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STEVE ADUBATO, host:

I recently sat down with New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, and he took your calls. Join us for more of CORZINE ON THE LINE.

Keith, we are thrilled to have you with us on this Friday night. Talk to the governor.

KEITH: Yes, sir.

Governor Corzine...

Mr. JON CORZINE (New Jersey Governor): Hey, Keith.

KEITH: ...I'm going to try to state this as, I guess, as well as I can. In light of the recent news regarding gay marriage in New Jersey, how important do you personally see this as an issue on a national level? And by that, do you think it's used as an almost alarmist deflection from other more pressing issues in the country? I know that it is something that is very concerning as it's a civil rights issue, but at the same time I see it sometimes--very many times it's being used as kind of an alarmist deflect...(unintelligible).

Mr. CORZINE: There's no--Keith, there's no question that there are people in politics who have used this as a diversion away from debates that are, in my view, much more important to the lives of the broad majority of people in society. In times, it has been used to divert away from talking about the war in Iraq and the prosecution of the war on terrorism or to argue that we shouldn't talk about universal health care. All kinds of things that I think sometimes we've used social issues to divert the debate. But in New Jersey, by the way, we use the term civil unions, although in every possible legal context there is a complete mirror of our marriage laws in every aspect other than the label. And...

ADUBATO: One second. I want to clarify something, governor. As we're doing this program, literally, yesterday, Thursday, people who had to wait 72 hours

after they, in fact, filed their applications in Lambertville...

Mr. CORZINE: Mm-hmm.

ADUBATO: ...Mayor David DelVecchio performed the first ceremony, first civil union ceremony, and then others took place across the state. Are you saying those who had these civil unions, that relationship, as sanctioned by the government in that instance, is tantamount to marriage?

Mr. CORZINE: In the state of New Jersey. It's--it is the equivalent on the civil underpinnings in how you're treated in the law within the state of New Jersey. We can't legislate with respect to Social Security...

ADUBATO: Sure.

Mr. CORZINE: ...federal implications with regard to civil unions, but what we did was take the legal statutes that exist for marriage and then for same-sex civil unions mirrored all those aspects so that you have the same protections under the law, minus the language or the term "marriage."

ADUBATO: And by the way, we mentioned Lambertville, New Jersey, and if you haven't gotten down there, it's an interesting place.

Mr. CORZINE: It's a great place.

ADUBATO: It is a great place. In fact, I know that...

Mr. CORZINE: Got to go to the Shad Festival in the spring.

ADUBATO: I heard you do go to the Shad Festival.

And, in fact, I know that WHYY-TV 12 and 91 FM WHYY, that is a--those are big stations in that area and I also acknowledge that we have another role. And again, our folks in WHYY went down the street in Central and South Jersey. I believe, since the governor mentioned the issue of universal health care, we have a roll-in from WHYY on that exact subject.

Ms. JENNIFER FOWLER (Princeton): My question are: What are his plans for health care for the youngest constituents in the state, like my daughter?

ADUBATO: That gets right to it.

Mr. CORZINE: We have probably the most aggressive program of registering or bringing children into the health care system of any state in the nation.

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Mr. CORZINE: We go up to 350 percent of poverty--for a family of four, that gets you up close to \$70,000...

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. CORZINE: ...where we have what we call FamilyCare in New Jersey, which will allow childrens and--children and their parents to get into a program

that is--mirrors Medicaid in its provision of health insurance. We're on a steady stream of trying to whittle down the \$250,000 uninsured kids that we have in the state. About 80,000 of those are undocumented, so we will not be able to bring them into a federal program because we're precluded from it. So we're working on the other 150,000, and we've signed up probably 60,000 kids this year to be insured, and we're going to keep on pushing. It's a big issue going on right now in Washington about renewing the resources that come from the federal government. Their share of the split is actually 65-35...

ADUBATO: Hm.

Mr. CORZINE: ...for what's called KidsCare out of Washington, or SCHIP you'll hear it labeled. And I'm going to go down to Washington this weekend, the National Governors Association--I lead the health committee--and it's the number one issue on our agenda is to make sure that we can continue to finance programs that bring children, all children, that meet our constraints into health insurance programs.

