

SERIES: Caucus: New Jersey with Steve Adubato
TITLE: Caucus Up Close: Garden State Cancer Center
SHOW #: 2229
TIME: 27:11

STEVE ADUBATO, host:

New approaches to cancer treatment next on CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY.

Announcer: Funding for this edition of CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY has been provided by Johnson & Johnson, the worldwide health care products company; New Jersey Natural Gas, proud to support education in our communities; QualCare Inc., a local managed care company covering 600,000 New Jersey residents; and by Verizon Communications.

ADUBATO: Welcome to this very special edition of CAUCUS. I'm Steve Adubato. You know, one out of every three New Jersey residents living today will become a cancer patient. The Garden State Cancer Center is pioneering new approaches to detect and treat this devastating disease. Joining us here in the studio to talk further about this important topic we have Governor Brendan Byrne, the state's 47th governor, and his wife, Ruthi Byrne of Zinn Graves & Field Public Relations and Marketing. And also Dr. David Goldenberg, president and founder of the Garden State Cancer Center.

Governor, I need to say this to you before we go any further. Do you know, you were the first guest that we ever had in the fall of 1986 for CAUCUS, and you were also the 100th guest that we had...

Former Governor BRENDAN T. BYRNE (Former New Jersey Governor): Is that right?

ADUBATO: ...by design. We asked you to come back.

Gov. BYRNE: Huh.

ADUBATO: And you've been here every time we've asked you. And before we talk about the gala coming up, Gala of Hope, and the cancer center, I just need to say to you that you got us started, so you're responsible for this, like it or not. Thank you, Governor.

Gov. BYRNE: Well, I--the Adubato family and Brendan Byrne have been together for a long time. And I knew your uncle, I knew your father--I know your father.

ADUBATO: That's right.

Gov. BYRNE: And you came along.

ADUBATO: And I'm by far the most charming.

Gov. BYRNE: Yeah. Well, I understand--I understand that. You told me.

ADUBATO: I told you!

Ms. RUTHI BYRNE (Zinn Graves & Field Public Relations & Marketing): And...

ADUBATO: You know, the governor used to say--I hate to say this. He used to

tell this joke on the--he's--by the way, Governor Byrne is a great stand-up comedian, a great speaker. He used to say this terrible joke, he goes, `Steve Adubato, you know when it's time to go to sleep? In the middle of the night when you're watching the'--you were saying you used to watch the thing at the end of the night, we were going off the air and Adubato was still on the air. You hurt me with that, Governor.

Gov. BYRNE: Oh.

ADUBATO: More importantly, let's talk about--we got a big event coming up. Set this up for us. You're going to see this promo several times, because we only promote things that are nonprofit events but important events. The Gala of Hope coming up on March 30th. Set it up for us, Ruthi.

Ms. BYRNE: OK. We have Brendan's 85th birthday--how could that possibly be that he's 85? but he is 85--and we have such a wonderful lineup of roasters and special guests, some of whom didn't want to roast but they wanted to speak. Among them: Governor Corzine, roaster in chief; Dick Codey, also governor...

ADUBATO: Senate president, former governor.

Ms. BYRNE: Senate president, former governor.

ADUBATO: Is Governor Corzine there, too?

Ms. BYRNE: Governor Corzine is roaster in chief.

ADUBATO: Roaster in chief?

Ms. BYRNE: Roaster in chief we call him.

ADUBATO: Jim Florio involved?

Ms. BYRNE: Jim Florio is not involved, unfortunately, here, but he has been involved with the cancer center before.

ADUBATO: And you have a great emcee.

Ms. BYRNE: And we have a great emcee. Let's see, Steve Adubato!

ADUBATO: See, I--enough about me.

Ms. BYRNE: Oh, my word.

ADUBATO: Let's talk about the cancer center. Doctor, give us the Reader's Digest version of the cancer center, exactly what you're doing, because the proceeds for the Gala of Hope event on March 30th celebrating Brendan Byrne's 85th birthday--by the way, log on, get information. More importantly, come to the event. It'll be a great event.

