

## Corzine's donations questioned in New Jersey governor's race

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WASHINGTON -- New Jersey Sen. Jon Corzine, a former Wall Street executive with a portfolio worth \$261 million, has been giving some of his money to black churches, raising questions about whether it's generosity or politics.

The Democrat, who is in a tight race for governor, donated or loaned more than \$2.5 million last year to black churches. He has received the endorsement of more than two dozen black ministers.

"Blatant quid pro quo-ism," said Democrat Walter Fields, Jr., former political director of New Jersey's NAACP. "We have always had wealthy candidates running for office. What we have never had is that individual wealth being used in such a direct way, and somehow we're supposed to look the other way."

Corzine, the former CEO of Goldman Sachs, has defended his giving and cited the millions he has given to other organizations as well, including Planned Parenthood and The Vaccine Fund, which finances immunization.

"There are people who work those fields every day who need resources. Some are Catholic charities, some are Jewish charities, some are Protestant and some are African-American. I go where the need is," he said.

The Rev. Reginald T. Jackson, executive director of the Black Ministers Council and pastor of St. Matthew's AME Church in Orange, N.J., said black ministers have been making personal endorsements of candidates since 1981. The council does not make endorsements.

Jackson's church has received thousands of dollars from Corzine over several years, including a \$50,000 loan last year.

In their endorsement of Corzine last month, Jackson said the black ministers chose the Democrat because he "will be a leader of a state at two extremes \_ at one end the wealthiest state in the nation and at the other end one of the poorest states in the nation."

Doug Forrester, the Republican candidate, made millions with his prescription drug management company, BeneCard Services Inc. He has donated \$1,000 to one black church, and he wrote a \$5,000 check to another for Hurricane Katrina relief.

Blacks make up 11 percent of the electorate in New Jersey.

Rick Cohen, executive director of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, said private foundations are not closely monitored.

"While Corzine may be doing nothing legally wrong, there are real questions about not only the grant making that goes to entities whose political endorsements or support are of interest to the senator, but grants to entities that are remarkably sizable," Cohen said.

Jackson, the official with the Black Ministers Council, said the scrutiny of Corzine's donations was because of Ed Rollins, who managed Republican Christie Whitman's successful 1993 gubernatorial campaign. Rollins said then that campaign used \$500,000 in "street money" payments to black ministers to keep them and their congregations from voting on Election Day.

Rollins, now a political commentator, later said he had made up the story.