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October 14, 2009 - 5:06pm

Webber: Corzine rigged unemployment statistics

By **MATT FRIEDMAN**, PolitickerNJ.com Reporter

Republican State Chairman Jay Webber today accused Governor Corzine of "manipulating official data for the Governor's reelection," but Department of Workforce and Labor Development Commissioner David Socolow said that would be impossible.

At issue was a downward revision of the number of private sector jobs created in July from 13,000 to 5,600. The Governor used the 13,000 in his reelection campaign as evidence that his economic policies are working.

Given the leaked email Corzine Deputy Chief of Staff Mark Matzen sent to department heads asking them to "get creative" to show how Corzine's economic policies were creating jobs, however, Webber said the revision could not be based on an innocent mistake.

"This memo that we found yesterday lends credence to the suspicion that those numbers were artificially inflated in August," he said.

But Socolow said that the unemployment numbers come from the federal government, and that while his office has a role in inputting some additional data, it would be impossible to fudge anything.

"All of this is done essentially with a [Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics] methodology. It's validated by BLS and using BLS data. We don't report anything. We do data entry into the national system, and the national office validates it and compares it to the other states," he said. "We don't have any opportunity to change these numbers."

Webber, however, pointed to an article in the conservative National Review Online that compared this state's statistics to others and found that New

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Jersey's estimates were always more optimistic.

"New Jersey, in this election season, seems to only estimate job creation numbers. If it could be blamed on the federal government, you would expect other states to mirror that New Jersey's out of step," said Webber, who is also an Assemblyman from Morris Plains.

But Socolow held that significant revisions are common. In a benchmark revision for the entire year of 2006, it turned out 30,000 more jobs had been created than originally estimated. For 2003, there were 60,000 fewer jobs created than estimated.

The November, 2008 estimate was revised downward by 19,600 jobs -- three times larger than the revision for the July estimate -- while the February, 2009 estimate was later revised upward by 5,200 jobs.

Webber, Socolow said, does not understand the way the estimates are compiled if he thinks the DLW can manipulate them.

"It's an impossibility. He doesn't understand the system," he said.

Matt Friedman is a PolitickerNJ.com Reporter and can be reached via email at matt@politicsnj.com.

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