

## WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

State political figures reacted to Gov. Chris Christie's firing yesterday of Education Commissioner Bret Schundler:

**"The biggest sin in government is to lie to the governor. Any governor. Any party. You just can't do it. Especially if it's on something where the governor is going to go out there and repeat your lie."**

*Pete McDonough, former communications director for Gov. Christie Whitman*

**"Two days ago, Gov. Christie said this was his responsibility. Then he said it was all President Obama's fault. Apparently, he's now decided it's Bret Schundler's fault."**

*Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester)*

**"We are concerned for the stability of quality education more than ever — this turmoil of leadership is worrisome, especially at this time of year."**

*Lynne Strickland, Garden State Coalition of Schools*

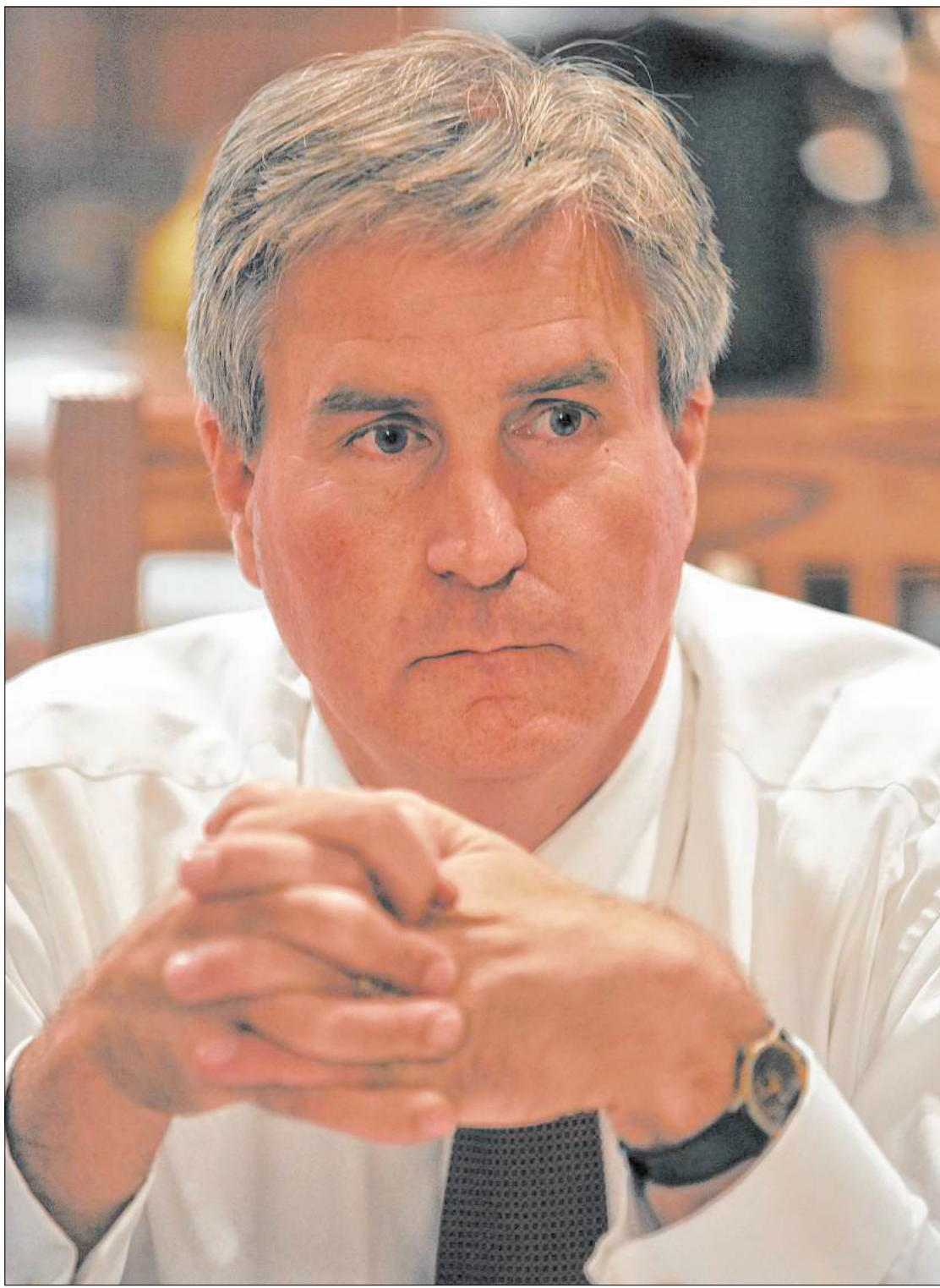
**"New Jerseyans deserve an honest accounting from Gov. Christie about what truly happened with this costly error."**

*Assembly Speaker Sheila Oliver (D-Essex)*

**"Governor Christie had no other alternative. He did what is right and in the best interest of our state. We now need to move forward and turn our attention to the business of the state, including a review of our school funding formula, the tool kit and continued property tax reform."**

*Assembly Minority Leader Alex DeCroce (R-Morris)*

# Fired Schundler says Christie went too far



ADAM STEVENS/FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

Fired state education chief Bret Schundler, speaking from his home yesterday, expressed "tremendous disappointment" over leaving the administration, but said, "Frankly, I don't feel I did anything wrong."

## Ex-education chief's comments about his dismissal spark fire from governor's office

By Lisa Fleisher and Jeanette Rundquist  
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Politically speaking, the day was a fast-moving soap opera.