Talk to us about the cancer center and why it's so important.

Dr. DAVID GOLDENBERG, ScD, MD (President, Garden State Cancer Center): Well, for about 30 years we've been developing a less toxic therapy, a biological therapy based on antibodies that targets very specifically the cancer cells. For the last 10 years the field of antibodies has actually introduced nine

different products into cancer management. So now we have a fourth dimension beyond surgery, radiation and chemotherapy which we feel is more specific and can add to the other modalities in improving the outcome in treating cancer patients.

ADUBATO: And what does this event mean, Doctor? Talk to us about this event.

By the way, I want to thank our friends at TD Bank, Nick Miceli, who actually brought us together in this. They're one of the--they're the sponsor.

Ms. BYRNE: Yes, they are.

ADUBATO: Big player in this whole thing.

Ms. BYRNE: Yes.

ADUBATO: Talk to us about the proceeds of this event on March 30th, and why it's so important to the center.

Dr. GOLDENBERG: Well, the center is supported almost exclusively from peer-reviewed grants from the federal government. We need the private philanthropy in order to match those grants so that we can invite and recruit new investigators to build new programs. The grants from the federal government support existing programs. And so we need another source of funds to match the federal funds. And as you know, federal funds have been waning over the last few years, and there's very little available in state funds. So this puts pressure on nonprofit centers to raise capital from private sources. And of course, this is not the best environment even for private philanthropy, so this gala is critical for our major fundraising in the private sphere.

ADUBATO: Governor, talk about it. I mean, it's one thing to celebrate your 85th birthday and have a lot of your friends and others roasting you and going beyond that, but also saying a lot of things about you. Talk about the cancer center and what it means to you to be a part of this very special event.

Gov. BYRNE: Well, my wife has been very heavy into this cancer center, and she has a real understanding of what the causes of cancer is and how we fight it. And I've been--I've been inspired by her more or less. But cancer is a dread--once you hear that word you get scared.

ADUBATO: And we all know someone--I mean, that's the thing. If someone says, 'Wait, they're doing research over there, that's not my thing'--listen, we're partners with the Susan G. Komen Foundation, the North Jersey affiliate. We're so involved in so many different initiatives that are connected to cancer. But this initiative at the cancer center, the Garden State Cancer Center, I mean, the work that you're doing, the research, this fourth approach that you--that you talked about, Ruthi, why is that so special? Because someone might be watching, saying, 'Well, there are a lot of cancer efforts.' What makes this different?

Ms. BYRNE: If you are a cancer patient, research is everything to you because that takes you from despair to hope, and hopefully cure, early diagnosis and cure. What David Goldenberg has done is brought a different dimension in terms of early diagnosis and also treatment that is so targeted that it doesn't affect other parts of your body. Everybody fears the word chemo, but this is a targeted therapy, unlike chemo, that does not give you side effects, all those dreaded side effects that a cancer patients expects to

endure.

ADUBATO: How'd you get involved in this?

Ms. BYRNE: Oh, I think I met David Goldenberg, it must have been about 15 years ago, and we've been a duo ever since.

ADUBATO: What is it about the cancer center--Garden State Cancer Center that you said, 'Hey, you know what, of all the causes'--and you are involved in a lot of charities, both of you are. What triggered in you about the work they're doing?

Ms. BYRNE: Well, it's--you know, David is a pathfinder and a pioneer in the field, and cancer research, to a great extent--and he's too modest to say this--rests on his shoulders. He has been the outstanding investigator. There's an outstanding investigator award, federal award that he's been the recipient of how many times, David? I know it's twice. Is it maybe three times?

Dr. GOLDENBERG: No, twice.

Ms. BYRNE: Twice, right. That is an enormous, enormous accolade. So when you see somebody doing something that good--and as you said, everybody's touched by cancer. I was talk...

ADUBATO: That's right.

Ms. BYRNE: ...talking to a woman whose father had died of cancer, mother was a cancer survivor and sister had died of cancer. So when you hear a family like that, there's a woman who wants to get involved.

