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Christie: I am for Butch Otter

New Jersey governor stumps for Idaho counterpart



SHAWN GUST/Press

JEFF SELLE/Staff writer | 11 comments

COEUR d'ALENE - New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie held a rally for Gov. Butch Otter Friday night at The Coeur d'Alene Resort.

The rally drew roughly 350 people to hear Christie discuss the state of the Republican Party and why Idahoans should re-elect Otter next year.

"I am really happy to be back here in Idaho," Christie said. "No, I didn't make a mistake. No, I have been here for the past three summers.

"Me, Mary Pat and all four of our children have come to vacation in the summer here in Idaho and we have loved every minute of it, so I am glad to be back."

Christie said he and his wife became good friends with Butch and Lori Otter back in 2010 after Christie was elected governor and joined the Republican Governor's Association, which he now chairs.

"They absolutely overwhelmed us with their optimism," he said. "They gave us their great gift - their sense of optimism that as governor you can make a difference in the lives of people who you live with every day."

Otter said at the opening of the rally that he left Washington, D.C., after serving as U.S. congressman for Idaho's 1st District.

"One of the reasons I left Congress - after six years there being your representative - I thought to myself this is a great republic we have and it's worth saving, but I don't think it can be saved here in Washington, D.C., so I am going home," he said. "Because I think the only way we can save this great republic of ours is the same way it was created.

"It was the states that created this republic, and so I think it's up to the states to save it."

Christie said that Otter is the right man for the job. He said Otter is straightforward and lets people know exactly where he stands on the issues even when he knows some may disagree with him.

"I came out here to Idaho because I don't want any doubt in anyone's mind, if there was, that I am for Butch Otter," he said. "And if you like the way I do business, you must love the way he does business in Idaho. He does an amazing job."

"See, Butch and I became best friends because we are the same kind of folks," Christie continued. "I am sure you never have to wonder what is on Butch Otter's mind."

He said that type of politician is refreshing and should be preserved. The alternative, he said, is a bunch of politicians who will say one thing to get elected and then change their minds once they are elected.

"You see, you don't expect politicians to agree with you on every issue," he explained. "If you are looking for a candidate who agrees with you on every issue, then here is my advice: Go home and look in the mirror because you're the only one who agrees with you all of the time."

That should no longer be the test, said the Republican governor who was just re-elected with more than 60 percent of the vote in a state that leans heavily Democrat.

"If we hold candidates to that test - that purity test - let me tell you what you're going to get," he continued. "You see, what you'll get when you demand that kind of test from your politicians is they will lie to you - take that to the bank."

He said that is what's wrong with Washington, D.C.

"It is bad enough for our country that this disease has infected and taken over our nation's capitol," he said. "Do not dare let it infect your state capitol."

Christie is headed home today for a "hot date" with his wife, but he said he will be watching Idaho as it heads into the primary elections in May of 2014. Otter will face Idaho State Sen. Russ Fulcher, R-Meridian, in the primary.

Christie said he came to call the party to arms and support Otter in both the primary and general elections next year, but he added they need to start supporting that effort right away.

"Now, if you don't, you are going to see the other Chris Christie," he said. "You know the guy you see on YouTube on occasion, or the guy who has some fairly candid exchanges with his people."

"I will be back with a Jersey attitude and that's not pretty," he quipped. "I'll tell you the truth, you don't want me back here angry."

After his speech, Christie took questions from the audience.

Jimmy McAndrew, of the Coeur Group, asked "the" question. Would Christie run for president in 2016?

"You know I currently have a job. I was just re-elected," he said, adding, "Our country needs a lot of help and each of us has to dig in and decide what we can do to best return our country to a place of prosperity at home, and prominence around the world."

"I'll spend the next couple of years thinking about how best I can do that. How is that?"