Gov. Chris Christie fired state Education Commissioner Bret Schundler yesterday after the governor said Schundler misled him about what was said during a meeting with federal examiners on the state's application for a \$400 million federal grant.

Schundler said it was Christie who was wrong and added the governor did what he often does, took a kernel of fact and went too far with it.

The Christie administration shot back, saying it didn't get anything wrong and Schundler was only damaging himself.

"Frankly, I don't feel I did anything wrong," Schundler said.

"We regret that Mr. Schundler continues to sully his own image by engaging in revisionist history," according to a statement by the governor. "Mr. Schundler was the administration's only source for what occurred in the Race to the Top presentation. All of the governor's statements were based on Mr. Schundler's account."

By the time the two sides stopped pointing fingers at each other, Christie's political capital had come into question as had Schundler's credibility. At issue was what was said during an Aug. 11 meeting between a New Jersey delegation led by Schundler and federal officials reviewing the state's application for the Race to the Top's multimillion-dollar grant.

The more-than-1,000-page education grant application included wrong data for school funding. Instead of giving information requested from 2008 and 2009, New Jersey provided data for 2011. The mistake cost 4.8 points out of 500, and the state fell three points shy of winning money.

During a news conference Wednesday, Christie blasted "bureaucrats in Washington," saying New Jersey tried to furnish the missing data during the presentation in the capital, but the officials refused to

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## Deflated, but not defeated, Schundler defends integrity

At the end of the darkest week in Gov. Chris Christie's term, it got worse yesterday.

The governor had already lost a \$400 million federal education grant, thanks to the most expensive clerical error in history. He then played the role of sore loser, complaining about the contest rules and blaming President Obama.

And when he learned that this harangue was weighed down with factual errors, he fired his able education commissioner, Bret Schundler, accusing Schundler of feeding him bad information.

Yesterday, Schundler fired back. The governor, he said, made the mistakes all by himself. And Schundler had saved a batch of e-mails that seem to support his view.

"The governor made an error," he said. "But it wasn't an error caused by me giving him the



Tom Moran  
nj.com/moran

wrong information."

In the end, it may be impossible to settle this one. Schundler has those e-mails, but the two sides had conversations that weren't recorded, and their accounts are sharply at odds.

The politics, though, is easy to see. And it's ugly for the governor. Democrats are planning hearings where they will pick at this scab for as long as they can. After being knocked around by Gov. Wrecking Ball for most of the year, you can imagine how giddy they are.

The core of the story at these

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## WHO'S WHO AT THE AUG. 11 MEETING

The U.S. Department of Education provided video of New Jersey's Aug. 11 presentation to Race to the Top reviewers. Here's who attended the meeting:

**1. Daniel Gohl** is the executive assistant of innovation and change in the Newark schools. A former technology high school principal, he has worked on issues involving science education.

**2. Rochelle Hendricks**, named acting education commissioner yesterday, is a longtime official in the state Department of Education. Her previous post was assistant commissioner for district and school improvement.

**3. Bret Schundler**, who the governor fired yesterday from his job as education commissioner, is a former Republican mayor of Jersey City. He also lost to James E. McGreevey in the 2001 gubernatorial race.

**4. Willa Spicer** is assistant commissioner at the state Department of Education. She's spent much of her career in South Brunswick as an assistant superintendent, assistant principal and principal.

**5. Andy Smarick**, a Race to the Top expert and former federal education official, joined the state's Department of Education this month. He spent the last year as a policy analyst at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a conservative education think tank in Washington, D.C. He also was a White House fellow.

— Jessica Calefati

## Southwest Airlines winging its way to Newark Liberty

Analysts: Carrier's presence next spring will mean lower fares in region

By Joseph R. Perone  
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Southwest Airlines will start flying out of Newark Liberty International Airport next spring in a move that should dramatically lower fares in the New Jersey market, analysts said.

Southwest will lease take-off and landing slots from United and Continental airlines as those two carriers sought to satisfy regulators' concerns about competition from their

proposed merger, creating the world's largest airline. Soon after the airlines' announcement yesterday, the justice department said that it has closed its anti-trust review of the merger.

Southwest will have 18 daily flights from Newark that will phase in between March and June of next year. Southwest already operates out of LaGuardia International Airport in New York and Philadelphia International Airport.

"We've seen tremendous demand for Southwest Airlines in the New York City/Newark area in the past year," said Bob Jordan, Southwest Airlines executive vice president of strategy and planning. "Adding Newark provides an excellent complement to our LaGuardia and Long Island service. This service also will provide a needed injection of low fares and competition into the New York/Newark market."

Jordan declined to say yesterday

which cities Southwest will fly to from Newark.

When the discount carrier enters a new market, its arrival is called "The Southwest Effect." The carrier typically sells aggressively lower tickets in new cities, said Rick Seaney, chief executive of FareCompare.com, a travel website.

"On the routes they announce from (Newark), prices are likely to drop dramatically," he said. "For example, we saw prices for non-stops drop by over

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## IN OTHER NEWS

### A new economic gauge: The maternity ward

The U.S. birth rate has fallen to its lowest level in at least a century. Page 2

### J&J CEO says company will work to regain trust

Recalls have let down the consumer, he said. Page 8

### Hurricane Danielle sparks a warning at the Shore

Although the storm was almost 1,000 miles away, forecasters said it could be trouble. Page 9

TODAY  
Sunny, with a high near 86°.



TONIGHT  
Clear, with a low around 57°.



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