Gov. BYRNE: And how many times have you heard somebody say, 'Well, my son or somebody has cancer and they've tried the traditional treatments and they don't work'? We're trying something new.

ADUBATO: That's right.

Gov. BYRNE: And that's where you get your hope.

ADUBATO: And a lot of people think there is not anything--there isn't anything new out there. And by the way, folks, if you're just tuning in, Governor Byrne is with us. He was the 47th governor of the state of New Jersey; as I mentioned earlier, the first guest we ever had. Believe it or not, it was 22, 23 years ago. He also came back to do our 100th program and we're proud to have him with us today. He's being honored at a gala event, and it is called the Gala of Hope. It is on March 30--put up the full-screen graphic. It's a great picture of Ruthi and the governor. You see it there, it's the Gala of Hope. It is on March the 30th.

Being held where, Ruthi?

Ms. BYRNE: Short Hills Hilton.

ADUBATO: Short Hills Hilton. And a group of us are involved with the charity. I'm proud to serve as the emcee of the event. You got several people, including Governor Corzine, former governors are involved as roasters, and people who are going to speak about the governor for his 85th birthday.

All of the proceeds go to the Garden State Cancer Center.

Doctor, let me ask you something. There are a lot of people watching who are asking themselves this: How far away are we from--listen, the word cure is a funny word when it comes to the clinical side of things, because it's defined in certain ways that confuse non-clinicians like myself. How much progress have we really made?

Dr. GOLDENBERG: Well, in a number of cancers we've made tremendous progress. When I started in my career, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma was a uniformly fatal disease. Childhood leukemia was fatal. There are a number of diseases like that which, over the last 40 years, have been turned from almost uniform fatality to 85, 90 percent cures. Hodgkin's lymphoma is now a curable disease. Childhood leukemia is a very high rate of cure. We're making progress slowly in many diseases.

The problem is we lump cancer as one disease and we're dealing with probably 200 different diseases, because virtually every tissue in the body can become cancerous. And so we have to take each separately. The major killers are, of course, lung cancer and we have then colorectal cancer, breast cancer and so on. But there are many minor tumors that are treatable. The first cure that I saw in my career was a very rare tumor of the testes and uterus called choriocarcinoma. And through a combination chemotherapy, that went from 100 percent lethality to over 90 percent cure within a period of a few years, and this was in the late 1970s. And that gave birth to combination chemotherapy. So today we're looking at antibodies combined with other forms to enhance the response rates. And it's a slow process, but when we look over the last 10, 20 years, we've had a formidable increase in cures in many of the major devastating cancers.

ADUBATO: Doctor, do you do clinical trials?

Dr. GOLDENBERG: Yes.

ADUBATO: You do clinical trials.

Dr. GOLDENBERG: Yes.

ADUBATO: And for those who want to find out more--by the way, your Web site. We have--I can't believe it. Is that the Web site, guys? That's the Web site for the cancer center. Thank you very much. You see the dot-org, so it just clarifies. You are a nonprofit?

(Graphic on screen)

www.GSCancer.org
For More Information

(973)844-7000
Garden State Cancer Center Clinic Inquiries

Dr. GOLDENBERG: We're a nonprofit.

ADUBATO: OK, so...

Dr. GOLDENBERG: And we do clinical trials on a--really on a worldwide basis. We have affiliations with major cancer centers in the US as well as in Europe,

and they do clinical trials with agents that we've researched and developed with support from the National Cancer Institute.

ADUBATO: Governor--and by the way, the Web site is up the entire time; phone, the phone number. Log on. Go to the event, the Gala of Hope. It's the 85th birthday of Governor Brendan Byrne. It's going to be a terrific celebration for a terrific cause.

Governor, let me ask you. Short version. In the difficult economic times in which we live, you know, how tough is it for government officials to prioritize and focus on the kind of discussion we're having right now? Or do they say, 'What, are you kidding me? We can't even keep the doors open in government!' Where does this fit?

Gov. BYRNE: They--yeah. They sacrifice. And what's happening is we're losing some of the funds. That's why I think this dinner is sort of urgent, because the other sources of funds and of income are drying up.

