NJ Environmental Federation Endorses Buono for Governor

Statement of Ben Forest, New Jersey Environmental Federation Board Member

April 23, 2013

In 2009, I voted to endorse candidate Chris Christie for Governor. He said he was a different kind of politician. That he would base his policies on “sound science” and environmentalists would have a place at the table in his administration. He has not kept his promise.

On the issue of greatest importance to me, climate change. On this issue, the governor is a disaster. Scientists have evidence-linking global warming to more extreme and frequent weather events. One would think that our recent super storm experience; is at the very least, a wake up call to the evidence of sound science, and not a pandering to the politics of hysteria. Yet Governor Christie recently remarked that he has no time for “esoteric” issues like global warming. Not so esoteric if you live on the Jersey Shore like I do.

In 2009, Christie pledged to do better than the 2007 Global Warming Response Act (GWRA) and implement it faster than Governor Corzine. In actuality, Christie has not only not implemented the provisions of the Act and corresponding Energy Master Plan, he has reversed their course. He set lower clean energy goals, advocates for more dirty power and waivered on man's contribution to climate change. If that was not bad enough, he unilaterally withdrew from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) – costing New Jersey tens of millions dollars, badly needed jobs and more pollution. In contrast, Senator Buono wrote and lead the fight to make the GWRA law.

To make matters worse, he has also taken $750 million in ratepayer funds dedicated to clean energy and used it as a piggy bank, costing the state thousands of green jobs and potential for lower monthly energy costs. There seems to be no end in sight to his annual raid of this fund.

On another issue of grave concern to me, then Candidate Christie promised that “all appointments will be based on qualifications and commitment of the nominee to the advancement of the mission of the organization and to New Jersey”. The Governor’s appointments to the Highlands Council overseeing enforcement to the Highlands Act are an embarrassment at best, with some of the appointees’ intent on dismantling the law they are charged with implementing and enforcing. Much of our state, including the food, beverage and pharmaceutical industries rely on the Highlands region for safe and affordable drinking water. Tourism, a vibrant part of this area’s economy, requires the preservation of pristine ecological offerings, not the possibility of overdevelopment.

Before that last gubernatorial election, I stated, “I believe environmental stewardship should be a concern for all of us – not owned by any one political party.” I still believe that. But sadly our Governor has chosen politics over policies that benefit the environment, public health AND help put more people back to work in the Garden State.

When NJEF issued Chris Christie’s overall mid term grade on the environment in 2012, we gave him a “D”, for global warming an “F”. New Jersey deserves better - a governor who gets nothing but an “A” for the environment AND the economy. There is no reason why they should not go hand in hand as demonstrated here today at Bayonne High School. Barbara Buono has a job promoting and environmental record to be proud of. That's why NJEF and I are proud to support her election as governor this November.

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