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## Gifts to Gov. Christie are not 'gifts,' rules NJ attorney general

By Mark Lagerkvist / May 21, 2015 / 3 Comments



AP Photo / James D Smith

HAVING A BALL: Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones (left) talks with New Jersey governor Chris Christie before an NFL football game against the New York Giants in 2014 at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

By Mark Lagerkvist | New Jersey Watchdog

In New Jersey, a gift is not a gift – particularly if you’re the governor and your subordinates interpret ethics rules in your favor. For example:

- [Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones](#) flew Gov. Chris Christie and his family to Texas on a charter plane to be his guests in a VIP luxury box at a football game in January.
- Billionaire casino owner Sheldon G. Adelson provided a private jet to fly the New Jersey governor and his clan to Israel in 2012.
- King Abdullah of Jordan picked up a \$30,000 hotel tab for Christie and his entourage during the same trip.

Yet none of those favors are considered “gifts” the governor is required to publicly



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report – thanks to a pretzel-logic legal opinion issued last week by his political appointee, Acting Attorney General John J. Hoffman.

The opinion enabled Christie to report he received no gifts during 2014 — just as he has since taking office in 2010.

The governor and other state officials are supposedly required to disclose all sources of income, including “honoraria, lecture fees, gifts and other gratuities (cash or non-cash) and other miscellaneous sources of income” in annual financial statements filed with the State Ethics Commission, as required by Executive Order 24.

But according to a six-page opinion from Hoffman, a gift does not have to be reported unless it’s a gratuity – such as “money received for performing a service” or “items received in return for performing some service, such as speaking at an event.”

The bottom line, strange but true: Christie does not have to report the favors as gifts unless it can be shown he did something in exchange for them.

“The governor’s financial disclosure statement meets all disclosure requirements by the State Ethics Commission under Executive Order 24,” said Kevin Roberts, Christie’s press secretary, in a prepared statement.

Christie picked Hoffman as acting attorney general in June 2013 to succeed Jeffrey Chisea, who the governor appointed to succeed the late Frank Lautenberg in the U.S. Senate.

Hoffman’s connection to the governor goes back to Christie’s tenure as U.S. attorney. In 2004, Christie hired him as an assistant U.S. attorney. In 2010, Hoffman followed Christie to New Jersey state government.

As acting attorney general, Hoffman receives a salary of \$141,000 a year. He serves at Christie’s pleasure.



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### Mark Lagerkvist

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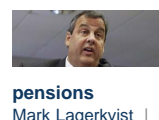
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But big gifts to the Clinton Foundation that they then used personally are donations, not gifts. It just depends on your political persuasion apparently and who are your friends and who are your enemies.

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That is twisted logic if I have ever seen it. If someone rents a furnished summer house for him and pays all utilities along with a car and chauffeur I imagine that would be okay too. How about the rent-a-wife by the hour service providers? When does he start paying for himself?

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