ADUBATO: Can't count on--you can't count on the government anymore on this stuff.

Gov. BYRNE: No. But you can count on cancer being a problem. I just had this removed yesterday.

ADUBATO: Excuse--you're very conscious of that, right?

Gov. BYRNE: Yeah.

ADUBATO: You're very aware of skin cancer, right?

Gov. BYRNE: Yeah.

ADUBATO: So the point is, the government officials can say, 'listen, can't be a priority.' But it's not like cancer's going to say, oh, you don't have a lot of money for research? You know, it doesn't stop. And it doesn't--you know, I mean it continues to devastate our families.

Ruthi, I--in the couple minutes we have left, what would you say to people who would want to go to the event but don't know what to expect? Describe what's going to happen.

Ms. BYRNE: At the event, well, we're going to have obviously roaster in chief...

ADUBATO: Yep.

Ms. BYRNE: ...Jon Corzine, Governor Codey, Bob Franks, John Degnan.

ADUBATO: Former Congressman Bob Franks, who's a great friend of ours, right?

Gov. BYRNE: Mm-hmm.

Ms. BYRNE: Yes. Sorry?

Gov. BYRNE: Kean.

Ms. BYRNE: Oh, yes, sorry, Governor Tom Kean. Yes, thank you.

ADUBATO: We actually--your tennis partner Governor Tom Kean was sitting in this seat...

Ms. BYRNE: Yes.

ADUBATO: ...what was it, about four hours ago. We were talking about higher ed. We told him you were coming and he said to say hello. He'll be there, as well.

Ms. BYRNE: Yes, he will.

ADUBATO: So Republicans, Democrats...

Ms. BYRNE: And he's a roaster. Democrats, every...

ADUBATO: ...across the aisle.

Ms. BYRNE: Across the aisle and everybody, because everybody loves Brendan.

ADUBATO: Yeah, what's--what is it about that?

Ms. BYRNE: Well, they've forgotten about the income tax, mostly. I think that's the...

ADUBATO: Governor, tell people real quick, you're on camera. What was the thing about the wave? You used to tell the thing about the wave. You know, people--how you used to wave.

Gov. BYRNE: That after people forgot about the income tax and got used to it, they started waving at me again with all five fingers.

ADUBATO: With all five fingers.

Gov. BYRNE: Yeah.

ADUBATO: Not just--I'm going to leave that alone.

Gov. BYRNE: I don't know.

Ms. BYRNE: Trail off.

ADUBATO: Thank you very much. Got about 45 seconds left. And by the way, log on to the Web site, find out more about the Garden State Cancer Center. Thank our friends from TD Bank and thank you for bringing this to us.

Finally, what's the word you want to leave with everyone, Doctor, when it comes to your organization, how important you are?

Dr. GOLDENBERG: Well, it's not only important to develop new technologies and be a little bit iconoclastic so that you look for opportunities that traditional cancer research doesn't always approach. But we also have to bring to bear that cancer is not only the problem of our families and others afflicted, but it's a major economic problem. It costs this nation \$220 billion a year.

ADUBATO: Doctor, I'm sorry, I'm going to cut you off. We're going to talk

about that next time, because I'm also told we're up against a hard break.

Right after this, county executive in Essex County Joe DiVincenzo, a good friend of Brendan's and Ruthi.

Thank you. I wish we had more time. Great discussion.

Ms. BYRNE: Yay. Thank you. Great discussion.

ADUBATO: We covered a lot of ground.

Announcer: If you would like more information on this program, or if you'd like to express an opinion, e-mail us at info@caucusnj.org. And visit us online at caucusnj.org.

ADUBATO: We are pleased to be joined by the Essex County executive, my good friend of many years, Joe DiVincenzo.

Joe, good to see you.

Mr. JOSEPH N. DiVINCENZO Jr. (Essex County Executive, New Jersey): Nice to be here, Steve. Thanks for having me.

