

## Daniel J. Douglas / Governors should borrow idea from 'President's Club' PressOfAtlanticCity.com

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### Daniel J. Douglas / Governors should borrow idea from 'President's Club'

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A new book, "The President's Club: Inside the World's Most Inclusive Fraternity," by Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy, describes the relationships of presidents and former presidents of the United States. It is a fraternity of varying numbers as former presidents pass away.

Currently the fraternity includes President Barack Obama and former presidents Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. Gibbs and Duffy detail the emergence of alliances and friendships between former competitors - sometimes to regain former glories or to burnish legacies and frequently to come together for the greater good of the office of the presidency and for the sake of the country.

As an example, the authors cite President Harry S. Truman, who was thrust into office upon the sudden death of his predecessor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Truman, who had very little contact with Roosevelt before his death, was left to finish World War II and then deal with the aftermath of years of death and destruction.

A key humanitarian and security concern was the mass of starving and frequently homeless people in Europe. Truman wanted to save the starving people of Europe from further misery and also wanted to provide a solid foundation for the security of the continent.

Truman turned to the only member of his fraternity at that time, former President Herbert Hoover. Although despised by some for his time as president during the Great Depression, he was considered an accomplished businessperson and humanitarian. Of particular relevance to Truman was that Hoover had been the director of the American Relief

functions. The most recent governor, Jon S. Corzine, finds himself ensnared in financial and legal problems in his position as CEO of MF Global.

With the exception of Corzine, all of the other former governors may be willing to contribute their experience and views on the current public policy issues of New Jersey.

The political discourse in this state has remained remarkably similar over the years. Some issues come and go, but the big issues of property taxes and education remain the top concerns of the citizens of New Jersey. All of these governors have wrestled with these issues and have made grand proposals to solve these problems - in their minds - once and for all. The fact that policymakers still are trying to form new solutions points to the need for greater collaboration and consultation.

Recently, Kean was the keynote speaker at a recycling conference sponsored by the Atlantic County Utilities Authority and the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Richard Stockton College. Kean spoke of a time when bipartisanship was more common and when civility was the norm and rancor was the exception. He easily shared credit for the recycling bill with the sponsor of the bill, former Democratic State Senator Paul Contillo.

He concluded his speech with this observation, "Even when it is difficult ... good people working together, from within the government, from the environmental community, from outside of government, doing it in a bipartisan fashion, can get things done."

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Posted in Commentary on Tuesday, June 12, 2012 12:01 am.

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