

New York Post Editorial

EXECUTIVE E-PRIVILEGE?

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A New Jersey appeals court has swallowed hook, line and sinker Gov. Jon Corzine's bizarre contention that he wants to keep private e-mails he exchanged with his union boss ex-girlfriend only so that he can govern effectively.

The three-judge panel yesterday ruled that Corzine doesn't have to make public any of his electronic back-and-forths with Carla Katz, head of the Garden State's largest public-employee union.

In fact, he doesn't even have to show them to a lower court judge - who'd said he would decide, based on content, whether Corzine was exerting a legitimate claim of executive privilege.

This decision has got to be appealed to the state's Supreme Court - quickly.

Because everything already known about the Corzine-Katz relationship suggests strongly that the only "chilling effect" release of these e-mails would have is on the governor's political standing.

Corzine and Katz, after all, aren't your typical ex-lovers. Their relationship ended with a confidential payment by him of \$6 million in cash and gifts.

Then there's the curious case of Katz's brother-in-law, Rocco Riccio: He was forced to quit his job at the state Department of Human Services over allegations he'd used it to examine the tax records of Corzine enemies.

Last November, Riccio collected \$362,500 more from Corzine - in yet another secretly negotiated deal - after charging that the governor reneged on a promise to find him a job with one of his private-sector friends.

And finally, there's Katz's contention that the e-mails should remain private because they involve official labor negotiations - a claim Corzine denies.

Executive privilege is meant to ensure that presidents - and governors - can receive frank advice, secure in the knowledge that their discussions with top aides will remain confidential.

It isn't meant to protect pillow talk.

Corzine's claim (litigated by his attorney general on the taxpayers' dime) that he's waging this fight to protect future governors is ludicrous.

People with nothing to hide don't spend so much time, effort and money trying to keep it hidden.