ADUBATO: Yeah, we talked with Brendan Byrne and Ruthi about the cancer center. A lot of interesting things going on in regards to the cancer center. But this is about government, OK? I know you're a big fan of Brendan Byrne. By the way, do your Brendan Byrne plug.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, listen, we were so proud of the governor and we wish him a happy birthday, 85th birthday. But...

ADUBATO: But didn't you name something...

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, at the courthouse complex, which we're restoring the whole entire complex, we named the plaza after him. You know, he was a former prosecutor, former judge, and when he was the governor he really did an outstanding job for the state of New Jersey. So we think--you know, he's an Essex County resident, and we want to do something to honor him, and we named a plaza after him. And we have a--it's right in front of a brand-new lobby, a new entranceway going in, so everybody could at that time see it and respect...

ADUBATO: Pay respect to the governor.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Absolutely.

ADUBATO: But you know, Joe, that was a different time. When Brendan Byrne was governor in the 1970s, right, it was a different time. As we do this program in the middle of February in 2009, the county executive recently delivered his state of the county address. I was there, it was not fun. While there are a lot of accomplishments, I want to talk not so much about the accomplishments right now.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: No, right.

ADUBATO: I want to talk about something different. We're at a time when Barack Obama is the president, economic stimulus package, Governor Corzine,

very challenging time. It's a tough time to be in government. It's a tough time to be a taxpayer. What do you think most taxpayers really want from elected officials like yourself, particularly when the news you deliver isn't so good?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: You know, the main thing what I've try to do in all the years I've been an elected official is to be honest and up front and just tell it the way it is. And as an elected official, what I always do is as long as you know you're doing the right thing, you know, whether it's...

ADUBATO: Give me an example of bad news you have to deliver sometimes.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Oh, bad news is--listen, it's telling people, you know, that you have a huge deficit and the way it has to be corrected is that you have to, you know, do layoffs, you have to raise taxes, you have to make tough decisions, you have to cut programs, you have to cut services.

ADUBATO: Talk about the layoffs.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Oh, the lay--listen...

ADUBATO: As hard as it is for people to get the notice, what's it like to give it?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: We--oh, you know, it's very difficult. You know, we had to lay off 219 people, which is very, very difficult. And especially in the economy that we're in, to lay off one person is too much. It's just that, you know, Essex County is--people pay one of the highest taxes in the state of New Jersey and maybe in the country. You know, the thing with the foreclosures, there's no question that we are the highest foreclosures in the state of New Jersey, you know, so.

ADUBATO: People just can't afford to keep their homes.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Can't afford it. You know, it's like balancing--you know, you have to balance two things. You have to worry about the people who work for you, because you do not want to lay off, and neither do you want to raise taxes. So you got to come in the middle, and that's what we did. We laid off 200 people, we raised taxes 4 percent, which is basically about \$90 per homeowner, which is \$8 a month. But guess what, that's \$8 too much a month. I had people that called me from South Orange, from Maplewood said, 'Joe, listen, we respect everything you done, you've been doing a great job improving the infrastructure, bringing integrity, honesty to government. But, Joe, my wife is out of work, the people next door just lost their home.' It's hard, you know. And then you have to worry about people that work for you that have been there doing a great job for the last six years for you, giving their heart and soul for it.

ADUBATO: So they're not being let go because of performance.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: No, not at all.

ADUBATO: They're being let go because you don't have enough money to run the government.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Because we don't have--we don't have enough money, you know. And when we were doing this budget in 2009, we were look forward to 2010, you

know. So we're trying to, you know--we wanted to do a cut where it affects--whatever we do in 2009, it will have an impact on 2010. The only thing that we're doing which is very good, Steve...

ADUBATO: Hm.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: ...is--you know, which we--is bringing in additional revenue. And let me tell you...

ADUBATO: Describe it. What does that mean? From where? Where is this money coming from?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: You know, we had a jail--we built a brand-new jail down in the city of Newark, and it was on the federal consent order. Once we got rid of the federal...

ADUBATO: Federal consent order, let's make that clear. The feds came in and said, 'Hey, this jail isn't where it needs to be.'