ADUBATO: Governor, before we go to an e-mail from our friends at nj.com on the issue of mental health, I have to ask you this: You mentioned Iraq before--and I don't care where you're watching us, it's a New Jersey issue, it's a New York, Connecticut, Delaware, Philadelphia, wherever, issue. Do you support the idea of having a very specific date by which all of the troops will come home? Do you support that?

Mr. CORZINE: I am--I believe that we ought to set a date where we're going to start phasing out. I believe we shouldn't be in combat positions. We...

ADUBATO: Did you vote--when you were--excuse me--you were in the United States Senate when the vote came up in 2002. You voted how?

Mr. CORZINE: I voted against the use of force resolution. And there were a lot of us who were concerned about the fact that we knew we could win the war or the battle but didn't know, nor did we hear anything talked about, on how we were going to win the peace. And it is--it's come to pass in many, many ways. There was enough questions about, in my mind, about the intelligence presentation, but the real issue is, is that no one talked about how we were going to win the peace, no one talked about how many troops we were going to need to be able to sustain it. And I'm not such a brilliant military strategist, but we still don't have it right as far as the number of troops that would be required to be able to do what we're trying to do. And so we ought to be getting into a training mode, into a supply mode, to protecting borders and being able to respond to specific terrorist threats. But trying to break up a civil war, I think, is a very bad idea. We ought to set a date on which we are going to start weaning our troops specifically away from combat.

ADUBATO: And you'd be surprised, folks, both on nj.com and--as well as the other e-mail questions and phone questions, more than you would believe are about Iraq and others issues. Even though the governor is the governor of the state, he served in the US Senate.

And, governor...

Mr. CORZINE: Can I--can I say--we've lost 85 or 86 young men and women--I think there's one woman--from New Jersey. I try to go to every funeral that I can get to. We have had our National Guard troops who are now in Iraq--we

have about three of them that were just extended. They're one of the groups that were extended from a year to about 16 months on the ground in Iraq. We will, if we're still involved in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2010, have as many as 3,000 National Guards troops. Almost all of our National Guards folks have had one tour of duty already. This is a real deal for a lot of New Jerseyans. So I think governors have a right to have an opinion. And they should...

ADUBATO: A responsibility.

Mr. CORZINE: And they have a responsibility to speak their minds.

ADUBATO: Governor, speaking of speaking your mind, we have an e-mail question from nj.com that comes from Bill in Mount Laurel, New Jersey. The subject is mental health agencies. The question is this, governor, can the state of New Jersey--what can the state of New Jersey do to support not-for-profit mental health agencies to help them better the salaries and the benefits in order to attract and retain better employees? Governor, there's a lot going on here, but basically it's about those who work in mental health agencies dealing with those who are most vulnerable because they have mental health problems.

Mr. CORZINE: Bill, this budget contains a 2 percent increase for the workers that you're talking about, beginning January 1, '08. We'd love to do it June 30th or July 1; we'd love to make it 4 percent. We just have to make choices on how we're going to put resources into various parts of government. I think this is one of the crying needs. We have obligations to have those who are able to go back into the community, whether it's mental health challenged individuals, disabled individuals or whether it's developmentally disabled individuals. And the way that they are generally integrated back into the community is through a lot of these nonprofit organizations, and they haven't had a raise in three or four years and we're going to try to make this something that is a priority.

Announcer: If you would like more information on this program or if you'd like to express an opinion, e-mail us at [DemocracyWorks@caucusnj.org](mailto:DemocracyWorks@caucusnj.org) or visit us online at [DemocracyWorksNJ.org](http://DemocracyWorksNJ.org).

ADUBATO: Governor, Jennifer is watching us on 13 in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey, but I have to ask you this before we go to her. Ho-Ho-Kus is a small town. There are a lot of small towns in New Jersey. In fact, there are 611, if not more, school districts; there are 567 municipalities.

Mr. CORZINE: Twenty-three of those school districts don't even have kids.

