



“Tough-talking” Christie to Stir Up the GOP

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie will deliver the keynote address at the Republican National Convention tonight, and media pundits are speculating about whether the Garden State chief executive’s often-tempestuous persona will create enough energy to compete with Hurricane Isaac, now barreling down on the northern Gulf Coast.



However, this report is not about the convention, which is being covered by another writer for *The New American*, but about Christie, himself. Though Christie has achieved national attention as a governor who is about as conservative as is politically possible in a Northeastern state with a liberal, union-influenced electorate (much like Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker), it is his feisty personality as much as his politics that has so often garnered him national media attention.

Indeed, it is hard to do an online search of articles about Christie without finding several wherein he is described as “New Jersey’s tough-talking governor.” This reputation has been greatly enhanced by frequent video clips of Christie posted on YouTube, displaying his blunt style to maximum effect. One of the first such videos to receive national attention was recorded at a Meg Whitman for Governor rally in Hollywood, California, in 2010. When a heckler shouted out that Whitman appeared to be like “Arnold [Schwarzenegger] in a dress,” Christie stepped down from the stage, shaking his finger at the man, speaking sternly: “You want to yell? Yell at me, but don’t give her a hard time.” (See video at end of article.)

Even people who might normally be turned off by such a confrontational personality viewed Christie’s defense of Whitman as an exercise in old-fashioned chivalry.

However, Christie is not averse to responding firmly to women, as well as men, who confront him at public events. When a teacher attacked his spending cuts as an assault on teachers’ compensation, he told the woman matter-of-factly: “Teachers go into it knowing what the pay scale is.” ([Click to watch video.](#))

When I became aware of Christie a few years back, I was somewhat amused by the constant application of the description “tough-talking” to him, for reasons that will become apparent in a moment. Looking up his biography on [Wikipedia](#), we find that Christie was born in Newark and is of Scottish, Irish, and Sicilian descent. Those of us who grew up in New Jersey and who are familiar with rough-and-tumble Newark and who played an exceptionally physical version of “[keep-away](#)” at lunchtime on playgrounds dominated by scrappy Irish and Italian kids are bound to remark: “With a background like Christie’s,



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on August 28, 2012

what would you expect — Mr. Rogers?”

To bring this story to an even more personal level, when I saw him in action (especially in the video confronting Meg Whitman’s heckler) my initial reaction was that my late father, who passed away in New Jersey in 1989, had come back to life in a younger body. My Dad worked in construction as a young man, and demonstrated those same direct, confrontational mannerisms for which Christie has become famous. (I used to say that my father was the only Republican member of the Wood, Wire, and Metal Lathers Union, but I spoke too soon. It seems that Republican Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah belonged to the very same union while working his way through law school!)

While the rest of the nation (except, maybe, for Texans, who also appreciate over-the-top boldness) might be somewhat amused, slightly perplexed, or even alienated by Christie’s blunt style, anyone familiar with the culture of rank-and-file New Jersey tends to regard him as “one of us” — a regular guy you might sit down and have a beer with.

While carbon copies of Chris Christie are to be found in every city, suburb, and hamlet of New Jersey, he is unique — in this writer’s memory — as a resident of Drumthwacket, the official residence of the Garden State’s governor. For a state with such a colorful, diverse population, New Jerseyans have often tended to elect bland, lackluster individuals to the governorship. It is little wonder that Christie is perhaps the first New Jersey governor since Woodrow Wilson whose name has even come up as a *possible* presidential or vice presidential candidate.

In politics, after all, the worst handicap is to have no personality.

And what about Christie’s politics? His endorsement of Mitt Romney speaks volumes, so he is obviously no anti-establishment libertarian like former New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson. But, like Scott Walker in Wisconsin, he does seem to have done a good job of fighting the entrenched, union-dominated bureaucrats and at least attempting to curb spending.

And, if his track record is any indication, his keynote speech at the GOP convention is likely to be more stimulating than the rash of unrealistic, New Jersey-based “reality” shows such as *Jersey Shore* or *Jerseylicious*.

Photo: New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie speaks to a joint session of the legislature, in Trenton, N.J.: AP Images



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