



Court allows Christie to hide \$1 million in Amex charges

By Mark Lagerkvist / August 9, 2015 / 17 Comments



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Governor's Office/Tim Larsen

ENTOURAGE: Gov. Chris Christie keeps secret \$1 million in security travel expenses

By Mark Lagerkvist | New Jersey Watchdog

Based on secret evidence, a New Jersey court is allowing Gov. Chris Christie to hide American Express bills that show how his state police security team charged more than \$1 million to pay for out-of-state travel.

Judge Mary C. Jacobson dismissed a public records suit by New Jersey Watchdog on Friday, ruling that details of past expenses for food, lodging and transportation could create a potential security risk for the governor in the future.

“The court finds the general interest of the public to have a breakdown pales in comparison,” said Jacobson during a hearing in Mercer County Superior Court. As a result, state taxpayers may never learn how the money was spent.

The Executive Protection Unit travel expenses increased with the frequency of Christie’s out-of-state trips to pursue his political ambitions, including his run for the

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White House. [Last year, costs totaled \\$494,420](#) as the governor traveled outside New Jersey for more than 100 days. That sum is 22 times more than the \$21,704 spent in 2009, former Gov. Jon Corzine’s last year in office.

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Jacobson based her decision on a confidential sworn statement provided by Capt. Kevin Cowan, head of the EPU. “He unequivocally swears in that certification that release of the information would increase the risk of harm to the governor,” said the judge.

New Jersey Watchdog’s lawyer was not allowed to view or question that evidence, which makes any appeal difficult.

[Christie almost blew his own defense by his comments to a Cub Scout](#) at an April town hall meeting in Hasbrouck Heights.

“How many bodyguards do you have?” 7-year-old Charles Tartaglia asked Christie in a [video posted on YouTube by the governor’s office](#).

“I count about six,” responded the governor, scanning a crowded VFW hall. “I’m not telling you which ones they are, but a subtle hint would be — the guys with the wires in their ears.”

Christie told the audience that 30 state police troopers are assigned to EPU. He said he is routinely accompanied by three officers. The around-the-clock protection also includes troopers stationed at his home.

RELATED: Christie reveals state security secrets to Cub Scout at public event

But in court filings, his office had claimed that same information must be kept secret to avoid endangering the governor.

“I had a lot of concerns that the position raised by the state was really undercut by the governor’s own comments,” said Jacobson. Yet she gave the state another chance to win the case by allowing Cowan to submit a certification under court seal.

Cowan asserted that even if Christie disclosed details about his level of security in New Jersey, the protection he receives when traveling outside the state is “different,” according to Jacobson. The Amex charges were “almost entirely” for out-of-state trips, so the judge concluded releasing credit card statements could reveal new secrets.

“He explained in detail how they are fundamentally different – and that is something that is confidential,” said Jacobson.

The decision rescues the governor from danger that EPU expense details could be revealed in the midst of his political campaign for the Republican nomination.

Christie has a reputation as a big spender when someone else picks up the tab. He was embarrassed by a [New Jersey Watchdog report documenting he spent \\$82,000 from a](#)



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[state expense account on food and alcohol concessions](#) at MetLife Stadium during the 2010 and 2011 NFL seasons.

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The EPU has racked up \$1.3 million in expenses – not including the troopers’ salary and overtime – since Christie took office in 2010. Of that total, more than \$1.1 million was spent on Amex charges for the governor’s out-of-state travel.

[The rate of EPU expenses skyrocketed by 66 percent – up to \\$184,659 during the first three months of this year](#), according to the most recent totals released by the governor’s office.

Those costs will continue to rise as Christie spends less time in Trenton and more time traveling the nation in search of votes and political contributions. He has journeyed outside New Jersey during 29 of the first 40 days since he officially declared his candidacy.

While Christie’s campaign may pay for his travel expenses, state taxpayers are stuck with the costs of the state police officers assigned to follow him wherever he goes.

Christie said he won’t ask America Leads, [his super PAC that has raised \\$11 million](#), to pay for extra public expenses created by his political ventures. [He refused to follow the lead of Wisconsin’s Scott Walker](#), a fellow governor and rival GOP candidate.

