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## Big ticket: Cost to protect Gov. Christie rises 1,800 percent

By Mark Lagerkvist / January 11, 2015 / 28 Comments / Edit Post



By Mark Lagerkvist | New Jersey Watchdog

No matter who paid for Chris Christie's ticket to the Dallas Cowboys vs. Green Bay Packers football game on Sunday, the New Jersey governor ran up the score on taxpayers.



AP photo

IN THE TRUNDRA: New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, left, walks the sidelines before an NFL divisional playoff football game between the Dallas Cowboys and Green Bay Packers Sunday in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

The travel costs of state police troopers assigned to protect the governor are 18 times higher than when Christie took office, a New Jersey Watchdog investigation found.

New Jersey spent nearly \$1 million on travel expenses for its state police Executive Protection Unit during Christie's four years and nine months as governor, according to documents obtained under the Open Public Records Act. Last year, Christie traveled

out-of-state on more than 100 days while visiting 36 states, Mexico and Canada, primarily on personal and political trips that were not official state business.

The current average monthly travel costs to protect Christie for a single month are 50 percent more than former Gov. Jon Corzine's entire final year in office, according to state records. For 2009, EPU's expenses were only \$21,704 – compared with \$32,933 per month for the first three quarters of 2014.

Spokesmen for Christie did not respond to New Jersey Watchdog's requests for comment.



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The governor announced he bought his own travel and ticket to the game in Green Bay. Last week, Christie acknowledged that Cowboys owner Jerry Jones paid for him, his wife and their four children to fly to Dallas on a private charter jet as well as their VIP seats at the Jan. 4 game against the Detroit Lions – an admission that stirred controversy about ethics and gifts to the governor.

The dramatic increase in EPU travel costs coincides with the political rise of an ambitious governor considering a run for the White House in the 2016 election:

- EPU expenses jumped by 300 percent to \$64,975 during 2010, Christie’s first year as governor. The following year, it doubled to \$129,842.
- The bill shot upwards to \$248,277 in 2012 as Christie crisscrossed the country to campaign for Mitt Romney and others, highlighted by his nationally-televised keynote speech at the GOP National Convention in Tampa. In 2013, the figure dipped to \$220,355.
- EPU travel costs accelerated to \$296,404 for the first nine months of 2014 while Christie traveled extensively as chair of the Republican Governors Association to raise political contributions.
- Overall, EPU travel expenses have totaled \$959,856 under Christie, not including unreleased expense information for the fourth quarter of last year.

Details of how most of the money was spent remain a mystery.

More than 80 percent of EPU travel expenses were charged to an American Express card kept by the governor’s office, which billed the state police for repayment. Through public records requests, New Jersey Watchdog is seeking the monthly AMEX statements that detail specific charges for transportation, lodging, meals and entertainment.

Available records show Christie’s office billed the state police for other “travel expenses” that included:

- \$129,272 for Blackberry smartphone service;
- \$8,586 for rental of a copier;
- \$1,505 for drinking water;
- \$3,552 to repair a security camera for the Drumthwacket gubernatorial mansion in Princeton;
- \$9,335 for unspecified charges relating to an unofficial trip Christie took to Israel in March 2012; and
- \$13,650 in transportation costs for Christie’s unofficial trip to Mexico in September 2014

[Click here](#) for line-by-line details of New Jersey Watchdog’s analysis. [Click here](#) for the full set of documents released last week by the governor’s office.

The EPU travel expenses do not include the troopers’ overtime pay, data kept secret under a rule adopted by the Christie administration. Nor does it count the cost of state police vehicles and helicopters used to transport the governor and his entourage.



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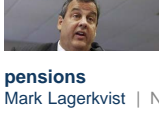
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Records of the amount of overtime paid became state secrets through a [2011 regulation adopted by Paula T. Dow](#), Christie's first attorney general. The rule assumes release of the information could somehow jeopardize the safety of the governor and his protectors if revealed.

A clue on the cost of EPU overtime surfaced last year when William Carvounis reportedly pleaded for "professional courtesy" during his arrest on shoplifting charges at a Cabela's store in Pennsylvania.

"Carvounis said he was on the governor's security detail," [Tilden Township Police Chief William J. McEllroy told New Jersey Watchdog](#). "He said he makes \$140,000 a year, and he's afraid of losing his job."

If true, Carvounis received roughly \$30,000 in overtime during 2013. The EPU trooper collected \$94,000 in salary and \$16,000 in non-overtime allowances, [according to a state Treasury payroll database](#).

The number of troopers assigned to EPU is usually deemed confidential. But in 2007, the [superintendent of the state police testified at a public hearing](#) that "18 or 19 troopers" were assigned to the governor's detail – and that number would soon increase by five officers.

Extrapolating those figures provide a rough estimate that troopers assigned to protect Christie could be earning upwards of \$3.3 million a year – \$700,000 a year in overtime pay on top of \$2.6 million in salaries and other compensation.

State police officials deny they know how much manpower it devotes to protect Christie on his personal and political journeys versus his official state functions and duties as governor.

"Wages and overtime are paid without reference to the type or location of work being conducted," [stated Capt. Sherri Schuster in a certification](#) filed in a recent lawsuit over public records. "Specifically, the payment of wages and salary will not distinguish between work conducted within New Jersey and work conducted outside of New Jersey."