ADUBATO: Well, you're making my point, governor. Here's what a lot of folks are wondering about. If a town has 2,000 people and the next town has 3,000 people, they have their own police chief, their own fire department, their own fire chief, their own school system. Some don't even have high schools--home school superintendent. It's called home rule in some people's eyes. Why not force those really small towns to come together and have one police chief, one fire chief, one school superintendent? And wouldn't that save a lot of money because of economies of scale, and wouldn't that, in fact, help potentially reduce property taxes?

Mr. CORZINE: Steve, it sounds like a speech I gave.

ADUBATO: But mandate...

Mr. CORZINE: The only issue that...

ADUBATO: You've not called for a mandate.

Mr. CORZINE: I have not called for mandates and there's a reason. That's the only difference I have with how you frame the issue. We live in a democracy. We established by democratic principles where those communities are. We need to make both the arguments that lead people to believe that it might be easier for them, cheaper for them, more efficient for them to be in shared service arrangements or even consolidated circumstances, but they ought to have the choice, and that's what democracy, small D democracy, is all about.

ADUBATO: Sure.

Mr. CORZINE: And what we are going to try to do--and by the way, in my budget I put together a \$20 million fund which will be there in succeeding years, as well...

ADUBATO: As an incentive fund.

Mr. CORZINE: ...as an incentive fund to say to communities, 'Share services. Think about consolidation. Think about ways that we can take advantage of economies of scale.'

ADUBATO: Is part of the job--Jennifer, I promise you, in 10 seconds I'll be with you. Is part of the job explaining to people if they choose not to consolidate and merge that it does have an impact on their property taxes?

Mr. CORZINE: Right. You know, people ought to have the right to say, 'I'd like to pay more to be able to have my own little 2,000-person community, my own school in the neighborhood,' but I don't think they should be demanding out of the state the same kind of support that those that are trying to help generate the common good by tapping into what I think almost everyone would say are economies of scale.

ADUBATO: Jennifer, I want to thank you for being so patient. I'm Steve Aduato. More importantly, Governor Jon Corzine is here in the studio, taking your questions, your comments. Hi, Jennifer. You're watching us on 13, right?

JENNIFER: Yes.

ADUBATO: In Ho-Ho-Kus.

JENNIFER: Yes.

ADUBATO: Talk to the governor.

Mr. CORZINE: Hi, Jennifer.

JENNIFER: Hi, Governor Corzine. My question for you is what have you thought about in terms of plans for DYFS reform?

ADUBATO: Mm.

JENNIFER: As you know, it's a major problem in our state. And would you also

consider a citizen task force to help oversee changes?

Mr. CORZINE: First of all, Jennifer, we had a major restructuring of DYFS. First of all, it was in a much bigger department and we pulled it out and made it its own department of state government, call it now Children and Families. We worked with the outside nonprofit groups that were suing us for not serving our children well--and I actually think they did us a service by holding us accountable...

ADUBATO: Governor, one second. Should we clarify--I think we should clarify what DYFS is. DYFS is the Division of Youth and Family Services. It's a state agency. They've been much maligned, a lot of negative publicity. They take care of foster children. There are over 50,000 children, in fact, that are in foster care.

Mr. CORZINE: Right.

ADUBATO: And it is a system that people have said needs to be reformed. Go ahead, governor.

Mr. CORZINE: Right. Well, the reform that we have put down has begun to work. We've hired about 500 new case workers--400 new case workers, so that the case load work for each individual following some of these 50,000 children that Steve just talked about are being more closely monitored. We have worked to move children from foster homes into adopted homes on a much more aggressive manner. We're up about 500 children this year--maybe it's a little less than 500--the highest number we've had in almost, I think, in the last decade going into adopted homes. We're tracking children much more closely, and we're doing exactly what you're suggesting, and we're being monitored by an outside group that is--who brought lawsuit and brought a federal mandate.

ADUBATO: The Children Defense Fund?

Mr. CORZINE: No, no, no, this is...

ADUBATO: There's a private group.

Mr. CORZINE: Private group...

ADUBATO: I know they're the ones who sued.

Mr. CORZINE: Right.

