

Socolow, David

From: NewsUpdate [newsupdate@gov.state.nj.us]
Sent: Friday, January 18, 2008 5:25 PM
To: undisclosed-recipients
Subject: AP: Corzine's mid-term report card

Fri January 18, 2008 16:45 EST

Corzine's mid-term report card: Some promises kept, others not

TOM HESTER Jr.
Associated Press Writer

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) _ New Jersey Gov. Jon S. Corzine promised more property tax relief and tuition aid, making health insurance more affordable and tackling political corruption when he ran for governor two years ago.

With Corzine having celebrated his second anniversary as governor on Thursday, putting him halfway through his first term, a look back at the Democrat's 2005 campaign promises shows he's fulfilled some vows but has much to do to accomplish others.

``We didn't promise miracles," Corzine said recently as he looked back on his first two years. ``We promised progress and I think that is exactly what we are delivering."

Here's a look at Corzine's 2005 promises and what he's accomplished:

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

PROMISE _ Increase property tax rebates 10 percent per year, call a special legislative session on property tax reform and support giving citizens the right to convene a constitutional convention to propose tax reform.

OUTCOME _ Corzine failed to increase rebates in 2006, but significantly boosted them last year, increasing them by about \$700 to \$1,051 per homeowner.

Corzine called the Legislature into a special tax reform session in July 2006, an effort that resulted in several new laws designed to control the nation's highest property taxes. He decided against supporting a constitutional convention.

COLLEGE TUITION

PROMISE _ Increase tuition aid and new scholarships for New Jersey college and high school graduates.

OUTCOME _ Corzine increased tuition aid grants, helping, among other things, 686 more county college students get an average of \$517 each to use toward tuition last year.

Since Corzine took office in 2006, average tuition at New Jersey state colleges and universities has

increased 14 percent, from \$5,745 to 6,573. The governor hasn't created new scholarships.

HEALTH CARE

PROMISE _ Make health insurance accessible for 766,000 of 1.4 million uninsured New Jerseyans, including insurance for all children and pregnant women.

OUTCOME _ The state enrolled 116,667 new residents under 21 years old in a state-run health insurance program from January 2006 to last year. Corzine also created a new program to provide low-cost insurance for an estimated 15,000 more children.

Still, the state still lacks a program to insure all pregnant women and about 250,000 children still lack insurance. Corzine has lately emphasized that the federal government must play a major role in making health care more affordable.

HOUSING

PROMISE _ Promised 100,000 new homes be built for low- and moderate-income families.

OUTCOME _ Corzine's administration is completing regulations on a plan that would bring 166,000 affordable new homes and apartments by 2018.

EMINENT DOMAIN

PROMISE _ Strengthen laws to ensure homeowners are protected against having their homes seized by local governments for use in economic development projects.

OUTCOME _ Has signed no laws to overhaul eminent domain proceedings. Proposals to do so have stalled in the Legislature with disagreements on the best approach.

ETHICS

PROMISE _ Tighten limits on campaign contributions from government contractors and prohibit county political parties from sharing money among themselves.

OUTCOME _ Corzine failed to support several failed Republican efforts to pass such reforms through the Legislature. Last year, he signed a law banning all newly elected officials from holding multiple elected offices, but the law allowed all current dual office holders to keep their positions.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

PROMISE _ Hold referendum that would ask voters if the state should borrow more money for school construction.

OUTCOME _ No referendum has been held, but Corzine overhauled the troubled agency that oversees school construction. The previous agency was criticized for wasting money and failing to complete expected projects.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

PROMISE _ Ask voters to support borrowing for stem cell research.

OUTCOME _ Voters were asked to borrow \$450 million in November but rejected the idea. Corzine lobbied hard for its passage, and was disappointed by the outcome, but said it sent a message to politicians to get their financial house in order.

COMPTROLLER

PROMISE _ Have voters elect a comptroller to investigate government spending.

OUTCOME _ After legislative opposition to an elected comptroller, Corzine approved an appointed comptroller. Some legislators contend the comptroller's ability to investigate spending was diluted by the final legislation, though Corzine argued it remained strong.

TAXES

PROMISE _ Corzine didn't promise not to raise taxes, but he said it'd be a last resort.

OUTCOME _ At Corzine's urging, the state increased sales, corporate, cigarette and other taxes by \$1.84 billion in 2006, easily the largest total tax increase among states that year. In 2007, however, when all state legislators were up for re-election, no new taxes were imposed.

In 2008, Corzine signed into laws bills allowing Newark arena tickets to be taxed and allowing towns to tax parking during special events, but he's also cut some corporate taxes and Atlantic City casino taxes.

SCHOOLS

PROMISE _ Examine school funding laws to try to find a more equitable formula for rural and suburban schools.

OUTCOME _ Recently signed law designed to send more money to rural and suburban schools facing enrollment increases and large numbers of special needs students.

ENVIRONMENT

PROMISE _ Enact a comprehensive law combating greenhouse gas emissions.

OUTCOME _ Corzine signed a law requiring the state to reduce global warming gases to 1990 levels by 2020 and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 80 percent below 2006 levels by 2050, making New Jersey third state with such a law.

CHILD WELFARE

PROMISE _ Improve services for children in state's troubled child welfare agency.

OUTCOME _ Corzine created a new state department to handle child welfare. Meanwhile, more than 1,500 foster children were adopted in New Jersey last year, setting a state record.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

PROMISE _ Find a permanent solution to state transportation funding problems.

OUTCOME _ Corzine signed a law dedicating all gas tax revenue to transportation work, refinanced transportation debt to keep fund alive until 2011, now seeking significant toll increases to provide transportation funding for next 75 years. He hopes the Legislature will approve his plan in March, and wants to put a question on the November ballot which would require voters to approve state borrowing.