



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## What's the Difference Between Governors Andrew Cuomo, Chris Christie, and Rick Perry?

RUBEN DIAZ August 20, 2014

What You Should Know

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### **What's the Difference Between Governors Andrew Cuomo, Chris Christie, and Rick Perry?**

You should know that there is an old saying: “You can indict a ham and cheese sandwich.” This means that the level of proof needed to indict a defendant might not be very high. It also means that the power and resources available to the prosecutors may be so strong that they can crush anyone who gets in their way.

You should also know that on August 15, 2014, Texas Governor Rick Perry was indicted by a Texas grand jury for charges relating to the abuse of power. According to the August 19, 2014 edition of the New York Times: “The indictment, returned by a grand jury on Friday in Travis County, Tex., stemmed from Mr. Perry’s efforts to force the resignation of Rosemary Lehmberg, the county’s district attorney, after her arrest on a drunken-driving charge. Mr.

Perry threatened to veto funding to her office unless she quit, a threat that he ultimately carried out by vetoing \$7.5 million earmarked for the Public Integrity Unit that was intended to fight official corruption.”

You should know that the US Attorney for the District of New Jersey has been busy investigating charges against Governor Chris Christie relating to the abuse of power. On June 25, 2014, the Daily Beast reported: “Just a few days after the lane closures on the George Washington Bridge became its own term with a scandal-signifying suffix, Dawn Zimmer, the Mayor of Hoboken, alleged that two members of Christie’s Cabinet told her that she would not receive additional money to rebuild her town unless she decided to go ahead with a proposed real estate project. Zimmer described being pulled aside by Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno at an event and informed what the deal was: Do as the administration wants or watch your town struggle to bounce back. Guadagno, for her part, has categorically denied Zimmer's accusations.”

Here in New York State, the rule of law is that when the actions of the director or board members of an organization that is funded by the State are displeasing to the Governor, the Governor has the power to intervene.

We all know how this happened to the National Puerto Rican Day Parade's Board, to the Hunts Point Multi-Service Center, and to the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty. If board members refused to resign, the Governor would use his power to stop the funding.

In the case of the National Puerto Rican Day Parade, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman found that there was no wrongdoing by the Board President Madelyn Lugo - nor any Member of the Board – yet the entire Board was forced to resign.

In the case of the Bronx Hunts Point Multi-Service Center, which was founded in 1968 by former City Councilman Ramon Velez and provided health care to 600 people per week, the government cited poor management and diminished their funding. In 2012, the State quietly shut down the Hunts Point Multi-Service Center, giving only two weeks for the counselors to transfer 470 patients to other Bronx methadone clinics.

In the case of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, Mr. William Rapfogel resigned as the Chief Executive, pled guilty to grand larceny, money laundering, tax fraud, and filing false documents to the Board. Mr. Rapfogel, husband of Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver's Chief of Staff, and the organization he led for more than two decades, had received millions of dollars from the State through Speaker Silver. Mr. Rapfogel paid more than \$3 million dollars in restitution and was sentenced to 3-1/2 to 10 years in prison.

My dear reader, if we think about how in Texas, an organization can turn the tables and bring charges against the governor, it seems to me that they have opened Pandora's Box for the rest of us.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no difference between the three governors. We will wait and see how the rule of law plays out for the future.

This is Senator Rev. Rubén Díaz, and this is what you should know.