

OPINION: CHRISTIE’S STATE OF THE STATE, A TOUR DE FORCE ON ALL FRONTS

75F@; C@89B | JANUARY 12, 2017

In just 75 minutes the governor reaffirmed his political dominance, took the high moral ground, and issued a clarion call to fight off a deadly health crisis



Without any question, the State of the State address delivered by Gov. Chris Christie this past Tuesday was a sharp break from tradition. With its singular focus on one issue — the rapidly spreading scourge of drug addiction and the urgent call to combat it and treat its victims — the speech stood apart as unlike any of those of his predecessors.

It was compelling; it was bold; it was emotional; it was moving. It was the stuff of which legacies are made.

In the span of 75 minutes before a joint session of the Legislature, Christie reasserted himself as the state’s dominant public figure, firmly in control of the public policy agenda and prepared to take his case aggressively to the people.

In the process, he took on the insurance industry, the medical profession, and the pharmaceutical industry — three entities with considerable lobbying clout in the Legislature.

It was as if Christie cared not for his historically low public approval standing or the political beating he’s absorbed from the Bridgegate scandal or the drumbeat of embarrassing news reports of being dissed by PtCin mbws

He spoke somberly of the pain and suffering of addicts and their friends and families. He decried the tendency to treat addiction as a moral weakness when, in truth, it is a disease which deserves treatment rather than scorn for its sufferers.

He warned against accepting the theory that drug abuse was confined to a specific socio economic class, an acceptance that blinds people to the truth and actually hampers efforts to deal with it.

There were moments in his speech when he held his audience in thrall as he recounted tales of those he knew personally who fell into addiction, fought their way back or died.

There could be no questioning his sincerity or the depth of his commitment to deal vigorously and effectively with a plague that threatens to overwhelm the state and the nation.

The speech was a political triumph as well, placing Democrats who may be reluctant to grant the governor legislative victories in what promises to be a highly charged election year, in a delicate *ft t*