and also the governor’s office director of operations has been subpoenaed.

Regina Egea, who was director of the authorities unit, but who is now the governor’s chief of staff, she has been subpoenaed again. This time, there’s also a subpoena for her senior counsel to the authorities unit.

Over at the Port Authority, there are a whole bunch of new subpoenas as well. Bill Baroni, who is now resigned from the Port Authority, he’s been subpoenaed again as have not one, but two of his assistants from the Port Authority. David Wildstein’s special assistant has also been subpoenaed at the Port Authority tonight, as has the chief of staff to the Port Authority executive director. The executive director was, of course, the one from the New York side who called the bridge lane closures off when he found out about them and said they were illegal and outrageous.

Also, a deputy director of media relations at the Port Authority has
been subpoenaed, a man named Steve Coleman, whose name you might have seen in media reports from the Port Authority. Assistant director at the part of the Port Authority that handles bridges has also been subpoenaed. Also, one of the Port Authority’s commissioners, who Senator Loretta Weinberg wrote to for help right after the bridge closure started. A commissioner named Pat Schuber, he has now been subpoenaed tonight, as has the institution of the Port Authority, itself, in the form of its custodian of records for the agency being subpoenaed tonight.

So, that’s 17 new subpoenas being sent out tonight. The last one, number 18, is maybe how we will get to one of the biggest unanswered questions in this whole story and the one that’s received the least press until now. And it’s about this man, Philip Kwon. Philip Kwon was nominated by Governor Chris Christie to serve on the New Jersey state Supreme Court. His nomination for the New Jersey state Supreme Court was rejected by the Democratic-led Senate in New Jersey.

Governor Christie excoriated the Democrats in the Senate for rejecting Phil Kwon’s nomination but he installed him at the Port Authority as kind of a really nice consolation prize. Put him in a well-paid job as deputy general counsel of the Port Authority. Now, the Port Authority has a bunch of people who work in the general counsel’s office as deputy general counsels and assistant general counsels.

They have a ton of lawyers at the Port Authority, but for whatever reason, it was this one, Phil Kwon, the governor’s Supreme Court nominee, who personally did the prep work for this testimony that you see here. Phil Kwon is sitting there in the right side of the screen, in the green tie.

This was late November. This is Bill Baroni who has since resigned from the Port Authority. This is Bill Baroni testifying to the New Jersey legislature as Phil Kwon looks on, testifying to the legislature at length about a supposed traffic study. The traffic study was the cover story that was cooked up to cover up what actually happened to those bridge lanes and this was Bill Baroni delivering that false cover story to the legislature in November, and it was Philip Kwon who the "Wall Street Journal" says spent part of four to five days preparing Bill Baroni to give that ultimately false testimony.

The Port Authority for their part, they contest that it was that many days of prep but they do not contest it was Phil Kwon who prepped Bill Baroni for that testimony which we now know to be false.

Why did Phil Kwon do that? Why was it him specifically assigned to do it? And did he know it was false testimony that he was preparing Bill Baroni to give to the legislature? Did he know it was a cover story?
There's all this focus nationally on Governor Chris Christie, what this means for his political future, how is he handling the crisis, is he going to run for president and should he step down as head of the Republican Governors Association, and his poll numbers, whatever. Right. Fine. I understand that's the national interest here, right?

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But there really is no reason to put the cart before the horse in this story. What remains unexplained here is the really basic stuff. Why did they shut down those bridge lanes and gridlock Fort Lee? It wasn't a traffic study. That was a cover story.

So, one, what was the real reason they did it? Two, who was in on it? And three, who was in on the cover-up? Who knew that the traffic study story was false and pushed it anyway to try to cover up the real reason this happened?

The busiest bridge in the world was used as a weapon to hurt one New Jersey town on orders that appeared to have come from the governor's office. It's fun to talk about Chris Christie's poll numbers. What remains between here and there is the central question of who done it and why and who helped them try to get away with it? Do we get closer to answering those questions with this new round of subpoenas tonight?

Now, in addition to the 18 new subpoenas sent out by the legislature tonight, the committee investigating the scandal also today voted on how to proceed with regard to the governor's fired deputy chief of staff, Bridget Kelly, and his former campaign manager, both of whom have invoked their Fifth Amendment rights and have refused to hand over documents to the legislature and have asked that their subpoenas be revoked.

Today, the committee investigating the scandal for the legislature said, no, we will not revoke subpoenas for both Bridget Kelly and Michael Stepien, the committee passed motions today declaring the subpoenas were, quote, "necessary, proper and relevant to the matter under investigation", declaring that Mr. Stepien and Ms. Kelly's objections to the subpoenas were invalid, and compelling them to turn over those documents that were called for in the subpoenas.

If Bill Stepien and Bridget Kelly still do not comply, now that the legislature has renewed their call for the documents and said the objections are not valid and they must comply, if Bridget Kelly and Bill Stepien do not comply, it is likely that they will be held in contempt and then they will get referred for prosecution. That's what happened when David Wildstein invoked his Fifth Amendment rights to not testify to the legislature. Mr. Wildstein has been referred for prosecution on contempt
charges, as his lawyer continues to seek immunity for him from those and other charges. He says he will sing like a bird if he gets immunity from everyone.

But for Chris Christie’s former campaign manager and his former deputy chief of staff, it is not just that they are refusing to testify, like David Wildstein, they are refusing to even hand over documents.

Yes, David Wildstein is refusing to talk, but he also handed over 908 pages of documentation to the committee. That’s how anybody knew about Bridget Kelly’s role in this whole thing in the first place. That’s how we knew about the "time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee" e-mail, it was in David Wildstein’s the 900 pages of documents. He’s been happy to turn over documents. He doesn’t want to talk.

With Bill Stepien, Bridget Kelly, they don’t want to hand over documents.

So, we’ve got the head of the legislative committee who’s running this investigation, the head of the committee who issued the 18 subpoenas tonight. He’s here live next on this show to answer questions.

But it seems like there’s two immediately outstanding new issues today. One is what’s going to happen to Bill Stepien and Bridget Kelly if they continue to refuse to comply with the subpoenas? What happens next with them?

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Secondly, a more political matter that’s maybe because it’s political a little more sensitive. And that is this. For the first time today, this investigation into Chris Christie and his administration in New Jersey, the bridge-gate investigation today for the very first time since it started, started to break down along partisan lines.

When the assembly voted to continue the investigation, it was a unanimous vote. All the Republicans and all the Democrats voted to continue the investigation. When the joint committee was formed to advance the investigation, the vote to advance the joint investigation was unanimous. Every Democrat and every Republican in the New Jersey legislature voted to continue the investigation. That’s why when guys like Rudy Giuliani were saying this is a partisan witch hunt, it was hard to take seriously given that every Republican in the legislature voted for it.

But when these votes happened today, essentially moving toward finding Bridget Kelly and Bill Stepien in contempt if they don’t comply with the subpoenas, when it happened today, it was not unanimous. The vote was
eight Democrats voting yes and all the Republicans on the panel not voting. All the Republicans abstained and refused to vote.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIPS)

STATE REP. HILLY SCHEPISH (R), NEW JERSEY: With respect to these motions, understand a lot about it. Only receive the motion as we were in the room and still have some questions. Not quite sure. Haven’t had the opportunity to digest a lot of this, and so for the moment, I am abstaining on all six of the motions.

STATE REP. GREGORY MCGUCKIN (R), NEW JERSEY: Realistically, in the limited timeframe we’ve had, a very complicated constitutional issues, I’m just not prepared at this point to make that determination, although I may at some point reach it, certainly not in the limited timeframe we’ve had to review this. Again, a very, very complicated constitutional issue and Fifth Amendment privileges. Quite frankly, it reads like a textbook and a very well-done brief, but for those reasons, I must abstain also on each of the six motions.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Assemblyman Carroll?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Abstain.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Senator O’Toole?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Abstain.

(END VIDEO CLIPS)

MADDOW: All the Republicans on the New Jersey investigative committee abstained from voting today. Before today, every vote in the legislature on this matter in both houses of the legislature has been 100 percent bipartisan and 100 percent unanimous. If that is now breaking down along partisan lines, if the Republicans are now balking at each new step in the investigation, what happens next?

The head of the investigation is here next to tell us.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STATE SEN. NIA H. GILL (D), NEW JERSEY: Second motion, I move that
the objections raised by Bridget Anne Kelly in response to the committee’s January 27th, 204 subpoena, and in response to the modifications to the subpoena of February 4th, 2014, have been considered by the committee and are hereby held to be invalid.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Invalid. The New Jersey legislative committee investigating the bridge scandal in that state today held that Governor Chris Christie’s former deputy chief of staff Bridget Kelly, she of the "time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee" e-mail, essentially cannot cite the Fifth Amendment in order to protect her from the subpoena that she has received that has asked her to give documents over to that legislative investigating committee.

Given that those objections that she expressed have been ruled invalid today by the legislature, what happens if Bridget Anne Kelly keeps resisting the subpoena? Same argument holds for governor Christie’s former campaign manager. What happens if they keep saying no?

Joining us now is New Jersey Assemblyman John Wisniewski. He’s co-chair of the select committee in the legislature.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for being here.

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STATE REP. JOHN WISNIEWSKI (D), NEW JERSEY: Rachel, good to be here. Thank you.

MADDOW: What is the -- what is the short answer to that long question, I guess? What happens if they continue -- Mr. Stepien and Miss Kelly continue to say, no, they’re not going to hand over documents?

WISNIEWSKI: I think there’s legal recourse our counsel will pursue. I think we’re way ahead of that right now. Right now what we’re going to is say, we’ve considered your objections. We’ve taken time. We’ve gone through the analysis. Our counsel has given us an opinion that those objections don’t stand and we expect compliance. Let’s see what happens when they get that message first, and then we’ll take it step by step after that.

But clearly there’s a difference. There’s a difference between forcing somebody to speak words that they have not ever spoken before in front of the committee and to provide documents that they previously sent to somebody by hitting a "send" button.

Other people that provided us documents, they’ve not interposed a
subsection, so the committee considered those objections that they raised but we feel very comfortable in following the advice of counsel and moving the way we have.

MADDOW: It was striking today to see all of the Republicans on your committee abstain from voting on those motions. Again, those motions were specific to Bill Stepien and Bridget Kelly and their Fifth Amendment claims. Was that a surprise to you? Should we see that as a new partisan divide opening up in what you’re doing?

WISNIEWSKI: I certainly hope not. This is a committee that’s looking to get at the facts. Why did Bridget Kelly choose on that August day to send the e-mail so early in the morning that resulted in the lanes ultimately being closed?

They’re not Democratic facts. They’re not Republican facts. They’re just the facts. We want answers to questions.

All the members of the committee were briefed. They got a full written brief on this issue last week. So, you know, to have the argument being made today that there wasn’t ample time to consider, I don’t get. My hope is this is an aberration that we can all work together and get to the truth because as I said, this just is really about answering questions and there are no partisan taints to the questions. It either is or it isn’t.

MADDOW: The other thing that the committee has don’t today, and this is reported in the "Star Ledger," first I know the committee didn’t put out the names of the people you issued new subpoenas to today. But I have to ask if there was a partisan divide on the committee in terms of sending out this new round of subpoenas?

WISNIEWSKI: Well, my understanding after we met in executive session, that there was an agreement we would wait until all the members, all the individuals who were named in the new subpoenas had gotten service. We wanted them to find out by receiving service and not from tonight’s newscast. And apparently that didn’t happen.

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But there wasn’t any strong objections raised about any of the new subpoenas. And there weren’t any strong objections raised about the last set of subpoenas.

And so, as I said, this is really about getting answers to questions, really fundamental questions. How did this happen? Who gave Bridget Kelly the authorization? What made her think she could do this? Really simple questions that apparently are becoming a very complicated in answering.
MADDOW: In terms of the list of subpoenas, again, reported tonight first by the "Star-Ledger," the state aviation -- the Aviation Authority within the state police which handles the governor’s helicopter travel is a part of this investigation, a part of the potential data universe out there that I’ve never considered before.

Can you tell us why they received a subpoena?

WISNIEWSKI: Well, I think all of these subpoenas are off-chutes of data that we already had that we continue to analyze and go there, and so, we sent out the subpoenas we did initially based on an initial review, but as you gather more data, other questions become obvious that you need to get answers to. And so what this round of subpoenas simply represent is the next iteration of questions. And every time we uncover something, every time we get an answer to a question, we’ve got five more questions that need to be answered.

So the subpoenas that came out today including the one to the aviation unit is really to get answers about who knew what when. Who was in the conversations at what point in time? Who else was with various people when those conversations were had? And sometimes you have to ask questions of a lot of people to get very few answers. So, we’re not going to just start ruling out asking questions before we know what the answers are.

MADDOW: It was that particular subpoena today was described in the press as having been -- having sprung from a concern that perhaps the governor did a flyover over the George Washington Bridge during the bridge shutdown on the day of September 11th, 2013. Do you want to comment on that speculation in the press?

WISNIEWSKI: I don’t know what the governor did or didn’t do in the helicopter, but I do think that who conversations are had with at particular points in time are just as important to the committee as where the helicopter flew.

So, this is part of a larger effort to piece together a puzzle that we’re not seeing entirely clearly, but we do know that there was an abuse of power in an attempt to cover it up. We need to know how far that goes and who else knew it.

MADDOW: New Jersey Assemblyman John Wisniewski, co-chair of the select committee investigating the bridge lane closures -- I can -- I feel your path narrowing as you step forward here in terms how careful you are in answering these questions. But thank you for being willing to keep the conversations going in explaining this to us.

WISNIEWSKI: I’m not sure it’s narrowing all the time. Sometimes I
see it narrow. Sometimes it gets wider. Each day, it changes.

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MADDOW: Yes, one foot in front of the other. Thank you, sir. Appreciate it.

WISNIEWSKI: Thank you.

MADDOW: I’ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE (R), NEW JERSEY: I have and will continue to, started yesterday, to once again now have personal one-on-one discussions myself with the remaining members of my senior staff to determine if there’s any other information that I do not know and need to know in order to take appropriate action.

I’m going to continue this process. I couldn’t get it all done yesterday. And so what steps we’ll take after that, if there are concrete steps beyond what I’ve done today, then we’ll certainly announce them and talk about them. If, you know, if not, then I’ll just say, listen, I think we’ve gotten to the bottom of this.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: That was New Jersey Governor Chris Christie last month announcing how he planned to get to the bottom of this whole embarrassing bridge scandal in his state -- personal one-on-one discussions with remaining members of my senior staff. If there are concrete steps beyond what I’ve done today, then we’ll certainly announce them. If not, I’ll say, listen, I think we’ve gotten to the bottom of this.

A week after Governor Christie described interviewing his staff, himself personally, his office announced that actually, they were hiring a big law firm to do a formal internal review. Quote, "Governor Christie made clear last week that he will conduct an internal review to uncover the facts surrounding the lane closures at Fort Lee."

Governor Christie’s press office today confirmed for us when they say Governor Christie made clear he would conduct that internal review, what they meant was his comments we just played for you here from that January press conference where he said he’d been talking to his staff one-on-one and would continue talking to them. They told us today that that was Governor Christie clearing calling for an internal review.
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Didn't much sound like it, but tonight, whatever else this internal review means, we do know now that it is not internal because tonight we can report exclusively that the lawyer hired by Governor Christie to do this internal review, that lawyer has contacted the attorney for the mayor of little Fort Lee, New Jersey, Mayor Mark Sokolich. The mayor's attorney telling us tonight it was Mayor Sokolich -- the mayor's telling us tonight that he received that communication from governor Christie's lawyer.

It was Mayor Sokolich's town, of course, that got turned into a parking lot for four days in September. Governor Christie's deputy chief of staff apparently ordered up traffic problems for Fort Lee and a Christie ally obliged by shutting down the town's access lanes to the George Washington Bridge.

It was Mayor Sokolich who pleaded for help from Governor Christie's office during the shutdown. Mayor Sokolich asking what on earth he did to anger someone enough that they would endanger his town by intentionally creating traffic problems in Fort Lee, so much so that ambulances couldn't get through?

In his search for why someone would want to do that to him and Fort Lee, Mayor Sokolich suggested it was perhaps retaliation at him for not endorsing Governor Christie in his re-election campaign. Governor Christie has denied that allegation from the mayor.

But tonight, the lawyer for Mayor Sokolich tells us that the attorney that Governor Christie hired to conduct that internal investigation of his own office, that Christie attorney has reached outside the governor's office to seek an interview with Fort Lee's mayor. The attorney for Mayor Sokolich says the request came through this weekend. The mayor's attorney did not answer when we asked tonight about how he responded so far to the request from the Christie lawyer.

But that's not all. There's more. We can also report tonight exclusively that the Christie attorney conducting this internal review has also written to the town of Fort Lee. Governor Christie's lawyer filing an open records request today with the mayor's office in Fort Lee requesting, quote, "any and all correspondence going back to August 1st about those lane closures in September. They're also requesting any and all documents back to January 1st about access to those lanes including, quote, "communications with the Port Authority."

They're also requesting, quote, "any and all documents having to do with the issue of endorsing Governor Chris Christie for re-election or talking to members of his re-election campaign. The Christie lawyers also
requesting any and all documents that the mayor or members of his staff provided to "The New York Times," "The Wall Street Journal" or other local or national, print, Internet or television media since September 1st, more than a week before the traffic jam, quote, "Regarding any of the above subjects."

Governor Christie’s lawyer requests that production of responsive documents be made as soon as possible. Signed very truly yours, Randy M. Mastro.

New and fascinating news tonight in this New Jersey story, specifically about what Governor Christie’s office thinks is an internal review that suddenly does not look very internal. Yesterday, Shawn Boburg at "The Bergen Record" broke the news that Governor Christie’s lawyers have also written to Hoboken Mayor Dawn Zimmer concerning that mayor’s allegation that Christie administration officials threatened to withhold federal aid money for Sandy relief, unless she supported a private development in Hoboken. That project has ties to the man who Governor Christie appointed to be chairman of the Port Authority.

The Christie lawyers asking for documents from Mayor Zimmer, also asking for an interview with her. Look at the quote from the letter. The governor’s office takes the allegations recently made by Hoboken Mayor Zimmer very seriously. For that reason, we have assembled a team here that includes five former prosecutors and are conducting a thorough review of the facts pertinent to Mayor Zimmer’s allegations.

And then they request, quote, "complete unredacted documents from the mayor’s office." Signed, respectfully, Randy M. Mastro.

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This internal review of the governor’s office which has now stretched into the office of the Hoboken mayor appears to not be getting very far yet at least not in Hoboken. Mayor Zimmer’s attorney replying basically, thank you, also no thank you.

The response, quote, "We question whether it is appropriate for the governor’s office in essence to be investigating itself, particularly when an investigation of the same subject matter is being conducted by the U.S. attorney’s office. Put another way, we fail to see how the request you’ve made would further your, quote, ‘mandate’ from the governor’s office to facilitate cooperation with the investigation when the mayor and city are already cooperating directly with that investigation."

These letters from Governor Christie’s lawyer to these mayors in Fort Lee and Hoboken makes for an unexpected development in a story that is
already persistently just plain weird from lots of different answers angles. But this is a really strange part of the story and it’s an unexpected turn in the strange part of the story. Part of the reason this is strange is the way the governor’s office is insisting that he clearly in that press conference, that day back in January, called for an internal review, when he described himself as a sad, angry boss continuing to talk one-on-one with his employees, personally, himself, in order to get to the bottom of this.

And yet in that same press conference, the governor said he had not asked his deputy chief of staff why she ordered up traffic problems in Fort Lee. Said he hadn’t asked her about it and didn’t plan to.

After Governor Christie announced he hired a lawyer, much of the press was all about the governor bringing in top legal talent to respond to the bridge-gate scandal. "The Asbury Park Press" headlined the governor’s new attorney as a legal alligator who’s reported to have wielded a bat for effect during meetings. Well, now, we have from that same lawyer requests for interview the with two New Jersey mayors who made allegations against Governor Christie, a request in the case of the Hoboken mayor that includes mention of a team of five former federal prosecutors who are taking the Hoboken mayor’s allegations very seriously.

How did the governor’s internal investigation get from not even asking Bridget Kelly about why she did what she did, to now mayors around the state who have questioned Governor Christie getting the opportunity to have meetings with five former federal prosecutors at a time? This is a strange turn and a strange part of the story. Where intimidation has been part of the alleged plot from the beginning, right? Is intimidation also part of how this scandal resolves from here on out?

Watch this space.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REV. WILLIAM BARBER, NORTH CAROLINA NAACP PRESIDENT: We say to our governor and every governor and every legislature and every politician, we say this to you in love -- don’t you know if you leave the low ground of extremism and go to the higher ground of justice, if you use your office to help somebody, then you’re living shall not be in vain.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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MADDOW: More than 80,000 people rallied in Raleigh, North Carolina, this weekend, protesting the hard right turn in that state under the Republican legislature and the new Republican Governor Pat McCrory, really kind of a ginormous number of people -- 80,000 to 100,000 people rallying this weekend in North Carolina. But that is not the only complication in Governor Pat McCrory's life right now. "The Associated Press" got a huge scoop on North Carolina today, and that story is next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Way over in the western part of North Carolina, tucked right underneath Tennessee is the lovely city of Asheville. The 11th largest city in the state located roughly at the mouth of the French Broad River and Swannanoa River. Right along Asheville's stretch of the French Broad River sits a coal fired power plant. The plant is owned by Duke Energy, which is headquartered in North Carolina, the single largest electric power holding company in the country.

Early last year an environmental group in that area started looking into this site, specifically looking into the huge amounts of coal ash that are stored at that plant. The group was concerned that the coal ash was contaminating the local groundwater. So, in January of last year, they filed a notice of their intent to sue Duke Energy in federal court. Under the federal Clean Water Act you can do that.

Citizen groups can file lawsuits over environmental right violations, but there's a sort of stray thread, maybe, loose, loophole, maybe, something to worry about. They have to give the state regulators, they have to give regulators in their state 60 days' notice just in case the state wants to take action on its own before the citizens case can move forward.

So, this group filed a notice of their intent to sue Duke Energy. And then on the 58th day after the notice went out, the deadline was 60 days. On the 58th day, sure enough, North Carolina's state environmental agency announced they were going to step in and take action themselves.

The state essentially intervened and said to the citizens group -- no, we are the state department for the environment. We have the right to step in here. We're stepping into your lawsuit and we're going to become the plaintiff here. State came in at the last minute and supplanted that citizen group's complaint.

Two months later, the same environmental group sent another notice about possible coal ash contamination at a different Duke Energy plant, this one near Charlotte. They filed another intent to sue over the conditions at that plant. Another plant owned by Duke Energy.
And on the 60th day, on the very last day before that lawsuit could go forward, state regulators, again, stepped in and intervened. We have the right to step in here, we’re the new plaintiffs here. You’re off the case.

Then this past June, the same environmental group sent another notice saying they intended to sue, again, over coal ash, allegedly contaminating a public fishing lake and local drinking water at a Duke Energy plant near Wilmington, North Carolina, and once again, just like before, state regulators stepped in on the very last day before the suit could go forward and say actually, you know what, we got this. We have the right to step in here. We’re the new plaintiffs. You citizens group can no longer sue, we’re taking over your case.

After blocking those three potential lawsuits from that environmental group, in the past year, the state announced that their big action, the reason that they decided to step in, block this group from doing it, they were going to do it, was so they could settle. On their own, they decided to settle the matter by assessing a fine against Duke Energy of a grand total of $99,000 -- $99,000 fine for a company that’s valued at nearly $50 billion. Three times environmental groups tried to use the Clean Water Act to see Duke Energy to force them to clean up their coal ash sites in North Carolina and three times the state government has stepped in at the very last minute to stop the lawsuit.

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Those details came to light in a rather jaw-dropping new report from "The Associated Press." "The A.P." reporting that at the beginning of last year, in January 2013, the North Carolina government started stepping in and blocking these environmental lawsuits against Duke Energy. That same month, January 2013, is when North Carolina got a brand new Republican governor, Republican Pat McCrory, who before he became governor spent 28 years working for Duke Energy.

In the year since he has become governor, these environmental groups raised concern after concern about this one company and its coal ash problem and every time they’ve essentially been stymied by the new administration. And then their worst fears were realized. Last week, last Sunday afternoon, up to 82,000 tons of coal ash mixed with 27 million gallons of contaminated water broke free from a 48-inch storm water pipe that was located at the Dan River power plant in Eden, North Carolina.

That retired plant is owned by Duke Energy. The pipe that ruptured spewed thousands of tons of toxic sludge which contains lead and arsenic and mercury and a stew of other toxic chemicals. Enough sludge flowed out of that pipe to fill up 73 Olympic-sized swimming pools.
The public was not told about the breach until the day after it happened. The initial reports by both the company responsible, Duke Energy, and the state regulatory agency, did not accurately relay the scale of the leak. This it turns out was the third largest coal ash spill the country has ever seen. The coal ash from this spill kept spewing into the Dan River for almost a week until this Saturday, this weekend when workers were finally able to plug the pipe and stop the flow.

Governor Pat McCrory’s first public statement about this huge spill was not until four days after it happened and then finally he showed up at the spill site and pounded his chest and touted his record of being so tough on the energy, crowing that his administration was the first in North Carolina history to take legal action against a company related to coal ash -- right, by stepping in and blocking other lawsuits against the company and settling with the company for basically no money and, importantly, no promise from Duke Energy to actually fix what they were doing wrong.

This new reporting from the "Associated Press" about the state’s role in blocking legal action against this industry, against this specific company, this new reporting raises questions about whether the sort of accident could have been prevented. One former regulator at the state’s environmental agency, Amy Adams, a nine-year veteran at the agency resigned in protest this past November over the direction the agency was taking since the new administration had been sworn in, saying she was steered away from issuing violations or fines against polluters once Governor McCrory of Duke Energy took office.

Joining us now is Amy Adams. She’s the former regional office supervisor for the division quality at the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. She’s currently North Carolina campaign coordinator for an environmental non-profit called Appalachian Voices.

Ms. Adams, thank you very much for being with us tonight.

AMY ADAMS, APPALACHIAN VOICES: Thank you for having me, Rachel.

MADDOW: So we have just received news, just within the last few minutes, received news about the third of those environmental cases that the McCrory administration intervened in. The first two cases where they intervened, they settled with Duke Energy for a total of $99,000 over the two cases. Duke didn’t have to change anything they were doing with regard to coal ash. The third one was pending. We’ve just heard tonight that they are going to delay their own settlement with Duke Energy in the wake of this huge new coal ash disaster in your state.

What’s your reaction to that?
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ADAMS: I think that is the most prudent action that I have seen DENR take since the litigation against these utilities has started. I think this is a progressive step forward that is typically unusual of Diener.

MADDOW: Could this leak at the Dan River plant have been prevented? Was it -- was this the sort of thing that was foreseen, that people were worried about with those lawsuits they were filing?

ADAMS: Yes. This was absolutely 100 percent preventable, Rachel.

What we know is that these coal ash ponds, anytime they’re storing toxic coal ash in an unlined hole in the ground adjacent to our surface waters, that there’s a risk to the public. There’s a risk to our drinking water, the public’s right for swimmable, drinkable, fishable water to utilize for their recreation and for their personal benefit.

And even though this spill is the outward sign, we saw the outward sign of the spill in Kingston, Tennessee in 2008, and this is the outward sign of a catastrophic failure here at the Dan River, these plants, all 14 plants in North Carolina are under lawsuit for contaminating groundwater. And that’s what the public doesn’t see, is that this groundwater contamination goes on every single day and while this is new news to your viewers this is not new news to the folks that are advocates trying to address this coal ash pollution that the state is facing.

MADDOW: You were involved on the regulatory side of this for nine years before you resigned last year, citing your changed work experience under the McCrory administration. Can you tell us what changed, what had your job been like, what had the regulatory job been like in North Carolina before Governor McCrory, and how has it changed since him?

ADAMS: Certainly. Before it has always been the mission of DENR to protect the resources and the public and the public’s right to have clean air, clean water, a swimmable, recreational, fishable resources in the state. When Pat McCrory took office, the first thing he did was he appointed John Skvarla, and John Skvarla was instrumental in redefining who DENR customer was.

The customer to me has always been North Carolina’s resources and its citizens. And he redefined that and said no, from here forward our customer is going to be the regulatory agent -- or the regulatory industry -- or the industries that we regulate. So, we shifted way from protecting the resource and the people from pollution to protecting the polluter and trying to help them protect both their profit and help them meet compliance standards through proper -- excuse me. Through --
MADDOW: Through the way they had to manage their waste and other by-products of what they do.

ADAMS: Absolutely. I’m sorry. I lost you there for a second.

MADDOW: I got you. I understand. Amy Adams, thank you for being with us. I have a feeling this will not be the last time we talk about this matter. Thank you very much for being here.

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ADAMS: Absolutely. Thank you so much.

MADDOW: Amy Adams is a former office supervisor for the division of water quality at the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. And she left there in protest last year.

Again, though, the breaking news tonight is that twice in the last year, the Department of Natural Resources in North Carolina intervened to stop a federal lawsuit against Duke Energy. In those cases, they settled with the company for $99,000 and they didn’t have to make significant changes to the problem they were getting sued over.

A third one of these was ready to go. A third one of these cases was ready to go, and a settlement was pending, but in light of the third largest coal ash disaster in our nation’s history, which has happened on the Dan River in North Carolina in the past two weeks, they have put that settlement on hold. That just happened this hour.

Stay with us. We’ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Best new thing in the world today. All right. This is a good one.

You are looking at Faurot Field in Columbia, Missouri, home of the football team at the University of Missouri. The big letter "M" that you see at the north end of the stadium, that’s the "M" for Missouri and it’s made of individually painted rocks. The whole thing spans nearly 9,000 square feet. According to Missouri lore, the rock M was built by the university’s 1927 freshman class using leftover rocks from the construction of the original memorial stadium.

Now, though, as part of tradition every year, incoming freshmen gather at the stadium and they repaint those rocks white. Rock M is an iconic thing in college football. It’s been there for more than 85 years. As a Mizzou football player after your final home game, you’re allowed to take
one of the rocks home with you.

And this year, Mizzou had one of their best football seasons in their history. They played in the SEC’s championship. They finished the season ranked as the number 5 team in the nation, and they were led by the player who they voted to be their team MVP. He’s a Mizzou senior, voted defensive player of the year in the SEC. He’s a genuine high-ranking NFL prospect now that he has graduated.

And you probably heard his name today. His name is Michael Sam. Mr. Sam has come out to the world as gay after coming out to his teammates last year. And since he is such a good player and is undoubtedly heading to the NFL, this has led to lots of prognosticating about to what it’s going to mean for the NFL, what it’s going do mean for men’s sports generally to have such a prominent openly gay professional athlete.

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And today, with the eyes of the sports world all focused on Michael Sam and his brilliant career at Mizzou, and his uncharted future because of this brave thing he just did, today this was the scene inside Mizzou’s football stadium.

See what’s going on there? At the snowy north end of the hollowed Faurot Field where the temperature did not reach 20 degrees today. Today it wasn’t just the rock M anymore. It was the rock S-A-M for Michael Sam.

We reached out to the Mizzou athletic department today to confirm the legitimacy of that picture. They confirm to us that that is the real deal.

Here’s to Mizzou fans and his teammates knowing and never caring. Here’s to the defying of expectations in a good way. Best new thing in the world today.

Now, it’s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O’DONNELL."

Thanks for being with us tonight.

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END
EXHIBIT 146
HARDBALL
January 9, 2014


CHRIS MATTHEWS, HOST: Bridge over troubled waters.

Let`s play HARDBALL.

Good evening. I`m Chris Matthews in Washington.

"Let Me Start" tonight where Governor Christie left off today. I want you, the people watching right now and the people involved in this escapade, to answer some common sense questions. Call them the smell test.

Did Governor Christie truly believe that the four days of long traffic backups at the George Washington Bridge last September were caused by a research project? If so, why didn`t he put his foot down, when it was going on day after day, and try to stop the stupid thing? Are we to believe that this famously blunt Christie was stricken with a bout of meek passivity?

And did Christie keep on swallowing this research project story for all these months since September? Did he refuse to negotiate -- or to investigate, rather, what he knew -- or who knew what was behind the traffic tieup because he bought that story or because he didn`t?

And are we to believe that the feisty governor was still in the dark on what his people were up to as he watched his two big-time appointments on the bridge authority itself being forced to resign?

Well, who is this new Chris Christie we haven`t met before, this quiet fellow who doesn`t ask questions, believes whatever he`s told, shows zero curiosity, only knows what his team is up to when he is drying off himself after his morning workout the other day and reads about it in "The Bergen Record"? That`s when he learns things, I guess.

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Well, who is this "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" character who moves as an innocent while his troops in Trenton, the Port Authority and in his campaign headquarters administer corporal punishment on those who failed to march to Christie`s music?
And how could we not -- hearing his heart’s shout of innocence this morning, not hear the echo of that scene from Rick’s Cafe Americain that still leads the band for proclamations of hurt innocence?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE (R), NEW JERSEY: I am humiliated by the fact that I did not know this and that I was deceived. And that’s an awful way to feel.

HUMPHREY BOGART, "CASABLANCA": How can they close me up? On what ground?

CLAUDE RAINS, "CASABLANCA": I’m shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here!

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Your winnings, sir.

RAINS: Oh, thank you very much. Everybody out at once!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: What Christie said today could be perfectly, even exquisitely true. But was it the whole truth and nothing but?

Jonathan Capehart is an opinion writer for "The Washington Post," and Michael Steele was chairman of the Republican National committee. Both are, of course, MSNBC political analysts.

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Jonathan, I want to start with you. His defense seems to be two-part. One, he began to get interested in this thing around December, and he called his staff people in and said, Do you know anything about this thing? He gave them an hour to say yes or no, then he goes out and tells the press they didn’t know (ph) a thing about it.