ADUBATO: And they're saying that the state is not doing what needs to be done.

Mr. CORZINE: Well, they said we weren't, and we settled with this group...

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. CORZINE: ...Children and Family--I--Defense Fund.

ADUBATO: All I know is that they're very committed to this...

Mr. CORZINE: Right.

ADUBATO: ...and you're still working on it.

Mr. CORZINE: Yeah--no, but we've made big progress this year. Kevin Ryan...

ADUBATO: Yes.

Mr. CORZINE: ...who was the child advocate before he became the head of this new department, has done a remarkable job of hiring people, getting real action on moving children from foster homes into adoptive situations.

ADUBATO: Ready to take a radio call?

Mr. CORZINE: Yeah.

ADUBATO: We have Jerome, who is calling us on WHY 91 FM.

Jerome, welcome to the conversation with the governor.

JEROME: Yes, good evening, Steve.

ADUBATO: Good evening.

JEROME: And good evening, Governor Corzine.

Mr. CORZINE: Hey, Jerome.

JEROME: You know, governor, I wondered, will the state of New Jersey move its primaries up to February so that the New Jerseyans--so that we can really have an input on this national debate?

ADUBATO: Great question.

Mr. CORZINE: Yes. Yes.

ADUBATO: Simple answer, "yes"?

Mr. CORZINE: Yes.

ADUBATO: So it's going to happen?

Mr. CORZINE: It's going to happen. It's agreed to by both houses. They haven't yet matched up all the bills. They'll do that very soon. They'll lay it on my desk and we will have a February 5th primary.

ADUBATO: Do you have a candidate in the presidential sweepstakes on the Democratic side?

Mr. CORZINE: Yes.

ADUBATO: Are you prepared to tell us who it is?

Mr. CORZINE: No.

ADUBATO: OK.

Mr. CORZINE: But it'll happen soon.

ADUBATO: Thank you, governor. And by the way, the--well, next time come back

about the tone of campaigns. You and I have talked about that before. It's already getting negative and nasty among the Democrats...

Mr. CORZINE: Exactly.

ADUBATO: ...in the presidential campaign. We'll talk about that another time.

By the way, will you come back and do this again?

Mr. CORZINE: Absolutely. I love doing this.

ADUBATO: Because...

Mr. CORZINE: Keeps me focused on what people are interested in, and people need to have a chance to ask the questions.

ADUBATO: And it keeps us focused, as well. In that spirit, we go to another clip from WHYY-TV 12. I'm not sure what the topic's about, but I'm sure it'll be relevant.

Mr. LYNCH HUNT Sr. (Trenton): We try to have more community involvement for gang violence, and what do you think a good proposal would be for that?

ADUBATO: Gang violence is the question, governor. What can and what would--will a governor do as it relates to gang violence? Chris Christie, the US attorney talks about gang violence a lot, and the US--excuse me, the attorney general--your...

Mr. CORZINE: General does, as well.

ADUBATO: ...deals with it, as well. What is the...

Mr. CORZINE: We have a the task force under Stuart Rabner, the attorney general, who is implementing a number of actions on the law enforcement side. But I like to answer this question in two parts.

ADUBATO: Gang violence.

Mr. CORZINE: One is we have to create an environment where children and young people don't turn to gangs to start with, which means we need strong early intervention in the educational process, in the lives of children who could easily be diverted into noncivil behavior. And we're working on that. That means getting kids into preschool, having full-day kindergarten, having quality schools in our urban communities that actually have productivity in the classroom. It means having quality after-school programs so that there are alternatives to being a latchkey kid who's--gets pulled into neighborhood problems. And those are all important elements that need to be in place for the long run to try to avoid having children slip off into troubled lives.

On the other hand, we also have to provide security to neighborhoods. We have allocated our state police into areas, Camden and Newark in particular, and Irvington...

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. CORZINE: ...to support local law enforcement. And we're bringing crime

tracking in a way that we think helps us identify what are the patterns of behavior in tough areas. We are--we're trying to promote an integration of the community so that they will help us find where the trouble spots are. We're changing bail conditions. People have to prove that it's clean money that they're using to get out of jail.

