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# Chris Christie apologizes, fires staffer over traffic jam scandal

Emails suggest aides closed lanes to cause traffic tie-ups in Democratic rival's town

CBC News Posted: Jan 09, 2014 10:30 AM ET | Last Updated: Jan 09, 2014 8:52 PM ET



Chris Christie apologizes 2:50

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Chris Christie apologizes, fires staffer 15:12

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New Jersey Republican Gov. Chris Christie has fired a top aide who orchestrated lane closures that jammed traffic for days in a local Democratic rival's town last September.

Christie, appearing at a news conference Thursday morning, apologized for the incident and said he has dumped Bridget Kelly as his deputy chief of staff, effective immediately, "because she lied to me."

The governor, long-rumored to be planning a 2016 presidential run, said it was "stupid and deceitful" for Kelly not to reveal what she knew about the scandal when asked about the traffic tie-ups four weeks ago.

"I am heartbroken that someone I permitted to be in that circle of trust in the last four years has broken that trust," he said. Christie also said he is "embarrassed and humiliated."

The scandal is being called the biggest test of his political career, but Christie said he himself had no knowledge or involvement in the planning or execution of the lane closings.

An email message sent by Kelly last August, calling for the lane closures,



Traffic moves across the George Washington Bridge, in Fort Lee, N.J., in this Sept. 2013 photo. (Mel Evans/Associated Press)

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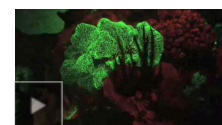
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- [Read the emails first obtained by the Bergen Record](#)

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was disclosed on Wednesday. It's one of several documents subpoenaed by New Jersey Democratic lawmakers investigating whether the move was made as political retaliation aimed at the mayor of Fort Lee, N.J., Mark Sokolich, for not endorsing Christie for re-election last fall.

- [Read the emails](#)
- [Neil Macdonald: Chris Christie sizes up the White House](#)

The closed highway lanes led to traffic jams lasting from Sept. 9 to Sept. 13, between the George Washington Bridge and Fort Lee.

"Time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee," Kelly wrote on Aug. 13 in a message to David Wildstein, a top Christie appointee on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey who resigned from the agency last month.

"Got it," replied Wildstein, a longtime Christie friend. A few weeks later, Wildstein closed two of three lanes connecting Fort Lee to the heavily travelled bridge, which runs between New Jersey and New York City.

Sokolich, a Democrat, called it "appalling" that the traffic jams appear to have been engineered.

Sokolich said the gridlock put people in danger by holding up emergency vehicles, and he added that those responsible should resign.

Wildstein appeared Thursday afternoon before a legislative committee investigating the scandal, but he refused to answer questions, citing his constitutional right against self-incrimination.

With files from The Associated Press

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### carlbailey

one elderly person died because of this political vengeance ploy, and a small child was missing for hours, all search efforts delayed, as well. christie ought to end up in prison for being the mover and shaker behind this criminal act. and no, despite the idiotic headline i saw on another thread, harper don't need to take any lessons from christie on how to handle these scandals that palgue both. neither of them is taking responsibility for the actions of subordinates, who merely obeyed the ... » more

5 hours ago  
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### Ipodhora

Interesting how even the brave political souls who admit "responsibility" get to keep their jobs while those who work on their behalf in a mutually understood context lose theirs. If you want to take responsibility - resign! Saying sorry with no consequences is gutless and should not be rewarded at election time.

8 hours ago  
3 Likes

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### leepulig

Christie mocked the journalist's question, waited for 4 months (never investigated).and now comes out with a sorry face. he should have dragged his aide and Wildstein to the mike and

rockers Arcade Fire and Muse as headliners

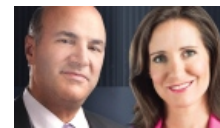
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make them apologize to the people of New York and New Jersey.  
at least he took the blame and fired the aide.  
hope they fire Wildstein too.

9 hours ago  
0 Likes

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**Sentient Human**

As to Harper mimicking Chris Christie, don't hold your breath. Christie is a real Republican, Harper just a Canadian version of a Tea Partier.

10 hours ago  
1 Like

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**Sentient Human**

Jon Stewart has had a field day with the 'Neverending Sorry'. Jon's take on corruption in NJ Wednesday night was a classic.

10 hours ago  
0 Likes

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**au contraire**

In business just like in politics, lying can take you so, far but never to your final destination.

10 hours ago  
0 Likes

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**FreeSpeech**

It's either Pure Incompetence on Harper's part or something way more sinister, either way... this potential corruption of conflict of interest needs to stop pronto! Stop stacking the deck Harper! All we are saying.. is give Democracy a Chance!

11 hours ago  
0 Likes

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**pblcan**

he sounds a lot like Harper didn't know anything, why are they in office when they have no knowledge what their staff are doing, closing a bridge down, paying off people to keep quite, deny deny deny

11 hours ago  
0 Likes

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**twobitsworth**

So what. How exactly is he making amends? Oh he isn't? That is how it works these days: utter a totally insincere "sorry" then walk away.

12 hours ago  
2 Likes

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**waynesworld**

What will your staff do to make you president, Chris Christie?

17 hours ago  
2 Likes

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**Sentient Human**

@waynesworld,

One thing is they will not use a bridge too far.

10 hours ago  
0 Likes

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