As for September, when the bridge hold-up -- tie-ups began, all the way through December, his answer on questioning was, I believed the research project story, this traffic study. I believed it whole. I never questioned it. I assumed it was the reason why -- four hours each day four days in a row was the reason for it. I never questioned it. I never through there was political hanky-panky or payback going on.

That’s the hard part. That’s the hard part that could have been conscious effort on his part not to investigate, conscious effort on him not to know what he didn’t want to know. And that, of course, is very hard to get to because it’s in the head.
JONATHAN CAPEHART, "WASHINGTON POST," MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Right, right. It’s in the head. But here’s the thing, and I think our colleague, Steve Kornacki, has been talking about this. When Bridget Anne Kelly, who’s the woman who sent...

MATTHEWS: Don’t you love the name Bridget?

(LAUGHTER)

MICHAEL STEELE, FMR. RNC CHAIR, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Old school. Old school.

CAPEHART: ... who sent the infamous e-mail that said...

MATTHEWS: Bridget!

CAPEHART: ... time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee, Steve said it strains credulity that someone like that, who has been with Christie for a long time, would do something like that and the governor wouldn’t know about it.

MATTHEWS: Or that she could speak for him with such authority...

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CAPEHART: Right.

MATTHEWS: ... that the guy over at the bridge commission would say, Sure, babe. Sure.

CAPEHART: Right. Or...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... just call me up, I’m going to stop the bridge traffic for four days because you call me up without me ever calling back the chief of staff or the guy’s counsel...

CAPEHART: Right.

MATTHEWS: ... or somebody say -- Is this what really Chris wants me to do?

CAPEHART: Right.

MATTHEWS: Because this may be against the law!

CAPEHART: But Chris, here is the thing. She sent that at 7:34 AM. She got a response back at 7:35 AM. There was no phone call. There was
no...

MATTHEWS: So you think there might have been that -- it was a cue, that they had set up ahead of time?

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STEELE: It was cued up.

MATTHEWS: What (ph) you (ph)?

STEELE: It was cued up. I said on your program about a month-and-a-half ago that, Let’s just wait to see what the governor knew and when he knew it. And right now, today, I think this press conference opens up the door for more questions. And it really was, I think, short term. It gives him some room, not a lot, because you’ve got folks pleading the 5th. You’ve got folks still possibly revealing stuff. So this is going to be a story for a while and it’s amazing...

MATTHEWS: Did you buy this...

STEELE: ... how the worm turns.

MATTHEWS: I’m sorry, Michael. Did you buy the Chris Christie he presented today? First of all, he’s humble. He should have been humble. He was apologizing to everybody on the planet.

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: For what, I’m not sure because he said he was screwed by his own staff people. I was wondering what he apologized for because he said Bridget whatever her name is did the whole thing on him. And then, of course, Wildstein and the other guy, Baroni, over at the bridge authority did. And of course, he fired his campaign manager, too. They were all doing it all around him, but he’s the only one that doesn’t know what’s going on.

Did you buy the fact that he’s sort of a passive, meek, sort of Don Knotts character -- I didn’t know what was going on!

STEELE: No, I did.

MATTHEWS: All around me, these people were so political! I don’t know anything about this.

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STEELE: I don’t think -- I don’t really think that...
MATTHEWS: This is Chris Christie?

STEELE: ... was his approach -- I don’t think that was his approach at all, and I have no clue what’s going on, woe is me.

MATTHEWS: He did say that today!

STEELE: Look, there is within those executive wings that space of deniability that the staff often provides...

MATTHEWS: OK...

STEELE: ... the chief executive. I think that’s part of what happened here, to some degree. And there’s probably stuff that he did not know...

MATTHEWS: But she said -- she was...

STEELE: ... that was revealed to him.

MATTHEWS: ... clearly -- she clearly comes across in the actual facts, none of which he gave us. "The Bergen Record" gave us all the facts.

STEELE: Right.

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MATTHEWS: He didn’t give us one new fact.

STEELE: Right. Right.

MATTHEWS: And she clearly had...

STEELE: And I don’t know if that should be his place, but...

MATTHEWS: ... a reputation as being the person who could be his enforcer. When she sends that little e-mail...

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: ... that says, Time for traffic problems in Fort Lee, Port Authority, as you point out, answered in seconds, practically. So everybody over in the Port Authority, these big shots, said, She’s the one talking for the governor.

Anyway, today, in his extraordinary press conference today we all watched, Governor Christie delineated his line of defense, beginning with an unambiguous apology, which wasn’t clear what he was apologizing for.
But here he is. Let’s listen.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHRISTIE: I come out here to this office, where I’ve been many times before, and I come out here today to apologize to the people of New Jersey. I apologize to the people of Fort Lee. And I apologize to the members of the state legislature.

I am embarrassed and humiliated by the conduct of some of the people on my team. There’s no doubt in my mind that the conduct that they exhibited is completely unacceptable and showed a lack of respect for the appropriate role of government and for the people that we’re trusted to serve.

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(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that’s four people, of course, the two on the bridge authority, and of course, he said, campaign manager, Mr. Stepien, and of course, Bridget Anne Kelly, who’s going to be quite famous now.

Here’s Christie announcing that his top deputy, Bridget Kelly, he says lied to him about her involvement in this matter and would have to go. She’s the chief deputy the -- chief deputy -- deputy chief of staff, rather. That’s her title. And she wrote, The time for traffic problems in Fort Lee has arrived, in her e-mail. Here she is.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHRISTIE: There’s no justification for ever lying to a governor or a person in authority in this government. And as a result, I’ve terminated Bridget’s employment immediately this morning.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, he never talked to her and tell her -- didn’t tell her to her face he was doing it. He didn’t have any conversation with her, apparently, subsequent to this news story yesterday.

Anyway, then comes the heartbreak and betrayal. Here he talks about that.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHRISTIE: I am heartbroken that someone who I permitted to be in that circle of trust for the last five years betrayed my trust.
MATTIEHWS: Well, finally, Christie said he was completely astonished at what his staff and appointees had been doing.

CHRISTIE: Let me tell you, everybody, I was blind-sided yesterday morning. I was done with my workout yesterday morning and got a call from my communications director at about 8:50, 8:55 informing me of this story that had just broken on "The Bergen Record" Web site. That was the first time I knew about this. It's the first time I had seen any of the documents that were revealed yesterday.

MATTIEHWS: It's very interesting -- not to do too much of a biblical study of his words today, because we all watched it for a couple of hours this morning -- that his real indictment of his now former deputy chief of staff is that she lied to him on that occasion in December.

It wasn't that she engaged in political skullduggery. It wasn't so much that she went ahead and tried to punish some mayor in Fort Lee because that didn't seem to walk too far away from his own thinking, apparently. But it did bug him she lied to him.

And yet, isn't it odd on the moment you're to be have a press conference an hour later, you call your staff and you say, If anybody has anything to tell me on this, you got an hour to tell me or else you're finished, basically.

It was almost -- was it a setup. Why an hour? Why give people an hour to come clean?

CAPEHART: Well, he was...

MATTIEHWS: I'm just curious.

CAPEHART: I think he was going out to do a press conference, I think, an already scheduled press conference, and he figured he was going to be asked about it. And so he wanted to be able to go out there and definitively say that no one...

MATTIEHWS: Why in December...
CAPEHART: ... no one was involved...

MATTHEWS: ... when this thing happened in September?

STEELE: Hey, that`s...

MATTHEWS: Why did he finally have a meeting with his staff on this matter? I know why. Because the other defense had fallen apart, because Wildstein and Baroni and those guys had stopped arguing this research project, this traffic study defense. That was gone. And that was his cover for the first two, three months. And once that cover was gone, he needed a new one, which I, I`ve asked my staff and they said that they didn`t do it. That covered him on the second half of this period of time.

CAPEHART: But his big problem throughout all of this is he -- when I look at what happened today, I see two Chris Christies. What you showed there was Chris Christie reading his prepared remarks. As you said at the beginning, he was humble. He was contrite. I thought he was pitch perfect.

MATTHEWS: Yes. It was a performance.

CAPEHART: Where the thing went off the rails was the second part, the Q&A. And the longer he talked, the more...

STEELE: The more questions began...

CAPEHART: ... the more super-confident, full of himself Chris Christie...

MATTHEWS: Did you like the way he choreographed...

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CAPEHART: ... Chris Christie came forward.

MATTHEWS: ... the press conference -- Look, I -- that`s not the way we do things here. You wait for me. And then he goes, You, not you, you!

CAPEHART: But that`s old style Chris Christie.

STEELE: That`s old...

CAPEHART: That`s Chris Christie, not the guy who walked out there and said, I am hurt and troubled. And did you notice something else, Chris? Not one time did he talk about how people in Fort Lee were inconvenienced, the story about...

MATTHEWS: How about the coronary?
CAPEHART: ... EMS -- EMS vehicles...

STEELE: Right.

MATTHEWS: OK, here`s what I think...

CAPEHART: .. that were delayed in the...

MATTHEWS: That`s what I`m thinking about. We`re going to get into this story the rest of the show.

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CAPEHART: He didn`t humanize it.

MATTHEWS: You`re waiting in traffic for four hours. People got to go to the bathroom, they got to go to work, little things that just drive you crazy.

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: We`ve all been in traffic jams like that. And the little human functions you can`t perform -- you got to get there -- you got to get -- and then you find out later that some politician did this to punish another politician, whether it was a staff or whoever it was. Coronaries. We all know -- whenever -- how many times have you felt guilty you haven`t been able to get off to the side of the road fast enough to let an ambulance through because you feel guilty. Get off to the side, and you get mad at everybody that doesn`t do it.

CAPEHART: Right.

MATTHEWS: Right? And here`s a governor saying to the whole -- the whole state, We`re not going to let the ambulance through. We`re all going to stay here in this roadblock because I said so to -- or somebody on his staff did -- to get even with somebody.

No. There are (ph) a case here. Somebody died in the hospital. I can`t believe somebody`s not going to litigate this because of traumatic experiences. When you have a heart condition and you don`t get to the hospital in a situation where you`re having a heart event, you better get there as fast as you can. If it turns out that the reason you were four hours late or whatever to getting there is some political machination going on, I don`t believe there`s not a lawyer waiting there on television to call in the case.

STEELE: I think there is, and there will be, certainly, in that regard. But again, I think we need to step back from this. Today, as
before...

MATTHEWS: Step back -- why do you want to step back?

STEELE: I want to step back and look at the whole thing. I’m not just g...

MATTHEWS: Yes, this guy was almost the Republican nominee for president.

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STEELE: Well, that’s fine. And you loved him. Everybody -- all the people loved...

(CROSSTALK)

STEELE: ... and now with the bridge thing, he’s -- all of the sudden, it’s a target. So again, this was -- this is my point. Step back and look at it from this perspective. There’s still nothing that has been brought to light as of yet that says that Chris Christie knew of and authorized this action to take place.

There is, and you all know this, having been on the Hill yourself...

MATTHEWS: Right.

STEELE: ... and worked with an executive...

MATTHEWS: OK...

STEELE: There is a level in which information does stop. There is a cap. And the question is, was that cap broken? And did it eventually get to him...

MATTHEWS: OK...

STEELE: ... and he knew about it, or did it really stop at the deputy chief of staff or the chief of staff level? And that’s something that’s still...

MATTHEWS: OK...

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STEELE: ... to unfold -- unfold on that.

MATTHEWS: I noticed in working in politics all the years I did, people even begin to look like their bosses. They dress like them.
(INAUDIBLE) people worked for Mondale ended up...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... the Kennedy people...

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: They all do. And by the way, you knew what the boss wanted done, and you did it. You anticipate -- like a good butler, you anticipated what they wanted done. And that`s what you did.

If she thought this is what he wanted done, that`s interesting. I want to know more.

Anyway, thank you, Jonathan Capehart. Thank you for that last-minute pushback on behalf of your party, Michael Steele.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: Coming up: New Jersey state assemblyman leading in the investigation into the bridge closure -- he`s coming here right now on HARDBALL.

And this is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

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(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Welcome back to HARDBALL. While Chris Christie, the governor, did his best to limit the political fallout of the George Washington Bridge controversy today, the legal fallout is only just beginning. There`s an army of legal investigations chomping (sic) at the bit right now.

Take a look at this. The owner of "The Bergen Record" newspaper is weighing a lawsuit alleges Christie`s office violated public records laws. The Port Authority`s inspector general launched his investigation in December. The U.S. Senate`s Transportation Committee is probing the issue at the federal level.

And then there`s the very real risk of civil lawsuits arising from the victims of that September traffic nightmare. For example, EMTs were delayed in responding to a 91-year-old woman, who died of cardiac arrest in the hospital.

While the U.S. attorney in Newark is opening his own criminal
investigation, or rather inquiry -- although NBC`s Pete Williams reports that the feds say there`s no obvious federal crime involved, not at the moment. And the state`s transportation committee has subpoenaed thousands of pages of documents, only a handful of which the public is aware of, which include those bombshell e-mails disclosed just yesterday.

Well, right now, the next shoe to drop is this, explanations from Christie`s deputy, Bridget Kelly -- that`s deputy chief of staff -- who ordered the George Washington Bridge lane closures and the Christie appointee at the Port Authority who carried out her orders, David Wildstein.

Kelly hasn`t been heard of since Christie fired her. As for Wildstein, he appeared before the state`s transportation committee today, but offered the committee`s chairman, John Wisniewski, nothing in the way of answers.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOHN WISNIEWSKI (D), NJ ASSEMBLY: OK, this e-mail communication, it is not?

DAVID WILDSTEIN, FMR. PORT AUTHORITY EXEC.: On the advice of counsel, I assert my right to remain silent, sir.

WISNIEWSKI: You can`t tell me whether it`s an e-mail or a text message?

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WILDESTEIN: Same answer.

WISNIEWSKI: Page 757 is a -- there are a lot of redactions on that page, is there not?

WILDESTEIN: It`s the same answer, sir.

WISNIEWSKI: The answer being that you refuse to answer under the 5th Amendment?

WILDESTEIN: That`s correct.

WISNIEWSKI: So you won`t even tell me if there is redactions on the page?

WILDESTEIN: Same answers.

(END VIDEO CLIP)
MATTHEWS: Well, joining me are two Democrats leading the charge in the fight against Christie. John Wisniewski is a New Jersey assemblyman. He’s a deputy speaker, in fact. And Bill Pascrell is, of course, the United States congressman from New Jersey, and his district includes Fort Lee.

I want to start with John Wisniewski, sir, Assemblyman. Let me ask you about this. How soon are you going to get to Bridget Kelly? It seems to me she would have a lot to say under oath, unless she takes the 5th like the other fellow.

WISNIEWSKI: Bridget Kelly is next on our list, and we intend to issue a subpoena to have her come and testify. But we still have a lot of unanswered questions from David Wildstein and unanswered questions from Bill Baroni. The problem we have, Chris, is every time we get an answer to one question, we wind up with 10 more questions to ask.

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MATTHEWS: What is your interest here? What do you want to find out? Do you believe the governor told the truth today, or the whole truth, is my question? Did he, in fact, give a credible statement today when he said from the time of these bridge holdups, these four-hour holdups, which were clearly ordered by somebody -- and they lasted four days and they caused all kinds of trouble and anger -- he believed all that time there was a traffic study involved and that some bureaucrat somewhere was academically trying to count cars or some absurd story, and he fell for it and believed it all the way through December when Wildstein began to say it wasn’t true. And Baroni, as well.

Do you believe that’s credible that he fell for that, that he’s that gullible, that naive to believe there wasn’t any hanky-panky here?

WISNIEWSKI: Well, Chris Christie is not a gullible and naive man.

It strains credibility for this governor. And if you have done any business in Trenton, you know this is a governor who micromanages every detail of his administration. It strains credibility that a deputy chief of staff had the kind of authority or clout that she did to order lane closures, or that David Wildstein would automatically respond to her command without there being some other level of involvement by his administration.

So, no, it just strains credibility. It’s just not a believable hypothesis that he has offered.

MATTHEWS: Where do you see the -- do you see criminality here at the
bottom of this?

WISNIEWSKI: I don’t know.

Clearly, Pat Foye, the executive director of the agency, said that federal and state laws were broken. And I will leave that to the prosecutors and law enforcement agencies to look at. But, Chris, there was an abuse of power here and then an attempt to cover up that abuse of power.

And what we need to get to the bottom of is, who abused the power, how did they cover it up, and how do we make sure it doesn’t happen again?

MATTHEWS: Are you guys going to -- are you members of the assembly going to subpoena Bridget Kelly next week, or how soon?

WISNIEWSKI: We’re going to issue a subpoena for Bridget Kelly, and we’re going to issue a subpoena for other members of the governor’s administration, Bill Stepien, the man he just asked him to step down as state party Republican chairman. Two days ago, he asked him to become the chairman. Two days later, he asked him to step down.

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Michael Drewniak is a possible target for a subpoena because he is involved in these e-mails, as are other members of the administration. The list is pretty large, and we’re going to take it piece by piece. At the end of the day, we want to get the answers that enable us to legislate, to fix this problem, so it can’t happen again.

MATTHEWS: What does your experience tell you about politicians and staff members? Do staff members take their lead in terms of where the boundaries, what the mission is, or do they make it up?

WISNIEWSKI: No, I think every organization takes their model from the leader of that organization. Chris Christie has been a bully and has practiced these kind of tactics as governor.

It’s not hard to imagine that his administration and his staff looks what he does and says these are the kind of things our governor endorses and supports. But, at the end of the day, I can’t believe that Bridget Kelly woke up one morning and decided to fire off an e-mail to close down lanes on the George Washington Bridge without somebody else telling her that’s something that needed to be done.

MATTHEWS: Give me an example, Assemblyman, of where you saw bullying by the governor personally, you can...

(CROSSTALK)
MATTHEWS: ... testify to it.

WISNIEWSKI: Well, the governor has bullied people who have come to his town hall meetings to ask reasonable questions about his policies. The governor has bullied members of the legislature. The governor has bullied municipalities.

And so time and time again, we see a governor who when he doesn’t get his way or he thinks that you’re challenging his authority, he uses his bluster, he uses his scare tactics to try to get his way. And so it’s not hard to imagine that people who work for him see that and they say, well, that’s the model the governor has set for our behavior, and they find that acceptable behavior.

But it’s not acceptable. And I think that what we’re finding out today is this administration that engaged in very shady tactics.

MATTHEWS: OK, thank you, Assemblyman.

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Like, during today’s press conference, of course, Governor Christie -- Governor Christie was asked point blank by CNN’s John King about a specific part of the story which doesn’t make any sense. According to these e-mails published yesterday, all Bridget Kelly had to say to Wildstein over at the Port Authority -- quote -- "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee" -- close quote -- and Wildstein seemed to know exactly what that meant.

It makes you wonder, did the foul line get moved by Kelly herself? In other words, what did -- they both think this was what Christie was up to? Clearly, she thinks the people over at the Port Authority thought this is what the governor likes seeing done.

Anyway, here is King’s question and the governor’s response.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JOHN KING, CNN: What do you ask yourself about they either thought this was what the boss wanted, or as a group they were willing to go rogue and do this and then try to cover it up and then lie to you?

GOV. CHRIS CHRISTIE (R), NEW JERSEY: Well, listen, obviously -- I said earlier, John, I’m heartbroken about it, and I’m incredibly disappointed.

I don’t think I have gotten to the angry stage yet, but I’m sure I will get there. But I’m just stunned. And what does it make me ask about me? It makes me ask about me, what did I do wrong to have these folks
think it was OK to lie to me?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: There was -- there is something here.

Congressman Pascrell, I always liked the way you have directed your questions at hearings and all that. This is like a weird kind of narcissism. I mean, I don`t care what he feels like. I don`t care he is disheartened. I don`t care he is sad. Who does? Nobody cares.

They want to know what he did. How did he signal to all these people around him, his campaign manager, his deputy chief of staff, the big two paid guys at the Port Authority, all that think he was into this skullduggery, and all this young woman had to do was call up -- I`m sorry - - is deliver a five- or six-word e-mail and they go to work for what they thought was the governor.

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And yet the governor says, I don`t know anything about this. What`s - - that`s the problem I have. I don`t know anything about this thing.

REP. BILL PASCRELL JR. (D), NEW JERSEY: Well, you have two hours of explaining. When you`re explaining, you`re losing. There is no question about that.

This is not about e-mails. This is not about moving cones here and there. This is not a joking matter. The governor attempted to make himself the victim tonight -- today. The victims are the folks who live in Fort Lee, New Jersey. They`re the only victims that are involved in this case at this point.

So this thing unfolds like the onion. And here it is. We`re pushing back, peeling that onion. And we`re learning more and more. Today, it isn`t surprising to me that Wildstein takes the Fifth Amendment on even the inane questions.

I would have him, if I was John, are you here today? Are you wearing clothes?

MATTHEWS: Yes.

PASCRELL: I mean, this is a ridiculous slap in the face of democracy. And if they think that this is the end of it, they`re mistaken. This is the beginning of it.

MATTHEWS: Now, these guys aren`t going to run for office. They don`t
have to worry about public opinion that much. What is the downside of these people just following their lawyers? They’re lawyered up to the hilt. They’re all going to take the Fifth. As you pointed out, he wouldn’t even say whether these are redactions or not.

And there they are and you’re looking at them on the paper. He wouldn’t say if they’re there. So, what happened? What -- if these people keep stonewalling, what do the people investigating this case going to get out of this?

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: How are they going to get to the governor?

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PASCRELL: Right, Chris.

I’m interested to find -- I want to go back to the e-mails which I think are not the priority here. It’s the actions that took place in the beginning of September. I wrote a letter to Baroni on September the 13th. He never answered it, which leads me to think that there is more to this than meets the eye.

If we believe that the deputy secretary -- deputy official within the governor’s office, Bridget, is the one who concocted this whole thing, then come on, we’re only making more jokes. So he is not the victim. The people in Fort Lee are the victim. It’s in my district. I’m going to make sure that I’m involved. I kept my mouth closed now for a few months.

Now it’s time for me to step forward, because we want to see justice. We want to make sure this never happens again. I mean, the Port Authority should be designed to try to figure out how we can lower tolls, not keep on increasing them every so often.

MATTHEWS: Yes.

PASCRELL: You need a wheelbarrow of money, Chris, to go over the George Washington Bridge. That’s absolutely an absurdity. While these guys are saying they’re reforming the place, it’s getting worse.

MATTHEWS: Yes, and four people, including her now, we know, on the record all believed it was fun and games to close down the bridge...

(CROSSTALK)

PASCRELL: Oh, yes.
(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: ... when -- when ambulances were trying to get through.

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Anyway, thank you, U.S. Congressman Bill Pascrell.

PASCRELL: It's a jocular situation, Chris. It's a jocular situation in their minds.

MATTHEWS: Thank you.

And thank you, Assemblyman John Wisniewski.

Up next: The tabloids up in New York and New Jersey are having a big day with this Chris Christie story, as they should.

This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Back to HARDBALL. And time for the "Sideshow."

Tip O'Neill famously said that all politics is local, and in the case of the George Washington Bridge scandal, nothing implies more about the political stakes here than the front pages of the local newspapers in New Jersey and New York. After all, it's stories like these that make the best tabloid fodder.

First, here is "The Trentonian," Which featured a cone-headed Chris Christie, "I Have Got a Bridge to Sell You." And here is a more direct headline from "The Asbury Park Press." "Do You Believe Him?" That's a question mark.

And then there's "The New York Daily News," which poked fun at more than just Christie's diminishing 2016 prospects. Finally, New Jersey -- northern New Jersey's "The Record" shows Christie with top aide Bridget Kelly, "Stuck in a Jam."

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By the way, here is why the latest developments in this scandal have obvious political implications for Christie's future. Let's start with Chris Christie, the governor. It's his deputy chief of staff, Bridget Kelly, who writes the now famous e-mail, "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee." She sends it to David Wildstein, Christie's appointee at the Port Authority, who replies, "Got it."
In October, Wildstein writes to Christie campaign manager Bill Stepien that Fort Lee’s mayor is angry. Stepien replies, "The mayor is an idiot. Win some, lose some."

Eventually, Kelly and Wildstein collaborate with Christie’s press secretary, Michael Drewniak, in a public statement, saying the lane closures were part of a traffic study. Well, in November, Wildstein’s superior at the Port Authority, Bill Baroni, another Christie appointee, also says the closures were part of a traffic study.

At this point, Baroni, Kelly, and Wildstein have lost their jobs. Stepien has lost his position with the Republican Governors Association and was asked to drop his candidacy for state Republican Party chair. The big question, of course, is what happens now to Chris Christie?

Up next, much more on the bridge scandal and the schadenfreude, joy through other’s tragedies, among Republicans today that says, well, Chris Christie, somebody who likes to throw punches, is now getting hit himself.

You’re watching HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

VERONICA DE LA CRUZ, MSNBC CORRESPONDENT: Hey there. I’m Veronica De La Cruz. And here’s what’s happening.

The deep freeze that gripped much of the U.S. recently wasn’t cheap. One firm puts the cost to the U.S. economy at $5 billion.

The nation’s biggest gay rights group wants the government to recognize the same-sex marriages that took place in Utah before the Supreme Court put them on hold.

And doctors say cuts to the nation’s food stamp program may actually wind up costing more in the end through increased Medicare and Medicaid costs.

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I’m Veronica De La Cruz. Let’s get you back to HARDBALL.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CHRISTIE: Politics ain’t beanbag, OK. And everybody in the country who engages in politics knows that. On the other hand, that’s very, very different than saying that, you know, someone is a bully.

So I am who I am. But I am not a bully. And what I will tell you is
that the folks who have worked with me over a long period of time would, I believe, tell you that I’m tough, but I have shown over the last four years in the tone that we have set here that I’m willing to compromise, that I’m willing to work with others.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MATTHEWS: Well, that was Governor Chris Christie this morning, of course, giving perhaps too broad a defense, saying he is not a bully, in his words.

Many of his political enemies would beg to differ, and they’re not confined to the Democrats. As Maggie Haberman wrote in Politico yesterday -- quote -- "Chris Christie is learning that being a party of one can be pretty lonely when times get tough. Democrats predictably condemned the New Jersey governor, but more notable was the dearth of Republicans out there who rose to Christie’s defense. And, privately, the schadenfreude" -- that’s the German word for joy through others’ tragedy -- "expressed by some of them that a man who has never been shy about taking shots at others was suddenly on the receiving end."

That is Maggie Haberman’s commentary.

Well, today, he did get some tepid backing from allies like U.S. Congressman Michael Grimm of Staten Island and Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina, as well as former Senate Scott Brown of Massachusetts, maybe future senator for New Hampshire.

But the full-throated defenders are few and far between.

Mark Halperin is an MSNBC senior political analyst and the co-author of "Double Down," the great new book, of course. And Eugene Robinson is a columnist for "The Washington Post" and an MSNBC political contributor.

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You know, let me ask you about too broad a defense here. It’s sort of a theme here. Was Christie a little too much broad brush in saying things like -- he had a couple of contradictory themes today. One was, politics aren’t beanbag. We’re tough guys in this business. And the other one was, I’m not a bully.

Well, which -- what message was he trying to get across? I thought he was trying to sell a whole new Chris Christie today that nobody really knew before, this meek sort of guy who is passive, who believes in bridge traffic studies and falls for the front excuse for everything, the alibis, and never questions anybody’s motives or his own staff’s behavior.
Your question -- your answer -- your question to you, Mark, did you buy the new Christie today?

MARK HALPERIN, MSNBC SENIOR POLITICAL ANALYST: Well, look, you go for 90 minutes plus, you’re going to have to say different things. You can’t just keep repeating the same things.

I thought in the beginning he had some clearly rehearsed lines, some pre-canned lines that were meant to set a different tone. But as the thing went on, you saw a little bit of the typical Chris Christie. He is very comfortable sparring with his statehouse press corps, which made up the bulk of the room.

So, I think the message today was, as you say, it’s a little bit sprawling. But if you just take it as a piece of theater, as a piece of political action, I think he did enough with the message in that event to get him through and put him in a better place afterwards than before.

But I -- it’s definitely the case that you can cherry-pick certain things he said, particularly often a focus on himself, as opposed to...

MATTHEWS: Yes, a lot of the narcissism there.

HALPERIN: ... his constituents that I think -- that I think, again, if you cherry-pick those, there were some moments that were -- that were a little bit flabby.

MATTHEWS: He reminded me of certain news commentators on television who focus a lot on themselves.

(LAUGHTER)

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EUGENE ROBINSON, MSNBC POLITICAL ANALYST: Yes.

(LAUGHTER)

MATTHEWS: I`m sometimes guilty, but there are others that are worse...

ROBINSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: ... where it`s all about how he felt and how he feels today and how this is reacting to him, and nothing about the public, really.

ROBINSON: Enough about what you think, Chris. What -- what about what I think, you know?
(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON: That was the whole focus. It’s that, you know, the sin that Kelly committed was she lied to him. It wasn’t that she tormented the people of Fort Lee for a whole week and messed up traffic and caused the ambulance to be late or anything. No. It’s that she lied.

How dare she? She can`t lie to me. That’s disloyal. She must be, you know?

MATTHEWS: The last king of Scotland.

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ROBINSON: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: And don’t mess with me.

ROBINSON: I thought that was interesting. And he left open this question of whether -- what the culture is like in his cabinet.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Why did all the people around him act a certain way in collusion without thinking wait a minute, the governor wouldn’t want this done. While didn’t Wildstein or Baroni or Stepien or, in this case, Kelly say, you know, the governor doesn’t want us to be doing this.

ROBINSON: Right. Why just one line? Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee? One line was enough to trigger the whole thing, as if it was kind of oh, yes, we know what to do. That was kind of weird.

MATTHEWS: Anyway, NBC’s Kasie Hunt asked Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina today about Chris Christie’s scandal.

And the South Carolina Republican said, quote, "It reinforces a narrative that’s troublesome about the guy. He is kind of a bully." This is Lindsey Graham. "You know, being candid and forthright and speaking truth to power is one narrative. But the other narrative is, you know, he is a transactional politician. He rewards his friends and punishes his enemies."

Senator Graham went on to say, quote, "If anybody in my office had done such a thing, they knew what their fate would be because I’m not that kind of guy. I just don’t see how people that close to him could have felt comfortable enough to do this if they thought their boss wasn’t of this mindset. Isn’t that just common sense?"

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/54031867/ns/msnbc-hardball_with_chris_matthews/#.VDWmFWdWdWQs
Let me go back to you on that, Mark. And I know you study these things in the tradition of Theodore White, going beyond the headline coverage, the daily coverage.

What does it tell you about Christie that so many people around him got it wrong, that they thought he was a bully? They wanted to do some bullying? Not the press. The people working for him thought he was a bully. That’s why they were out doing some bully tactics.

MARK HALPERIN, "DOUBLE DOWN": Well, Chris, to believe that Chris Christie said he didn’t know about this, he had to believe that some members of his staff concocted this plan and executed it, kept it to themselves, even when he was having this press conference, continued to lie to him. Even when they were having e-mails of theirs turned over to this committee, they continued not to tell him, and that he didn’t really understand why there was a second resignation from the Port Authority.

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All of that can be explained if you believe that in fact Christie did know. And there are a lot of Republicans I’ve talked to in the last 48 hours who -- or 36 hours who have that view still, who say based on what they know about Chris Christie, they say what they know about the nature of his political operation, they just find it hard to believe, in some cases extreme incredulity, that this operation could have been done.

Forget a culture. It’s more like the operation of how it would work. You do this kind of thing in most places, you do that kind of thing, you want credit for it. You don’t keep it to yourself if you’re going to do it.

MATTHEWS: You know what I get the feeling, it’s always like when people say they feel sorry for the Watergate people, all the ones who went down. Their lives were ruined. I always say I got a worse one for you -- they got away with it.

ROBINSON: Yes.

MATTHEWS: Because if they had gotten away with it, we have had a deviancy decline in the federal government that would have been historic, if he’d get away with all that stuff. What’s next?

ROBINSON: Exactly.

MATTHEWS: And my question about this. Does -- do you as an expert on politics, do you believe that "The Bergen Record": had not broken this story yesterday and Kelly -- what’s her name, Bridget Kelly’s behavior here
and the e-mail hadn`t gotten out, do you think some time from months from now when this thing cooled down and she said at a party late one night, I was the one that kicked this thing off -- do you think he would have fired her?

No, no, I don`t believe that in a minute.

ROBINSON: No, no --

(CROSSTALK)

MATTHEWS: It wasn`t that. It was that she lied to him right before a press conference. But even though, the real problem, her real sin was getting caught.

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ROBINSON: Well, exactly. She did get caught. Now, some of this might have eventually come out because of the question about the traffic study, right. At some point it was going to become clear that this wasn`t a traffic study, right?

You know, at some point, it was going to be clear, I think that this wasn`t a traffic study. And newspapers weren`t going to let it go. So, people were still exercised about it.

But nonetheless, I think your point is a valid one. You know, what would the consequences have been had it not blown up in the way that it did.

MATTHEWS: He wasn`t going to blow her out unless he had to. By the way, Chris Christie to this moment has not told us anything in the public light, anything that wasn`t told by "The Bergen Record" and by the investigators. He told us nothing.

ROBINSON: He`s got to know something, right?

MATTHEWS: It`s called rolling disclosure and it kills your credibility.

Anyway, thank you, Mark Halperin. A real expert, "Double Down", out there in the bookstores right now.

Eugene Robinson, thank you.

When we return, we`ll hear from a rare Christie defender out there. I`m going ask U.S. Congressman Michael Grimm of New York why he is taking Christie at his word.
This is HARDBALL, the place for politics.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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MATTHEWS: We’re back.

Most national Republicans have resisted coming to the defense of Chris Christie, who at least before this scandal broke was considered -- and I considered him -- a leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016.

One U.S. Republican congressman from New York, however, issued a statement today praising the New Jersey governor for his leadership even before his press conference had wrapped up. U.S. Congressman Michael Grimm was put on the show before he said, quote, "Governor Christie demonstrated true leadership and accountability during today’s press conference. I know him to be a man of unquestionable honor and iron-clad integrity, and I take him at his word."