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Over 25 years we were on federal consent order, and just two years ago we were able to get off of that because what happened, we built a new facility and we improved all the programs...

ADUBATO: It was overcrowded, it was not a safe situation.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Medical was horrendous.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: People were not getting treated properly, and we changed all that. But since then what we have been able to do is we're bringing in federal inmates and we're bringing in the ICE inmates, which is immigration detainees.

ADUBATO: So that's money, that's revenue?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Yeah. Well, what's happening is by bringing in these inmates, which we bring in about 450, is going to bring the county an additional \$17 million into our revenue side of our budget, which is good, because you have to offset. You just can't anticipate taxes, raising taxes. You have to be able to bring revenue in. The other thing with the jail where we're making money, instead of housing our--the sick inmates in an outside facility, we worked out an arrangement with East Orange General where we bring our inmates there to recover. But besides bringing Essex inmates, we also bring inmates from Hudson, Passaic and Union County.

ADUBATO: How does that bring in revenue?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, we charge them per day, just like a hospital would charge...

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: ...for staying in our hospital, which brings in another \$500,000 a year.

ADUBATO: So wait, let me get this straight. So much of your job, even though

you had to raise taxes...

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Which is...

ADUBATO: ...even though had to lay off people, is looking for ways to bring money into government?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: You have to be able to...

ADUBATO: Sounds like more of a business than government job.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: It's the way we've been running this government the last six years is as a business. We have to increase our revenue side. And we're able to do that at our jail, we're able to do that at our youth house. Right now we're negotiating with Passaic County, because we're going to take their detainees, we're going to bring in about \$5 million a year just on that side. These are all happening this year. So we're getting ready for the 2010 budget...

ADUBATO: Hm.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: ...because we just can't be--depend on what, tax increases. People can no longer afford it. We got to keep people within their houses.

ADUBATO: All right, let's talk about other tough stuff. By the way, full disclosure, Joe and I actually grew up together, we're longtime friends, and I served as an unpaid co-chair of the transition committee that really tried to put the government together, and I've done some coaching and teaching with Essex County managers a while back. Just wanted to get that out there. So now I have to ask Joe a particularly hard question.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: How about that I beat you in golf, too, you know what I'm saying, man?

ADUBATO: He wants to believe he beats me in golf. We play on public golf courses, and there's no money that changes hands.

That being said, Joe, I got four and a half minutes left. I got to hit you with a tough one.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Go ahead.

ADUBATO: Public employee unions. I read the blog sometimes, and the people who represent some employees in the county--police, others--say pretty rotten things about you.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Yeah.

ADUBATO: And they say that the county executive doesn't understand. Because I--why don't you tell folks what it is proposing. Why don't you tell folks what the issue is about arbitration. Because this isn't just an Essex County issue, it's a state and national issue. Lay it out for us.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, first of all, there's no longer where--look, the employees that work for Essex County, all right, before they used to say that government workers used to make less than people in private industry.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, believe it or not, it's changed. People in the public sector are now making more money than people in the private sector.

ADUBATO: Because of contracts?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Because of contracts, because in the private sector you can see what's happening.

ADUBATO: Right.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: People are getting laid off so quick. But the thing what has to--what has to happen in the next couple years, I'm asking our workers, who's done an outstanding job for the economy, the 3500 employees--listen, you know, I'm asking them to, for 2009--or for 2008 I want to give them a 3 percent increase...

ADUBATO: Three percent increase on salary.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Plus pay for their health benefits, a portion of their health--1.5 percent, OK.

ADUBATO: OK, pay for a portion of the health benefits.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Plus take a zero in '09 and zero in '10.

ADUBATO: No increase in salary in '09 and '010.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Right. That's what...

ADUBATO: And they said, 'Are you nuts? We have to get an increase.'

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, listen, what I did in example, we did the same thing on our executive. A hundred and twenty-five nonclassified employees, we did that. We took a 3 percent and we took a zero '09, a zero '010. The only difference is we're paying 20 percent of our premium. We're paying a lot more...