Nor do officials keep track of specific EPU travel expenses.

"EPU-related expenses are not broken down by trip," asserted Schuster in her certification. "EPU-related expenses are not broken down by categories such as transportation, lodging, meals or entertainment."

Regardless of the extra cost to New Jersey taxpayers, Christie decided to travel to another football game, along with his 24/7 state police protection.

"As a lifelong Cowboys fan, it's hard to pass up attending a playoff game when you've been dubbed the team's mojo," explained spokesman Michael Drewniak on Christie's behalf. "Not wanting to risk breaking the team's 5-0 streak by messing with karma, Gov. Christie, his orange sweater, and his son, Andrew, will air travel to Lambeau Field this weekend to attend the game against the Green Bay Packers."

On Sunday, the Cowboys lost their winning streak and their mojo. The Packers won 26-21.



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**Mark Lagerkvist**

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**G-man** · 19 hours ago

You sure he didn't spend that money on Big Macs and Shakes. With his explosive and demeaning attitude when dealing with the citizens he needs 18 or 19 troopers to protect him from getting his as- kicked. Just another bully in the political playground.

|  · Reply · Share ›



**RockLakeGuy** · 21 hours ago

Just wondering. Isn't NJ one of the strictest gun ownership/control states? Why the need for security troops?

Just wondering.

1  |  · Reply · Share ›



**BigTime\_TJ** · a day ago

I agree, spending is way too high for ALL politicians. Congress should be cut in half.

|  · Reply · Share ›



**Rich Meyer** · 2 days ago

Another fat, career pol chowing down at the public trough. For a guy so quick to enact new gun control legislation he sure has a lot of them around his sorry a\*\*. I'm glad his team lost.

4 · Reply · Share ›



**heyj0e** · 2 days ago

just another entitled pig feeding at the trough

2 · Reply · Share ›



**Rod Timmons** · 2 days ago

This fat head is nothing but a LAP DOG for the REICH-WINGERS - this is more the reason we need this WATCHDOG site to keep him in our sights !

· Reply · Share ›



**Ben Enjerry** · 2 days ago

Those NJSP security detail folks are top drawer operators:  
<http://www.nj.com/politics/ind...>

1 · Reply · Share ›



**Carol** · 2 days ago

BAHAHAHAHA! All that money spent and the Cowboys lost!!!!

Go Packers!!!!

5 · Reply · Share ›



**NJ voter** · 2 days ago

I don't see a dimes worth of difference between either party anymore. Funny how they over protect themselves from the public. NJ needs a 3rd party fast.

5 · Reply · Share ›



**Brutuss100** · 2 days ago

More like Obama than he's willing to admit. Now if maybe he'd start playing more golf like his mentor it would help him lose weight....

2 · Reply · Share ›



**Sam Williams** > Brutuss100 · 2 days ago

They are nothing alike. A little slow are you?

4 · Reply · Share ›



**John** · 2 days ago

Hopefully he will be off the government dole very soon.

7 · Reply · Share ›



**SheShe** · 2 days ago

judging by comments, looks like X X-tie is OK by some of you. Not by me. First lady and her mother? They are the President of the United States' wife and mother in law. Since when are apples and oranges comparable, secret service protection \$ wise?

But the state of New Jersey is paying through the nose for X X-tie in many more ways than one, including legal defense for Bridgewater scandal, pay to play, etc. On the other hand he's such a charrrrring man. Such a sweeeeeet talker. Reminds me of Blago (IL gov, pay to play) who is now serving oodles of time.

"Wake up guys!"

6 · Reply · Share ›



**llewellynh** > SheShe · 2 days ago

The axe will fall if Fema ever audits the bills the paid for after Sandy. Next to none of it went to ordinary people: it was just spread around friends - some didn't even live in the area that was hit by that Frankenstorm.

3 · Reply · Share ›



**Sugah49** · 2 days ago

Wake up guys, have you seen what your first lady and her mother does?

1 · Reply · Share ›



**Gary A. Anderson** · 2 days ago

Glad the Governor is for the People of his State ... must be something he picked up from Hillary Clinton's time in office there...

Other than this I bet the State Patrol loves this guy ... while the impoverished just linger in disparity.

God I can't think of anything good about this.

2 · Reply · Share ›



**Reality** > Gary A. Anderson · a day ago

The disproportionate disparities of the disaffected disadvantaged disenfranchised, oh my!

2 · Reply · Share ›



**Jerry Danielson** · 2 days ago

Thats very funny I am a bus driver and couple of my guys from group manage to get on field and shake his hand and also Jerry Jones (which we have pictures to prove) and no security even stopped them, we had big laugh over it.

1 · Reply · Share ›



**Mark Henselt** · 2 days ago

Of course it costs so much to protect Christie. The state is paying by the pound.

3 · Reply · Share ›



**Mark Stabler** · 2 days ago

I don't really understand why State or Local law enforcement officers accompany Governors or Athletic teams out of state. They do not really have any legal authority to enforce the laws of other states. Eventually one of these officers will be involved in a shooting or altercation that will be a big embarrassment to all involved.

2 · Reply · Share ›



**SweeneyKeynote2012** · 3 days ago

Did Christie fly commercial, or was a private aircraft supplied in which he made a commercial fare reimbursement to the friend or organization that supplied aircraft?

3 · Reply · Share ›

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