U.S. Congressman Michael Grimm is a Republican congressman from New York.

We also have joining us Valerie Huttle. She’s a Democrat of New Jersey Assembly.

Thank you for joining us, Assemblywoman.

Let me go to Congressman Grimm. Do you believe the story we got today from the governor? There is two parts of. One, he didn’t know there was a problem with his staff until he got the story yesterday in the paper, in "The Bergen Record".

And two, that he believed all the way from September, all the way up until at least December, and perhaps even now that there may have been a traffic study that explains the whole problem at the Jersey end of the George Washington Bridge.

Do you believe him that he believed it was a traffic study that was at the bottom of all this?

REP. MICHAEL GRIMM (R), NEW YORK: No question. As I said in my statement, I take the governor at his word.

Listen, I know the governor, not very well, but for years I worked under him technically as an undercover agent in a very high profile undercover case while he was the U.S. attorney. And where I stand, he is a
man of honor and integrity, period. And I do take him at his word, absolutely.

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And, listen, he’s the governor of a very large state. The idea that he’s going to look into a specific traffic study I think is ridiculous. No governor probably would. This isn’t something that he would really normally grab his attention. So, I do believe him.

MATTHEWS: Let’s talk about his reputation as a hands-on executive. If you find out traffic’s been held up for four hours, that’s a dangerous situation in commuting time with emergency vehicles and all having to get through, we’ve seen what happened here, a person had a coronary trying to get to the hospital and died in the hospital. These things happened. They weren’t speculative.

You find out it was done for four days straight going into New York. Your state goes into New York, largely through the Holland Tunnel, Lincoln Tunnel, that bridge, and you don’t call up and say, what the hell is going on there? Somebody tells you, oh, we’re just counting cars. That’s why.

You would fall for that as governor? You would say that’s all I want to know?

GRIMM: Well, first of all, as far as all the things, somebody not getting to the hospital on time -- again, there’s nothing to justify the acts that led up to this. That’s first of all. It’s unjustifiable.

MATTHEWS: Would you buy it?

GRIMM: Do I think --

MATTHEWS: Would you buy it? Would you buy? No, seriously --

(CROSSTALK)

GRIMM: Would I have called up and said, what the heck is going on? Absolutely. I would say what’s going on?

MATTHEWS: Would you take as the answer, we’re counting cars?

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GRIMM: If someone said, yes, we’re performing a traffic study, it is done all the time. I’m born and raised in New York. I’ve seen a lot worse causing traffic not only in the Verrazano Bridge, but on all these bridges, under Belt Parkway, the Brooklyn Queens Expressway. We can go on all night
if you want to talk about traffic nightmares that lasted much longer than four days. Yes, unfortunately in this area, yes.

MATTHEWS: OK. That’s a bad standard of judgment. I mean, it’s a low standard of expectations.

Anyway, let’s go to Valerie Huttle. He’s a member of the state assembly. What do you make of this? The Chris Christie today, the sort of meek guy, passive, accepting excuses, not knowing what his four staff people are up to, his four appointees are up to and quietly accepting sort of naivety?

Do you buy that? Is that the Chris Christie the one that exists or the one that performed today?

VALERIE HUTTLE (D), NEW JERSEY ASSEMBLYWOMAN: It certainly is not the Chris Christie we have seen in prior years.

You know, he should have been angry. Where was his anger? He was very humble, and heartbroken over his staff.

I’m angry that my constituents suffered, you know, the threat of public hazards, what you just talked about. I didn’t see that today. I saw much humble demeanor and I can tell you that there has to be more answers to the questions.

Certainly, again, a traffic study for four days. This has been since September. We have not -- we would not have had those e-mails broken in "The Record" yesterday if it were not that we passed subpoena powers to the legislature.

So, we need to get subpoena which means there’s no transparency there, there’s a culture of inclusiveness. It’s a political patronage mill at the Port Authority.

Certainly, it doesn’t make any sense. I’m angry and shocked and, quite frankly, he did veto a bill that I worked on in a bipartisan way, in a bi-state way with members from New York, and he vetoed it, and it was a Port Authority Transparency and Accountability Act. The Port Authority needs to be accountable and transparent.

MATTHEWS: Yes. Do you buy the fact all four people around him appointed by him, Stepien and Wildstein and Baroni and Kelly, all operated without his knowledge? All of them?

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HUTTLE: I believe that we will get the answers to those questions.
And I don’t know if he called them out on it. I mean, he certainly cleaned house. He fired two members of his staff.

But he did that two through of his top chiefs of staff. I don’t know what the conversation was. I don’t know the reason for it. I think we need to get to the bottom of this.

MATTHEWS: Let me go back to Michael Grimm.

Congressman, I’ve always liked you on the show. I want you on forever. But I want to ask you a question about how you recognize politics.

I know if this were a Democratic governor of Jersey, exactly the same thing, wouldn’t you be skeptical if that Democrat came out and said, I don’t know what was going on in my office. I don’t know what my deputy chief of staff was doing. I don’t know what my campaign manager was doing. I don’t know these guys they give these jobs to at the Port Authority are up to.

I don’t know nothing.

Where you do get this idea? You can send one e-mail and, all of a sudden, the bridge stops. Who gives people this authority? Wouldn’t that be a reasonable problem to know what the hell is going on?

GRIMM: Very fair question.

MATTHEWS: Yes, a Democrat doing it.

GRIMM: Very fair question.

If it was a Democrat I worked with, again, when I was an undercover agent who had reputation as U.S. attorney that this governor has, if it’s a Democrat that had the reputation for the last four years, working bipartisan and having an exemplary record for the state of New Jersey, then I would -- then I would not be skeptical.

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The last thing is, here, I’m hearing from Democrats how outraged they are, they’re angry this, that, the other thing. From the Democratic Party, let’s be honest here, from Fast and Furious, to Benghazi, to the IRS scandal --

MATTHEWS: I knew you’d --

GRIMM: Where have the Democrats been angry? It is ridiculous.
MATTHEWS: I wish I could erase the record. I know what you did there.

GRIMM: It’s ridiculous.

MATTHEWS: You vomited out the usual charges against the Democrats. Fine, nice work.

GRIMM: Right. So, let’s not be complete hypocrites.

MATTHEWS: No, no, I’m not being a hypocrite. I’m fascinated with this story. I’m fascinated.

GRIMM: Of course.

MATTHEWS: With the amount of people involved in this story. It`s an amazing story of how things can go really wrong when there’s the wrong culture around, the wrong attitude as we say in Philly. Attitude. I’m telling you --

GRIMM: But I’m glad he stood up and he owned it.

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MATTHEWS: There was some bad attitude in there. And this governor is going to have to explain.

By the way, suppose you tonight, are Bridget Kelly, thinking the guy I’m working for, thinking I’m serving, has done this to me.

Anyway, Congressman Michael Grimm, thank you. Please come back.

Assemblywoman Valerie Huttle, same to you. Thanks for coming.

We’ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MATTHEWS: Let me finish tonight with this story that’s not finished tonight. It’s this Chris Christie story.

Don’t you want to know what Bridget Kelly has to say about being nailed as the number one bad guy here, being nailed in the role by the governor she’s been serving all these years? I like to hear her explanation why she believed it, holding up traffic on the George Washington Bridge was a step she thought furthered the governor’s political interest, would you?

I like to know why the guy at the bridge authority took orders to stop
the traffic from someone in the governor’s office, why he did so just because she sent an e-mail saying it was time to start traffic problems for Fort Lee.

And all of this was going on without the governor’s knowledge, without his knowing the least little bit about how this office, his own office does business. I didn’t do nothing, he said, I didn’t say nothing, I didn’t hear nothing, I didn’t speak nothing.

Well, that’s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

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"ALL IN WITH CHRIS HAYES" starts right now.

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March 12, 2014

Honorable Loretta Weinberg, Co-Chair
Honorable John S. Wisniewski, Co-Chair
New Jersey Legislative Select Committee on Investigation
State House Annex
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Co-Chairs Weinberg and Wisniewski:

We are deeply troubled by the latest round of unauthorized revelations of confidential documents and information obtained by the New Jersey Legislative Select Committee on Investigation.

Assembly Majority Leader Greenwald has stated that it is our duty not only to protect the integrity of this Committee, but the integrity of the whole Legislature, and to respect the interests of those who have received subpoenas for information. However, information only the Committee should be privy to is consistently published in the media, including the content of documents received by the Committee and actions taken by our Special Counsel, even before members are informed. The continued breach of confidential information jeopardizes the ongoing investigation into the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the integrity of the Committee and must be stopped immediately.

On Monday, February 10, 2014, the Committee met to update Members concerning the status of its investigation and convened in closed session. While we met in closed session, the press already knew the identity of all recipients of the latest round of subpoenas before the Members of the Committee.

On Tuesday, February 25, 2014 at 6:30 am, a Star Ledger article titled “Christie bridge scandal: Records show Samson's role; Fort Lee mayor meets with feds” was posted on nj.com. The article quotes Chairman Wisniewski discussing the contents of confidential records turned over to the Committee by David Samson. The Members of the Committee did not receive notification regarding the receipt of Samson’s documents until an email sent by Michael Molimock of the Office of Legislative Services on Tuesday, February 25, 2014 at 9:48 am, over 3 hours after it was leaked to the Star Ledger.

On Thursday, February 27, 2014, a Star Ledger article titled “New bridge scandal text messages 'disturbing,' Wisniewski says” included comments by Chairman Wisniewski regarding the redacted David Wildstein documents. The article included the following “One redaction, for instance, was of text messages about a crane failure on a Port Authority job, he [Wisniewski]
said.” “Not part of this investigation, not part of what we’re looking at,” Wisniewski said. “We don’t need to see that.”

We are also very concerned that the confidential information redacted pursuant to the agreement between our Special Counsel and the attorney for David Wildstein would be leaked to the press even further jeopardizing the investigation and our integrity.

At our most recent closed session, we raised these serious concerns and supported Senator Gill’s suggestion that only Committee Members and authorized staff be permitted to attend the closed session.

Despite this reform, the problem continues. So in an effort to live up to Majority Leader Greenwald’s vision and our hope for a fair and bipartisan panel, we suggest our Special Counsel draft confidentiality agreements to be executed by all Committee Members and staff.

We also question the unilateral action taken by you and/or Special Counsel to retain additional counsel without the knowledge or consent of the Committee Members. On February 19, 2014, we received copies of the complaint and briefs seeking to enforce the subpoenas issued against Bill Stepien and Bridget Anne Kelly filed by Leon J. Sokol, Esq. and Anthony S. Bocchi, Esq. from the law firm Sokol, Behot and Fiorenzo on behalf of the Committee. We have concerns regarding the potential for duplicative billing as well as who authorized this firm’s retention. Please provide us with a copy of the retainer agreement between Sokol, Behot and Fiorenzo and the Committee and/or the Legislature.

We would appreciate a response as expeditiously as circumstances permit.

Respectfully,

[Signature]
Senator Kevin O'Toole

[Signature]
Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll

[Signature]
Assemblywoman Amy Handlin

[Signature]
Assemblywoman Holly T. Schepisi

cc: Honorable Stephen M. Sweeney, President of the Senate
    Honorable Vincent Prieto, Speaker of the Assembly
    Reid J. Schar, Esq., Special Counsel to the Committee
    Charles S. Buono, Office of Legislative Services
    Francisco Maldonado, Senate Majority
    Frank Dominguez, Senate Republicans
    Aaron Binder, Assembly Majority
EXHIBIT 148
Christie bridge scandal: Records show Samson’s role; Fort Lee mayor meets with feds

port authority chairman david samson.JPG

David Samson, chairman of the Port Authority and partner in the powerful Wolff & Samson law firm, was appointed Port Authority chairman by Gov. Chris Christie in 2011. (Tony Kurdzuk/The Star-Ledger)

Christopher Baxter | The Star-Ledger By Christopher Baxter | The Star-Ledger

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on February 25, 2014 at 6:30 AM, updated February 25, 2014 at 6:47 AM

TRENTON — Records turned over to the state legislative committee investigating the George Washington Bridge lane closings show the chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, David Samson, has been “intimately involved” with day-to-day operations.

Assemblyman John Wisniewski (D-Middlesex), a co-chair of the panel, said Monday the documents provided by Samson included his many communications with Gov. Chris Christie’s administration, though none show direct contact with Christie.

"It paints a picture of a guy that’s intimately involved in the operations at the Port Authority," Wisniewski said. "He’s not a chairman of the board in a traditional sense, but a guy who’s making a lot of phone calls back and forth with folks down in Trenton."

Samson, one of the most prominent legal figures in the state and a longtime adviser to Christie, faces mounting questions about potential conflicts between his work at the Port Authority and the work of his high-profile, private law firm Wolff & Samson.

Most recently, a Star-Ledger review found Samson voted to award millions of dollars in Port Authority contracts to a company whose owner is represented by Samson’s law firm in a hotly contested and lucrative legal fight involving a railroad construction company.

Wisniewski said it would be hard for Samson to distance himself from the Port Authority by saying he only attends meetings and votes.

"When you see the intimate level of involvement, it’s hard to even come with a rationale why it’s not a conflict," Wisniewski said. "It becomes clear when you look at everything as a totality that the Port Authority really became a subdivision in the governor’s office."

A spokeswoman for Samson could not be reached for comment.

Wisniewski said the communications also cast doubt on Christie’s insistence that he knew nothing about the September lane closings until after access was restored. The governor’s senior staff was involved, but no
evidence has emerged directly linking Christie to the decision.

"When you look at the number of people in that upper echelon with the governor and their routine involvement with the Port Authority, and in particular in some cases with this issue, you just kind of shake your head and say how is that possible?" he said.

DOCSYMENTS PILE UP

The governor's office did not return a request for comment.

Wisniewski said the legislative committee began receiving responses to the 18 subpoenas for records issued earlier this month, but the process will take several more days, if not longer. The panel is still receiving records in response to 20 subpoenas issued last month.

A criminal investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office continues with word that Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich, who was thrust into the national spotlight after the lane closings gridlocked his borough, met with federal prosecutors for more than three hours.

"Mayor Sokolich voluntarily met on Friday with members of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Newark to discuss the lane closures at the George Washington Bridge this past September," his attorney Tim Donohue said in a statement. Donohue declined to comment on the discussions.

Sokolich, a Democrat, and other members of his party believe the lane closings were orchestrated by supporters of Christie as retribution for his decision not to back the governor's re-election.

"The mayor is grateful for the efforts of the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the mayor and his entire administration will continue to cooperate fully with this investigation as well as the Select Committee's investigation," Donohue said.

RELATED COVERAGE

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- Complete coverage of bridge scandal

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New bridge scandal text messages 'disturbing,' Wisniewski says

Two central to the George Washington Bridge lane closings, David Wildstein and Bridget Anne Kelly, joked in messages about causing traffic problems for prominent New Jersey Rabbi Mendy Carlebach. (Star-Ledger file photo)

Ryan Hutchins/The Star-Ledger By Ryan Hutchins/The Star-Ledger
Email the author | Follow on Twitter
on February 27, 2014 at 1:55 PM, updated February 27, 2014 at 9:06 PM

TRENTON — The leader of a New Jersey legislative committee investigating the George Washington Bridge lane closings said newly uncensored emails released today are “disturbing” and that the two officials at the center of the controversy acted like children.

“There’s no new ground been broken,” state Assemblyman John Wisniewski (D-Middlesex), the co-chairman of the committee, said today at the Statehouse. “But what it does show is kind of a juvenile, cavalier attitude toward their official responsibilities and joking about the power they had to create traffic or delay flights.”

The records released this morning show David Wildstein, a top official at the Port Authority, and Bridget Anne Kelly, who at the time was a deputy chief of staff in Gov. Chris Christie’s office, joked about causing traffic problems for Rabbi Mendy Carlebach of the Chabad of North and South Brunswick. Carlebach, who is Orthodox and a close Christie ally, is a chaplain for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Department.

"And he has officially pissed me off," Wildstein told Kelly in a text message.

"Clearly," Kelly wrote. "We cannot cause traffic problems in front of his house, can we?"

-Wildstein replied, "Flights to Tel Aviv all mysteriously delayed."

"Perfect," Kelly wrote.

Wisniewski said he had not spoken to Carlebach and did not understand why Wildstein and Kelly would have wanted to cause him trouble. He said it was “inappropriate” for government officials to talk about a religious leader in that way, and that it “speaks to the need to reform this agency.”

“It seems like they really felt comfortable in talking about how they could utilize their authority to apparently get back at people, which is disturbing,” he said.

The 20 pages of documents, released today, also reveal that Kelly was the unidentified recipient of many of the text messages originally provided by Wildstein, the former director of interstate capital projects at the Port Authority. The committee’s attorney, Reid Schar, negotiated the release of the records with Wildstein’s attorney,
Wisniewski said most of the documents were redacted appropriately because they had nothing to do with the September closing of lanes leading to the bridge in Fort Lee — something Democrats have called an act of politically retaliation against the borough's mayor.

One redaction, for instance, was of text messages about a crane failure on a Port Authority job, he said.

"Not part of this investigation, not part of what we're looking at," Wisniewski said. "We don't need to see that."

MORE POLITICS

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Committee Meeting

of

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON INVESTIGATION

"The testimony of Christina Genovese Rema concerning the committee’s investigation into all aspects of the finances, operations, and management of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and any other matter raising concerns about abuse of government power or an attempt to conceal an abuse of government power: including, but not limited to, the reassignment of access lanes in Fort Lee, New Jersey, to the George Washington Bridge."

LOCATION: Committee Room 11
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: May 6, 2014
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Loretta Weinberg, Co-Chair
Assemblyman John S. Wisniewski, Co-Chair
Senator Nia H. Gill
Senator Linda R. Greenstein
Senator Kevin J. O'Toole
Assemblywoman Marlene Caride
Assemblyman Louis D. Greenwald
Assemblyman Paul D. Moriarty
Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll
Assemblywoman Amy H. Handlin
Assemblywoman Holly T. Schepisi

ALSO PRESENT:
Charles A. Buono Jr.
Michael R. Molimock
Office of Legislative Services
Committee Aides

Francisco Maldonado
Senate Majority
Kate McDonnell
Assembly Majority
Committee Aides

Frank Dominguez
Senate Republican
Keith Loughlin
Assembly Republican
Committee Aides

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey
COMMITTEE NOTICE

TO: MEMBERS OF THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATION

FROM: SENATOR LORETTA WEINBERG, CO-CHAIR AND ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN S. WISNIEWSKI, CO-CHAIR

SUBJECT: COMMITTEE MEETING - MAY 6, 2014

The public may address comments and questions to Charles A. Buono, Jr., Michael R. Mollinock, Committee Aides, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Kimberly Johnson, Secretary, at (609)847-3840, fax (609)292-0561, or e-mail: OLSSAideLSI@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the committee by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The New Jersey Legislative Select Committee on Investigation will meet on Tuesday, May 6, 2014 at 10:00 AM in Committee Room 11, 4th Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.

The committee has subpoenaed Christina Genovese Renna to testify before the committee concerning the committee’s investigation into all aspects of the finances, operations, and management of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and any other matter raising concerns about abuse of government power or an attempt to conceal an abuse of government power, including, but not limited to, the reassignment of access lanes in Fort Lee, New Jersey to the George Washington Bridge.

Issued 5/1/14

For reasonable accommodation of a disability call the telephone number or fax number above, or TTY for persons with hearing loss 609-777-2744 (toll free in NJ) 800-257-7490. The provision of assistive listening devices requires 24 hours’ notice. Real time reporter or sign language interpretation requires 5 days’ notice.

For changes in schedule due to snow or other emergencies, call 800-792-8630 (toll-free in NJ) or 609-292-4840.
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SENATOR LORETTA WEINBERG (Co-Chair): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this hearing of the Legislative Select Committee on Investigation.

Today marks the beginning of an important new phase of our inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the closure of lanes leading into the George Washington Bridge from Fort Lee in September, and the apparent abuse of government power.

Today the Committee will receive testimony from Christina Renna, a former employee of the Governor’s Office of Intergovernmental Affairs who, as part of her official duties, worked under Bridget Kelly, and can hopefully shed light of a number of matters including the Fort Lee connection of this story.

Ms. Renna, thank you very much for agreeing to appear here today.

As everyone here is aware, the information we have available to us indicates that a number of individuals have firsthand knowledge as to what happened on that bridge in September. Unfortunately for the people who were affected by these four days of unnecessary traffic jams, some of those parties have refused to cooperate with this investigation, invoking their constitutional rights against self-incrimination. The reason we’ve asked you to appear here today is because of the unique insights into some of the facts surrounding this matter that you appear to have by virtue of the people with whom you most recently worked.

Our hope is that the information that you and other witnesses provide will help us understand what safeguards broke down and allowed a critical piece of infrastructure like the George Washington Bridge to be used
as a political tool. We hope that you can help in answering some of these questions, and we appreciate your cooperation, and we appreciate your being here.

May we have a roll call, please?

MR. BUONO (Committee Aide): Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Here.

MR. BUONO: Senator O'Toole.

SENATOR O'TOOLE: Here.

MR. BUONO: Assemblywoman Handlin.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HANDLIN: Here.

MR. BUONO: Assemblyman Carroll. (no response)

Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle. (no response)

Assemblyman Moriarty.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Here.

MR. BUONO: Majority Leader Greenwald. (no response)

Senator Greenstein.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Here.

MR. BUONO: Senator Gill.

SENATOR GILL: Here.

MR. BUONO: Assemblywoman Caride.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Present.

MR. BUONO: Co-Chair Wisniewski.

ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN S. WISNIEWSKI (Co-Chair):

Present.

MR. BUONO: Co-Chair Weinberg.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Here.
Thank you.

Assemblywoman Handlin, you have a statement before I call the witness?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HANDLIN: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Actually, I have a few questions about the schedule of witnesses. About a week ago we all received an official communication which gave us a list of the individuals who had agreed to testify before this Committee. And on that list there were two top decision makers from the Port Authority; one was Foye, the other one was Schuber. And then, a couple of days later, there was an exposé in the media about yet another unconscionable backroom deal at the Port Authority. This was the one where the Port Authority paid a half a million dollars to some architect crony who had not even been hired by the Port Authority. And I am dismayed at the fact that magically our two witnesses discovered that they were too busy to come to talk to us. And apparently they found conflicts that are holding them until at least June; perhaps longer.

Frankly, I'm very skeptical that they have any intention of coming here. And we all know that the Port Authority is spending $22 million a day, every day, while this Committee -- for whatever reason -- fails to take up the task of reform.

And so my first question is: What exactly is the strategy for dragging these Port Authority decision makers in here?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Assemblywoman, I think they have both agreed to appear, and we do have them scheduled for June.
ASSEMBLYWOMAN HANDLIN: When they were scheduled-- One of them was scheduled for this afternoon.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Correct. But there was a conflict in schedules, and we also felt that Ms. Renna’s testimony might run over a little bit. So we were happy to accommodate. But they both have agreed -- as far as I know -- they both agreed, and their attorneys have agreed, and they will be here in June.

So although we will be officially -- or have officially issued subpoenas, we’re really not dragging them here; they’re coming appropriately.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HANDLIN: Well, and noting that we did in fact go to court and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to try to force Kelly and Stepien to come here, because we believed that they might be at the center of the lane closure controversy, this is a case where we know we are dealing with the ringleaders of the circus. They are the ones who are deciding about all the shenanigans over there. And I don’t think that we should continue to let them continue to run their clown operation while we pursue headlines any way that we can. And if they won’t come in, I would like to ask that we consider bringing in a number of other top decision makers at the Port Authority who can give us all the insight, that we repeatedly said we needed, into the Port Authority. After all, our one, unique contribution to this whole situation is that we are the ones who can legislate, we are the ones who can reform the Port Authority.

So I would like to ask if we would consider issuing subpoenas for the following people, at a minimum: General Counsel Darryl Bookbinder; Vice Chairman Scott Rechler; Peter Zipf, the Chief Engineer;
Jose Rivera, the Chief Traffic Engineer; Robert Durando, the General Manager of the George Washington Bridge; and Cristina Lado, the Port Authority Government Affairs person.

I know that what we’ve done in the past has been to walk into the back room and somehow, out of the air, a list of subpoenas has been presented to us that we’ve agreed to. But perhaps this time we can have a public discussion about whether or not these people can be dragged before us, because we need to hear from them.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Assemblywoman, your term is dragged. As I told you, both the Executive Director Pat Foye and the Commissioner Pat Schuber have agreed to appear before us on June 3. So I have no question about that. If you want to submit your list, we will take that under consideration. So thank you for putting it forth.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HANDLIN: I absolutely will. You have more faith in them than I do. Again, for the record, I don’t believe that they’re going to be here. I think they’re going to find many other things to do. And that the longer we let them get away with it, the more the meter runs, and the more money we’re looking at being spent by a bunch of clowns who really have no interest other than themselves.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Madam Chair.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Assemblywoman Schepisi, I am going to give you the floor, but I-- Let me just give you a little housekeeping here.

We have a very important witness before us, and we’re here to hear her -- not, hopefully, too much from ourselves. We will have a quick lunch break around 12:30 for a very short time, and I plan to adjourn this
meeting by 3:30 today. So I need your cooperation in being able to move the questioning forward.

SENATOR O'TOOLE: Chair, just for a moment.

After Assemblywoman Schepisi, I have like a 60-second comment that I'd like to make. I'll keep it short.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I'll get the time watch ready.

(laughter)

SENATOR O'TOOLE: Thank you, Chair.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Madam Chairwoman, I do appreciate the opportunity to speak.

Unfortunately we haven’t met as a group in a while, so just going to what Assemblywoman Handlin had said I would like to make a motion to issue subpoenas to the General Counsel, the Vice Chairman, Peter Zipf, Jose Rivera, Robert Durando, and Cristina Lado to have them come in as well and testify. If we’re truly trying to understand what transpired at the Port Authority to be able to put forth appropriate reforms to the Port Authority, I think it’s important that we bring in these additional Port Authority individuals who, even in timelines and stuff that we have received -- documents that we have received -- these are names that have come up repeatedly with respect to the traffic study, with respect to lane realignments and the like.

And I do make a motion to issue subpoenas to them.

SENATOR O'TOOLE: I'll second that.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Any comment?
ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I move to table that at the moment. And, quite frankly, I’m—you know, we have a witness here. And I would like to get on with conducting that interview with this witness instead of all of this information that’s coming up for the first time.

Assemblywoman, I find it distressful that you say we’re trying to “chase headlines” instead of bringing in these people. The Chairwoman has stated that they are scheduled in June. She said it not once, not twice, but three times, and you keep belaboring the point. Let’s get on with this witness, and let’s discuss, at an appropriate time, other subpoenas.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: And, if I may, just real quickly—

SENATOR WEINBERG: Pardon me, there’s a motion to table. May I have a second?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Second.

SENATOR WEINBERG: It’s not debatable.

May I have a roll call?

MR. BUONO: On the motion to table the motion, Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: No.

MR. BUONO: Senator O’Toole.

SENATOR O’TOOLE: No.

MR. BUONO: Assemblywoman Handlin.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HANDLIN: No.

MR. BUONO: Assemblyman Carroll.

ASSEMBLYMAN CARROLL: No.

MR. BUONO: Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle. (no response)
Assemblyman Moriarty.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Majority Leader Greenwald. (no response)

Senator Greenstein.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Senator Gill.

SENATOR GILL: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Assemblywoman Caride.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Co-Chair Wisniewski.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Co-Chair Weinberg.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Yes.

We will take those names under consideration.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: And Chairwoman, if I may just very briefly, to Mr. Moriarty's point.

We recognize we have an important witness here. We have not had an opportunity to have a public meeting, I think, in close to two months. We have had various concerns about process and procedure that we've sent letters to the Committee on. And while we are very appreciative of receiving -- for the first time on Friday and Monday -- information regarding the strategy of what we're doing and the like, we really, other than just having subpoenaed documents on a website, have not participated in this process. We have had numerous conference calls, we've been billed for memoranda we have never seen. So with respect to-- There are certain concerns that we still have about this process, particularly with respect to
the confidentiality, with respect to concerns that were raised as recently as May 2 in the letter from Angelo Genova to our Committee. We have respectfully requested numerous times, going back to January, that we all enter into confidentiality agreements for the integrity of this process; that we have grave concerns regarding leaks to the media of documents. And it’s not a partisan type of issue; it’s absolutely nonpartisan. Angelo Genova wrote a very strongly worded letter on May 2 and, to my knowledge, he’s counsel for the New Jersey State Democratic Party. And we have not had an opportunity to discuss any of these issues; we don’t know if our counsel intends on addressing it; if it’s going to be addressed before we bring in additional people; whether or not we’re going to actually do anything about it.

So I just wanted the opportunity to ask counsel very briefly whether or not there’s a strategy in place for us to be able to maintain the integrity of our investigation and not have witnesses refuse to provide documents because of their grave concerns about them being leaked to the media in violation of various rules, including N.J.S.A. 52:13E-1 and N.J.S.A. 52:13E-8.

And real quickly before we get on to this witness, if we can just have some sort of discussion with counsel regarding what we are doing to address this.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Assemblywoman, with all due respect, I do want to get on to the witness.

We have stated this publicly, and we have stated this privately -- Counsel has been at all of our private meetings -- that any of you are free
to call him -- you have his phone numbers -- to have a full discussion with him about anything.

So now you have put your process issues before us in writing, as well as publicly here. And I would like to move on. You have received all the documents that we’ve received. Everything is uploaded onto the secure website.

Senator O’Toole, you wanted to say something?

SENATOR O’TOOLE: Thank you, Chair. Briefly -- the clock is moving.

The letter that came to us from the lawyers Genova and Chertoff raised a very alarming issue. And now we have three New Jersey lawyers -- including Mr. Marino -- who’s essentially accusing this Committee or Committee members of leaking confidential documents in violation of the Fair Procedures Act. That, to me, is alarming. I think we have to do something about that. And I’d like to know here if there is any member who either accidently, intentionally, authorized the release of confidential subpoena documents in January, February and March. And if no one is willing to admit that -- and I don’t see anybody rushing forward-- I think it is such a serious charge. We are now under a cloud of suspicion. It undermines the integrity of this Committee. I’d like to make the motion that we collectively petition the Attorney General and ask him to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate this charge that’s been leveled at this Committee by three New Jersey lawyers. And as you well know, if a person is guilty of that -- forget the conspiracy part, if there is one -- they face up to six months in jail and $1,000 per offense. And for us to have three lawyers
accuse this Committee of leaking confidential documents and it goes unanswered, it really raises a question.

So I make that motion.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: I second it.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Any comments?

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I move to table. I find it preposterous. You know, now we’re going to investigate the investigators? You know, I find this-- These attorney letters -- they’re doing their job. You know, they’re claiming-- They’re trying to protect their clients and they’re taking a swipe at us. I see no purpose in this.

SENATOR O’TOOLE: Well, Paul, it’s undeniable. The subpoenas were in the papers before we had received them.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Excuse me, through the Chair, Senator O’Toole.

SENATOR O’TOOLE: Through the Chair. Thank you.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Thank you.

SENATOR O’TOOLE: Through the Chair.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Assemblyman Moriarty, are you finished speaking?

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I agree it’s troubling; but I don’t think that that’s going to help matters.

SENATOR O’TOOLE: It does help matters if other people will cooperate.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Excuse me, Senator O’Toole.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: I second the motion.

SENATOR WEINBERG: We have a motion to table.
May I have a vote, please?

MR. BUONO: On the motion to table the petition to the Attorney General to appoint a special prosecutor,

Assemblywoman Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: No.

MR. BUONO: Senator O'Toole.

SENATOR O'TOOLE: No.

MR. BUONO: Assemblywoman Handlin.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HANDLIN: No.

MR. BUONO: Assemblyman Carroll.

ASSEMBLYMAN CARROLL: No.

MR. BUONO: Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle. (no response)

Assemblyman Moriarty.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIAHTY: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Majority Leader Greenwald. (no response)

Senator Greenstein.

SENATOR GREENSTEIN: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Senator Gill.

SENATOR GILL: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Assemblywoman Caride.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Co-Chair Wisniewski.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MR. BUONO: Co-Chair Weinberg.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Yes. And in the interest of full disclosure, Angelo Genova was also my attorney who helped me fight the
case to get into the State Senate. And I respect that he’s representing his client to the best of his ability.

Thank you.

Okay, if there are no further issues to come before the Committee, the Committee calls Christina Renna, the former Director of Intergovernmental Affairs in the Office of the Governor, to testify.

Ms. Renna, thank you for appearing here today. I am Co-Chair; Assemblyman Wisniewski-- We are the Co-Chairs of the Committee. Are you accompanied by attorney today? And if so, please introduce yourself -- the attorney.

HENRY E. KLINGEMAN, ESQ.: Good morning, members of the Committee. My name is Henry Klingeman, on behalf of Christina Renna.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Ms. Renna, do you understand that the statements you make today-- I’m sorry. I’m going to make you more nervous than you already are.

Do you understand that if the statements you make today are willfully false, if you fail to answer a pertinent question, or commit perjury you may be subject to penalties under the law?

CHRISTINA GENOVESE RENNA: I understand.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Did you receive a subpoena from this Committee compelling your testimony at this meeting?

MS. RENNA: I did.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Did you receive a copy of the Code of Fair Procedures, together with the subpoena?

MS. RENNA: I did.
SENATOR WEINBERG: Do you understand that you have certain rights under the Code of Fair Procedures, including the right to be accompanied by counsel, who shall be permitted to confer with you during your questioning, advise you of your rights, and submit proposed questions on your behalf?

MS. RENNA: I understand.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Does your counsel have any questions to submit today?

MR. KLINGEMAN: Not at this time, but as I explained to the Co-Chairs of the Committee, Ms. Renna has a very brief statement she'd like to make at the outset of her testimony.

SENATOR WEINBERG: As you can see we have a hearing reporter from the Office of Legislative Services Hearing Unit present. Your testimony is being recorded that it may be transcribed for the Committee and it may be used in other proceedings. Do you understand that?