ADUBATO: And not drug money or some other kind of money.

Mr. CORZINE: Not drug money or some other things. And we're going to continue to push not only on--here in New Jersey, but on a national front to try to clean up the illegal flow of guns in this country, because the violence is transferred easily into gun violence. That is such a tragedy in our local communities.

And so I--there's just a whole host of things we have to do. It's not a single answer. It's a lot of answers. The--as you suggest, the US attorney, but I will tell you, our state attorney general, making this one of the top priorities. We've had three or four major, major gang busts since Attorney General Rabner's been in office, and we're going to continue to pursue the law enforcement aspects, as well.

ADUBATO: And, governor, we're going to continue the conversation here.

We have about six minutes left, folks. Let me just do this. I want to remind folks the telephone number is 1 (800) 922-8813, 1 (800) 922-8813, or really quickly, in the last few minutes, if you want to, logon with your Web sites. Send--excuse me, logon with your e-mail questions, DemocracyWorks@caucus--C-A-U-C-U-S--nj.org. Please, we've got a few minutes left.

We're going to Anita, who is waiting patiently to speak to the governor.

Hi, Anita, how are you tonight?

ANITA: Fine.

Mr. CORZINE: Hi, Anita.

ADUBATO: Talk to the governor.

ANITA: As governor, what achievement are you most proud of? And what has been your biggest regret?

ADUBATO: Most proud of?

Mr. CORZINE: Well, we have a lot of good things going on. Most of the things I'm proud of are the works in progress. We talked about Children and Family, the reorganization. If we can save children's lives and get them into a position where they can be healthy and grow into productive lives, I will consider that one of my great successes. I'm very, very pleased with the investment that we're making in stem cell research, which has the hope of breaking down some of the most dreaded diseases because of the research that we will produce. It also will produce economic gain for our state. And quite honestly, I am proud that we have taken the steps to deal with the most regressive tax that New Jerseyans pay, and that is the property tax. And I think in the long run, the program that we put together with respect to credits, caps, the controller bill that is going to root out waste, fraud and

abuse and a number of the steps that we're taking to lower the cost of business--doing business as government will work their way through in time. And I think that--I'm happy about it.

ADUBATO: Greatest regret?

Mr. CORZINE: There--I really did not like the shutdown of government last June and July. I...

ADUBATO: Over the increase in the--you said that you wanted the sales tax to be increased.

Mr. CORZINE: Well, it's not only over increase. We also fought to get a serious responsibility of putting money into pensions and we made cuts in the budget. But I don't think that we ought to have to come to sort of confrontational position to get something done.

ADUBATO: But you didn't want to shut it down. You felt--you're saying it had to be shut down?

Mr. CORZINE: You--I have a--I have a responsibility to say the budget is balanced. I can't lie about that, and as a consequence, you have to do what you have to do. But I don't think that that's the best way to get to a solution.

ADUBATO: And by the way, in New Jersey, if you don't know, the constitution from 1947 mandates that you balance the budget. You cannot deficit spend; you must balance it.

Mr. CORZINE: And I have to sign that...

ADUBATO: Yes.

Mr. CORZINE: ...and say that it's actually done.

ADUBATO: I want to formally and officially thank everyone, particularly here at 13 WNET, our studio here in New York. Governor, thank you for coming in.

Mr. CORZINE: Great questions, too, by the way.

ADUBATO: What would you say to all those who picked up the phone and e-mailed and everything else? Twenty seconds or less, what would you say to them?

Mr. CORZINE: Democracy requires participation. People need to understand and think about the problems. They need to--just like politicians, need to listen to what the various options are so you can make good decisions. And the only way to do that with public policy is to listen to the debate.

ADUBATO: Governor, on that note, I want to thank you again for coming in. We appreciate it. I promise it won't be the last time we do it.

To everyone at home, thank you so much for joining us for CORZINE ON THE LINE.

Announcer: CORZINE ON THE LINE is a production of 13 WNET New York, WHYY News and Public Affairs, and the Caucus Educational Corporation, celebrating 20 years of broadcast excellence.

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