RELATED: Christie stiffes New Jersey for security travel costs while Walker PAC pays

“We’re going to continue to conduct this in the same way I’ve always conducted it,” Christie told reporters in New Hampshire last month.

New Jersey voters overwhelmingly oppose Christie’s practice of saddling taxpayers with the travel bills of the state police escorts who follow him on the political trail, according to a recent [Monmouth University poll](#).

Only one percent of the voters polled thought the state should pay, while 82 percent said Christie’s campaign should take responsibility for the out-of-state security costs. The same poll found 58 percent of New Jerseyans judged their governor as not honest or trustworthy.

###

DISCLOSURE: Investigative reporter Mark Lagerkvist is the plaintiff in [Lagerkvist v. Office of the Governor](#), Mercer County Superior Court, MER-L-463-15.



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madmemere · 9 hours ago

Shame on lardbutt - -and HE wants to be President?? I can see it now; if lardbutt makes it to the oval office, we'll just have more of the same fraud we've got now!

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ncmathsadist · 15 hours ago

Time to render him into candles. Think of the mosquito repelling power!!

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Ladydonnalands · 19 hours ago

Time to put that man in a birdcage, I tell ya!





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TheTruthBurns • 19 hours ago

Gotta Love "Chris I'm Hungry for Obama Hugs Capone Christie". I Hate this Fat Phuck Traitor Gangster. I mean who wouldn't after he Gagged on Obama's Kok & then Publicly Hugged Him to show everyone that HE WAS Obama's Beotch I would love to see a Gang Rape video with him as the Fat Beotch Squeeling like a Pig in Deliverance - Kill this Fat Phuck, Roast Him & Feed some Homeless people.

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loyalmutt • a day ago

Which crime family does Christie belong to?

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Cole Johnson > loyalmutt • 21 hours ago



The obama crime family! Pelosi, biden, feinstein, holder, lynch, boehner are also members!

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ncmathsadist > Cole Johnson • 15 hours ago

Pass the fattie, Cole!

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carpkiller • a day ago



This is just a glance of what would be if christie were president. He is a capone to a tee.

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Geronimo • a day ago

I didn't know the bakery took Amex.

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J. Ernst • a day ago

Funny how the Ferguson topic, when clicked on, goes to this crap!

Ferguson...let the criminals go down and their \$\$\$ handlers PAY FOR THE

DAMAGE after they are arrested for inciting this riot!!!

It is do-able!!!

These "protesters" were trucked, bused and transported into this town to DISRUPT, DESTROY & keep the misery going! This IS a business model!

So find out who the "organizers" are, arrest them, interrogate them and MAKE THEM PAY for all of the damage!

OR, let the GOOD people of Ferguson TAKE CARE OF IT!!!

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Rodney Steward > J. Ernst • a day ago

I like the last part, and that's what it's gona take. They clean out the gutters in Chicago, and like U said, bus in the thugs to start the trouble, to make the cops look bad. And did U see the blacks, carrying the muslim flag??

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J. Ernst > Rodney Steward • 19 hours ago

I didn't watch more than TEN SECONDS of my local news showing of what's what in Ferguson! I consider it a NON-ISSUE! Frankly put, if REAL RESIDENTS stood by the sides of these "perps" and chanted "Get to hell outta here!! NOW!! GO HOME!!" or something similar, MAYBE the newsertainment industry AND "protest organizers" would get the message! Then again, that means that REAL RESIDENTS would have to STEP UP and be counted! Not likely! EVERYONE who is conservative, honorable, accountable does NOT want to be arrested or hurt! I get it! BUT, if "residents" REALLY wanted to "take back their neighborhoods", then maybe that "young black man" who was shot while attacking a police officer would NEVER have had to be "confronted" BY the police...for "being what he truly demonstrated" ... being a THUG!!!!

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Rodney Steward > J. Ernst • 18 hours ago

Very well put my friend. Like U stated, a REAL PRESIDENT, that we are lacking!

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