MS. RENNA: I do.

SENATOR WEINBERG: You are entitled to a copy of the transcript of your testimony at your expense when such copy is available. Do you understand that?

MS. RENNA: I do.

SENATOR WEINBERG: You have the right to file a brief sworn statement relevant to your testimony for the record at the conclusion of your examination. Do you understand that?

MS. RENNA: I do.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Please note that all of your responses should be verbal. We cannot record a headshake or a nod. And if you do
not understand a question please ask for clarification; otherwise, we are going to assume that you understand the question and that your answers are responsive to that question. Do you understand that?

MS. RENNA: I do.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Before I proceed with the oath, do you have any questions?

MS. RENNA: No.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. You will be free to stop at any point and confer with your attorney, or if you need a brief break to just let us know.

Okay, please stand and raise your right hand.

(witness stands and raises right hand)

Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is true, correct, and complete to the best of your information, knowledge, and belief?

MS. RENNA: I do.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Please be seated, and state your name for the record.

MS. RENNA: My name is Christina Renna.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Thank you, Ms. Renna; and again, welcome.

Could you start out by describing for us the last position that you had in this Administration?

MS. RENNA: Respectfully, Chairwoman, I have brief statement I wanted to give.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, thank you.
Please go ahead with your statement.

MS. RENNA: Thank you, Chairwoman.

I appreciate the Committee giving me the opportunity to provide what knowledge I have regarding the George Washington Bridge lane closures, and share the truth about the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. I hope I am able to further your understanding of the facts today.

I had no knowledge of, or involvement in, the bridge lane closures, but I do know IGA. The bridge lane closures did not in any way, shape, or form, exemplify the IGA I know. For four years IGA’s focus was good government. We engaged in proactive, consistent, and inventive outreach to Sandy storm victims, to a variety of community groups all across the political spectrum, to Democrats, to Republicans, and to Independents, in towns up and down New Jersey.

IGA was people helping people, State government helping local government regardless of political affiliation, ethnic or religious background, or economic standing.

IGA was amazingly nonpartisan in keeping with the Governor’s desire to maintain open communication and responsiveness as our top priorities. I am proud that IGA was exactly what government should be, and I am prouder still that the IGA staff mastered it. We accomplished truly wonderful things that Governor Christie extolled on numerous occasions -- praise that was echoed back to him by local officials, both Democrats and Republicans, as unprecedented.

I look forward to answering your questions today, and thank you for the opportunity to give a statement.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Thank you, Ms. Renna.
Well, let me start off, since you gave your brief description of the IGA -- what was your title when you began working at IGA?

MS. RENNA: When I began working at IGA I was Director of Business Affairs.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And what were your responsibilities when you began-- What year did you begin?

MS. RENNA: I began in April of 2010.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay, and what were your responsibilities when you began at IGA?

MS. RENNA: When I began at IGA my main focus was business outreach; specifically, I would reach out to local Chambers of Commerce and also counties Chambers of Commerce, regional Chambers of Commerce, and all the business organizations in the state to try to help, sort of, further the Governor’s message of what he wanted to do in office for economic development and job growth in the state.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And who did you directly report to when you started working there?

MS. RENNA: I directly reported to a woman by the name of Amanda Gasperino at the time; DePalma now -- Amanda DePalma.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And who headed IGA at that time?

MS. RENNA: Bill Stepien.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And what-- Was Bridget Kelly working at IGA at that point?

MS. RENNA: Yes, she was.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And what was her role and responsibility there, if you remember?
MS. RENNA: I believe her role was interfacing with the Legislature at that point.

SENATOR WEINBERG: She was a legislative liaison from IGA?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And when Mr. Stepient left the IGA to work on the campaign, is that when Ms. Kelly took over?

MS. RENNA: Yes, that’s correct.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Did she assume all of Mr. Stepient’s duties and responsibilities?

MS. RENNA: That’s my understanding.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And when Ms. Kelly took over the IGA, who did she report to?

MS. RENNA: Kevin O’Dowd, Chief of Staff.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And did she-- Is that where she took direction, or was she still-- Did she interface with other members of the Administration -- Mr. McKenna, the Governor himself -- anybody else in Administration?

MS. RENNA: I don’t specifically know; I would assume so.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Now, how did IGA differ from the Office of Constituent Relations? Do you know?

MS. RENNA: Yes. Constituent Relations -- OCR as we called it -- handled specifically constituent outreach: constituent phone calls, communications, e-mails that came in through the generic e-mail address, letters that were written. So Constituent Relations handled that aspect of
it. IGA was constituent relations specifically for local and county elected officials, and also certain constituent (indiscernible).

SENATOR WEINBERG: So Constituent Relations was more confined to individual constituents -- your bureaucratic problems.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Now, what about your interaction generally with the Port Authority? That's obviously an issue that this Committee has devoted a fair amount of time to and will continue to in the future. Did the Authorities Unit that existed in the Governor's Office interface with the Port Authority, or did you, from IGA, have any interface with them?

MS. RENNA: The Authorities Unit was the primary interface between the Port Authority and the Governor's Office. IGA had some contact, but the primary point of contact was the Authorities Unit.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Were there any matters on which the IGA would have contact with the Port Authority that the Authorities Unit might play a role in or not play a role in? And if so, what kinds of activities would that be?

MS. RENNA: That's a hard question for me to answer, just because I'm not sure what the Authorities Unit knew or didn't know about what IGA -- the things IGA interfaced with the Port Authority about. I'm just not sure, so I don't feel comfortable answering the question.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay, but-- And, by the way, just for everybody's edification, any of these exhibits that we have, if we refer to them, I think OLS is able to project them for all of us and everybody else to see.
And let me get into a little bit about your interview with Gibson Dunn.

MS. RENNA: Sure.

SENATOR WEINBERG: You told the interviewers that Kelly and Wildstein were “exceptionally close,” and that Wildstein called Kelly frequently, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: How did you know that?

MS. RENNA: Just from proximity to Bridget; just being in a room when he would call, or overhearing conversations between them.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Was your office located near hers?

MS. RENNA: No, it was not.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So it would just be when you happened to be in her office, or in the general vicinity that you noted-- I assume you couldn’t hear her when you were sitting in your office.

MS. RENNA: I mean, I just know factually from conversations with Bridget, to overhearing myself-- I mean, they were close friends. They were-- They got along very well together.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay, so did you attribute that kind of interface between the two of them to a social relationship or to a business relationship? Or do you know why?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know the answer to that question. I would speculate business, but I don’t know the answer.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. You stated that you rarely interacted with David Wildstein, and that you did, maybe, five or six times, if I remember correctly. And that you interacted with some younger folks
who worked under Wildstein at the Port Authority. Could you tell us who those younger folks were?

MS. RENNA: There was one gentleman by the name of Jared; I can’t remember his last name. Ann O’Rourke was there; I used to deal with her quite a bit. But as far as other names, I don’t remember right now.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And what did you deal with them about?

MS. RENNA: A variety of issues. A lot of what IGA did was interfacing with the departments -- that’s a different component to the IGA operation. And for some time I was in the role of doing departmental relations. So whenever there were events with the Port Authority or events where Bill Baroni would be a speaker -- a surrogate on behalf of the Administration, things like that -- I would work logistically with the Port Authority on lining things like that up. That’s one good example. That was probably the most frequent communication I had with David and his team.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And that would be through these younger folks who worked under David Wildstein, generally?

MS. RENNA: Yes, I talked with David occasionally as well. But, you know, mostly it was done more at the staff level.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Does the Port Authority have its own communications staff who would be handling some of these issues like when Bill Baroni was giving a speech someplace, or explaining things somewhere?

MS. RENNA: I believe so.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay, but the IGA or your office did interact with them anyway?
MS. RENNA: We wouldn't interface with the communications shop, no.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay.

SENATOR O'TOOLE: Chair, a procedural question.

Are we asking questions about what she directly knows, or what we assume-- She said a couple of times, "I assume so." We're asking her whether the Port Authority had a communications department. So I think the directive-- If she doesn't know, I don't think she should assume, and I think the counsel would agree with me on that.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I assume that Ms. Renna's counsel is perfectly able to giver her counseling.

Anything else? (no response)

Thank you.

The reason I asked the question about the communications is that you brought up that you had some interactions with Bill Baroni when he was going to be a speaker someplace -- that that's when the IGA, or your office, had interactions with him. So my question about the communications staff was, wouldn't they ordinarily be handling that? If you don't know, feel free to say-so.

MS. RENNA: I don't know. And just a point of clarity, I never communicated with Bill Baroni directly.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay.

MS. RENNA: Okay.

SENATOR WEINBERG: All right. So who did you communicate with when you were dealing with-- I believe, if I understood you, you said that you had the interaction with the Port Authority when
Bill Baroni might be giving a speech someplace. I don’t know if I’m quoting you accurately, but that’s what I thought you said.

MS. RENNA: When Bill Baroni was a surrogate on behalf of the Administration I worked with staff to orchestrate that. I just wanted to clarify that I had not had any direct communications with Bill Baroni.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. So when Mr. Baroni was employed at the Port Authority, he acted as a surrogate for the Governor. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And that’s when you would have had some interaction with whatever was going on around then?

MS. RENNA: Correct, yes. That’s an example.

SENATOR WEINBERG: If not directly with him.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Were you under any impression that when things were going on at the Port Authority or outreach of any kind by the Port Authority out to communities, that the IGA had any kind of a role in that?

MS. RENNA: I don’t think I understand your question. Could you clarify what you mean?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Well, when-- There was obviously a lot of interaction between the Port Authority and communities in New Jersey.

MS. RENNA: Right.

SENATOR WEINBERG: For a whole variety of reasons. Did that actually have to get approval by the IGA when those kinds of outreach,
or interactions, or grants, or whatever they were enabling local municipalities to do-- For instance if, in fact, they were helping Fort Lee with a transportation program, would that have to be approved by the IGA or would there be an interaction on that?

MS. RENNA: I don't know. I don't think it would have been approved at the staff level, so I would have no knowledge of that.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Now, in January of 2013 -- I'm moving ahead a little bit here -- Mr. Stepieo gave the go ahead to begin contacting our "Dem allies" to seek endorsements for Governor Christie. And that is Tab 1, Page 4. Mayor Sokolich was included on the list of targets -- which is on Page 2 of the same tab. And when the e-mail thread was forwarded to you, you replied "super, super exciting." So this was an outreach to Democratic allies, is Mr. Stepieo's description, I think. Why did you think this was "super, super exciting?"

MS. RENNA: I wish I had chosen better words in retrospect.

It was just, you know, 2013 marked the start of the Governor's reelection. There were a lot of people enthusiastic about it and excited about it. So, you know, that e-mail was forwarded to me just to say, "Hey, head's up. This is starting," and I said, "It's exciting. It's time to get the ball rolling on the Governor's reelection plans."

SENATOR WEINBERG: So in your opening statement you talked about the bipartisan -- or nonpartisan nature of the IGA. So in 2013 there was some change there where -- because it was the Governor's election year?

MS. RENNA: No.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So that it was--
MS. RENNA: I'm sorry.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Well, I think your testimony was just that it was the beginning of the Governor's reelection year, and it was time to start reaching out -- or maybe I'm not paraphrasing that correctly. It was 2013; that's a fact. It happened to be the Governor's reelection year. And there seemed to be some emphasis in the IGA to not be so bipartisan or nonpartisan and to respond to everybody. So you brought up in your testimony just now that this was the beginning of the Governor's reelection. And so was-- Why was this kind of interesting that we had a list of Democratic allies to approach?

MS. RENNA: Just so to clarify previously, I was just talking more globally. I wasn't talking about IGA being -- or 2013 being IGA's start. They are two completely separate things. So I want to clarify that statement. Obviously, with 2013 -- January 2013 -- the Governor was up for reelection. That was the start; that's what that comment reflected.

To your question, just because there were Democrats who were potential endorsers did not change the dynamic or the day-to-day operations of IGA at all. IGA was amazingly bipartisan, and everything we did was in a bipartisan nature: Just because there was a list of elected officials who could potentially endorse the Governor, that doesn't change what our day-to-day job was of reaching out to Democrats, Independents, and Republicans alike. It's apples and oranges.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. But I didn't use the words Democratic allies; that was used in Mr. Stepien's e-mail. So they were somehow different from all of those nonpartisan folks who you were reaching out to. You had a group of Democratic allies. That was sent to
you. Did you feel that those were people you were supposed to be reaching out to, perhaps, a little more often? Or why was this list sent?

MS. RENNA: Well, Democratic allies is simply a description of the grouping of people. There are Republican allies as well; there are all kinds of allies. I mean, it's just a simple descriptive term of a grouping of people that doesn't impact or influence the day job we did. That's just what this e-mail happened to be about.

You know, Democratic allies are just that: they were Democratic allies. The Governor has a lot of them. And so, again, it's just a descriptive term more than anything else.

To your question about getting more attention than others, the answer is no.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So people were described in categories in this bipartisan or nonpartisan operation -- people were sometimes described by Democrat or Republican?

MS. RENNA: Well--

SENATOR WEINBERG: Those are the groupings they used?

MS. RENNA: I would say that's just normal conversation as you relate to elected officials. We knew who were Democrats and who were Republicans; it didn't change the kind of work we did daily.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Well, were-- Did you participate or hear any discussion about tracking certain officials, particularly the Democratic allies -- as they were apparently referred to within the halls of the IGA -- of tracking those who were endorsing, those who weren't endorsing, or those who were considering endorsing?

MS. RENNA: Was I in fear? No, I was not in fear.
SENATOR WEINBERG: I'm sorry?

MS. RENNA: Was I in fear of tracking them?

SENATOR WEINBERG: No, no. Did you hear? Did you hear? I'm sorry. (laughter)

MS. RENNA: Oh, oh. Sorry. Did I hear? Sure. There was-- I mean, you keep an eye, keep track of all kinds of people. Not specific classifications. There was just day-to-day work. It was just the normal course of business work.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So you did hear of people who were coming -- that you were reaching out to as part of your responsibility? I'm really speaking generically of the office -- you can separate yourself out anytime you want as a person, or as what the atmosphere and environment was -- that there was tracking who was endorsing and who wasn't endorsing, particularly from the Democratic allies.

MS. RENNA: There was tracking of who potential endorsers were, yes; and if there was tracking done of any kind it was done on nights and weekends -- their personal time, when they're allowed to do that kind of work.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Madam Chair.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay, there was no tracking being done within the office during the course of the day? There was no discussion, or who to reach out to, or which ones to give special emphasis to?

MS. RENNA: I mean, again Chairwoman, 565 municipalities. You know, one day we might have cared specifically about hard hit Republican mayors in Monmouth County for another reason. Another day
we might care specifically about members of the autism community. You
know, painting it in this narrow focus is unfair -- I personally feel as though
it's an unfair characterization. You know, again, normal course of business
work, we interacted with a lot of different people, a lot of different groups
of people.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Madam Chair, may I ask a
follow-up question to her?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Excuse me?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: May I ask a follow-up
question?

SENATOR WEINBERG: You will get an opportunity to do
that.

Ms. Renna.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I'm not characterizing; I'm reading
the words that were put forth: Democratic allies. And then your input
about Democratic mayors and about the knowledge of endorsements and so
on. So I'm not ascribing that to anything other than your testimony and
the documents that we have had in front of us, and that we have in front of
us.

If there were mayors who were chosen or somehow ascribed --
that people in IGA should be especially nice to some group of mayors, was
there any discussion like that?

MS. RENNA: IGA being especially nice to certain people?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Yes.
MS. RENNA: No, I think we treated everyone fairly and equally. Now, that’s not to say that-- There were many elected officials who didn’t want to engage with us -- many where we tried and they just had no interest in dealing with the Administration. But it was a level playing field -- very much so -- and the same with our interactions with the Legislature, county officials -- just an equal playing field. I don’t think you could characterize it as being nicer or--

SENATOR WEINBERG: So there were never any instructions put forth to anybody in the IGA by the – when you were Director or prior to that, that you know of firsthand, that certain mayors needed extra attention, as opposed to other mayors?

MS. RENNA: Giving certain mayors extra attention can go a lot of different ways as well. I mean, I think you’re saying this in the vein of Democratic allies.

SENATOR WEINBERG: No, I’m just asking you if--

MS. RENNA: We gave special attention to lots of--

SENATOR WEINBERG: Ms. Renna, I’m just asking you if in fact you as Director -- when you were Director, or before you assumed the extra responsibilities, you were ever given any instructions to be extra nice to some group of mayors?

MS. RENNA: I don’t think that’s an accurate characterization. No, I-- No.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay, it’s a question, not a characterization.

MS. RENNA: No.
SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Were you kept abreast in any way of the endorsements or other outreach to elected officials?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And how were you kept abreast of the endorsements?

MS. RENNA: Of-- Just a point of clarity: endorsements or outreach?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Endorsements and other outreach to elected officials.

MS. RENNA: So IGA conducted outreach to elected officials day in and day out. It was basically our main charge. If grants were coming down from DEP, we would call a municipality and let them know that, "Your town is getting $5,000 in recycling money." That kind of outreach was all tracked, and the way we tracked it was with a mayor’s name and then the feedback they provided. "Oh, that's great news," or, "Oh, I'm only getting $5,000" -- whatever it may be. That was the way we monitored the receptiveness of the mayors, their enthusiasm, and things like that.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So you monitored the acceptance and the enthusiasm of various mayors?

MS. RENNA: I'm talking about, for as an example, when they were receiving grant dollars for, as I said, a recycling-- This is an example. Sure, we hoped that they were pleased with the news; we were calling to deliver good news. It's part of what we did every day.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Did you ever come across a mayor who was unhappy when you called and told him he just got a grant?
MS. RENNA: Yes. I just said yes. "I only got $5,000; I wanted $10,000." We heard that all the time as well.

SENATOR WEINBERG: If that ever happens again, I'll give them another name that they can call for a grant. (laughter)

MS. RENNA: So yes, but that's why tracking the outreach was so important and sort of interesting -- to gauge the feedback. And, you know, in the same breath it gave us a nice pulse on the different grant programs in the departments and how they were being implemented. And we could answer questions about the calculations that go into that and things like that. It was just-- It was good government. It was a way to give good news, and monitor results, and answer any questions they had.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So the monitoring of enthusiasm -- was that kept in any formal way, or passed on to anybody?

MS. RENNA: Oh, yes. The outreach was always passed on to IGA leadership, who was curious as well.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Now, I did ask you, and I don't think you answered that part of the question: Now, clearly, were you kept abreast of the endorsements that were coming in?

MS. RENNA: Yes, I was.

SENATOR WEINBERG: In what manner were you kept abreast of that?

MS. RENNA: Either just verbal communication with the staff, or over e-mail -- either/or. This was specifically during the period -- just for clarity purposes -- of January through November. Because this was really the only time I was overseeing the bulk of the staff at that point. So I'm
talking specifically, in answer to your question, of that period between June and when I left the Governor’s Office.

   SENATOR WEINBERG: So we’re talking about the period between January and November?
   MS. RENNA: June.
   SENATOR WEINBERG: June and November.
   MS. RENNA: Sure, yes.
   SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Did your office, in any way, work on or bring up issues that you know about concerning endorsements or work on garnering endorsements from certain mayors?
   MS. RENNA: I don’t think I understand the question.
   SENATOR WEINBERG: Did you, or anyone in your office who you are directly aware of, work on garnering endorsements from certain mayors for the Governor?
   MS. RENNA: I personally did not, but some of the staff who I oversaw did.
   SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And were you aware while you were overseeing them that they were working on garnering endorsements?
   MS. RENNA: I was.
   SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And how were you made aware of that?
   MS. RENNA: Just conversation.
   SENATOR WEINBERG: Well, who gave them instructions to garner endorsements for the Governor?
MS. RENNA: Well, IGA leadership was always very clear that any of this sort of volunteering campaign work that we would do, as long as it was done on our volunteer time, was absolutely fine. And they received that advisement from counsel.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Let’s get back to my question about whether or not IGA staff -- and if I wasn’t clear -- during the course of the working day were garnering endorsements for the Governor in any way, shape, or form.

MS. RENNA: Any endorsement work was done on nights or weekends, or before work.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. So there were no discussions by IGA staff with mayors during the course of the workday on, perhaps, endorsing, considering the endorsement?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know the answer to that. I wasn’t the one garnering the endorsements, so I don’t know.

SENATOR WEINBERG: You said you were made aware of the issues around endorsements.

MS. RENNA: Sure.

SENATOR WEINBERG: You were made aware just from general conversation? There was no formal discussion about this -- nothing with leadership?

MS. RENNA: No, there were formal discussions; I mean, I was their boss so we had conversations about it. But do I know what the staff was advised to do per IGA leadership?

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Who did you have conversations with?
MS. RENNA: My staff -- the IGA staff.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And who gave you the instructions to talk about endorsements?

MS. RENNA: IGA leadership always gave all of us instructions; it wasn't just me.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Who was that IGA leadership who gave those instructions?

MS. RENNA: Depending on the timeframe we're talking about, it was either Bridget Kelly or Bill Stepien.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay, so let's talk about 2013.

MS. RENNA: Okay.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Let's concentrate on that timeframe. Bridget Kelly and/or Bill Stepien were the only two who gave those instructions? Did they give it directly to staff, or through you?

MS. RENNA: Just generally the way IGA was set up, it was Bill or Bridget who were the decision makers; they were senior staff. I sort of, in this role from June on, oversaw 10 people. I'm sort of the implementer -- I'm the one who took the information they gave me, passed it along to them, and then they did the work. That's exactly why I said I didn't seek any endorsements from mayors myself; the staff did that. I sort of was the pass-through as far as information is concerned.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay, so you-- Somebody passed this information through to the staff.

MS. RENNA: Sure.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So you were the implementer, you said.
MS. RENNA: I think that’s a fair way to put it, yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And you got those instructions from Mr. Stepien and/or Ms. Kelly.

MS. RENNA: Who received, yes, advice from counsel’s office on it. That’s my understanding.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And they received advice from the Governor’s Counsel Office on— What did they transmit to you that they received advice about?

MS. RENNA: That I’m not specifically sure, and I don’t know specifically if it was the Governor’s Counsel. I assume it was. Again, I don’t know.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Well, you referred to counsel. Do you know which counsel?

MS. RENNA: Well, there are also attorneys that work for the reelection campaign. I just don’t know what attorneys specifically they got advisement from, but I was told that it was cleared with counsel’s office. They were very particular to make sure all the things that we did -- and this wasn’t just IGA, this was every department in the Governor’s Office -- was following the letter of the law in how we were conducting ourselves.

You know, a lot of people on the IGA staff worked on other political campaigns previously, or had been in roles like this before in other government offices. You know, the nights and weekends directive is something that mirrored what a lot of people had experienced in other legislative offices or on other campaigns. So the advisement was there, and I think the staff -- the majority of the staff felt comfortable with that advice.
SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Ms. Renna, again, I’ve prefaced the last couple of questions, I believe -- the fact that I’m concentrating -- my questioning is concentrating on 2013, which you characterized, which is a fact, the beginning of the Governor’s reelection campaign. And that staff, through you -- you were the implementer -- that somehow staff knew that there was an outreach for endorsements. And that information -- please stop me if I do not report this correctly -- that information came somehow from Mr. Stepien and/or Ms. Kelly, through you, to the staff.

MS. RENNA: Yes, or sometimes it came directly from Bill or Bridget to the staff without-- It could have been either/or.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And when that information was coming from Mr. Stepien, was it while he was still working in IGA, or after he left to go to work for the Governor’s reelection campaign?

MS. RENNA: That was when he was still in the Governor’s Office.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So while he was still in the Governor’s Office, he was talking about potential endorsements for the Governor.

MS. RENNA: Yes. In his spare time, personal time, yes he was.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. So he only had that discussion after 5:00 or before 9:00 in the morning, or at lunchtime, or was it confined to certain hours? I mean, you yourself described yourself as the implementer--

MS. RENNA: Right.
SENATOR WEINBERG: --of a policy that apparently sought endorsements for the Governor, and that this was somehow, through you or sometimes directly from them, transmitted to the staff. So this was only done-- You only had those discussions with Mr. Stepien or Ms. Kelly after 5:00 or on weekends; or were those discussions-- I'm having trouble separating in my mind what you perceived as was going on here in the solicitation of those endorsements. Were they done -- were there discussions done during the business day because you're implementing -- using your words -- you were responsible for implementing some kind of endeavor? I won't describe it as a policy, but an endeavor. So could you kind of clear up my confusion about this?

MS. RENNA: The political work was done during our personal and volunteer time.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So this issue about your implementing -- what was it that you were implementing?

MS. RENNA: Just the structure of IGA was such that, candidly, no one had a lot of access to Bill. I personally did not have much access to Bill. When Bridget moved into that role, not everyone had access to Bridget. I had access to Bridget.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Right.

MS. RENNA: So a lot of times the communication flowed downward through me.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Well, that's the structure.

MS. RENNA: Right.
SENATOR WEINBERG: But I would like to know what you were referring to that you implemented -- that you got instructions from Mr. Stepien when he was there, and then Ms. Kelly when she took over.

MS. RENNA: I never got specific directives from Bill. That e-mail, as you see, was forwarded to me and I was not on the original e-mail chain.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Which e-mail are you referring to?

MS. RENNA: The one where I articulately responded "super, super excited." (laughter)

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay.

MS. RENNA: That e-mail, as you see, as you pick through line by line of that e-mail, I was not on that initial e-mail. That went to another colleague of mine. And Bill specifically lays out in that e-mail that IGA can do this sort of work at the appropriate times -- on nights and weekends; that there is no problem with that. That e-mail was simply forwarded to me; that was not a directive that I got directly from Bill. Any communications I had on endorsements did come, really, from Bridget.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay.

MS. RENNA: Globally, to the IGA staff, Bill and Bridget both gave directives. They were the bosses.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So again, what was it that you were implementing? You're telling me that you got some kind of instructions, but I'm not sure what-- What were you implementing in terms of dealing with Democratic allies, seeking endorsements, not seeking endorsements. What were you implementing? Those are your words.
MS. RENNA: I was making sure they were doing what they were doing. I mean, I was making sure if they felt as though there was a mayor--

SENATOR WEINBERG: Who is they?

MS. RENNA: The staff.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Go ahead.

MS. RENNA: If my staff felt as though there was a specific mayor who they had an interest in endorsing; or, counter, if a mayor broached a subject on their own with an IGA staffer -- which happened several times as well -- they would say, “I need to talk to over the weekend” -- or whenever it may be – “about this.” Then they would report that call back to me and say, “Listen, I just got a call from X mayor. It seems as though he’s interested in endorsing.” So I was again, I guess, implementing -- I was a pass-through of information.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I’m going to come back to that in a moment.

Let me move to all the people who you’re being nice to; to the people who you were told to keep hands off from, or be not so receptive to. How was that list drawn up; or how were you given instructions to implement, “Don’t call back whoever”?

MS. RENNA: So just to clarify, as I previously said, we were never told to be nice, specifically, to anyone. I just disagree with that characterization.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I’m sorry; hold that for one moment if you don’t mind.

Okay; I’m sorry. Are you finished?
MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: All right. I'm going to refer to Tab 28, and it's Page 7, Tab 28, of the Gibson Dunn report. And under Number 2 -- List of Mayors -- it says, "Renna believes--" Now this is Gibson Dunn's characterization of your interview with them. "Renna believes Stepien kept track of mayors who were not in favor with IGA." We're not talking about the campaign, now.

MS. RENNA: Right.

SENATOR WEINBERG: We're talking about not in favor with IGA. "But Renna was not privy to that process. But IGA staff would receive mandatory directives along the lines of, 'Do not rush to return this mayor's phone call.'" Again, a characterization by Gibson Dunn of your interview: "IGA staff was given mandatory directives." This was not, "Call me back after 5:00," but a mandatory directive. "Renna remembered responding"-- Oh, pardon me. "Renna recalled an IGA staffer asking Renna, 'Can we get a list of hands-off mayors?' Renna remembered responding, 'You know we won't get it, and it would change daily anyway.'"

So that leads me to believe -- particularly if there was a mandatory directive that changed daily -- that there was some way of informing IGA staff during working hours who was a "hands-off mayor," and that there was a mandatory directive to that effect. Is that correct? I mean, I'm reading from Gibson Dunn's characterization of your interview.

MS. RENNA: So a few things in this.

First, your convoluting in your question -- respectfully -- lists of mayors -- just the 565 municipalities -- which, day-to-day, that was IGA's
job to contact them during the workday, versus potential endorsers. That work happened after 5:00.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So excuse me, Ms. Renna. There was a mandatory directive after 5:00 that said, “These people are hands-off mayors?”

MS. RENNA: Mandatory directive were not my words. You notice they are not in quotation marks. Those were Gibson Dunn’s words. That was their characterization; they were never words I would use. I would never use mandatory directives except in one incident, which we can circle back to. They were not my words.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Did you correct that with Gibson Dunn when you saw that characterization?

MS. RENNA: I didn’t see these until it came out publicly.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So you didn’t have a chance to correct any of their characterizations of people’s interviews?

MS. RENNA: Correct -- or some of their facts. There are minor facts in my interview throughout it that are just-- There are some inaccuracies.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Do you know what other inaccuracies are contained here that you can recall?

MS. RENNA: Sure. For example, there are 60 affected towns, not 16. An important error in the report was this mandatory directives; it has gotten a lot of attention and is upsetting to me because it was not my characterization at all, nor would it be. The phone call I exchanged with Bridget Kelly on December 12: She called me, I called her back. The call dropped mid-conversation; we tried to call each other back. I actually
reached her first, not vice versa. So little details like that, for example. But *mandatory directives* is the one that, candidly, was most alarming to me because it’s aggressive language and it’s not language I would have used.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. What did you mean then by -- and this is in direct quotes, or at least-- I’m not sure it’s a direct quote from you, but “Staffer asking Renna ‘Can we get a list of hands-off mayors?’” And your response, ‘You know we won’t get it; it would change daily anyway.’”

MS. RENNA: That was from a text message exchange, which I submitted in my documents to you. That is a text message between me and a colleague of mine in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs where we’re anecdotally talking about proactively setting up meetings. Hands-off mayors list. List? There’s not a formal list. It’s not like there’s a secret, hidden list out there that is labeled “hands-off.” It doesn’t exist. This was more conversational in tone. And what this gets to is -- and circling back to the other line in this portion of the memo, “Do not rush to return this mayor’s phone call.” The directive was never, “Don’t return this mayor’s phone call. It was proactive. *Proactive* is a very important word as to what we were instructed. IGA conducted proactive outreach via phone or via meeting requests all day, every day to local elected officials. That’s what this meant. Let’s pull back on the proactive outreach; however, if a mayor were to call, it doesn’t mean don’t be responsive. As a matter of fact, for four years of working in IGA, I have wracked my brain and I can’t think of one example when we were not responsive to a mayor who called -- whether or not they were in favor or not in favor with the Administration for
whatever the reason may be. So it's an important point to clear up because this paragraph is, I think, mischaracterized.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Is there anything else in the Gibson Dunn interview with you that you think mischaracterized what you were trying to get across to them?

MR. KLINGEMAN: Madam Chairwoman, I think that's an unfair question. Ms. Renna has not, in preparation for her testimony today, gone through the report, line by line, for the purpose of reciting from memory mistakes that were made. If you'd like us to undertake that exercise after the hearing we will do so.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I respectfully understand that, Counselor. And since there is a very important phrase in the Gibson Dunn characterization of their interview with Ms. Renna -- mandatory directive -- I think it would be worthwhile that she gets an opportunity to please review their characterization of her interview and let us know what else might be wrong -- which you can do at a later date.

Thank you.

Well then, let me move to the interchanges with Mayor Sokolich.

Why-- Again, if there was-- Were you told in any way, shape, or form not to return any phone call from the Mayor of Fort Lee?

MS. RENNA: I was not told directly to not return a phone call to the Mayor of Fort Lee.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Were you told indirectly?

MS. RENNA: There was an e-mail exchange I shared with Bridget Kelly where she was clearly unhappy that a member of our staff
proactively outreached to Mayor Sokolich and set up a meeting. She was clearly angered by that, although I didn’t know why. Based on her reaction I advised staff to just, “Let’s wait and see. Maybe we can figure out what the problem is.” It was-- It didn’t make sense to me at the time.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Did you ever figure out what the problem was?

MS. RENNA: I did not.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. So you advised staff to, kind of, back off from Mayor Sokolich because Bridget Kelly was so angry about it.

MS. RENNA: Well, I didn’t actually communicate that to the staff. I personally knew she was angry, but I just said, “Let’s just hang tight. I need to have a conversation with Bridget about what the issue is with Mayor Sokolich, because there is clearly something.” But that conversation never happened; I never had that conversation.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And there was an exchange which I assume we’ve all seen in the documents where, I guess, you were kind of explaining away -- Evan Ridley, was it? -- his making a terrible mistake by taking a call from the Mayor of Fort Lee. That’s my impression; again, an impression is that you were sort of covering for him. I’m not saying that in a negative manner. (laughter)

MS. RENNA: Well, I was trying to placate Bridget, seeing that I didn’t understand what was happening. In the same breath you’ll notice I didn’t communicate that to Evan either, because I was trying to, kind of, protect Evan from that since I didn’t really understand what was going on.
SENATOR WEINBERG: Is Mayor Sokolich the only mayor that either Bridget or anybody else in IGA got a little exercised about setting up meetings, proactively reaching, not answering the phone, whatever?

MS. RENNA: Obviously Mayor Sokolich stands out. I don't know; I just don't know. We dealt with 565 mayors, Chairwoman. I mean, respectfully, it's a tough question to answer.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. So let's go back for a moment to-- Let's talk about the fact that the Lieutenant Governor was going to-- I guess she was invited by the Fort Lee Chamber of Commerce to be a speaker. And there was an exchange between you and Bridget Kelly about whether or not she should accept this invitation because Mayor Sokolich might show up. Can you give me a little bit of the background of that exchange, or what took place, or why the Lieutenant Governor would not come to a -- or you might consider -- not you personally -- but that you might consider asking her not to go to a Fort Lee -- any Chamber of Commerce because the local mayor might show up?

