



Gov. Chris Christie's Most Outrageous Flip-Flops

By Tiffany Germain and Anna Chu June 30, 2015

“The fact is you don’t have to change your positions. ... People have to be authentic.”¹ These choice words come from New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R), who is expected to announce his candidacy for president this week. Gov. Christie explained further that the Republican Party should focus on candidates who “believe in what they say and don’t change depending on what state they’re in.”² But over the course of his career, one of Christie’s only constants has been his inability to stick with a position. This fact sheet provides a look at some of Gov. Christie’s biggest flip-flops.

Pathway to citizenship

A pathway to citizenship would not only allow millions of undocumented immigrants to come out of the shadows by earning legal status, it would also inject \$1.1 trillion into the U.S. economy over 10 years.³ Gov. Christie initially supported a pathway to citizenship, but as the 2016 election neared, Christie flipped. Now he says a pathway to citizenship is an “extreme way to go” and not “where the American people are.”⁴

- **His position before:** In 2008, then-U.S. Attorney Christie advocated for immigrants, saying that “being in this country without proper documentation is not a crime.”⁵ As governor, he argued that the president and Congress “have to put forward a common-sense path to citizenship for people.”⁶
- **His position now:** During an interview with Fox News earlier this year, Gov. Christie responded “No, I don’t believe [a path to citizenship] is the way to go and I don’t believe that’s where the American people are,” adding that it was an “extreme way to go.” Christie also said candidates who support a pathway are just “pandering.”⁷

Reproductive rights

Although access to abortion is legal and constitutionally protected, women’s access to legal abortion is disappearing in many states.⁸ Early in his political career, Christie supported a women’s right to choose and even publicly admitted to donating to Planned

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Parenthood. But prior to running for governor, he flipped his position and now says he is anti-choice. He even boasted that he has defunded Planned Parenthood five times.

- **His position before:** Before running for office, Christie said, “It’s also no secret that I am pro-choice. ... I support Planned Parenthood privately with my personal contribution.”⁹
- **His position now:** In 2015, Christie said, “I’m pro-life, I ran as a pro-life candidate in 2009 unapologetically, spoke at the pro-life rally on the steps of the Statehouse—the first governor to ever speak at a pro-life rally on the steps of the Statehouse—and vetoed Planned Parenthood funding five times out of the New Jersey budget.”¹⁰

Common Core

The Common Core, a set of rigorous math and English guidelines for elementary and secondary schools, aims to fix the previous patchwork system of academic standards that was failing too many students. Gov. Christie strongly supported the Common Core before, going so far as to criticize fellow Republicans for their “knee-jerk” opposition to the president.¹¹ But ahead of his 2016 bid, Christie fully flipped positions in order to appeal to the conservative base.

- **His position before:** In 2013, Gov. Christie said, “We are doing Common Core in New Jersey and we’re going to continue. And this is one of those areas where I have agreed more with the President than not. ... I think part of the Republican opposition you see in some corners in Congress is a reaction, that knee-jerk reaction that is happening in Washington right now, that if the president likes something the Republicans in Congress don’t.”¹²
- **His position now:** Christie fully flipped on his support by 2015, saying that the Common Core is “simply not working.”¹³ But he does not say that his actual policy has not changed; he is still using the same tests aligned with the Common Core standards.¹⁴

Gun violence protections

New Jersey has enacted some of the strongest gun violence protections in the country, ranking third out of 50 states for the strongest gun laws.¹⁵ After the tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, Gov. Christie spoke out against the National Rifle Association, or NRA,¹⁶ and even signed into law a new measure to prevent terror suspects from buying guns in New Jersey.¹⁷ Recently though, he said he would revisit the state laws if he had a Republican-led legislature.

- **His position before:** Gov. Christie used to say he supported “strictly enforcing” New Jersey’s gun violence protections.¹⁸
- **His position now:** When asked about Second Amendment rights this year, Gov. Christie said, “Send me a Republican legislature. And with a Republican legislature you’ll have a governor who will respect, appropriately, the rights of law-abiding citizens to be able to protect ourselves.”¹⁹

Climate change

The science behind climate change is settled: Scientists are as certain that humans are causing climate change as they are that smoking causes cancer.²⁰ Yet Gov. Christie has been inconsistent on whether he believes global warming is real and affecting his state—so much so that he has changed his position twice.

- **His position before:** In 2011, Gov. Christie said, “In the past I’ve always said that climate change is real and it’s impacting our state.”²¹
- **His position in between:** After Superstorm Sandy, Christie rejected the idea that state agencies needed to prepare for climate change, arguing there was no proof that Sandy was caused by climate change.²²
- **His position now:** Speaking in New Hampshire recently, Gov. Christie said, “I think global warming is real. I don’t think that’s deniable. And I do think human activity contributes to it.”²³

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Endnotes

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