ADUBATO: Health benefits.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: For health benefits for ourselves. Listen, the next two years going to be very difficult. It's a global crisis we're in. The state's in a crisis, county, municipality.

ADUBATO: The country.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Every--country. We have to sacrifice. Everybody's got to sacrifice. Everybody's going to have to give a little bit. The major problem...

ADUBATO: So if the union says no, we have a contract.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, we don't--there's no contract.

ADUBATO: OK, but you're renegotiating contracts now.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, we're renegotiating all 26 unions, all 26 contracts right now.

ADUBATO: When they say we understand the sacrifice...

Mr. DiVINCENZO: We don't have a signed contract right now.

ADUBATO: ...but we should not be included in that because we already are making a sacrifice because we're public servants. Your response?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, listen, the thing is just read the newspaper and watch the TV set, you know. With--every day you're seeing thousands and thousands of people being affected, thousands and--losing their--laid off...

ADUBATO: People have been laid off in public television, where we are right now.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: ...foreclosures.

ADUBATO: That's right.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: I mean, constant. Listen, we have the highest tax county, we have the most foreclosures. We're in a financial crisis, and the next two years are going to be very difficult. And it could go on further, all right. All I'm asking people to sacrifice. The thing with our PBAs, this binding arbitration, you know, I've been a freeholder president now the county--it just doesn't work. It's outdated.

ADUBATO: Explain to the folks. So the county executive and his team proposes a certain contract, and the bargaining union on behalf of the public employee says no way, and they're at an impasse. Right now the law says, Joe, that an arbitrator comes in, looks at the situation and says, 'All right, here's the way we're going to go.' Why doesn't that work? It sounds fair to me.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Well, that's a third party, you know, that comes in there and sounds fair. You present your argument...

ADUBATO: Right. They're objective.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: ...and they present their argument. But what happens is what I--if they look at Essex County and look at the economic realities of Essex County, where we are financially and looked at our--they don't. What they do is look at comparison of other towns throughout the state of New Jersey, what they're getting. They could be more wealthy what Essex County is, all right? We do not have that money. It can't be based on comparison, it's got to be based on what the reality is here in Essex County. Binding arbitration, no--it's outdated. It's got to change.

ADUBATO: You're proposing--30 seconds left. What are you proposing?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: What I'm proposing is we do out binding--I was elected to be the county exec, I should be one negotiating with them at the table, all right, and that's just not happening.

ADUBATO: You just have to work it out and get the arbitrators out of it.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: No, what--yeah, absolutely. Because right now, with

the--what happens is the unions want the arbitrator to come in, because they know whatever anybody else is getting, they're going to be getting. Essex County can no longer afford it.

ADUBATO: Well, which could then drive taxes up?

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Drive taxes up and what happens...

ADUBATO: Layoffs could happen.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Additional layoffs. Listen, you never want to lay off police, sheriff and prosecutors. You never want to lay off. But guess what, it's coming to the time now where they're going to be laid off.

ADUBATO: Whatever happens with this battle over arbitration, Mr. County Executive, is going to have state and national ramifications. Thank you for laying out the challenging job you have, because I know you love it. Thank you, Joe.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: Thank you.

ADUBATO: Great job.

Mr. DiVINCENZO: All right.

Announcer: The preceding program has been a production of the Caucus Educational Corporation, celebrating over 20 years of broadcast excellence; NJN Public Television; and Thirteen in association with wnet.org.

Funding for this edition of CAUCUS: NEW JERSEY has been provided by Johnson & Johnson, the worldwide health care products company; New Jersey Natural Gas, proud to support education in our communities; QualCare Inc., a local managed care company covering 600,000 New Jersey residents; and by Verizon Communications.

Promotional support provided by NJBIZ, all business, all New Jersey; and New Jersey Monthly, magazine of the Garden State, available at newsstands.

Don't miss Steve Adubato and co-host Rafael Pi Roman each week on "Inside Trenton," Saturdays at 8:30 AM on Thirteen and Sundays at 7:30 AM on NJN Public Television.