MS. RENNA: So this e-mail chain began-- This actually started because I proactively reached out to the Fort Lee Chamber of Commerce inquiring if they had an interest in having the Lieutenant Governor speak to their members.

SENATOR WEINBERG: What was the date of that?

MS. RENNA: Of this e-mail exchange, or--?

SENATOR WEINBERG: No, when you reached out to the Fort Lee Chamber of Commerce.
MS. RENNA: Well, they sent me the formal invitation on August 22, so it was some time before that -- probably the week before that would be my guess.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Of 2013?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay.

MS. RENNA: Once I received the invitation, I just forwarded it to Bridget Kelly as I always would. And this is on the heels of, a few days prior, her being angry that Evan Ridley met with the Fort Lee Mayor. So her response to me, “Should we do this in light of the Mayor?” seemed strange, but I sort of understood what she meant. Because clearly I knew that she was animated about Evan’s meeting the week prior. That’s why I sort of said, “I guess not. It’s a good Chamber, though, because it is a strong Chamber of Commerce in Fort Lee.”

SENATOR WEINBERG: Well, I think what you said before that is that he might now go if you don’t tell him about it, because he works during the day.

MS. RENNA: Well, yes, right. So after that she responds to me with, “I assume the Mayor will go.” And, again, this is me operating under the assumption that something -- Mayor Sokolich has done some critical wrong for whatever reason, I don’t know what, or something is going on with the Mayor that I don’t know about. So she responds to me by saying, “Not necessarily” -- or I respond to her saying, “Not necessarily. If we don’t tell him he works right?” As in, he has a job. And she says, “Correct. Good call.”
So in light of our current situation, I understand why this looks strange. But candidly -- and this gets back to the mandatory directive conversation as well -- oftentimes information did not flow downward as it relates to why we weren’t talking to an elected official of any kind -- State, county, local. There were a few -- several occasions over the four years that this information was not shared with us because a certain person might be under investigation -- which sometimes that came to fruition, and sometimes that did not. But there are several examples -- which I would like to not name names, but I’m sure we can all think of who those people would be -- that our interactions in IGA were scaled back inexplicably. And a lot of times it could -- well, not a lot of times -- but on occasion it could be because someone was under investigation or someone was about to be indicted; things of that nature. So we were all looking at this with a critical eye; but I was looking at it with the eye of: Bridget was clearly very upset a few days prior; she did not give me a reason why. Here we go again. She makes this comment about the Mayor. So now I’m certain that something is going on with the Mayor, and it could be any of the things I just outlined. So again, it’s hard to say, “How often did this happen?” It happened for a variety of reasons, most of which were incredibly legitimate -- but that’s one example.

SENATOR WEINBERG: I’m going to get ready to close my portion of your questioning. And if you need to take a break at any point--

MS. RENNA: I’m okay.

SENATOR WEINBERG: --let us know. We do have some time before we will move to a lunch break.
But I just-- I want to again clarify this directive issue -- whether mandatory or only a directive -- that Gibson Dunn’s characterization of your implying there was some kind of a mandatory directive is incorrect.

So the list of hands-off mayors -- as opposed to the list of everybody who you were proactively reaching out to -- the list of hands-off mayors was never given to any member of IGA staff, or through you as the implementer, except in the context of the campaign. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: The hands-off mayor’s list, again, is not a real list. It’s not something that would be written down. It’s not real. This was conversational in nature. That list does not exist.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. So then conversationally were you given any information from either Bridget Kelly, Bill Stepien, or anyone else about certain mayors who were hands-off for whatever the reason?

MS. RENNA: Through the course of any work day -- again, we’re dealing with literally thousands of elected officials -- I am sure conversations like that happened. It’s the normal course of business. I mean, I’m sure.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And your interpretation of the hands-off mayors were that they might be people who were under investigation?

MS. RENNA: No, no, no. Hands-off mayors would be people IGA would not be proactively conducting outreach with. We would not pick up the phone and say, “Hey, Mayor, how are you doing?” But if that Mayor called us and said, “Hey, I have a pothole,” then we would figure it out. But we didn’t call the Mayor and say, “Hey, I’m going to be in Bergen
County. May I swing by and maybe take 30 minutes of your time and catch up?” We didn’t do any of that. That’s what that meant.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. So then the hands-on mayors -- the ones who you did the proactive outreach to -- was there ever any discussion about those folks and endorsements?

MS. RENNA: I mean, I think it’s fair to say that IGA was about creating relationships. We forged relationships. There’s nothing wrong with forging relationships, obviously. In 2013, the dynamic did change because the Governor was up for reelection. So as I said, we had elected officials coming to us with open arms saying, “I want to endorse.” Similarly, you look at the 565 mayors and you say, “Who really enjoys what the Administration has done for the past four years? Are there people who you think would be open?” Those conversations did happen, sure, as it would with any elected official, I would think.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. I am going to pause now and turn the questioning over to my colleague, Assemblyman Wisniewski.

Are you both okay? Do you need--

MR. KLINGEMAN: Yes, thank you.

MS. RENNA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Do you need a break?

MS. RENNA: No; I could use a little more water.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I think we can get you some water.

MS. RENNA: Okay, thank you.

MR. KLINGEMAN: That’s my job. (laughter)
MS. RENNA: I bring Smart Water literally everywhere.

(laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: That’s not a plug or anything?

MS. RENNA: No. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

First of all, thank you for being with us this morning.

Just a couple of areas of follow-up, if I may, that Senator Weinberg started with that I just want to try to get a better handle on.

And so drawing your attention to what is marked Tab 28, Page 7 -- which is, again, the memorandum prepared in response to your meeting with the Gibson Dunn attorneys. And I just want to try to understand. The memo says that you believed that Mr. Stepien kept track of mayors “who are not in favor with IGA.” Is that something you said to the Gibson Dunn interviewers?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall my exact words with Gibson Dunn.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Something to that effect?

MS. RENNA: Something to that effect. It would not be in favor with IGA, it would be in favor with the Administration.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. In your interview you said you “believed.” How did you believe? Why did you believe that Stepien kept track of those mayors who were not in favor, either with IGA or the Administration?

MS. RENNA: Because Bill kept track of literally everything. It’s just his nature. And candidly, it’s completely appropriate for him to
know the dynamics between certain elected officials, certain people, generally speaking. I mean, in his role that was appropriate.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you know that because you had a conversation with Mr. Stepien, or you had a conversation with someone else who told you that?

MS. RENNA: I worked for Bill Stepien for four years. There were a lot of conversations. So nothing I can specifically recall, but I'm sure conversations happened.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Just to be fair to you, was it more of an assumption on your part or something that you understood?

MS. RENNA: Both.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay, thank you.

In the interview memo, the memo states -- and I'm quoting from the memo Tab 28, Page 7 -- it says, “IGA staff would receive mandatory directives along the lines of ‘do not rush to return this mayor’s phone call.’” So I just wanted to ask you about the words that are used to describe your interview that say, “Would receive mandatory directives.” Can you describe for me how you would receive those mandatory directives?

MS. RENNA: We did not receive mandatory directives. I'm correcting this language in there.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. So you’re saying that that, a representation of your interview, was incorrect.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay, thank you.
Then there is, on Tab 14, I believe it's a text message exchange with Chris Stark. Who is Chris Stark?

MS. RENNA: He was a colleague of mine in the office, IGA.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did he report to you, or did you report to him?

MS. RENNA: He reported to me.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. So Chris Stark says, on Saturday, August 17, 9:29 a.m., "Is it possible to get a list of hands-off mayors?" Was that a term of art that was used within the IGA staff?

MS. RENNA: No, I don't think so. Again, I think it was just conversational in nature. I think that's just how Chris characterized it. That wasn't a common term thrown around.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But you seemed to understand, because your response was, "You know we won't get that." So you understood what he meant.

MS. RENNA: Correct, because if you read the entire exchange, we're talking about a proactive meeting that Evan Ridley set up with Mayor Sokolich. If you read beyond the parts you just highlighted, he goes on to say that -- I go on to say a few things, and then he goes on to say, "It's hard to do because some people aren't available; then we have to go through getting vetted again." This is as it relates to being out on the road -- because the Regional Directors were primarily based out on the road -- and trying to secure meetings to fill their days on a whim. So if they know they're spending the day in Monmouth County, for example, they would try to fill their day.
Chris saying, “Can we get a list of hands-off mayors?” and me saying “You know we won’t get that and it would change daily anyway,” that’s candidly a reflection of Bridget. Bridget, day-to-day, it just always varied.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Well, did she create that list?

MS. RENNA: There is no hands-off mayors list.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But you both seemed to understand what that meant.

MS. RENNA: It was, again, people who we would not be conducting proactive outreach with.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: How would you know who those mayors would be?

MS. RENNA: Either through communications -- Bridget would mention something, whatever it may be. I mean, we worked in an office.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: No, I understand.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But, I guess-- So how would Bridget communicate to you that somebody was a hands-off mayor?

MS. RENNA: You know, again, I use that term loosely. But, you know--

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I tell you what--

MS. RENNA: Sometimes she would just--

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: --before you answer that, use the term that you would use. If you feel uncomfortable with the term hands-off mayor, what term would you have-- If you’re saying that this is not
an accurate representation of the discussion, how would those mayors be referred to?

MS. RENNA: Mayors we were not conducting proactive outreach with.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And so how would you find out who a mayor you’re not conducting proactive outreach is?

MS. RENNA: Bridget would tell me either by not telling me -- in an e-mail, like we saw as it relates to Fort Lee -- which is being upset; or sometimes she would communicate that there was a problem. Oftentimes she didn’t give me the reason that there was a problem, but I would know that there was a problem.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Isn’t that a difficult way for you to be able to do your job if you don’t know who you’re not supposed to be proactive to?

MS. RENNA: It was.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Let me move forward to the issue of the use of personal e-mail accounts.

On Tab 28, Page 5, in your interview with Gibson Dunn you explained that you created a Gmail account about a year after you began working for IGA. And your explanation was -- and again I’m quoting from the Gibson Dunn report -- “everyone was using a personal e-mail account for work purposes.” Did somebody come to you and suggest or direct you that you needed to create a personal e-mail account?

MS. RENNA: No, not that I can recall.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So how did it come about that you decided to create a personal e-mail account that is referenced in this memorandum?

MS. RENNA: Well, as I stated, I sort of viewed the fact that a lot of people around me were using personal e-mail addresses. So after being in IGA for a full year, and I didn’t have one for a full year, I created one. And, you know, just picking up the practice, really, of my colleagues. That’s why I went ahead and did that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So up to that point in time when you created that Gmail account, you’re saying you did not have a personal e-mail account?

MS. RENNA: Oh, no, I did. That’s where my Banana Republic coupons go. (laughter) But I never used it for work purposes now.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So this was a secondary personal e-mail account that you used for work purposes.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: When you were creating this second personal e-mail account for work purposes did you have a conversation with any of your superiors in the Governor’s Office -- whether it be Governor’s Counsel or anyone else -- about the propriety or the advisability of using a personal e-mail account for your work?

MS. RENNA: Not that I recall. Again, I’m sure conversations happened. We had annual ethics training in the Governor’s Office as well. I just can’t sit here and specifically recall when this conversation was and who had those conversations with me.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did the annual ethics training in the Governor's Office discuss the use of personal e-mail accounts for public business?

MS. RENNA: I genuinely don't recall.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: What type of public work would you communicate about using the personal e-mail account?

MS. RENNA: I can only speak for myself.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: That's all I want you to do.

MS. RENNA: For me, I did a lot of work on the personal e-mail account because I reported directly to Bridget. And Bridget was always available on her personal phone. She was not as available -- she was not always checking the government BlackBerry. And you know, as is -- I guess in the past four years everything is very fast-paced. I always was looking for quick responses. So I started to default to the personal e-mail address for no reason other than the fact that Bridget was more responsive to it. So we talked about a variety of things, all kinds of things, but that was for that reason primarily.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you use that personal-- The secondary personal e-mail account -- which I think you called a Gmail account -- did you also use that to discuss campaign matters?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And you volunteered for the Chris Christie for Governor reelection campaign?

MS. RENNA: I did.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you participate in what was the nominated Bridgewater Wednesdays?
MS. RENNA: I participated twice a month.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Twice a month. On those
Bridgewater Wednesdays, or at other times?

MS. RENNA: Usually on the Wednesdays, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And were those Bridgewater
Wednesdays created specifically for IGA staff to participate?

MS. RENNA: No, it was open to the entire Governor’s Office.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So that was a term that the
entire Governor’s Office understood?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

So you said one of the reasons you used your personal Gmail
account to get a hold of Bridget Kelly is that she didn’t respond to her
governmental e-mail account?

MS. RENNA: I wouldn’t say she didn’t respond; I was just able
to get her more quickly usually. She always had the personal phone on her
because of the children. So it was just if I needed something right away,
that’s where I went.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So the personal e-mail
account that you communicated— When you communicated with Bridget
Kelly, you communicated to her personal e-mail account.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And was that
personal e-mail account on her governmental-issued phone, or on a private
phone?

MS. RENNA: On her private phone.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

Now, there was a -- and you may not be aware of it -- but do you know who Vinny Napolitano is?

MS. RENNA: I do.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Who is he?

MS. RENNA: He was one of my colleagues in IGA.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did he report to you?

MS. RENNA: No, he did not.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you report to him?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: What was his position?

MS. RENNA: He was, at the time that I left the Governor's Office, he was my equal in the office of IGA. He oversaw the constituency area of IGA and managed a staff that oversaw relationships with different communities.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. In his interview with the Gibson Dunn law firm he talked about that he was directed to use his personal e-mail account to draft and maintain Google spreadsheets for IGA purposes. Are you familiar with these Google spreadsheets?

MS. RENNA: I am.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And what was contained on these Google spreadsheets?

MS. RENNA: You name it: everything from generic contact lists -- that's where we kept all databases of cell phone numbers and personal e-mail addresses for local elected officials. That was only privy, obviously, to staff. When the Governor would host a town hall we found it
much easier to track RSVPs through a direct link to a Gmail document; it just electronically-- I mean, you name it -- tracking all the outreach we did. The reason why we defaulted to Google documents was because the staff was so sizable that, as you know, with an Excel worksheet you make your changes but then you have to send it to your counterpart to make changes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Sure.

MS. RENNA: This was a way that we could all log on at the same time, make our changes simultaneously. It just made work -- life -- a lot easier.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did any of those Google spreadsheets have any information about mayors -- mayors that might be endorsing, mayors that might not be endorsing?

MS. RENNA: Yes. We had spreadsheets for that as well, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And so just so I understand it, the spreadsheets encompassed contact lists?

MS. RENNA: Some had contact lists, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Some were lists of mayors to endorse or who may not endorse?

MS. RENNA: Yes. Some were State of the State invitation lists. I mean -- Drumthwacket, holiday parties. Again, with so many cooks in the kitchen it was just the easiest way.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why were those Google spreadsheets accessed through private e-mails, and not through your governmental e-mail account?

MS. RENNA: I don't know enough about technology to answer that question. But I think -- I believe that you have to have a Gmail
account to access the Google document. I’m not sure, Chairman. I’m sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And other than the ethics training that you referenced a few moments ago, did you receive any other advice, or counsel, or guidance about using your private e-mail account for public business?

MS. RENNA: Not that I can recall, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

I’d like to move ahead to the August 15 e-mail that Mr. Ridley sent to you with his daily report. It’s Tab 11. And he says to you, “Meeting with Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich, 3:30, TBD” -- to be determined, I would imagine. And you replied, “This is great.” Why did you reply, “This is great?” What was great about it?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know; hold on one second.

I don’t know that we have that document. Do you mind-- I think that--

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: It starts at the top with “Meeting with Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich.” I think right there.

MR. KLINGEMAN: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MR. KLINGEMAN: Would you happen to have an extra set of documents for us?

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: The book with the copies.

MR. KLINGEMAN: Thank you.

So what tab are we referring to right now?

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Tab 11.
MS. RENNA: So do you mind repeating the question?

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Your response to Evan Ridley’s communication, stating, “Meeting with Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich, 3:30,” is, “This is great.” When I read this e-mail it implies that you knew something about this meeting. Why did you say, “This is great?”

MS. RENNA: Well, I don’t know that that’s-- I just don’t know that that’s what I was responding to with, “This is great,” because of all the redactions. I’ve never seen this document before, so I can’t say that “This is great” was because of the Fort-- I don’t know what else was contained in this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. So you’re not aware of why you said, “This is great?”

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And you’ve never-- I mean, this is an e-mail you responded to.

MS. RENNA: Yes, I’ve never seen this document before. So I’m sorry, I can’t clarify.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: You do not recall responding to this?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay, okay.

This e-mail, however, became the subject of a controversy between Mr. Ridley and Ms. Kelly, correct?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: The fact that he was scheduling a meeting with the Mayor of Fort Lee?
MS. RENNA: Yes, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Subsequently there was an exchange where Ms. Kelly expressed her displeasure.

MS. RENNA: Correct, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Do you know why Mr. Ridley should not have scheduled a meeting, or that scheduling a meeting would have evoked displeasure in Ms. Kelly?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

There’s a reference in the documents to a weekly sit-down with IGA staff. Are you familiar with those?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And did you participate in them?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And what took place in those weekly sit-downs?

MS. RENNA: They were just a normal staff meeting, weekly. They were usually held on Fridays where Bridget got the entire staff together and just we round-robin. We just went around the table and talked about the things we were working on; talked about any large-scale initiatives, or projects, or whatever we may be working on. It was just a staff meeting.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And at that staff meeting, Mr. Ridley would be there?

MS. RENNA: Sure, yes.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: You would be there?
MS. RENNA: Yes.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Ms. Kelly would be there?
MS. RENNA: Yes.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Anyone else?
MS. RENNA: The entire staff; unless we were not in that day, of course.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And would it be correct that at those meetings, discussions about what that staff, such as Mr. Ridley, were doing in the upcoming week?
MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And so if a staff member was going to do something in the upcoming week, and there was a problem, that would have been flagged by Ms. Kelly or somebody?
MS. RENNA: Yes and no. So the answer is yes, that if they talk about the meetings that they have scheduled for the upcoming week, if there was a problem Bridget would then respond to it at that time directly and then we would know. However, because the Regional Directors-- Their schedules were very fluid. A lot of times it was based around where the Governor and Lieutenant Governor were, because every Governor and Lieutenant Governor event has an IGA staffer there. So if the Lieutenant Governor adds a business stop on Tuesday that was not planned for on Friday at the staff meeting, and let's say Evan Ridley had to go staff the Lieutenant Governor, then he would build a day out on the road pretty quickly because he's already going to be out. So he may as well take the
second half of the day to meet proactively with the mayor to check in and see how things are going in a town.

So this actually gets back to the text message exchange, too, and the vetting being a problem, because so often the staff was creating meetings on the fly that it became hard to just go out there and schedule a meeting -- and then obviously something like this happened with Mayor Sokolich where Bridget was clearly upset over it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So after that e-mail, in the period of August 16 to 17 there is an exchange between you and Ms. Kelly where Kelly appears very upset that Ridley met with Sokolich, implying that he should have asked for permission before doing so. Are you familiar with those e-mails? It’s Tab 12, Page 4 and 5.

MS. RENNA: I am. I’m dreading putting it up because I used a curse word and my mother and father are in the audience. So let’s not scroll through. (laughter)

SENATOR O’TOOLE: We can tell them to leave, just for a moment -- the parents. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Well, we can work on the deletion up there.

MS. RENNA: Thank you, thank you. It’s not pertinent to the discussion.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why was Kelly upset that Ridley met with Sokolich?

MS. RENNA: Why was Kelly mad?

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: yes.

MS. RENNA: I don’t know.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Did you ever have a conversation with her at this time about why?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why not?

MS. RENNA: She would have shared the information if I needed to know.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Now, it seems that your discussion with Kelly about the Ridley meeting with Sokolich -- my read of it appears that you’re trying to, at least, help Ridley out; that you didn’t want him to feel the full brunt of Kelly’s ire. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes, that’s accurate.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Is this something that was a common occurrence -- where you kind of knew that you had to help him out because you knew Bridget would be upset about this?

MS. RENNA: I loved my staff, and they were excellent. And when things like this happened I did try to, kind of-- Protect isn’t the right word; but there was no reason for this to be communicated down. I just tried to placate, and explain, and that was that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So at this point in time were you aware that Ridley had communicated back that he thought that he could still get Mayor Sokolich’s endorsement? On August 16, he still thought Mayor Sokolich might endorse the Governor?

MS. RENNA: No. It was never my understanding that Mayor Sokolich was going to endorse at all through this time period. Evan did put a line in one recap to me, just kind of saying, “public endorsement looks
bleak.” That was information we already knew. We knew from the spring that Mayor Sokolich had no interest in endorsing the Governor.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And you tried to protect Ridley in your communications with Kelly, but you never addressed this issue with Kelly directly.

MS. RENNA: No, I never addressed it with her directly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why not?

MS. RENNA: Information flowed down; I mean, that’s the only way I can describe it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MS. RENNA: Bridget can sometimes be a little difficult, as far as sharing information goes. I never wanted her to get the feeling that I was trying to overstep or ask information I wasn’t privy to. So, you know, she shared what she felt I needed to know, and I left it at that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Tab 12 on Page 5 -- you assured Kelly that even Stark -- one of the other reports to you -- would have flagged a meeting with Sokolich, suggesting that it was understood that there was some problem meeting with Sokolich. Why would you communicate that, “Even Stark would have flagged this meeting?” I mean, you seem to have known something about there being an issue with meeting with Mayor Sokolich.

MS. RENNA: No, no, no. With the way the IGA flowchart worked. So I was the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs; Chris Stark was the Senior Regional Director. The other Regional Directors reported up to him, so technically the flowchart went up through Chris, then up through me. So a lot of times if I was busy in meetings or not in the office
for whatever reason, they would run their schedules by Christopher, but Chris would always flag it with me. I mean, he didn’t want me to be out of the loop. He was a good staff member that way, and so we communicated frequently about what the staff was doing. That’s what that means.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Would it be fair that, to describe your position in IGA, that you were essentially the staff’s intermediary with Bridget?

MS. RENNA: Yes, I think that’s fair.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MS. RENNA: The regional team, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But they would work through you, and then you would work through Bridget?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. I’m trying to understand, from a business practice standpoint, how this works where there is the level of anger, displeasure expressed with one of your staff people about meeting with Mayor Sokolich. You communicate that even Chris would have flagged this meeting, but you don’t have any understanding as to why, or—what the issue was. Can you help me understand that?

MS. RENNA: No. Again, information flowed on a need-to-know basis. Was it frustrating? Sure. But one can argue as well that it’s discipline as well. There are plenty of discussions that happen day-to-day in the Governor’s Office at the senior staff level that I had no business knowing about. And so was it frustrating? Yes, but who am I to know if this fell into that category or not? So that’s the way I looked at it.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So is your testimony that one of those staff members, like Mr. Ridley, really had to get preapproval before meeting with the Mayor?

MS. RENNA: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So every single meeting with a mayor had to be preapproved?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And if they weren’t preapproved then they wouldn’t happen?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Or they’re not supposed to happen?

MS. RENNA: They’re not supposed to happen, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

There was also a skepticism expressed about whether Ridley actually even met with Mayor Sokolich.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why did you express that skepticism?

MS. RENNA: Anecdotally I had heard that maybe Evan was not meeting with some of the people he said he was meeting with. So I felt that there was a chance that he could have lied about this meeting, and not done it, and just been off for the afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you ever have a conversation with Ridley about that?

MS. RENNA: I believe I did, yes.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And what did he say?

MS. RENNA: I didn’t specifically have a conversation with Evan about this, but just generally about performance issues, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: All right, so I just want to understand. So you expressed skepticism about whether Ridley actually even met with Sokolich. You’ve had other conversations with him about performance issues?

MS. RENNA: Yes, I mean--

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But on this particular occasion where you had this skepticism, you didn’t take him aside and say, “Evan, did you really meet with him?”

MS. RENNA: Well, he provided me with the recaps from the meetings. So his meeting recap was decently detailed. I don’t think it was something that he would have made up.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So why did you express the skepticism?

MS. RENNA: I expressed the skepticism on the front end before I received that. Once I got that, it seemed legitimate. I actually had more questions about a second meeting he took that day with the Mayor of West Milford. I’m not sure that that was real. But, again, it was just-- I’d rather, respectfully, not detail my staff’s performance issues. I just don’t think it’s relevant.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: There was this issue about -- that Senator Weinberg raised -- about the Fort Lee Chamber of Commerce breakfast. And the e-mail exchange is captured on Tab 16. You had raised a question about the Chamber of Commerce to Bridget Kelly,
and Kelly asked, "Should we do this in light of the Mayor?" Do you now, or did you then, have an understanding of what she meant by, "Should we do this in light of the Mayor?"

MS. RENNA: No. As I explained to Chairwoman Weinberg, this e-mail exchange and my reaction to it was based solely on the fact that four days previously she was clearly very angry about any interactions with Mayor Sokolich.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So I'm just trying to understand that your response, "I guess not," is based on what?

MS. RENNA: Just placating Bridget.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I just want to--

MS. RENNA: Obviously there was an issue--

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes, it seems to me that -- and correct me if this is an incorrect characterization -- that at least a thread of consistency through your testimony is that you did a lot to placate Bridget. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: I did some, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why was that?

MS. RENNA: Bridget could be a very good manager sometimes; and she could also be difficult sometimes. So it varied day by day. You just rolled with the punches and did the job.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Now, you and Bridget were close at one point in time.

MS. RENNA: We were.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And that was during the period of time when you both worked in IGA.
MS. RENNA: Correct, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And then there was an estrangement -- a progressive estrangement.

MS. RENNA: I think that's a fair characterization, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Do you know why?

MS. RENNA: I don't.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: She never said anything to you?

MS. RENNA: No, she didn't.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you ever say anything to her?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Were you always placating or trying to placate Bridget Kelly even when you had a closer relationship?

MS. RENNA: The dynamic was different then, I would say. I also didn't have a staff of 10 people. So all in all, the dynamics evolved over time as well. There are times - yes, placate is the right word. You know, honestly I really tried every day to do a really good job for Bridget. And she had a lot on her plate, and she was enormously overwhelmed between family and work. And I just really tried to make her life easier.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Going back to the Chamber of Commerce breakfast, Tab 16 -- which I think is displayed-- Kelly's response back to you after you say, "I guess not. It's a good Chamber, though" -- she writes back, "I assume the Mayor would go, no." And you respond, "Not necessarily if we don't tell him. He works, right?" My
reading of that says you understand that there's a reason to not have Mayor Sokolich and the Lieutenant Governor at the same event. Why is that?

MS. RENNA: That's because of the whole e-mail chain. I mean, it's obvious that Bridget doesn't want the two of them together by the reading of this e-mail chain. So I'm simply being reactionary.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But you're not giving her any feedback; you're just basically-- Is it correct that you're just essentially responding to what you think she wants to hear?

MS. RENNA: I'm giving her an option that-- I'm obviously telling her that the Chamber is a strong chamber; that it would make sense to send them there. And if she has an issue with the Mayor -- which she clearly did -- a way of getting around it was that the Mayor's working and he's likely not going to come anyway. So I was reminding her of those facts.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Again, this is another instance of where it appears from the e-mail exchange that you had some level of understanding that there was a level of animus or disagreement between Bridget Kelly and Mayor Sokolich.

MS. RENNA: I can assure you I did not have any knowledge of that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Even though in this instance and in the prior instance that comes across in the e-mails?

MS. RENNA: It depends on how you read the e-mails.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And your explanation is that you were just simply trying to placate her on both occasions?

MS. RENNA: Not always. If you read the e-mail exchange--
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Just in those two occasions that we’re talking about -- with Evan Ridley meeting with Mayor Sokolich--

MS. RENNA: I was trying to placate her when she was upset with Evan’s meeting, yes. With this I’m trying to be helpful and give her other suggestions of how we can get around the issue that she apparently has with the Mayor. I wouldn’t call that placating.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But you, at this point in time, still don’t know what the issue is.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And no one’s ever shared with you at the office -- Stark, Ridley, anybody -- about what this issue is?

MS. RENNA: None of them would know. If I didn’t know, they wouldn’t know.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Let’s go forward to September 9, Tab 18. You were copied on an e-mail that Bridget Kelly sent to Evan Ridley. And the e-mail is, “Have you spoken to the Fort Lee Mayor?” Which Ridley replies, “No, not in a while.” When that e-mail came to your inbox, at that point in time were you aware of the lane closures on the George Washington Bridge?

MS. RENNA: I don’t believe I was, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Was it unusual for Kelly to directly communicate with Ridley?

MS. RENNA: I wouldn’t say it was unusual. It wasn’t regular, but I wouldn’t call it unusual.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay -- maybe a different choice of words on my part. The normal chain of command would be for Ridley to communicate with you.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And for you to communicate with Kelly.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And so this was a departure from what was a normal method of communicating?

MS. RENNA: Again, I wouldn’t say it was a departure, because there are times that Bridget would just go to one of my staff members and, as a way of looping me in to make sure I’m aware, CC me on it. So that happened pretty frequently, too -- decently frequently.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So there was no consistent pattern of communication in terms of the chain of command? Sometimes it went through you, sometimes it didn’t?

MS. RENNA: The chain of command always went through me, but she is the boss. So if she wanted to reach out to a member of her staff, she did that. And out of respect for my position, she would CC me to make sure I was in the loop about it. It was just a way of keeping everyone on the same page.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: After this e-mail exchange on September 9 that you were copied on, did you have an opportunity to see Bridget Kelly on that day or the day after?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Did you ever have a conversation with Bridget Kelly about this e-mail?

MS. RENNA: No, I did not.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you ever have a conversation with Evan Ridley about this e-mail?

MS. RENNA: I don't believe so, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: The e-mail that we have here is a photocopy of an e-mail having been printed out. It's not-- You can see, it's skewed on the page. Why and when did you print out this e-mail?

MS. RENNA: In response to the court subpoena I received.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Now, on September 12 -- so three days later -- Evan Ridley came to you in person and he described an angry call he had gotten from Mayor Sokolich -- and that's reflected on Tab 28, Page 13. That's Evan Ridley's interview memo, and according to that memo he had been in a meeting with the North Arlington Mayor and he was unable to take the call so it went to voicemail. Afterwards, Ridley called Mayor Sokolich back and learned about the lane closures, and the traffic problems, and Mayor Sokolich's frustration and concern about political retribution. You took handwritten notes about this.

MS. RENNA: Yes, I did.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Was it always your practice to take handwritten notes if somebody like Evan Ridley came into you to explain something or discuss something?

MS. RENNA: Something-- Yes. I mean, something of larger importance, sure. Or if I was on the phone taking notes, yes.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So in your mind this was something of larger importance.

MS. RENNA: Evan made it clear that it was an important situation.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And why did you think it was an important situation?

MS. RENNA: Because Evan made it clear it was an important situation.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Other than-- He just came in and said, “This is important?”

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And that’s it?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

On Tab 19 Ridley says he asked you if the Office of the Governor had anything to do with the lane closures, given Sokolich’s suggestion of political payback. Did you answer that question?

MS. RENNA: I believe I told him I didn’t know.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: You didn’t know? Okay. Did you communicate this directly to Bridget Kelly?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why not?

MS. RENNA: Because I couldn’t get a hold of her.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And how did you try to communicate to her?

MS. RENNA: I typed an e-mail and sent it to her.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Why didn’t you pick up the phone?

MS. RENNA: She was in the Governor’s weekly Sandy meeting.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MS. RENNA: And so she was in that meeting; it lasts anywhere from an hour to two hours, depending upon-- So I cannot reach her at that period. And during that meeting is when news broke of the Seaside Boardwalk fire. So then she was with the Governor and obviously focused on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: What time is that weekly standing meeting?

MS. RENNA: It varies week to week. It’s never at the same time.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And you didn’t think about leaving a voicemail message for her?

MS. RENNA: No. I don’t-- I’m not a big voicemail message leaver, period.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Was that a policy of the office?

MS. RENNA: No, it’s my personal preference.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

Now, there’s a distinction that I want to make sure I understand completely -- is the interview memo says that he let the phone call go to voicemail. However, in the e-mail you wrote to Bridget Kelly you say that Ridley answered the phone when he received the call from an
unrecognized number. Why was your recounting of the facts different than what Evan Ridley said had happened?

    MS. RENNA: I don’t know. I just reiterated it as I recalled it.
    ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Were you trying to protect Ridley in some fashion from Bridget Kelly?
    MS. RENNA: The e-mail led as the e-mail led, because I knew three weeks previously she was angry that Evan met with Mayor Sokolich. I did not have a follow-up conversation with Bridget about why that was a problem.

    ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.
    MS. RENNA: Now-- Sorry.
    ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: No, go ahead.
    MS. RENNA: And now, obviously, the Mayor is calling. And, yes, in an effort-- If I didn’t lead the e-mail that way, her response back to me -- my guess is that it would be, “Why did Evan pick up the phone?” That would be my guess. So I led the e-mail that way, explaining why he fielded the call in the first place.

    ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And so you didn’t feel comfortable saying exactly what happened?
    MS. RENNA: Well, I don’t recall Evan telling me that. I just think it’s a discrepancy in how we’re remembering it.

    ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. But this was contemporaneously written, at the time. Is there a chance your recollection now is different than it was when you wrote this?
    MS. RENNA: Maybe I’m not-- I don’t think I’m following. I don’t think we’re talking about the same things.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Well, I'm trying to understand why Evan Ridley would say that he let the call go to voicemail and then called him back. And your contemporaneously written e-mail message to Bridget Kelly says that he took a call from an unrecognized number. There is a significant variance, and so I'm trying to understand--

MS. RENNA: No, but the number did come from a number he was not familiar with --- which is why he let it go to voicemail.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So the only reason--- Your testimony is, the only reason you didn't explain that he returned the call, as opposed to answering the phone, was that you felt that that was in some way protecting Evan from Bridget Kelly's displeasure?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. So again, this is another instance of where you felt it necessary to intercede on behalf a staff member to protect them from Bridget?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. So I just want to show you Tab 20, which is this e-mail. And this was the e-mail that you sent to Bridget, and you recounted the conversation we just discussed. And the response from Bridget Kelly was, "Good." Did you understand why she said, "Good?"

MS. RENNA: I didn't understand it, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Sounds like she was pleased?

MS. RENNA: That is one way you could read it, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Is there another way?
MS. RENNA: You can read it that she was glad that he said he would call him back. There are varying ways to read it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But if you were concerned that Bridget Kelly would be upset about Evan Ridley speaking with Mayor Sokolich, why would she be saying, “Good,” that he was talking to him?

MS. RENNA: I agree.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So would you agree that it’s not likely that she was saying, “Good,” that he called him back?

MS. RENNA: I agree with that, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

Did you have a discussion with Bridget about her response, “Good?”

MS. RENNA: No, not that I can recall.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Did you have a discussion with anyone else about this e-mail?

MS. RENNA: Not that I can recall, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you have any further discussions with Evan Ridley that day about this e-mail or about the conversation with Mayor Sokolich?

MS. RENNA: Subsequent to this, Evan did follow back up with me, because I told him when he reported all this to me, “Hold. Let me check in with Bridget about this.” This was the first time I had heard about any of the lane closures -- this e-mail here.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MS. RENNA: Or the phone call fielded from Mayor Sokolich. So I said, “Hold, because I don’t know what we should do.” Then the
Seaside fire happened. We were really consumed by that for a few days -- yes being IGA. And then on the back end of it-- No. I mean, I believe Evan checked in with me once just to say, “Did you get any feedback?” I told him I hadn’t yet, and I think that that’s it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

Were you aware that on December 12 Bridget Kelly showed Kevin O’Dowd the September 12 e-mail that you wrote to her about what Sokolich had told Ridley?

MS. RENNA: I read that in the memo and learned that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But you weren’t aware of that independently?

MS. RENNA: I was not, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: On or after December 12, did Mr. O’Dowd ever talk to you about this e-mail?

MS. RENNA: No, he did not.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did anyone else on the Governor’s staff talk to you about this e-mail?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Now, according to your interview memo, the IGA office -- this is what they said you said, so correct me if this is incorrect. “The IGA office did not engage in any outreach with Mayor Sokolich between the Ridley August 16 meeting and the Fort Lee lane closures.” Is that what you said?

MS. RENNA: Yes.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Aside from the conversations that we just talked about, is it correct that the IGA ceased to interact with Mayor Sokolich?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Do you understand why?

MS. RENNA: That was at my recommendation to Evan because I didn’t want Bridget to be upset with him.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So you made a recommendation to Evan to cease all communication with Mayor Sokolich.

MS. RENNA: Until I had a chance to talk to Bridget further about this -- and that opportunity just never came.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you ever share with anyone that you had made that recommendation to cease all communication with Mayor Sokolich?

MS. RENNA: No, I don’t believe so.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Is there a reason why-- You just testified that you made that recommendation. Is there a reason why that’s not related or conveyed in any way in your interview memo with the Gibson firm?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know. No, there’s no specific reason for it. I think you just asked the question.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did they ask you that question?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.
So you were the one who personally instructed Ridley to stop meeting with Sokolich?

MS. RENNA: Right, for his protection in this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you or anybody else think it relevant to reach out to Mayor Sokolich? I mean, you’ve instructed the Intergovernmental Affairs Office to essentially cease contact with a mayor.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So I’m just trying to understand that in the context of the phrase that was used in your interview about the office being “amazingly nonpartisan.” You’ve recommended, “Don’t talk to this Mayor,” because -- your testimony -- one staff member was very unhappy about any communication, but you don’t know why. I’m trying to understand how you could call it “amazingly bipartisan” or “nonpartisan,” and at the same time shut this Mayor out.

MS. RENNA: You’re making it seem like this is a partisan or a nonpartisan issue. It was just an issue. It was a traffic issue. And, you know, I’m willing to take the blame for that. You know, I instructed Evan to halt communication with Mayor Sokolich until I had a chance to talk to Bridget further about it; and that I never followed up. So this was not as it relates to hands-off mayors, or any of that. This was just me saying to Evan, “Something is up. I need to get to the bottom of it.” And I never got to the bottom of it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And so, in a sense, you put Mayor Sokolich on, essentially, a do-not-call list.

MS. RENNA: I don’t think that’s a fair characterization.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Was anybody allowed to reach out to Mayor Sokolich?

MS. RENNA: If Evan had reached out to Mayor Sokolich that would have been fine. I just said -- again, I didn’t express to him that Bridget was upset with him. I was trying to protect him a little bit from that. So I didn’t express to him why. He didn’t know any of the reasons why. I just said, “Don’t.” And if he had, that would have been fine. But I was recommending to him to halt until I could have a further conversation with Bridget.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I’d like to go back to the December 12, 2013-- I’m sorry; I’d like to go back to that e-mail -- Tab 20 -- that e-mail. On December 12 you received a call -- or Kelly called you -- at about 8:30, 8:45 at night.

MS. RENNA: On December 12?

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: The two of you talked for about 20 minutes, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes:-

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: She called you specifically to ask about the timing of trying to secure the endorsement for Mayor Sokolich, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes, that’s how she led the conversation.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Now, what did you tell her?
MS. RENNA: I told her I wasn’t 100 percent certain because I was not overseeing the operation at that time. I was not overseeing the Regional Directors, I had different responsibilities in IGA. I communicated to her what I had heard anecdotally, which was that Matt Mowers -- a member of our staff at that time -- felt the Mayor out to see if he would be interested in the spring of 2013, although I couldn’t remember specifically when -- if it was April or May.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why would Bridget Kelly call you to ask you to recount the efforts to get Mayor Sokolich’s endorsement?

MS. RENNA: Because at the time I was the person overseeing the regional team. And if there were people in IGA seeking endorsements, it was those Regional Directors. So, you know, the person who used to oversee the regional team was no longer there.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So the Regional Directors are the individuals like Evan Ridley--

MS. RENNA: Sure, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: --who reached out to mayors. And it was your --understanding their job was to secure endorsements.

MS. RENNA: It was not their job to secure endorsements.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: One of their functions.

MS. RENNA: If they felt an opportunity to secure an endorsement and were comfortable doing so, they were given the green light to do that, yes. I wouldn’t call it a job or a responsibility at all.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But I’m trying to understand why Bridget Kelly would call you and ask you to recount for her the timeline of obtaining Mayor Sokolich’s endorsement. The question, at least, seems to imply that she thought in your role that you had some knowledge about that. You’re saying you had no knowledge about that?

MS. RENNA: No, I mean-- You know, candidly, Chairman I was the only other-- Bridget called me a lot to bounce things off me. I’m an older member of the staff. She called me, not frequently around this time, but generally over the time we worked together-- This was not a strange call; this was not a strange ask. Even though I didn’t oversee the team at the time, I can’t think of anyone else in IGA she would have called about that except Evan directly. But she didn’t-- She went through me before-- Most of the time she went through the regional staff.

Chairman, do you mind clarifying to me-- Obviously, a good point was made. I’m not clear if you were asking me to clarify this based on what I know now, or based on what I knew at the time -- because the answer differs, obviously, dramatically.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Sure. Let’s start with what you knew at the time.

MS. RENNA: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Bridget Kelly called you on December 12 at 8:45 in the evening. Did you always get calls from Bridget Kelly at 8:45 in the evening?

MS. RENNA: Not at that point, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. So this was an unusual call.
MS. RENNA: Absolutely, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And so in this unusual call she asks you to recount for her what you knew about the timeline and securing Mayor Sokolich’s endorsement. That was her question.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Now, did you say to her, “Bridget, I don’t know anything about that.”

MS. RENNA: Sort of, yes I did, as you see in my memo. I say, “Well, I wasn’t involved with that side of the operation at that point, but this is what I can tell you that I heard anecdotally.”

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: What side of the operation was involved with securing endorsements?

MS. RENNA: The regional operation.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: The regional people like Ridley?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. So it’s your understanding that one among, perhaps, many obligations of Evan Ridley was to secure endorsements.

MS. RENNA: That’s false. It was not an obligation at all.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Job function?

MS. RENNA: It was not a job function.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: What was it?

MS. RENNA: It was a voluntary exercise.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I’m having trouble understanding -- and maybe we’re using language to not communicate
correctly here, so let’s try this again. Why would Bridget Kelly think you knew anything about the Sokolich endorsement?

MS. RENNA: Because we had staff members on staff who were interested in pursuing an endorsement from Mayor Sokolich.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. But there were times where Bridget directly communicated with those staff members, you testified earlier.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So why didn’t she call Evan Ridley? Why did she call you if you say you had no knowledge of that?

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I don’t know why she chose to speak to me about this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. The call was actually broken into two parts because the call dropped, right?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And in your Gibson Dunn interview memo, you noted that there was a change in demeanor in the call. What was the demeanor on the first part of the call, and what was the demeanor in the second part of the call?

MS. RENNA: I would characterize the first part of the call as being businesslike. You know, for lack of a better term, normal -- conversing, asking questions about work and whatever it may be. The second version of the call was-- She was enormously nervous, enormously sort of erratic. She wasn’t making a lot of sense. She talked in circles a bit; she repeated herself a lot. She sounded nervous. I was having a hard time following her in the second part of the conversation.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Just so that we’re clear. So this conversation broke into two parts. She calls, first part, matter-of-fact, businesslike.

MS. RENNA: I mean, just normal. It was a normal exchange about normal things. It was not an abnormal tone, not abnormal anything -- just a normal conversation.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And the first part was about what you know about securing the endorsement of Mayor Sokolich.

MS. RENNA: Correct -- the timeline.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And the second part was-- She had used some phrases in it, in your conversation, that you recounted in the Gibson Dunn -- and I’m paraphrasing -- but essentially something to the effect that “if somebody told me to do something, that’s okay.”

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: What did you think she was talking about?

MS. RENNA: I took that to mean that, candidly-- One way I would describe Bridget is a little insecure. And she relied heavily on other people, I think, to make decisions for her. I think that that was absolutely the case up until she became Deputy Chief of Staff, and then she didn’t have anyone to make those decisions for her anymore.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: I’m not sure I follow when you say “making decisions for her.” What kind of decisions would she have people make for her?

MS. RENNA: She looked for guidance a lot. She was just not a decision maker, I would say. I guess I don’t know how else to describe it.
When she says something along the lines of, “Someone tells me something’s okay,” I took that to mean that feeds into that insecurity that she has. That someone told her something, and just knowing Bridget she wouldn’t challenge really anyone, even at her level or above her at all. I mean, she doesn’t-- I really don’t want to pile onto Bridget, but--

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Well, I just-- With all due respect, it also sounds like something that you did, because you weren’t willing to challenge Bridget Kelly.

MS. RENNA: If that’s what you want to say, that’s fine.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Well, but I’ve asked you why you didn’t challenge Bridget Kelly, and you said, “It’s just not something you did.”

MS. RENNA: I didn’t want to feed her frustration that (indiscernible); I just didn’t.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: You didn’t want to feed her frustration?

MS. RENNA: And aggravation. And she--

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why was she--

MS. RENNA: --was enormously overwhelmed, and enormously stressed with day-to-day life. And again, I served her day in and day out and tried to make her life easier, which I told her a million times.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: At the end of that phone call she asked you to do her a favor.

MS. RENNA: She didn’t put it that way.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: She asked you to do something for her.
MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: What did she ask you to do?

MS. RENNA: Well, it wasn’t the end of the phone call; it was the middle of the phone call. But she said that she— I brought this e-mail chain up — the “Good” e-mail chain up to her.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: You raised it in that phone call?

MS. RENNA: I raised it to her. She led by saying, “I didn’t know anything about this -- the lane closures.” I countered with, “Well, yes you did, because Mayor Sokolich called Evan and I e-mail you about it.” And that’s when the tune started to change; that’s when her demeanor changed. And she knew exactly what e-mail I was talking about. She said that she— She responded to me by saying, “Oh, are you talking about the e-mail I responded to with, “Good?” And I said, “Yes.” And she said, “Well, ‘good’ can mean a bunch of different things. You can read that a bunch of different ways,” and she sounded very nervous. And then she said, “You know, just do me a favor and get rid of it.”

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And what did you understand her to mean by “get rid of it?”

MS. RENNA: Well, I clarified. I said, “You want me to delete the e-mail?” I said that to her.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Yes.

MS. RENNA: And she said, “Yes. Listen, I’m getting a lot of questions, and I’m just really nervous. And, you know, I can’t take getting grilled about this over and over again.” So she sort of said yes, but moved
on and never actually reacknowledged the point again, if that makes sense. She acknowledged it, she confirmed it, she moved on and didn’t address it again. And right around then is when the call dropped.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: For the second time?
MS. RENNA: No, the first time.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: First time?
MS. RENNA: Yes.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: When she asked you to get rid of it, and you confirmed that she wanted you to delete it, did you challenge her in any way saying, “Bridget, that might not be a good idea; there’s a legislative committee investigating this”?
MS. RENNA: No. I couldn’t get a word in edgewise at that point. She was talking very fast, talking in circles. The call dropped mid-sentence. And the topic never came back up in the second half of the conversation.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And this e-mail was on a private Gmail account.
MS. RENNA: Correct.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: You had access to Bridget’s private Gmail account?
MS. RENNA: No.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Well, how would you-- She wanted you to delete it from your e-mail account?
MS. RENNA: Yes. That is what I assumed she meant, yes.
ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. I’m curious that of all the transactions, this phone call at 8:45 at night -- which you clearly
didn't anticipate -- in that phone call you were able to pinpoint this one e-mail communication. How did that rise to the surface? Was it significant to you in some way?

MS. RENNA: It's the only thing I knew about the Fort Lee lane closures. Mayor Sokolich never reached out again. This was it; this was all I knew. I knew that I had this on this e-mail exchange, because I remembered. I remembered the call coming in.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So you deleted the copy of the e-mail that you had.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: On your e-mail account.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But then you did something else.

MS. RENNA: Before I deleted it I forwarded it to another account to preserve it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: This e-mail account that you deleted it from, this was your e-mail account.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did anyone else have access to it?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why would you delete it from an e-mail account that no one else would see and then send it to another e-mail account?
MS. RENNA: I wanted to be able-- If she asked me, if it came up again in conversation, I wanted to be able to tell her in good faith that I did what she asked me to do. But I also knew that I had never been asked to do anything like that before. I felt the request could have been inappropriate. And, candidly, I was uncomfortable with it. So I did what she asked me to do, but I protected myself as well. That's the way I look at it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why do you use the term you protected yourself?

MS. RENNA: I mean, being asked to delete an e-mail is a strange request and a unique request. And, you know, in four years of working in IGA, I was never asked to do anything that I felt uncomfortable with.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: You thought it was wrong?

MS. RENNA: And I just thought it was-- I thought it was strange; I thought it was strange. And I felt she was paranoid -- that's really what I felt.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: This strange request -- the next morning, you were at work?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Did you talk to anybody in terms of somebody who oversees ethics, or law, or chief counsel, or anybody like that and say, "Hey, I just want to let you know I got this strange request." Did you talk to anybody?

MS. RENNA: I did not.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why not?
MS. RENNA: I didn’t think I needed to. I just didn’t.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: All right. So I’m just trying to understand. So the night before you thought it was “strange,” correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: But you didn’t report it to anybody.

MS. RENNA: Again, we’re looking at this on the back end view. I didn’t think that it rose to a level of having to go to an ethics officer for it. I just-- I didn’t -- not at the time.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Now, you were aware at that time that there were legislative hearings on this issue.

MS. RENNA: I was, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And notwithstanding the fact that there are legislative hearings on this issue, Bridget Kelly asked you to delete an e-mail from your own personal e-mail account. You delete it, and preserve it somewhere else, but you don’t think it rises to the level to talk to somebody.

MS. RENNA: I didn’t, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. When did you eventually talk to anybody about this deletion?

MS. RENNA: I brought it to Regina Egea on January 9.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Why on January 9?

MS. RENNA: That was the day after it became exposed -- Bridget’s involvement in the lane closures.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And who did you talk to?
MS. RENNA: Regina Egea.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

MS. RENNA: That's who I brought it to.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: And did you talk to anybody else?

MS. RENNA: Not at that time.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay. And what was her response when you brought it to her attention?

MS. RENNA: Regina didn't say much. She looked surprised. I explained to her the timestamps, and the different e-mail addresses, and why they varied. And I just explained to her that I felt a responsibility to turn it over in light of what came out yesterday. And I knew the Governor was going to have a press conference later that morning, and I just wanted to make sure the Governor had all the information I knew on this before he got up behind the podium, essentially. So I brought this down to Regina first thing in the morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: So the e-mails-- The Bergen Record story came out on January 8.

MS. RENNA: Yes.--

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: You waited until January 9 to go to Regina.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: When you saw the story on January 8, why didn't you go to Regina on January 8?

MS. RENNA: Candidly, I was-- We were all completely in shock. It was a day of -- not to be dramatic -- but it was a day of a lot of
tears in the office. A lot of people were very upset about what transpired. A lot of people were genuinely in shock by it all. I'm getting upset even talking about it. It was just traumatic for definitely the entire IGA team. There are a lot of younger people on the staff. My door was a revolving door that day of people upset, asking for advice on what to do.

I did this first thing in the morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: On January 9?

MS. RENNA: The next day, before I even interacted with my staff, as a matter of fact.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Up until that point in time— So that conversation between you and Bridget Kelly on the evening of December 12, through January 9 -- did you speak to anybody either about the request to delete the e-mail or the content of the e-mail?

MS. RENNA: Not that I can recall, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: There are references to there being an inquiry made in the Governor's Office staff if anybody was aware of an e-mail or any communications related to the bridge issue -- which I think was in December before the Governor had his December 13 press conference.

Were you aware there was this inquiry within the Governor's Office if anybody had any knowledge?

MS. RENNA: I wasn't aware of that, but I can recall it now.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Nobody knocked on your door and said, “Do you know anything? Does anybody know anything?”
MS. RENNA: Knowing that information-- I don't recall that at all. The information would have probably flowed through Bridget on that. I don’t recollect it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

Co-Chair, I’m going to take a break now, and turn this over to other members.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

MS. RENNA: You’re welcome, Chairman.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. Does anybody over here have some short questions? Otherwise, we’ll take a lunch break.

SENATOR O’TOOLE: I think we should take a lunch break. I’d like to take a break.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Assemblywoman Schepisi, did you--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: I can wait until after the break.

SENATOR WEINBERG: All right. We’re going-- It’s 12:40 p.m. Be back here at 1:10 -- just 30 minutes, please.

(recess)

SENATOR WEINBERG: We are back into session. Thank you for being comparatively prompt -- relatively prompt.

Thank you, Ms. Renna. You know, of course, you’re still under oath.

So I’d like to recognize Assemblywoman Holly Schepisi.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Thank you.
MS. RENNA: Thanks, Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Ms. Renna, how are you?

MS. RENNA: Doing well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Good.

It sounds a little bit like your relationship with Bridget, with information flowing on a need-to-know basis, is similar to being a Republican on this Committee. (laughter)

But I do have a couple of questions to ask you, very quick.

At the time that Bridget spoke to you about not responding to Mayor Sokolich, did you believe that it was because he was a Democrat?

MS. RENNA: No. No, I had nothing-- I don’t believe that that had anything to do with that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay. Did you ever speak to the Governor directly about any of these issues?

MS. RENNA: No, not at all.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SCHEPISI: Okay. And the last question is, when you were talking earlier about campaign activities and IGA activities -- when the campaign kicked into gear, were you guys instructed by anybody to keep the two activities separate?

MS. RENNA: No -- absolutely, the directive was always to keep the activities separate. I mean, in the capacity that IGA staff was working in, it was like any volunteer that wanted to volunteer for Governor Christie. So it was the same. And yes -- there was a strict delineation between keeping the two. Which is why nights and weekends were so important; which is why Bridgewater Wednesdays when we would make
calls on behalf of the election campaign happened around 6:00 every night. That's why.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

And just before I recognize Senator Gill, I have one more question that was kind of left over from my earlier questioning, which has to do with the phrase *mandatory directive*.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: If I remember correctly, in your earlier answer to the questions, you said something about a “mandatory directive took place once before.” Could you speak to that? What was the “once before”?

MS. RENNA: I mean, I sort of got into it in an answer to another question. But the only time -- if you want to use that phrase *mandatory directive* -- which, again, were not my words, but words that make sense in just this one capacity -- it's that, as I said: If there was any reason to believe that a person was under investigation or was about to be indicted, we were told, off the bat-- We weren't told they were under investigation; we weren't told that at all. But we were told absolutely no contact with this person; and if this person reaches out to you to not return the call -- nothing. And that was obviously for the protection of the Governor, but obviously also for the protection of us, of the staff.

Now, you know, in one specific case -- which I don't want to give examples, obviously -- but I remember none of us knew why. And a month-and-a-half later, there it was in the newspaper -- and we understood. So that would be the one exception. If you want to use that term *mandatory directive*, that's where it would fit.
SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. And when you were doing the Bridgewater Wednesdays or weekends, what kind of phone calls were you making there?

MS. RENNA: Oh, a variety. A majority of them were calling people to see if they would come to events for the Governor. So the Governor was doing a campaign headquarters opening in Paterson. So we would call people in Paterson and say, “The Governor welcomes you to come out” -- things like that.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. So you weren’t doing endorsement calls from the Bridgewater Wednesdays.

MS. RENNA: No. It was like a get out the vote-type-- That kind of phone banking; traditional phone bank.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And you weren’t doing the endorsement calls during the week in the office.

MS. RENNA: We weren’t doing endorsement calls in the office during the week, no.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So then how did the endorsement calls get done?

MS. RENNA: Well, I don’t want to say exclusively. I mean, maybe if one of the staff members who was working on an endorsement happened to be in Bridgewater at 6:00 at night, then maybe they made an endorsement call. That would have been fine because that would be after hours. I mean, I can just only-- I can speak for myself: I never made an endorsement call at Bridgewater.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay. I’m not going to belabor the point any further.
MS. RENNA: Okay.

SENATOR WEINBERG: But obviously endorsement--
According to your knowledge, endorsement calls were not made -- request endorsement calls, outreach, whatever -- to potential Democratic allies during the business day. And generally the Bridgewater Wednesdays or weekends were about GOTV calls. So somehow, however many democratic allies endorsed the Governor, we don’t quite know how all that happened? It’s just kind of a mystery?

MS. RENNA: Well, as I just said, maybe endorsement calls were made on Wednesdays after hours. I’m sure, possibly, that happened. It would have been acceptable for that to happen after hours.

However, at the end of the day, once a week people from the Governor’s Office went to voluntarily make calls on behalf of the Governor’s reelection campaign. It was one day a week; it didn’t happen on weekends unless people wanted to go on weekends. The characterization that you can’t figure out when endorsements took place if we worked during the day and one day a week made phone calls is, I think, a little shortsighted. There’s plenty of time to do that work.

SENATOR WEINBERG: So one day a week people from the Governor’s Office -- that during the day they took a vacation day or whatever and--

MS. RENNA: Some people-- No, no. Some people went two times a week. People who enjoyed doing get-out-the-vote calls went whenever they wanted after hours.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay.

MS. RENNA: It was just--
SENATOR WEINBERG: All right, well I’m sure as we review documents from the campaign of Governor Christie we might find out how those endorsements took place, or when they did.

But thank you.

I would like to recognize Senator Gill, and then Assemblyman Greenwald.

SENATOR GILL: Thank you very much.

I have a couple of questions. And some of them I will frame with respect to certain events.

Now, I just want to make sure-- And you may have testified to this. When did you first become aware that the Mayor of Fort Lee communicated or interacted with IGA regarding the lane closures?

MS. RENNA: It was September 12 when he called Evan Ridley.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. Have you ever received a communication that claimed that the Port Authority, the Governor’s Office, or the Administration was acting in retribution?

MS. RENNA: No.

SENATOR GILL: -- So would it be correct of us to say that based upon -- and if we can put the exhibit up; it would be Tab 20. And this Tab 20 is your e-mail and your description of your conversation with Mr. Ridley. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And in your e-mail, in your description of your conversation with Mr. Ridley, you state that Mr. Ridley said that the Mayor told Evan -- and Evan is Mr. Ridley, right? -- that he
had no idea why Port Authority decided to do this; and this refers to the lane closures, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.
SENATOR GILL: Okay. But there is a feeling in town that it is government retribution for something, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.
SENATOR GILL: All right. Had that been the first and only time that you had a conversation or received communications from anyone claiming that the Governor's Office or the Port Authority was acting in retribution?

MS. RENNA: I believe this is the only time.
SENATOR GILL: Do you know, or do you believe, or--
MS. RENNA: I believe.
SENATOR GILL: Okay. So it would be correct of me to say that this was out of the ordinary for you.

MS. RENNA: What was out of the ordinary?
SENATOR GILL: For you to receive a communication or a conversation with Mr. Evans (sic) or anyone who references that there is an allegation of governmental retribution.

MS. RENNA: No, I disagree with that statement.
SENATOR GILL: Okay, so then I want you to tell me why you disagree.

MS. RENNA: I disagree with the statement because IGA's day-to-day job was fielding, really, complaint calls -- because no one calls when they're happy; they only call when they're upset about something -- of all kinds, all day long, alleging all kinds of things.
SENATOR GILL: So is it correct to say -- and I'm asking you what you received. I'm not asking what IGA-- This is specific to you. Have you received information or communication alleging that actions taken were taken as part of governmental retribution?

MS. RENNA: Not that I can recall, no.

SENATOR GILL: Now, I'm asking you, with respect to your knowledge. Aside from Ms. Kelly's response of "Good," did you -- and we're talking about with respect to Tab 20 -- did you ever have any subsequent conversation between September 12 and December 12 with Ms. Kelly, Mr. Ridley, or anyone else about the Mayor of Fort Lee or the issues of government retribution or lane closures?

MS. RENNA: After September 12 I had a follow-up conversation with Evan, during which he asked me if I had received feedback from Bridget on how to proceed on this issue. I previously stated that earlier. Beyond that, Evan submitted in his daily report to me a Wall Street Journal news article link which I then turned over to Bridget in my daily report.

SENATOR GILL: Did you read the link? Did you go to the link and read the Wall Street Journal article?

MS. RENNA: I did not. But that, I believe, was in our clips -- the Governor's Office clips that day.

SENATOR GILL: Did you read it in the Governor's Office clips?

MS. RENNA: I don't recall if I did or not.

SENATOR GILL: Did you-- And you supervised Mr. Ridley, correct?
MS. RENNA: I did.

SENATOR GILL: And when Mr. Ridley -- after you’ve had this conversation with him about government retribution and the lane closures -- he sends you a specific link with respect to the Wall Street Journal. And you did not simply click on that link to see what Mr. Ridley was referring to?

MS. RENNA: No, it came through in our clips earlier in the day, so I already knew what article he was referring to.

SENATOR GILL: Did you read the clips?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall if I did or not.

SENATOR GILL: Well, then how do you know what article he was referring to if you don’t remember if you read the clip or not?

MS. RENNA: He described the article before putting the link in the daily report.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And did he describe the article before putting the link in the daily report to you?

MS. RENNA: In his daily report, in writing; not personally.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And did you read that?

MS. RENNA: His daily report? Yes.

SENATOR GILL: So what was the article that you say he referred to in his link that you now say he described in the daily press?

MS. RENNA: It was the first-- I believe it was the first news article published on the lane closures -- I believe. Or at least it’s the first that got any attention.

SENATOR GILL: And so since it’s the first that got any attention, what did it say, in substance?
MS. RENNA: I don’t recall.

SENATOR GILL: Do you recall if it said anything about political retribution?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall, no.

SENATOR GILL: And at any point after did you ever go back and view the link that was supplied to you by Mr. Evans -- right? Is that his name?

MS. RENNA: Mr. Ridley.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. Help me out here, because I do mix up names.

MS. RENNA: Evan is his first name; Ridley’s the last name.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. My first name is Nia, my last name is Gill. That’s pretty easy.

So did you ever go back and just click on the link to see what Mr. Ridley had?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall if I did or not.

SENATOR GILL: Okay.

Now, I just would like to frame this by establishing a little guide -- framework -- so it can direct our attention more specifically. So we know that on October 1, the Wall Street Journal published a story quoting the Port Authority Executive Director Patrick Foye’s directive to reopen the closed lanes. And in that e-mail it is reported that Director Patrick Foye stated that he “believes this is a hasty and ill-advised decision that violates Federal law and the laws of both states. To be clear,” he states, “I will get to the bottom of this abusive decision which violates everything this agency stands for.” He continues, “I intend to know how the Port Authority was
wrongfully subverted and the public interest damaged, to say nothing of the credibility of this agency.” Do you know if that was the story that you reviewed?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall.
SENATOR GILL: Do you recall reading about this?
MS. RENNA: I don’t recall, no.

SENATOR GILL: Then on November 7, the Wall Street Journal publishes a story identifying David Wildstein as the official who ordered the lane closing. Did you get any information with respect to that story in the news clippings that are provided to you?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall, no.

SENATOR GILL: Now, on November 25-- And before I continue, you were the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

MS. RENNA: I was.

SENATOR GILL: And as Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, it was your job responsibility to supervise the 10 members of the IGA staff, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: --And those 10 members were divided into two teams of Regional Directors, and they were responsible for interacting and communicating with mayors and locals governments, on the local level, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And I think previously you indicated that your position was a pass-through for information, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.
SENATOR GILL: And that-- Okay, so on-- I'll go back. On November 25, Bill Baroni testifies in front of the Assembly Transportation Committee. All the while there are reports about political retribution regarding the lanes. And then on December 7, David Wildstein resigns. On December 12 the Assembly Transportation Committee subpoenas documents from Mr. Baroni, Mr. Foye, Mr. Wildstein, and other Port Authority figures. Were you aware of any of these events at that time?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: I'll be finished in a little while.

So that on December 12, according to Mr. O'Dowd's interview memo, we know that the Governor had a private meeting with Bill Stepien, his campaign manager, and a separate private meeting with Mr. O'Dowd, his chief of staff, where the Governor, according to Mr. O'Dowd's interview memo, discussed the Fort Lee closures. Mr. O'Dowd's interview memo also states, "By that time, December 12, there was speculation in the press that the lane realignment was political retribution." It goes on to say that "following the conversation with the Governor, O'Dowd, executing the Governor's directives, spoke to Ms. Kelly and instructed her to look for any e-mails, texts, etc. regarding the-lane closings."

Now, were you aware of that when it took place?

MS. RENNA: No, I wasn't.

SENATOR GILL: Okay.

Thereafter, on that same day, you had a conversation with Ms. Kelly, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And would that be December 12?
MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And in that conversation you testified that Ms. Kelly asked you to delete Exhibit 20, which is your e-mail.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. Now, when she asked you to delete-- Let me rephrase that. Did you-- Would it be correct to characterize the issues in the e-mail as relating to governmental business?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: Now, what was your reaction when Ms. Kelly, on December 12, asked you to delete what was governmental information, which was the e-mail? What was your reaction?

MS. RENNA: I thought it was strange. It’s the only request like that I’ve ever received.

SENATOR GILL: And you knew that it was a governmental e-mail you were deleting?

MS. RENNA: Yes, which is why I preserved a copy

SENATOR GILL: Well, I’m going to get to why you preserved (indiscernible).

And you didn’t delete the e-mail immediately, did you?

MS. RENNA: No, the next day.

SENATOR GILL: It took you 15 hours, until the next day, on December 13, before you deleted the e-mail, correct?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: And you didn’t delete the e-mail until you forwarded your e-mail to another one of your personal accounts.

MS. RENNA: Correct.
SENATOR GILL: And was that the account where you kept your Banana Republic coupons?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: Now, why did you wait 15 hours before you deleted the e-mail?

MS. RENNA: Because I wanted to sleep on the request; I thought it was odd. Not to mention the fact I have three stepchildren to pack lunches for and get to school the next day. So when I came in during the course of work the next day, is when I did the deletion and preservation of the e-mail.

SENATOR GILL: So you deleted it in order to misrepresent to Kelly that in fact you deleted it. And you kept it in order to preserve and protect any interests you may have in the e-mail.

MS. RENNA: Yes, not just any interests I had; but any global issue that came out of the request to delete it. I’ve never been asked to do that. I thought it was the right thing to do.

SENATOR GILL: You thought it was the right thing to do -- to delete it?

MS. RENNA: I did. And preserve a copy.

SENATOR GILL: And preserve it and not tell anyone.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: Okay.

Now, were you aware that on December 13, the same morning that you deleted the September 12 e-mail to Ms. Kelly, that Ms. Kelly actually provided a copy of your e-mail without her response of, “Good,” to Mr. O’Dowd following their senior staff meeting?
MS. RENNA: I was not aware of that.

SENATOR GILL: And that Ms. Kelly also forwarded your e-mail to Mr. Wildstein?

MS. RENNA: I was not aware of that either.

SENATOR GILL: Did you know that Mr. O'Dowd gave your e-mail, provided to him by Ms. Kelly, to the Governor prior to the Governor's conference on December 13?

MS. RENNA: I don't know if that's accurate or not.

SENATOR GILL: I didn't ask you if it was accurate; I asked you if you were aware.

MS. RENNA: I wasn't aware.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. Now, to the accuracy of it -- I will refer you to Mr. O'Dowd's interview memo. And in that interview memo he states that's so.

MS. RENNA: Thank you.

SENATOR GILL: If you want to check that out.

MS. RENNA: Thank you.

SENATOR GILL: You're welcome.

