

Corzine e-mail case is closed

The N.J. Supreme Court denied an effort to force him to release exchanges with his ex, a labor leader.

By Adrienne Lu

Inquirer Trenton Bureau

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The New Jersey Supreme Court yesterday rejected a Republican effort to force Gov. Corzine to release e-mail exchanges with his former girlfriend, who was president of the largest state workers' union.

The court declined to hear an appeal of a unanimous appellate court decision in January.

The three-judge appeals court ruled that Corzine could keep the e-mails he exchanged with Carla Katz private, saying the release of confidential e-mails could have a "chilling effect on the governor's ability or willingness to solicit advice, or to accept unsolicited advice in the future."

The Supreme Court decision effectively ends the legal efforts by state Republican Party leader Tom Wilson, who for nearly two years has been trying to force the governor to make the e-mails public.

Corzine and Katz dated from 2002 to 2004, when Corzine was a U.S. senator. He and his wife separated in 2002 and divorced in 2003.

The dozens of e-mails were exchanged while the state was negotiating contracts with public employee unions in 2006 and 2007.

Wilson argued that the public had a right to review the e-mails to determine if the ended relationship had affected the negotiations. In his defense, Corzine invoked executive privilege, which exempts some executive branch communications from public scrutiny.

"I'm glad this is over," he said after a bill-signing ceremony yesterday afternoon. "I think we've had a political fishing trip by folks that's gone on for far too long."

He added that the contracts that emerged from the labor negotiations were good for New Jersey.

"The contract saved the state \$6.4 billion. It broke a lot of new ground in with reforms to pensions and benefits," Corzine said. "It is very clear from the multiple judges who have seen it, as well as the ethics panel, that is it time for this all to be over."

Wilson conceded Corzine had won the legal battle, but said the governor should hold himself to a higher standard.

"If he has nothing to hide, then he should stop hiding," Wilson said. "Refusing to do so, I think, he's made it plainly clear he does have something to hide."