Now, I'm on January 9 -- and we'll frame this a bit so we-- The Bergen Record reported that Ms. Kelly e-mailed Mr. Wildstein, stating the infamous, "Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee." It was on that day that you decided to come forward with your e-mail and the fact that Ms. Kelly had asked you to delete your e-mail September -- had asked you to delete your September 12 e-mail, correct?

MS. RENNA: Correct.
SENATOR GILL: Okay. And also on January 9, the Governor held a press conference announcing Ms. Kelly’s firing, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And it was January 9 when you first spoke to Melissa Orsen, the Lieutenant Governor’s Chief of Staff. And you spoke to the Lieutenant Governor’s Chief of Staff and you told her about the September 12 e-mail and the request to delete.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: And then you-- On that same day, Ms. Orsen -- who is the Lieutenant Governor’s Chief of Staff -- directed you to talk to Regina Egea who, I might add, by that time was named by the Governor to be his next Chief of Staff. Did you go to Regina Egea and say that there’s a September 12 e-mail, and tell her what it was and that you had been directed to delete it?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And did you tell either of those two persons -- the Lieutenant Governor’s Chief of Staff and the Governor’s named new Chief of Staff -- that you also kept a copy?

MS. RENNA: Yes; I did.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And then Ms. Egea then directed you to speak to Chris Porrino?

MS. RENNA: Porrino (indicating pronunciation). Yes.

SENATOR GILL: Porrino.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And he was the Governor’s Counsel. Was that correct?
MS. RENNA: Incoming Chief Counsel at that time, yes.

SENATOR GILL: Incoming Chief Counsel.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: And you went to the Governor's incoming Chief Counsel, and you told the Governor's incoming Chief Counsel about the September 12 e-mail, the contents of it, and that you were requested to delete it.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: And that, in fact, you had not deleted it.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And at that time you still were not aware that on December 13 the Governor and Mr. O'Dowd knew of your e-mail prior to the Governor's press conference.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: During the almost 30-day period -- from December 13, when the Governor knew of your September 13 e-mail, until January 9, when you decided to come forward -- did Mr. O'Dowd ever question you about the e-mail?

MS. RENNA: No, he didn't.

SENATOR GILL: Did the Governor ever question you about the e-mail?

MS. RENNA: No, he didn't.

SENATOR GILL: Did Mr. McKenna ever question you about the e-mail?

MS. RENNA: Mr. McKenna was no longer working in the Office of the Governor at that time.
SENATOR GILL: I didn’t ask you if he was working; I asked you what he said. Did he ever question you about the e-mail?

MS. RENNA: No.

SENATOR GILL: Did anyone ever question you about the e-mail during that timeframe?

MS. RENNA: No, they didn’t.

SENATOR GILL: Now, I just have a couple more questions. Following the-- And then you spoke to Mr. Porrino-- How is that pronunciation?

MS. RENNA: Porrino.

SENATOR GILL: Thanks a lot. I’m glad he doesn’t have a first name that I would have to try, too.

For two hours, the night of January 9, correct?

MS. RENNA: No, that’s false.

SENATOR GILL: Is it false, or is it incorrect?

MS. RENNA: It’s incorrect.

SENATOR GILL: Okay, correct me.

MS. RENNA: I spoke to him on whatever the Friday night was. It was not January 9; it was whatever -- January 11 or 12. Whatever that Friday evening was -- that’s when I spoke with him.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. So that I won’t either be false or incorrect, would it be January 11?

MS. RENNA: Whatever that Friday was.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. So it is the month of January, whatever that Friday was.

MS. RENNA: Correct.
SENATOR GILL: Okay. And before you spoke to the Governor's Chief Counsel, you convened a meeting with your Regional Directors in IGA, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: Why did you convene that meeting before you talked to the Governor's Counsel?

MS. RENNA: I thought it was appropriate to communicate with the staff. I wanted to be able to give a full picture to the best of my ability when I did have the opportunity to talk to Chris Porrino. So in calling them in, I sort of wanted to gut-check my memory on things and ask them if there's anything they thought I should bring up in the larger picture of things.

SENATOR GILL: And what did you discuss with them, and what did they discuss with you?

MS. RENNA: I told you what I just discussed with them, and--

SENATOR GILL: You discussed with them -- you said you had a "gut-check."

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: -- Other than a gut-check, what did you discuss in order to check your gut?

MS. RENNA: I asked them if there were any other mayors or elected officials of any sort that could be upset with the Administration for reasons that I wouldn't have known of. Now, I didn't think that was the case, because I would have known, I believed. But I wanted to make sure, because if that was the case, I wanted to, again, give a full picture to Chris Porrino when I spoke to him.
SENATOR GILL: And did you ask any of the Regional Directors if they were aware of any allegations of governmental retribution or retribution by anyone in the government?

MS. RENNA: No, I didn’t.

SENATOR GILL: Did you ask the Regional Directors if they knew anything about the lane closures?

MS. RENNA: No, I didn’t.

SENATOR GILL: Did you ask the Regional Directors if they had any conversations with anyone in the Governor’s Office -- other than you, because you’re their supervisor -- with respect to any issues of governmental retribution?

MS. RENNA: No, I didn’t.

SENATOR GILL: Now, you indicated -- or at least in the Mastro report you stated --- And you can tell me if this is correct or not, so if you want to get the report, Counsel--

MR. KLINGEMAN: We have it, Senator.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. It says that you stated that you thought you wanted to have the meeting because you wanted to know what could come out of the woodwork when you were talking to the Regional Directors.

MS. RENNA: Yes, correct.

SENATOR GILL: And so come out of the woodwork -- are those your words, or are they the interviewer’s words?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall.

SENATOR GILL: You don’t recall if you said “out of the woodwork” or not?
MS. RENNA: I don't recall that, no.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And do you recall that in your report-- And I understand that in this Mastro report there was no mechanism for you, or any of the interviewees, to correct the interview before it became part of the public record, correct?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And there was no mechanism supplied that after it became part of the public record that you could be able to contact the attorney's office and have an addendum placed on this, correct?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: So that is why I want to know, and will not simply adopt what's there.

Now, on the evening that you spoke to the Governor's Chief Counsel for two hours, what did you discuss with him and what did he discuss with you?

MS. RENNA: I discussed everything I discussed with Gibson Dunn.

SENATOR GILL:--Now, we already know you don't want me to rely on Gibson Dunn because everything's not accurate. So would you tell me what you discussed with him? Or should I simply adopt what's in the Gibson Dunn report as sum and substance of what you told the Governor's Chief Counsel?

MS. RENNA: So the conversation really lasted about two-and-a-half hours. And we discussed, first and foremost, the e-mail. We sort of went backwards, if memory serves me correctly. So we discussed Exhibit 20
--- the messaging in it, the response, and the forwarding of the e-mail to preserve it.

We discussed a little bit of the managerial style of Bridget; the managerial style of how the department was run; and the inner workings, the day-to-day operations. Chris Porrino, at the time, was not Chief Counsel yet, so he was completely unfamiliar. So it was sort of IGA 101, you know -- filling him in as to what it was.

SENATOR GILL: So you’ve made an assumption that he was unfamiliar. And so when you talked to him, what did you know his title to be?

MS. RENNA: He didn’t have a title at the time. He was incoming Chief Counsel.

SENATOR GILL: So he was incoming Chief Counsel without a title.

MS. RENNA: He wasn’t on staff yet, but yes.

SENATOR GILL: So he talked to him, and he wasn’t on staff. Why did you talk to him if he was incoming Chief Counsel, but not really have a title and he wasn’t on staff? Why did you talk to him for two-and-a-half hours?

MS. RENNA: Because he was incoming Chief Counsel.

SENATOR GILL: And was there a Chief Counsel who was on staff at that time?

MS. RENNA: No. The next day, or that Monday, he was going to start. This was 7:30 at night on Friday night.

SENATOR GILL: So there was no Chief Counsel.

MS. RENNA: Correct.
SENATOR GILL: Because the Chief Counsel--

MS. RENNA: --was starting on Monday morning.

SENATOR GILL: Let me finish the question and I'll let you finish the answer.

Who was Chief Counsel before Mr. Porrino?

MS. RENNA: Charlie McKenna.

SENATOR GILL: And Charlie McKenna had been named as the -- or nominated to be the Attorney General, correct?

MS. RENNA: No, that's incorrect.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. What happened to Charlie McKenna?

MS. RENNA: He's heading up the SDA now.

SENATOR GILL: At this time, when we have the incoming Chief Counsel, there had been a Chief Counsel immediately before that, correct?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: And so who was that Chief Counsel?

MS. RENNA: In the interim it would roll to the Deputy Chief Counsel, whose name is Paul Matey.

SENATOR GILL: I didn't ask you in the interim. Who was the Chief Counsel? Who was the last Chief Counsel before the incoming Chief Counsel?

MS. RENNA: Charlie McKenna.

SENATOR GILL: And Charlie McKenna-- Had Charlie McKenna been nominated to any other position?

MS. RENNA: I don't recall the timeline on that.
SENATOR GILL: Do you recall of Charlie McKenna had been nominated to be (indiscernible)?

MS. RENNA: I believe he had but, again, I don’t recall.

SENATOR GILL: And what position do you recall, no matter what timeframe, that he had been nominated for?

MS. RENNA: I’m sorry, Senator. I don’t recall.

SENATOR GILL: Okay.

MS. RENNA: He’s at SDA. He was appointed-- I’m just not following your line of questioning. I apologize.

SENATOR GILL: Oh, no, I apologize--

MS. RENNA: He’s at SDA.

SENATOR GILL: --if it was confusing.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: Okay, we’ll move on.

MS. RENNA: Okay.

SENATOR GILL: You say you don’t know, you don’t know. I have just a couple more questions.

And the reason I asked you about-- And what did Mr.-- What did the Governor’s incoming Chief Counsel say to you?

MS. RENNA: He asked a lot of questions, as lawyers do.

SENATOR GILL: And I know as lawyers do we ask a lot of questions. What were some of the questions that he asked you?

MS. RENNA: A variety of things, again, as I previously stated. We started with this e-mail, we sort of worked backwards. I explained--

SENATOR GILL: Did he ask you why did you delete the e-mail?
MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And did he ask you why you preserved the e-mail?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: Did he ask you if you had ever received any requests to delete government e-mail before?

MS. RENNA: I don’t believe he asked that question.

SENATOR GILL: Did he ask you if you knew anything about the issue of government retribution?

MS. RENNA: Yes, he did.

SENATOR GILL: And did he ask you if this was the first time you were aware of such allegations from anyone with respect to this issue?

MS. RENNA: Yes, I believe he did.

SENATOR GILL: And did he ask you if you had provided this e-mail or any communications to anyone other than himself?

MS. RENNA: He did ask that question.

SENATOR GILL: Did he ask you if you had provided this information to the Governor?

MS. RENNA: No, he didn’t.

SENATOR GILL: Did you tell him that you provided the information to the Lieutenant Governor’s Chief of Staff?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall if I told him that or not.

SENATOR GILL: Did he ask?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know why he would have, no.

SENATOR GILL: Well, I don’t know why you wouldn’t tell him. So we can speculate on both things, but we’ll--
MS. RENNA: It's not an important fact.

SENATOR GILL: Oh, it's not an important fact?

MS. RENNA: No.

SENATOR GILL: Respectfully, that somebody asks you to delete a governmental e-mail; you go to the-- You think that it's important enough that you save it to protect yourself later and then you go to the Lieutenant Governor's Chief of Staff to tell the Lieutenant Governor's Chief of Staff. You go to Ms. Egea, who was what capacity?

MS. RENNA: Incoming Chief Counsel -- incoming Chief of Staff.

SENATOR GILL: Incoming Chief of Staff to whom?

MS. RENNA: Governor Christie.

SENATOR GILL: To the Governor. And then you have a conversation with the incoming Chief Counsel. So maybe it is unimportant.

Now, the reason I'm asking-- And did he-- Did the Governor's Chief Counsel indicate to you that he would take this information to the Governor?

MS. RENNA: I don't recall that; I just don't remember.

SENATOR GILL: And the reason I'm asking you this -- other than to get a fuller understanding -- is because the record will reflect that Mr. Porrino -- help with me the pronunciation.

MS. RENNA: Porrino.

SENATOR GILL: Porrino -- the Governor's Chief Counsel -- was never interviewed by Mr. Mastro. So that was also the reason why I'm exploring with you.
And this is my last question. You testified that you wanted to get your September 12 e-mail to the Governor before his January 9 press conference, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And why did you want the Governor to have your September 12 e-mail before his January 9 press conference?

MS. RENNA: Because it’s important that he has all the facts at his disposal before he goes before the press.

SENATOR GILL: Because if he doesn’t have-- So you wanted to make sure that the Governor knew that on September 12 you had a conversation -- was it September 12? -- that you had a conversation with Mr. Ridley, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And that Mr. Ridley relayed to you that the Mayor of Fort Lee was complaining about lane closures, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And you wanted the Governor to know that Mr. Ridley also related that the Mayor of Fort Lee considered the actions -- or there was a feeling in town that it was government retribution for something, correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

SENATOR GILL: And you thought that was important for the Governor to know before his press conference so that he could have all the facts before him.

MS. RENNA: In light of January 8, correct -- yes.
SENATOR GILL: Okay. And at the point where you-- And to whom did you give the e-mail?

MS. RENNA: Regina Egea.

SENATOR GILL: And you gave it to Regina Egea when?

MS. RENNA: In the morning -- first thing in the morning.

SENATOR GILL: Of January 9.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: But you had already told Regina Egea about this some time ago, correct?

MS. RENNA: No.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. So the first time you told Regina Egea about it was on January 9?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And you gave it to her what time on January 9?

MS. RENNA: It was first thing in the morning.

SENATOR GILL: So is first thing in the morning 9:00?

MS. RENNA: Approximately.

SENATOR GILL: Okay. And when was the Governor’s press conference?

MS. RENNA: I don’t recall; I’m sorry.

SENATOR GILL: And when you gave it to Regina Egea, at that point she was the Governor’s Chief of Staff, correct?

MS. RENNA: Incoming Chief of Staff.

SENATOR GILL: Incoming Chief of Staff. And did-- What did she say to you, if anything, when you gave her the September 12--?
MS. RENNA: She didn't say much. I explained it to her; she said Counsel's Office will likely want to speak with me further about it. I said I was willing to speak to whoever I had to.

SENATOR GILL: And at that point on January 9, when you gave the September 12 e-mail to Regina Egea so that the Governor could have it before his January 9 press conference, you were not aware that the Governor had had this e-mail for 30 days?

MS. RENNA: No, I was not aware of that.

SENATOR GILL: No further questions. Thank you.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Thank you.

Assemblyman Greenwald.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Thank you, Senator.

Ms. Renna, let me first thank you for coming in today. I know it's not easy. I appreciate you coming here to testify. Obviously, a tremendous amount of people have received a request to come in and testify -- subpoenas -- and your willingness to do so, I think, does a couple of things: one, it helps clarify some of the record; and two, it sends a message to others that this is a process we try to find out what happened here.

And I think it's also important that what we've learned today in your testimony is that in spite of numerous interviews the work done by the Mastro report -- you've clarified certain things today -- correct me if I'm wrong -- that are not accurate in that report. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: And that we should not be taking that report necessarily on face value. If this has happened to you on
a number of occasions within the report, I would imagine that it has happened to other people as well. So this is a very important process.

I also want to state for the members of this Committee and for the public that I have had a very long working relationship with you that I have found very rewarding. You’re a remarkable young woman, and it does not surprise me that you took the courage to come here today and testify. And I want to thank you for that, again, as well.

MS. RENNA: Thank you, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Christina, I just want to run through a couple of things with you, okay? You okay? All right.

The purpose of-- Take a minute; you okay?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF COMMITTEE: She’s all right.

MS. RENNA: I’m okay; go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: I know you’re tough. Listen--

MS. RENNA: Sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Look, part of-- While you’re just taking a second, part of the reason why this is important is because it takes a lot of courage to stand up. These are very powerful and influential people, and the impact of this report-- For you to stand up and say, “This isn’t accurate,” a lot of people would just say, “Eh, maybe it’s not that big of deal.” I think you learned a valuable lesson through this process, and that you don’t just let those things go. So again, I want to applaud you for what you’ve done here.
I wanted to really listen to you when you were testifying so I didn’t take “notes” from you. So I don’t want to put words in your mouth, so if I’m saying something that’s not accurate I’d appreciate it if you would clarify it for me as well.

I’m going to paraphrase a little bit, so if I’m off in the tone or tenor of this, let’s have that conversation.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: There seemed to be a group of mayors, from within the Intergovernmental Affairs department, that members of the Department -- which is in the Governor’s Office -- were assigned to do outreach to and facilitate relationships. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: And occasionally you would be notified, and your department would be notified, that there were some mayors who they would want you to not interact with. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: Not in a proactive outreach way.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Not in a proactive--

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: And I think you’ve said -- and, again, I want to make sure I’ve got this right -- that the feeling of the tenor was that maybe those mayors were under “investigation.”

MS. RENNA: Not exclusively.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay.

MS. RENNA: I don’t think that that’s a fair characterization. I gave that as an example really of the mandatory directive language, specifically.
ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay.

MS. RENNA: But also painting a broader picture that just because we didn’t always have -- weren’t always given a reason as to why we might not be as proactive with some as we are with others, it wasn’t just for no rhyme or reason. There were occasions that there were very legitimate reasons. And I think it’s been portrayed that it was just, almost, a vindictive--

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Sure.

MS. RENNA: And I just-- I used that as an example to say the spectrum was broad.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: But there was at no time, when this issue around Fort Lee was going on, that you thought the Mayor of Fort Lee was under investigation, did you?

MS. RENNA: I mean, I wouldn’t know one way or the other.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Right.

MS. RENNA: Personally, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: This was not one of those examples, right?

MS. RENNA: Personally, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Right. But there was clearly some tenor -- and again, I’ll go through some of the e-mails specifically if you need me to -- but there was clearly this give-and-take amongst Bridget Kelly and you that was kind of wrapping around this young man Evan who was working with you -- or for you. Why was he reaching out to the Mayor, did he have authority to reach out to the Mayor, who approved him to reach out to the Mayor? Is that accurate?
MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: What was the concern within the Governor’s Office about reaching out to the Mayor?

MS. RENNA: I have no idea.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay.

The other thing I think that’s important to point out is, if there was a major tragedy going on -- because you indicated in your testimony today that there was, in the midst of some of this when the e-mails were being exchanged and you were getting phone calls -- it was a very hectic time because you were also dealing with Sandy recovery and communities affected by and ravaged by Sandy. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: I assume if one of the mayors who was on the -- I’m going to call it the *do-not-call list*. I don’t know what you guys called it, but whatever the list was called -- it’s like in Harry Potter: the names that can’t be spoken (laughter) -- but this list was a list of some kind and some nature that we were not to call. If one of the towns and one of the mayors who we were not supposed to call was going through a horrific event like Sandy, we would avoid this protocol and we would obviously reach out to the mayor. Because it’s not really about the mayors, it’s about the constituents for which they serve, and we all serve, and that your office serves.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. And who made that decision? Who overrode this protocol within the office? Was that you? Would you say, “That’s a political nonsense thing. This is too important.
We're going to make the call.” Who would make that call to say, “I know we’re not supposed to call this mayor, but something serious happened. Somebody has to call the mayor.”

MS. RENNA: It would just be conversed about amongst the IGA leadership -- whoever that was at the time: you know, me-- It would be, really, honestly, a no-brainer. I mean--

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay, yes. You would think, right?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. So the only thing that you said today that I would disagree with slightly is, this was not just a traffic issue. This bridge is the most populated bridge -- one of the most populated bridges in the country.

SENATOR WEINBERG: The most.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: The most. Again, I want to be careful what we all say. I thought so, but it is the most populated bridge in the country. This was not a traffic accident that took place, and we were trying to get recovery personnel out there to clear the lanes. This was an issue that was going on, not for an hour or two, but for days. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. At some point, when you get an e-mail that says, “The Governor” -- I apologize, “The Mayor is extremely upset about the reduction of lanes -- three to one -- it’s not only causing a horrendous traffic backup, but first responders are having a terrible time maneuvering the traffic because the backup is so
severe," I don’t know what’s going on in the office at the time, but the moment I hear first responders all the games end.

So when you get an e-mail back from Bridget Kelly that says, “Good,” is it your indication that it’s “good” that the Mayor reached out, is it “good” that they’re having traffic problems, is it “good” that the first responders can’t respond, is it “good” that someone thinks it’s for political retribution, is it “good” that the Mayor looks like an idiot? What was the “good”?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: What’s your conjecture? What do you believe the “good” was about? At this point now, when you now know-- You’ve had the exchange around Evan that, why is someone reaching out to him? There’s an issue going on. This is a bridge that is on the terrorist watch list. This is during the week of September 11. It’s the anniversary of one of the most horrific tragedies, with Pearl Harbor, in our country’s history. What is going through your mind?

MS. RENNA: I-- You know, candidly, it was not an out-of-the-ordinary response. And I know we’re looking at it through this lens now--

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Sure.

MS. RENNA: --but it just wasn’t an out-of-the-ordinary response.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: For Bridget Kelly?

MS. RENNA: For Bridget, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay.
So in the Gibson Dunn report, you made a comment today -- which I agree with, in my dealings with Bridget Kelly-- And let me say this to you. I think my dealings with Bridget Kelly are very similar to yours before whatever your relationship was took a turn. She was appointed originally as a legislative liaison to our body. She was a professional young woman; she conducted herself, in my opinion, with the greatest professional responsibility; she was very attentive to our needs; she never made me feel Republican or Democrat. But I can tell you this, and I said this publicly before: On the numerous times that she dealt with me around public policy -- which is the only issue she ever dealt with me on -- she never once would interact with us and we would say to her, “Well, here’s a revision that I think is a compromise that will get this done and gather the support of the number of legislators we need to pass this. And this is what I believe will solve the problem, and this is what will pass and become good law if the Governor’s Office is interested.” I never once got the answer of, “Great, go ahead and do it.” The answer was always, “Let me go back to the Governor’s Office and check.” Now, does that sound like Bridget Kelly to you?

MS. RENNA: It sounds like Bridget Kelly because she was constantly checking before she made a decision (indiscernible).

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Right. So again, I don’t want to put words in your mouth, but what you said today is Bridget was not a decision maker. Is that correct?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. And listen, that is not a criticism. In any office, in any structure, in any corporation, any
business, any government entity there is a chain of command. And I would-- And I had defined Bridget Kelly in the past, and I will do here today: She was a soldier who took orders and executed upon those orders, and had people who responded to her and she would relay those orders. I think you were in that chain of command. Is that an accurate statement?

MS. RENNA: I believe so, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. So Christine, my point would be on this. When it starts to come to the attention-- Here's why this Committee is-- In my opinion, my humble opinion, the purpose of this Committee is to do a few things. I believe with absolute certainty there was an abuse of power. The purpose of this Committee is to find out who orchestrated and who was the architect of this abuse of power, how deep did it go, who gave the order, and why.

Do you believe that Bridget Kelly broke from what was her persona, her responsibility, and for whatever reason in the exchange of e-mails around Evan to you, broke from her normal course of action, and that Bridget Kelly orchestrated and was the architect of the theory around a study and to take it from three lanes to one? Do you believe that?

MS. RENNA: I wouldn't say she was the architect, but she was instrumental in the process.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay.

MS. RENNA: I believe that, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. Now, at the time, in the early part of September when this took place, you weren't aware of this. My understanding is, from hearing you today and looking at the e-mails, you heard about this in the news like everyone else.
MS. RENNA: I probably heard it in the news slower than everyone else because it didn’t get covered in South Jersey nearly as much as it did elsewhere.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: That’s a whole separate issue, Christina, that I’ve been talking about for a long time. (laughter)

MS. RENNA: I was very much out of the loop on how severe this actually was.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Right. So the reality is, though, that if she did not orchestrate it or was not the architect, but was instrumentally involved, and you did not know in the early part of September, the question has not been asked today: At any time between that early part of September and as you sit here today, do you know who was the architect of it, and who worked with Bridget Kelly to order the shutdown of the lanes?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know directly, no. I mean, I think we all have theories, but I don’t know.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. All right, when you say we don’t know directly, it’s not that you have heard from other people who have knowledge? You honestly, as you sit here, have no knowledge and do not know?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. But you, like everyone else sitting in this room, has a gut feeling on what that may be?

MS. RENNA: I mean, I think because of where I am positioned I can make an educated guess on this.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay.
MS. RENNA: But that’s all it would be, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. I don’t know if it’s a fair question, but I’m going to ask you. What is your educated guess?

MS. RENNA: I think it’s exactly what I just stated -- that I think that Bridget was not an architect, but I think that she was participating in whatever this was.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. You also say on the last page of your report -- which I think is a very interesting statement -- “Renna described the IGA operation as Bill Stepien’s brilliant brainchild that represented ‘fantastic government 99 percent of the time.’” What did you mean by that statement?

MS. RENNA: I mean it was fantastic government 99 percent of the time. I mean, it was just-- I was enormously proud to work for IGA, coming not from the political world but from the business world. It was a fantastic experience, and that’s what I meant by that.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: And I assume that the experience around the George Washington Bridge would represent the other 1 percent.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. My gut is that your office epitomized the age-old adage that good public policy and good government is good politics. And that if you serve your constituents and your community regardless of political persuasion, that that is good government and that that will inure to the benefit of those departments of the leadership of those governments, and that ultimately will be recognized. And if that, in fact, happens, it’s good politics.
MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. The problem with this department -- whether unbeknownst to you or not -- is that people at some point, when the election got closer, crossed the line between good government and what was good politics; because there is no other explanation. This gentleman was not under investigation; there was no reason to turn off the lines of communication to this Mayor. I mean, you get a letter from a Mayor that is talking about, "First responders can't do their job," somewhere the politics took over and superseded. And the lesson in this -- and whether a crime was committed or not -- is that, that 1 percent and the weight of that 1 percent far outweighs the 99 percent of getting it right 99 percent of the time. And that's the tragedy here.

MS. RENNA: If, in fact, that's what this was; we don't know if that's what this was. But--

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Well, you know-- And again, Christine, we don't. But here's the problem. And again, in the Gibson Dunn report, your interactions with Kelly that evening where Kelly says, "You know, Christina, if someone tells me something's okay, who am I to question them?"

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: We know it was. What we don't know is why and who. That's what we don't know. But it's-- We know she was not someone who would issue an order like this. We know that she was someone who took orders and executed upon them. We know that she stated to you, in real time, in that moment when you called her "erratic" -- I would call that conversation, reading the transcript, almost
frantic. "You know, Christina, if someone tells me something is okay, who am I to question them?" That is an honest statement that she made from her gut, when I would tell you she was scared and nervous. And she may have said to you, "I don't need vindication," but she sure as hell was looking for vindication.

And my concern is that the breech of trust to the public in a situation like this is the damage that has been done; that Governor Christie -- when he was a U.S. Attorney and talks so often about -- that the abuse by elected officials was worse than that of drug dealers because it was a breech of the public trust. And that's what this is.

Are you aware that on Page 5 and 6 in one of the Mastro reports, the report states that "Bridget Kelly canceled the meetings that IGA had set up between the Jersey City Mayor Steve Fulop and high-ranking members of the Administration; between several commissioners in EDA, CEO Michelle Brown." Do you know why Kelly would have done that?

MS. RENNA: I don't, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. Mayor Fulop--There was no fear he was under investigation?

MS. RENNA: Not to my knowledge.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Right. There was-- But again, it's all in this same timeframe and window.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: I think, again, certainly clearly indicating that at some point people above you who were in charge of this operation took what was a good government entity and started to blur the line between government and politics.
Do you understand Bridget Kelly to have the power to determine with whom Administration officials could meet? Was that her authority to do so, or did she have to go to someone else?

MS. RENNA: No, that was her authority.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. So she could independently make a determination of who you all could meet with.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. Do you know what the ground rules were for that?

MS. RENNA: It varied. I mean, in this instance, it was not abnormal for any newly elected mayor for IGA to put together what we called a Mayor Day, which was sort of State Government 101 for newly elected mayors. So this is in that vein.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: But that chart that she had on her wall of mayors wasn’t newly elected mayors.

MS. RENNA: The chart on her wall?

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: I thought there was a chart that she had on her wall of-- Go ahead.

MS. RENNA: Yes; what Gibson Dunn presented me with?

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Yes.

MS. RENNA: That was a list of mayors, constituency leaders, a variety of people.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Right. It almost sounds like a lineup of people who she would want to review, meet with, and she was trying to develop relationships with -- but it almost sounds like it's a good and bad list. Not that you would know, but when you look at it--
MS. RENNA: I would not characterize it as a good and bad list. It was a mixed bag of individuals. There were, like I said, mayors, there were constituency leaders, there were State Legislators, there were Republicans, there were Democrats. There were people who endorsed the Governor, there were people who did not endorse the Governor. So I don’t know if I agree with that characterization.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay, that’s fair.

On Wednesday, August 7, Tab 10, at 5:59 in the evening, it looks like from your personal e-mail you sent to Bridget Kelly a list, under the subject “Bergen D’s.”

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: And they’re all— I’m assuming -- I know most of them -- but I’m assuming because of the subject line they’re all Democratic mayors in Bergen County.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. Why did you send that list to Bridget Kelly?

MS. RENNA: I have no idea.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Is it routine for you to send a list like that?

MS. RENNA: She requested it, but she didn’t tell me why she needed it.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. Did she request a list like that often?

MS. RENNA: No, I think this is the only list I can think of.
ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Was there any follow-up from that list?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: No interaction with IGA to follow up with Mayor So-and-so? Okay.

On Tab 6 -- I'm sorry, Tab 9 -- there is Evan's recap, which I think is from your personal e-mail as well, and it says under Mayor Sokolich-- Do you have that in front of you?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: "The Mayor seems supportive of the Administration and willing to help as needed. But there is a bleak outlook on any public endorsement. Today Fort Lee will go live with their own emergency radio broadcast. That sounds really good. They will immediately start providing over 300 hand-cranked radio units to residents and businesses with an emphasis on seniors and special needs. That sounds like a very good public policy initiative. This will put Fort Lee in an exclusive group of municipalities in the nation with its own dedicated emergency radio station. Sounds like great public policy. Mayor Sokolich is also very proud of the new development on a vacant 16-acre parcel just south of the George Washington Bridge -- a major focus of Mayor Sokolich's 2011 reelection campaign. This multimillion dollar development will encompass luxury apartments, restaurants, a public park, and movie theater. Sounds like a great public policy for the state in a very important region of the state."

And then he says he was "shocked the Governor didn't participate in groundbreaking." Why was he shocked?
MS. RENNA: Because they had a very good relationship.

ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Okay. This e-mail, unintended -- and I know it comes from your private e-mail -- in my mind, crosses the line between the good public government services of the department and the first line that, “it looks bleak that he will do a public endorsement.” If the purpose of this agency is to do good government and good relations, it should never have been tied to this public endorsement. And I think it starts to show the turn, on June 6, that the office and the department started to change its focus away from good government and start to direct itself inappropriately towards the good politics, in not allowing one to take care of the other on its own through its natural progression.

Christine, I just want to close with where I started. This is very hard. And you should be commended for being the first and the bravest, I think, to come forwarded and have this conversation. And your testimony today is very helpful, I think, to tell us that we still don’t know the whole story regardless of the Mastro report; that the Mastro report is not accurate in and of itself. The level of inaccuracies, we don’t know.

But the truth of the matter is we still don’t know what is at the core of this Committee, which is while we know there is an abuse of power, who was the architect of this and why was it orchestrated? But you deserve a tremendous amount of credit for being someone who was willing to come in and acknowledge that the whole story is not out there and there is more to tell.

So thank you very much. I appreciate you being here.

MS. RENNA: Thank you.
ASSEMBLYMAN GREENWALD: Chairman and Chairwoman, thank you.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Thank you, Assemblyman. Senator O'Toole, do you have any questions?

SENATOR O'TOOLE: No.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Any other questions from--

One quick follow-up question to Assemblyman Greenwald's. Maybe I have more than a passing interest in Democrat mayors in Bergen County. But you said you didn’t know why. What did she ask you for?

MS. RENNA: A list of all the Democrat mayors in Bergen County.

SENATOR WEINBERG: And that was it?

MS. RENNA: That was it, yes.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Okay, all right.

Assemblyman Moriarty.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Thank you, Ms. Renna, for coming in today. I know this must be difficult.

I wanted to start off by asking you about a statement here in the Gibson Dunn report about Stepien's top 100 towns list. Are you aware of that?

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So you say that the focus of the regional team for four years was good government across the board.

MS. RENNA: Yes.
ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Nonpartisan.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Now, tell me if the Gibson Dunn report did not accurately portray what you said. But if you read the following lines, it says, "It was implemented," this good government across the board, "was implemented by managing constituent relations with every elected official at both the local and county level." But the T-100 towns list -- I guess that's the top 100--

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: --was Stepien's brainchild. It says that you did not know how Stepien came up with the list. You said that the list was not based on town size, so it wasn't the top 100 towns. But you recall being told anecdotally that "Stepien was a brilliant mastermind of voting data and had compiled a list of key towns whose support for the Governor could grow." That does not sound like good government across the board, if I may. It sounds like using voting data to decide who IGA should concentrate on. Why would voting data be used to decide who to concentrate on? Does that sound like good government?

MS. RENNA: Well, I don't know that that's accurate. I mean, I heard that anecdotally. That may not be the case at all. I've heard lots of things about how the top 100 town list was constructed. And I go on further in my memo to explain that it's a true mixed bag of towns, of political parties, rural, suburban, urban, you know--

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: But when you heard that anecdotally, did that not cause you to be concerned that maybe you were concentrating not on good government but on towns that political analysts
using voting data had determined would be the best towns to mine, going forward, so that the Governor could be successful in his reelection campaign? Did you ask anyone? Did you do anything with that information?

MS. RENNA: I mean, I may have been concerned if I heard it was exclusively built on that list, but that's not my understanding at all. And again--

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: You asked nobody? You did not question anybody?

MS. RENNA: I felt the top 100 town list was a really helpful tool for me personally to be used day-to-day. You know--

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: But when you see a list that makes-- It's not the top 100 towns in terms of population, it doesn't seem to have any rhyme or reason. And you're told anecdotally it's based on voting data to help the Governor grow his popularity, wouldn't you want to know what that top 100 list was based on?

MS. RENNA: Not necessarily. I mean, listen, IGA's job was relationship building. This was simply a way for us to focus our efforts on really where to start. With so many municipalities, this was our jumping-off point. And if you look at the list, and you look at the list of towns, there are towns whose administrations wouldn't answer our phone calls if we tried -- and we tried all the time.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Let me-- I'm sorry--

MS. RENNA: There are Republican towns that we -- those administrations don't want to interface with the Governor.
ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Who gave you the top 100 list?

MS. RENNA: I just got it when I started in IGA. I don’t remember who specifically gave it to me.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Did it change from time to time?

MS. RENNA: After Sandy we added 17 towns to the list. So it became a top 117.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Who was in charge of updating that list, or who had the authority to change it?

MS. RENNA: Bill added the 17 -- Bill Stepien added the 17 new towns to it.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Was Bill, at the time that he added towns to it, was he on the campaign side or was he part of government?

MS. RENNA: No, he was in government, and largely the towns were added because of the implications from Sandy.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Okay, let me ask you this. Speaking of Bill Stepien, what was the-- How did the coordination work between Bill Stepien, when he was running the campaign, and Bridget Kelly as your boss? Would they coordinate activities, to your knowledge?

MS. RENNA: I am quite certain that they were not coordinating activities.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Okay. And why is that?

MS. RENNA: Because I know, because Bridget told me that she was not on speaking terms with Bill Stepien.
ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Okay.

I want to go back to some things that happened starting last August, and give you an opportunity to clarify anything that might be incorrect. I've known you for a long time; I think of you as a straight shooter and someone I respect.

MS. RENNA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: And I don’t think of you as a wallflower. I think of you as a woman of action, smart, sharp. So there is some areas of the testimony that puzzle me, quite frankly, and I want to go back over that.

So back in August of 2013, you were aware that Bridget Kelly apparently had a problem with Fort Lee’s Mayor, but you say you don’t know what that was.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: You knew about the George Washington Bridge lane closures, at least by September 12 -- which was kind of when it was happening or at the end of when it was happening. So you knew about that, correct?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: You knew that Mayor Sokolich was very displeased about this.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: And you knew that Bridget Kelly’s reply to the Mayor’s displeasure was, “Good.”

MS. RENNA: Correct.
ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So given all that information, did you do anything with it?

MS. RENNA: No, I didn’t.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: That surprises me. Also, since you know Bridget Kelly’s relationship with David Wildstein -- which you said was very close and chummy -- and then you start seeing the news coverage, didn’t you start wondering about all of these pieces of the puzzle, and wondering whether the Governor’s Office actually had some involvement in the lane closings?

MS. RENNA: I never thought the Governor’s Office had involvement with the lane closures, which is why, on January 8 when this happened, I was completely shocked by what happened.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: When I say the Governor’s Office, I don’t necessarily mean the Governor; I mean Bridget Kelly is in the Governor’s Office, Deputy Chief of Staff.

MS. RENNA: Correct. And I never felt that she had anything to do with this until January 8. I mean, I was very shocked.

Even with the ask of the deletion of the e-mail, I just thought she was being paranoid and she was nervous. And I know that she can be insecure. And so-- And I don’t know the degree of her -- during this conversation -- elaborating or being overdramatic. I don’t know; I’m not privy to the conversation. So I walked away from that thinking the request was strange, the request was inappropriate. But, in the same breath, I still didn’t think she was involved. I just thought she was being paranoid.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I want to get to that later. I want to go back to-- So you did nothing with that information.
MS. RENNA: No, I did nothing with the information.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So then you decided, apparently unilaterally, to stop communicating with the Mayor of Fort Lee and told Evan Ridley--

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: --not to do anything until you were able to clarify what was going on.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: And then you said you never followed up.

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: This I find so strange because weeks go on -- no follow up; months go on -- no follow up. Newspaper reports -- did you follow up?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: No. There are resignations; people are resigning from the Port. Still you’ve never gotten to Bridget Kelly to ask, “What’s going on, and can we still talk to Mayor Sokolich?”

MS. RENNA: And I understand, again, in retrospect how that looks. But the work environment was enormously fast-paced; it was round the clock at this point. And this was-- You know, no one-- I think I can say that everyone just didn’t think this was as severe of an issue until it was -- until we realized it was. And I know I feel guilty of that. Just once David Wildstein and Bill Baroni resigned, that’s really when my antenna went up -- at that point. Beyond that, you know, the Governor is asked about a zillion things in the news all the time. And it was just a part of a fast-paced
work environment. I mean, I know in retrospect it sounds crazy, but that really is the answer.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Do you regret not doing something?

MS. RENNA: I-- Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So then the Governor, on December 2 apparently -- I think I have the right date -- asks all his staff if they know anything. Who asked you?

MS. RENNA: No, it was senior staff. He asked senior staff.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Nobody asked you?

MS. RENNA: No one asked me.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Okay. So he comes out and says he knows nothing about this because he’s been assured by his senior staff that everybody’s been questioned. When he comes out with this, you still know that you have this e-mail, right?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: You don’t say anything.

MS. RENNA: I didn’t at that point, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Ten days later you get this odd phone call at night, and you’re asked to destroy evidence, basically. I mean, I know you said it was odd. Did you think that it was slightly illegal?

MS. RENNA: I don’t want to-- The answer is I was scared of overstepping over Bridget. This is a very severe implication. If I ended up being wrong, I thought I would lose my job. I just-- I didn’t want to-- If I went to Counsel’s office with the e-mail, I had no doubt that whoever was in Counsel’s Office would go to Bridget Kelly and say, “Why does Christina
Renna want five minutes with me?” Just because a lot of people -- I mean, especially in Counsel’s Office -- didn’t know me very well. So I was fearful; I was fearful of getting her caught up in something that I didn’t know if she was involved in or not, and I was scared of if it ended up being false, violating her trust and never being able to get that back. I mean, there is a lot of things that went into it.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: So you were fearful for your job and not fearful that--

MS. RENNA: Not necessarily for my job, but for crossing Bridget.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Why were you so fearful of Bridget Kelly?

MS. RENNA: Well, she was my boss, and she was senior staff. And I am very proud of the work I did, and was progressively promoted over four years several times and increased responsibility. But I was never a decision maker, and she was.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I’m sure that most people are afraid to cross their boss, but at the same time you characterize Bridget Kelly as someone who wasn’t = didn’t seem to be a great leader and looked for approval from people. And you don’t believe that she could have been the architect of closing the bridge. So I’m trying to rectify in my mind how you would feel that she’s somewhat weak and looking for approval, and at the same time you’re afraid to confront her with anything.

MS. RENNA: Maybe I can’t describe it either.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Okay, fair enough.
So if she wasn’t the architect, do you think David Wildstein could be the architect for closing a bridge?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARY: I mean, would he have the ability to do that by himself?

MS. RENNA: I believe he would have the ability, yes; but I’m not positive.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARY: So is it your feeling that David Wildstein and Bridget Kelly acted alone?

MS. RENNA: I don’t know.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARY: Do you have a theory on that?

MS. RENNA: I have lots of theories.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARY: Do you want to tell us any?

MS. RENNA: I’ll take a pass. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARY: So you said you wanted to make sure that the Governor had all the information on January 9 -- to make sure he went out there-- Why in God’s name didn’t you want the Governor to have all the information on December 2, or December 12, or back in September when you had information that seemed to lead to something suspicious going on here?

MS. RENNA: I honestly don’t think I was even still all that focused on this, come December 2. This was not necessarily an issue in my purview; this was not-- This e-mail had come in and went in September, there was no follow-up. It was just not on my forefront.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARY: Not even when someone calls you at 8:45 at night and tells you to destroy a document?
MS. RENNA: Well, that's when things shifted -- or right around this time was around the same time that David Wildstein was being subpoenaed and they were resigning. This was all around that time period when I stated that -- I really started to take note of what was going on. But up until that time, as I said previously, we fielded 30 calls a day from angry mayors about something. And I'm not saying that this is just any pothole or any graffiti on an overpass -- it's not. But the pure volume of incoming we received is enormous.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Can you tell me about your conversations with Bridget Kelly on January 7, 8, 9 -- anything that you discussed on those three days or since then. And is there anything she said -- no matter how seemingly unimportant -- that might shed light on who else was involved or how this all happened?

MS. RENNA: The Gibson Dunn notes do a good job with recapping that.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Well, since in some ways they do a bad job on other things, I'd like to hear it directly from you, if you don't mind.

MS. RENNA: Orr January 7, Bridget and I met for nearly two hours -- about an hour-and-a-half -- on IGA personnel positioning. With term two starting she was picking my brain on who I thought would be good fits in certain areas of different departments, and asking my opinions of certain staff members who worked for me and things like that.

During the course of that conversation she made an offhanded comment to me about being happy the Fort Lee situation was dying down -- which I didn't react to at all. I just said, "Yeah." You know, I just sort of
nodded in agreement. And she made a comment that she had been hiding under her desk any time someone walked in with questions, nervous about the Fort Lee situation. She was happy it was dying down. So that was just a passing comment; there was no further conversation on it.

January 8 happened. The morning of January 8, I started working with Bridget on a few things starting at 6:30 in the morning -- 6:30, 7:00 in the morning -- on a few things.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: And where were you? Were you in her office, or your office, or somewhere else?

MS. RENNA: When? On January 7?

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: January 8.

MS. RENNA: January 8.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: At 6:30 in the morning.

MS. RENNA: Oh, no. This was just home.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Okay.

MS. RENNA: Okay -- answering e-mails, text messaging, working on a few things. Going in, my entire commute into work we were working on a few work things. And then around 8:00 she said she had to jump on a conference call. And then somewhere between, I think, 8:30 and 9:00 the story broke. So I had been working with her pretty consistently throughout the morning, and then the first phone call came maybe 45 minutes after the story broke -- 45 minutes to an hour. She called me on my office line crying.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: You were now at the office.

MS. RENNA: Yes, I was at the office at this point.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Okay. And she was where?
MS. RENNA: She was in her car. She said she had pulled over to the side of the road. And she was crying. And I told her I saw the article. And she apologized. She said, “I’m so sorry, Christina.” I asked her if she was coming in to the office, and she said no. And I asked her if she had talked to the Governor, and she said no. And then she— Another call came in, so she let me go.

Maybe an hour after that, maybe, she called me back again on my office line. She sounded a little bit more calm, but I think she was still crying at this point. And she said that she needed help deleting her Twitter feed because people were tweeting mean things about her. And she said, “You should go on your Twitter feed because people are tweeting mean things about you,” because I was a friend of hers, we had had some tweets on her-- So I went on, she gave me her password to her Twitter feed. I tried to pull it up with her log-in information and deactivate her account. I tried about five times and, for whatever reason, I couldn’t get it to deactivate. So I explained that to her, and then I tried to reset and send her something so she could deactivate it. All I know is that it ended up coming down; I didn’t take it down, but it ended up coming down later in that day.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARITY: Do you know if there was any potential evidence on that, that you were now taking down? You were now being asked to delete something else. Did you think that there could be some evidence on there?

MS. RENNA: Honestly, it didn’t cross my mind. She very-- She only used the Twitter account to really watch what other staff members were doing on Twitter. She didn’t use it very regularly. She didn’t tweet
regularly. It was more, I think, a mechanism to watch what everyone else in IGA was tweeting to make sure they weren’t doing anything inappropriate.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Did she, at any point, say, “I didn’t do any of this. This is terrible”?

MS. RENNA: She didn’t, no. And I didn’t ask. I didn’t ask.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: And was that the extent of your conversations on January 8?

MS. RENNA: No. So then she called me back again and was much calmer a little bit later in the day and was just trying to act normal. She was seemingly just business as usual. She communicated to me that her daughter, who had just turned 17, was chased to school by reporters and she was upset about that. So at that point she got a little emotional. And she just was trying to work normal, asking me about the State of the State address and how our RSVPs for ticketing were coming in. She provided me with a new e-mail address for her and asked me to send an updated State of the State list to a new e-mail address. And she asked me not to share it with anyone else in IGA -- which I agreed to.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: What time was this on January 8? In the afternoon, late afternoon?

MS. RENNA: Assemblyman, the day is such a blur I really couldn’t tell you. I think it was later in the afternoon -- maybe mid-afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: But it’s your testimony that she was acting as if she was going to continue in employment and moving forward with her tasks and her duties.
MS. RENNA: I hung up the phone thinking she was in denial. That was the impression I got.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARTY: At that point, when you talked to her and she was still talking about the State of the State and invitations, did she indicate or did you ask her whether she had talked to anyone in the Administration -- either the Governor or the Chief of Staff or any Counsel? Had anyone talked to her and said, “Hang tight. This will be fine.” Or, “Get in here.” Anything?

MS. RENNA: The only question I asked her was earlier in the day -- and I did ask if she had talked to the Governor. And she did say no. But beyond that, I didn’t ask any of those questions, and she didn’t offer any of that information--

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARTY: Okay.

MS. RENNA: --that I can recall.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARTY: I’ll try to wrap up quickly because I know we’re getting late.

Let’s go to the-- Is there any other conversation on January 8?

MS. RENNA: Not on January 8. There was--

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARTY: January 9?

MS. RENNA: There was a conversation on January 9.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORTIARTY: Can you tell me about that?

MS. RENNA: The conversation on January 9 was, she called me before the Governor’s press conference -- maybe an hour before the press conference -- crying, telling me that she had been fired. She was hysterical, she could barely get the words out. I was crying. And she just said, “I don’t know what I’m going to do.” And I believe I asked her again
at that point if she had talked to the Governor, and she said, “He won’t talk to me. I talked to Chris Porrino.” And she said a few times, “I don’t know what I’m going to do.” And she apologized a lot, and then she said, “You can’t trust anyone, Christina.” That’s what she basically closed the conversation with. “You can’t trust anyone, Christina.”

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Have you spoken to her, texted her, e-mailed her, or any communication since?

MS. RENNA: After that conversation ended, she text messaged me with, “I’m sorry to tarnish IGA.” I wrote her back, trying to comfort her, of course. And she texted me back, saying that we were an amazing team and an amazing group of people. And I just told her to hang in there, and that’s it. I have not talked to her since.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: You have never been-- She never offered an explanation of her actions or anyone else’s?

MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Have you-- Can you tell us why you left the Governor’s Office?

MS. RENNA: I was contemplating leaving beforehand, especially in light of my conversation with Bridget on January 7. And I had already been exploring some opportunities in the business sector -- to go back. So I just felt the time was right and, like I said, I’d been contemplating it really all of December already. And it just made sense.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Has anyone from the Governor’s Office or anyone related to the Governor’s Office discussed with you your testimony before the Gibson Dunn panel or before this panel at any time?
MS. RENNA: No, not at all.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: I thank you for your time and I appreciate your appearing here today.

MS. RENNA: Thank you, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN MORIARTY: Thank you, madam Chairwoman.

SENATOR WEINBERG: Assemblywoman Caride.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Good afternoon, Ms. Renna.

MS. RENNA: Hi, good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: I know it's been a long day for you so I'm going to try to be brief.

MS. RENNA: That's fine.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: And you're doing a very good job at that.

I want to go to Tab 13 for a minute. I just want to follow up with something that you had -- the way you had answered a question for Assemblyman Greenwald.

MS. RENNA: This is the one with the curse word.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: No, no -- Tab 13. The one --

MS. RENNA: Oh, it's not. Okay, I apologize.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: No, no. I wouldn't do that to you. (laughter)

MS. RENNA: I was a little worried.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: No, it's the one where Assemblyman Greenwald went over the Evans (sic) recap from Christopher Stark.
MS. RENNA: Correct, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: I have (indiscernible) on my paper, here. Let me see something. Tab 9, I’m sorry.

Assemblyman Greenwald had asked you about Mayor Sokolich’s statement about he was shocked that the Governor didn’t participate in the groundbreaking.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: And you had responded that they had a good relationship.

MS. RENNA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Who had a good relationship?

MS. RENNA: I think Mayor Sokolich thought that he had a good relationship with the Governor because on one or two occasions-- I mean, he had been at Drumthwacket for a holiday party and things of that nature. So I knew Mayor Sokolich thought he had a very good relationship with the Governor and was very proud of that relationship. Even though he wasn’t planning to endorse, he actually really personally liked the Governor, was my understanding. So that’s really what I meant by that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Now, these recaps -- what was the purpose of the recaps by your Regional Directors?

MS. RENNA: The purpose was basically to make sure they were doing what they said they were doing. So if they took a meeting on the road -- they were out on the road all day -- this was proof of the job that they did, and it’s a way for, obviously, me to stay on top of all the issues
around the state. And these recaps, they were always submitted to Bridget for review as well -- so she was always kept in the loop about things.

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE:** So it had to really do with the purpose of your office, which was proactively reaching out on a nonpartisan--

**MS. RENNA:** Correct. I mean, this is a good example of just the kind of random government issues that were raised with IGA. This is just one Regional Director; we had four. So it gives you a sense of the volume.

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE:** But now, you'll have to forgive me, because I'm a little bit confused as to where does the office work stop and where does the campaigning start? And in this particular recap, it says there is a bleak outlook on a public endorsement. So it seems to me that there is a combination of the two -- of campaigning work, or endorsement work, and public policy or outreach work.

**MS. RENNA:** I mean, I can't speak to why Evan led with that in this recap. I just don't know why he did. But just for big picture purposes, this was not a surprise. We knew Mayor Sokolich was not endorsing from March or April, and that was absolutely fine. And we continued a great relationship with him. As you can see, in June we had a proactive meeting with him where he was going through the whole list of items going on in town. So--

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE:** Well, that's another thing that confuses me also. If you knew back in April -- March -- that he was not going to come out and endorse, why was your office still being proactive?

**MS. RENNA:** Because we were always proactive with everyone.
ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: So then why would Mr. Ridley need permission or approval to speak with him in August?

MS. RENNA: Well, that’s why it was confusing to me, because just because a mayor was not endorsing does not mean in any way, shape, or form IGA cut contacts, stopped contact -- never. And Mayor Sokolich is a great example of that. And these recaps are a great example of that.

You know, as it relates to-- I lost my train of thought, actually; so I’m just going to stop there.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: With regards to the endorsements, was your staff instructed to have separate meetings with the mayors and the elected officials to discuss possible endorsements, say, after hours, in the evening, or on the weekends?

MS. RENNA: Correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: And then go in during the week to see the mayors and discuss business? Is that what they were instructed to do?

MS. RENNA: Any meeting with a political purpose to it that would help in a volunteer capacity of campaign initiatives were done in the evenings. There were a lot of dinner, grab a beer after work, after-hours types of things.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: So Mr. Ridley-- What area of New Jersey does he live in -- south, middle, or north?

MS. RENNA: Where does he live?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Roughly.

MS. RENNA: I’m not sure, but his region is the northern region.
ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: So he would be expected to then drive back upstate to Fort Lee and discuss possible endorsements, or perhaps go up to North Jersey and discuss possible endorsements with potential mayors after hours?

MS. RENNA: Well, he wouldn’t be expected; he would voluntarily do that if he wanted to. I mean, it’s purely a voluntary decision. No one was mandated to participate in any of this.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: And, again, this recap report -- it shouldn’t really have that information then? Is that what--

MS. RENNA: I’m sorry, I didn’t hear the question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: The recap report -- it shouldn’t contain information with regards to potentially endorsing or not endorsing the Governor?

MS. RENNA: I mean, it could; I would say that this didn’t happen frequently in the team’s recaps. So that’s why I said I really can’t speak to why Evan led with it. It was my understanding that it was just a proactive outreach meeting. It’s my recollection he wasn’t-- I mean, we already knew for months he wasn’t endorsing, so this is sort of an oddity that I can’t explain.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: If we could just go to Tab 15. Now, I know that this e-mail from Mr. Ridley to you is on a Sunday, but it refers to a meeting with the Fort Lee Mayor and it also refers to a meeting with the New Milford Mayor.

MS. RENNA: Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Would that be based on IGA business.
MS. RENNA: So these were the meetings— This was the meeting that Bridget got upset that he took -- that I asked him for recaps to be sure that he actually did attend these meetings that he said he attended. So these were the recaps he provided me.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: But based on IGA business--
MS. RENNA: Based on IGA business, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Okay. So for example, the last sentence with regards to the meeting with the New Milford Mayor, it says, “Still willing to be a team player,” in quotes. And then, “Help out where possible.” What exactly does that mean?

MS. RENNA: You would have to ask Evan. I mean, I don’t know.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Did you ask him about that?
MS. RENNA: No.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: And what about the last line, again, with regards to Mayor Sokolich. “Supportive, but no signs of endorsement.”

MS. RENNA: Yes, again, I don’t know why he included that, especially because we had known that piece of information for months.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Did you, at any time, call to his attention that he’s not supposed to mix politics with the policies of the office? Or, I should say, getting endorsements on work product material that had to do with outreach?

MS. RENNA: I would have those conversations when they were necessary to be had. This example here, I don’t feel as though that conversation was necessary to be had. Now, maybe it’s just the way I read
it, but I read it as Evan’s own personal comment, not that this was an action item in a proactive meeting he set up on IGA time. It almost seems like these last two bullet points are just his closing thoughts. I am in no way reading this thinking that that was a topic of conversation. And I would have no reason to believe it would. The team was extraordinarily disciplined as far as when these conversations happened.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: I understand what you’re saying, but when I read this it sounds to me like the last bullet point on each has to do with campaigning. So I would have thought that that would have been brought to their attention -- not to mix the campaigning with the actual work of IGA.

MS. RENNA: Again, these are Evan’s own thoughts. It does not come across to me as an action item of the meeting. I didn’t see any problem with it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CARIDE: Did you ever receive any calls from any of the mayors or elected officials with regards to -- during office hours -- with regards to potentially coming out and endorsing the Governor?

MS. RENNA: It happened on a few occasions where mayors would bring up the subject with staff when they were serving in their staff capacity. Usually when that happened, the meeting concluded and I got a panicked phone call from one of the staff members, scared that this subject was just brought up, that they didn’t bring it up, and that they told them that he would call them back over the weekend or later that night to discuss it; because everyone was so sensitive to lines being crossed. So just because of that, I do know a few examples of mayors who reached out while they
Vivid recollections show Port Authority cops' concern with GWB lane closures

BY SHAYN BOBURG
STAFF WRITER | THE RECORD

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On the second day of the George Washington Bridge lane closures last year, a Port Authority police officer stationed at a gridlocked intersection picked up the two-way radio in his patrol car. The closures were creating “hazardous conditions” on Fort Lee’s streets, he told fellow officers according to his own account, and the lanes needed to be reopened.

“Shut up,” a Port Authority police supervisor at the bridge allegedly replied, instructing the officer not to discuss the apparently secret operation over an open radio channel.

That exchange, as described by officer Steve Pisciotta and involving the highest-ranking officer at the bridge, Deputy Inspector Darcy Licorish, is included in a summary of the recollections of nearly a dozen rank-and-file police officers that was provided to lawmakers investigating the lane closures, according to documents obtained by The Record.

Document: Port Authority police accounts of traffic jam

The accounts of 11 officers at the bridge during the week of the closures share common threads and provide vivid new details about how the operation was put into effect on a Monday morning nearly a year ago.

The instructions about the new lane configuration, many of them said, were delivered at roll call before the morning rush hour on the first day by Police Lt. Thomas “Chip” Michaels, who grew up with Governor Christie in the town of Livingston. He told the officers not to touch the traffic cones choking the number of access lanes out of Fort Lee from three down to one, according to the officers.

Later that morning, officers said they saw Michaels driving David Wildstein — the Port Authority executive who ordered the closures and
also grew up with Christie — around Fort Lee’s gridlocked streets.

Several immediately heard gossip in a police break room that the closures were part of a dispute between Christie and Fort Lee Mayor Mark Sokolich, who had declined to endorse the governor for re-election. The officers described the resulting traffic as “horrible” and “horrible,” and at least one urged a reversal of the operation, only to get warnings that his remarks over the radio were “inappropriate,” according to his attorney. It’s the first indication that police charged with patrolling the bridge recognized and notified superiors of the chaos being caused by the lane closures.

The summary, written by the legislative panel’s attorney Michael W. Knoo and based on an interview with the officers’ attorney Dan Bibb, renews questions about the role of some Port Authority police officers in what appears to have been an exercise motivated partly by politics.

The Record also obtained separate summaries of informal interviews with the two police supervisors at the bridge at the time, Michaels and Licorish. Those interviews were conducted prior to the one given on behalf of the 11 rank-and-file officers and do not address some of the allegations regarding the instructions — and warnings — the officers say they received.

Read the summaries of Michael’s interview and Licorish’s interview.

Michaels, during an interview in late July, told the panel’s attorneys that he was told by Wildstein that the closures were part of a legitimate traffic study, intended to determine if cutting off access from Fort Lee would benefit drivers on Route 95.

The five-page interview summary is the first time Michaels’ account of what happened at the bridge has been made public.

In it, Michaels acknowledged driving Wildstein — whom he knew from Livingston — to survey the traffic congestion on the first day of the closures. Wildstein was a “cop buddy” who was “understood to be third in command at the Port Authority,” Michaels said.

That same morning, they went to a local diner for breakfast, during which they discussed “nothing substantive concerning the lane closures” but did talk about the gubernatorial race and Christie’s prospects as a presidential candidate.

Some of the 11 rank-and-file officers at the bridge, however, described the supervisors as ordering them not to voice opposition to the lane closures as they were happening.

Perhaps the most explosive anecdote was provided on behalf of Pisciotta, a 12-year officer who is typically one of the first to arrive at the bridge before the morning rush hour, according to the summary. Pisciotta’s attorney said his client, who had worked at the bridge for over five years, recognized early on that the closures were causing traffic safety problems and aired his concern over the radio on the second day, according to the summary.

Licorish “replied to Pisciotta by radio, telling him to ‘shut up’ and that there could be no further discussion of the lane closures over the air,” according to Pisciotta’s attorney.

Michaels and a police sergeant then “visited him in person at his post to tell him that his radio communication had been inappropriate,” the attorney said.

A second officer, Angela Tait, said she witnessed both exchanges, according to the summary.

State Sen. Loretta Weinberg, who is co-chairwoman of the legislative panel, said the summaries indicate that “law enforcement was in on this whole thing.”

“It was bad enough that it was the Port Authority and people close to the governor, but now you’ve got the people who are responsible for keeping us safe,” she said. “Any time you have law enforcement involved in a political operation, that’s very troubling.”

Bibb, who is representing the 11 officers, also told the lawmakers’ attorney that many of the officers have already been interviewed by federal investigators, who are conducting a criminal probe. Bibb provided the legislative panel a summary of what the officers stationed at the bridge would say if subpoenaed to appear before the committee and testify under oath, according to the memo, dated Aug. 27.

On the first morning of the closures, several officers said, Michaels and Sgt. Nadine Rhem told the on-duty cops about the lane closures and instructed them “not to move the cones.”

Many of the officers said they instantly recognized the havoc that would result and they recalled quickly hearing rumors that the closures were the result of a political spat.

Rajiv Sama, the officer who typically puts out the traffic cones separating the three access lanes from the others loading to the bridge’s upper level, said that, according to the summary, when he showed up on the first day of the closures, Michaels told him during the morning call that the cones were already out.

“When Sama later saw the new cone configuration, he noticed the cones were physically touching each other and immediately realized the lane reduction would create ‘a nightmare,’” according to a summary of his account. Michaels instructed Sama not to report to his usual post monitoring the Fort Lee access lanes, “Post 10,” that week. Instead, he was to help manage traffic at a nearby intersection in Fort Lee.
Central Avenue and Bruce Reynolds Boulevard.

Other officers reported seeing Michaels driving Wildstein, who did not return a request for comment, around Fort Lee in a police car on the first day of the closures.

Although some of the officers had apparently never met Wildstein, they recognized him because the “officers keep pictures of senior Port Authority figures posted in the break room so that they are aware if anyone from headquarters visits the Bridge,” according to an account attributed to officer Jim Cronin.

Another officer, Lou Capulano, recalled speaking with the Fort Lee police chief on the second day of the closures, his lawyer said. During the conversation, the chief, Keith Bendul, “attributed the lane closures to a political disagreement between Governor Christie and Mayor Sokolich.” Five other officers reported hearing the same rumor.

In his interview, Licorish, who was the commanding officer at the time, described the traffic as “horrendous” and “tremendously backed up.” But he said when he met Wildstein and Michaels at an intersection near the bridge on the first day, Wildstein greeted him only briefly by commenting on the traffic. “Don’t look too bad,” he said before walking off alone, according to Licorish.

On the days that followed, Michaels exchanged text messages with Wildstein about the traffic congestion. Among the messages was one by Michaels on the second day that read: “Local fl ee traffic disaster.” Michaels said that and other messages were merely updates requested by Wildstein, who is also an acquaintance of his brother, lobbyist Jeff Michaels.

Licorish, meanwhile, said he recalled speaking to drivers who complained that trips that once took 10 to 15 minutes were taking an hour-and-a-half. When the Fort Lee police chief complained to him that emergency responders were delayed, Licorish passed on the comment to his supervisor, the Port Authority’s assistant chief, Gloria Frank. He didn’t remember if there was a response, according to the summary.

Some of the officers said they witnessed desperation by motorists.

On Sept. 10, the second day of the closures, officer Ray Rodriguez, who is now retired, said he saw a motorist “jump a traffic island in response to the congestion.” Rodriguez gave the driver a ticket.

Tait, the officer who overheard a supervisor tell a subordinate not to discuss the lane closures over the radio, recalled telling “upset motorists that they should call Mayor Sokolich’s office to complain.”

Her lawyer said she did so because she believed that if Sokolich personally called the Port Authority to complain, the problem would be resolved more quickly. Sokolich did try to contact Christie’s appointees at the Port Authority and the governor’s office, records show, to no avail.

And although Wildstein said the lane closures were part of a traffic study, a month after the closures, as questions swirled about the legitimacy of the traffic study, he called Michaels to ask him what the officer considered simple questions, including how many lanes lead to the George Washington Bridge.

“Lt. Michaels said the conversation made him question how Wildstein could have organized or directed a traffic study if he did not have such basic information about the configuration of the GWB,” the memo states. “Lt. Michaels initially thought Wildstein must have been fairly sharp and capable if he represented Gov. Christie at the Port Authority. After these experiences, however, he concluded that Wildstein’s ‘ego was too big.”

Christie has denied any involvement or prior knowledge in the lane closures, and a team of attorneys hired by the governor to conduct an internal review backed up his claim. The Port Authority police union endorsed Christie for re-election, and Christie vowed to keep the agency’s police force in charge of securing the World Trade Center site, worth hundreds of jobs.

Bibb, the attorney representing the officers, was retained by the union. He is representing officers Mike Barnable, Jim Camus, Jim Cronin, Lou Capulano, Chris Hackett, Christian Orscher, Steve Piscolotta, Ray Rodriguez, Rajiv Sana, Angela Tait, and Russ Van Wetering. None of the officers responded to requests for comment. Neither did the Port Authority.

Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll, a Republican on the legislative panel, said "nothing in these reports gives me a better understanding of what happened." He called the investigation a "witch hunt" and said the panel should spend its time focusing on reforming the Port Authority and let prosecutors complete their investigation.

Staff Writer Karen Sudol contributed to this article. Email: boburg@northjersey.com
EXHIBIT 152
September 12, 2014

Dear Co-Chairs Weinberg and Wisniewski:

As you know, we have consistently stated that the leaking to the press of confidential evidence obtained by the committee jeopardizes the integrity of the investigation. Our previous recommendations that Special Counsel draft confidentiality agreements to be executed by all committee members and staff have been ignored. Today our Special Counsel strongly implied that this committee’s leaks have caused the United States Attorney to place formerly available and participating witnesses on the committee's “do not call” list.

This latest development has officially impeded our investigation and must be addressed by the Co-Chairs at this time.

When we first received updates from Special Counsel following his interviews with potential witnesses, Republican members asked Co-Chair Wisniewski whether members were permitted to discuss these interview memos with the media. In other words, should the memos be treated as public testimony offered before the committee by a witness or as confidential attorney work product? The Chairman advised that these documents were not to be publically discussed.

Shortly thereafter, reporters began calling some of the Republican members when it became clear that the reports had been leaked to the press. In the context of discussions with the reporters about the reports, the reporters posed some questions that were not directly answered in the memos. Good questions, which, quite possibly, might have properly produced follow-up questions by our attorney to the relevant witnesses.

Counsel has now strongly implied that some of the interviewed witnesses have now been placed on the “do not call” list by the United States Attorney as a result of the interview materials being publically distributed. This action now precludes us from securing extremely relevant information that, but for that restriction, would have been available to us.

It is now apparent that the leaks, which have always been annoying and unethical, if not illegal, have now risen to the level of undermining our ability to secure information which would otherwise have been available to us and have harmed or impeded the U.S. Attorney’s investigation.

We renew our request for confidentiality agreements for all committee members and staff, and we will renew our request for the Attorney General to investigate the nature of leaks.

Respectfully,

Senator Kevin O’Toole

Assemblyman Michael Patrick Carroll
Assemblywoman Amy Handlin

Assemblywoman Holly T. Schepisi

cc: Honorable Stephen M. Sweeney, President of the Senate
Honorable Vincent Prieto, Speaker of the Assembly
Reid J. Schar, Esq., Special Counsel to the Committee
Charles S. Buono, Office of Legislative Services
Philip M. Mersinger, Office of Legislative Services
Michael R. Molimock, Office of Legislative Services
Francisco Maldonado, Senate Majority
Frank Dominguez, Senate Republicans
Kate McDonnell, Assembly Majority