

NEW YORK NEWS

“We want to help. That’s government’s role” — a statement made in 1994 by Sen. Frank Lautenberg, who died on Monday



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Sen. Frank Lautenberg (R) stands with ybl" data-bbox="47 312 394 331"/>

Sen. Lautenberg Dead

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Barack Obama said in a statement, “from improving our public transportation to protecting citizens from gun violence to ensuring that members of our military and their families get the care they deserve.”

The Senate observed a moment of silence in Lautenberg’s memory, and at the White House the flag was lowered to half-staff.

Lautenberg served nearly three decades in the Senate in two stints, beginning with an upset victory in 1982 over Republican Rep. Millicent Fenwick.

Possessed with neither a dynamic speaking style nor a telegenic face, he won his last race in 2008 at age 84, becoming the first New Jersey politician ever elected to five Senate terms.

The senator played a vital role in getting the “Lautenberg Amendment” passed in 1990, allowing thousands of Jews to emigrate from the former Soviet Union. The amendment permitted historic religious persecution to be a sufficient factor to receive refugee status.

Over the years, he was a reliable Democratic vote on such issues as unions, guns and the environment. A native of one of the most congested and heavily industrialized and polluted states, he worked to secure hundreds of millions of dollars for mass transit projects, ardently defended Amtrak and pushed for money for the Superfund toxic-waste cleanup program.

He was the author of a 1984 law that threatened to withhold federal highway money from states that did not adopt a drinking age of 21, a measure that passed amid rising alarm over drunken driving. At the time, some states allowed people as young as 18 to drink.

By 1988, every state was in compliance with the law, which has been widely credited with reducing highway deaths.

A former smoker, Lautenberg was one of two

prime sponsors of the 1989 law that banned smoking on all domestic flights of less than six hours, one of several anti-smoking laws he championed. The measure helped pave the way for today’s numerous restrictions on where people can light up.

Lautenberg had announced earlier this year that he would not seek another term in 2014, and Newark Mayor Cory Booker, a fellow Democrat, said he would run for the seat.

Republican Gov. Chris Christie, who frequently tangled with Lautenberg, said: “I think the best way to describe Frank Lautenberg — and the way he would probably want to be described to all of you today — is as a fighter. Sen. Lautenberg fought for the things he believed in, and sometimes he just fought because he liked to.”

“I give him praise on a life well-lived,” the governor added.

Lautenberg initially retired in 2000 after 18 years in the Senate, saying he did not have the drive to raise money for a fourth campaign. He served on the boards of three companies, two graduate schools and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

But New Jersey Democrats recruited Lautenberg out of retirement in 2002 as a replacement for Robert Torricelli, who had abandoned his re-election bid just five weeks before Election Day in a financial scandal.

Republicans went to court to prevent the ballot “switcheroo.” When that failed, they attacked Lautenberg as a political relic ill-suited for dangerous times.

But Lautenberg surged to victory over Republican Douglas Forrester and returned to the Senate in 2003 at age 78, resuming his role as a leading liberal.

Lautenberg made his fortune as chairman and CEO of Automatic Data Processing, a New Jersey-based payroll services company he had founded with two friends in 1952. It

GOP Replacement For Lautenberg Not Assured

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — Gov. Chris Christie is perhaps the nation’s highest-profile Republican — but that’s no guarantee the seat held by the late Sen. Frank Lautenberg will switch to GOP hands. In fact, it’s that profile that could help preserve the seat for the Democrats, political observers say.

Christie has two key decisions: Whom to appoint to fill the seat in the short term, and when to let voters have their say on who will fill it until the term expires in January 2015. There are layers of political calculations involved, along with possible legal complications.

Christie, widely considered a possible presidential candidate for 2016, needs to decide whether to appoint someone who will merely keep the seat warm, or someone who will seek to keep it in the 2014 election.

With Lautenberg’s death, the Senate now has 52 Democrats, 45 Republicans and two independents who caucus with the Democrats. New Jersey has not elected a Republican to the Senate since 1972. And it hasn’t had one serve there at all since 1982, when Republican Gov. Tom Kean appointed Republican Nicholas Brady to finish the term of Democrat Harrison Williams, who resigned amid scandal in the last year of his term.

If Christie picks a Democrat, it may not play well with Republican presidential primary voters, who could see him as disloyal to his party. But if he picks a Republican, he risks upsetting voters who chose a Democrat for the seat, and a moderate Republican may not help him much with that group, either.

Political analysts say the list of Republican possibilities includes state Sen. Tom Kean Jr.; U.S. Rep. Chris Smith; former Gov. Christie Whitman; state Sen. Joe Kyrillos, who ran for the U.S. Senate last year; state Sen. Kevin O’Toole; or Bill Baroni, the deputy executive director of the Port Authority

became one of the largest such companies in the world.

Later in his Senate career, he became a foil for Christie.

In 2012, Christie called Lautenberg a “partisan hack” and an “embarrassment” and said it was time for him to retire. Lautenberg called Christie “the name-calling governor” and “the king of liars.”

Born in urban Paterson, N.J., the son of Polish and Russian Jewish immigrants, Lautenberg often recounted what government did for him — and what it

of New York and New Jersey.

Another possibility could be Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno, which would open a spot on Christie’s re-election bid ticket this fall for another Republican.

Despite the risks, Christie could consider appointing Newark Mayor Cory Booker, a Democrat who announced earlier this year plans to run for Lautenberg’s seat in 2014, said Brigid Harrison, a political scientist at Montclair State University. The move would help Christie’s image with Democrats and African-Americans across the country.

“For his own political future, it is not a bad gamble” for Christie, Harrison said.

Another major question is the timing of the election.

Frank Askin, a professor at the Rutgers-Newark School of Law, said there are two conflicting state laws about when an election to fill the seat may be held. Options include this November, when the governor is also on the ballot; November 2014; or a special primary and general election some other time over the next 19 months at a cost of millions of dollars.

State Senate President Stephen Sweeney, a Democrat, said Christie should appoint a Democrat, because the seat was held by an elected one, and then hold a special election this November. But he said he thinks Christie may be reluctant to appoint a Democrat and hesitant to give up his place at the top of this fall’s ballot.

Askin said he expects Democrats to sue to try to force an election this year if Christie does not do that on his own.

The main timing question Christie will consider if he chooses a Republican is whether being on the ballot with the popular governor might help that candidate win a race, said Matthew Hale, a political scientist at Seton Hall University.

“Does he think that there’s anybody out there who can run and beat Booker?” Hale asked. “If there is, put that person in, give them a chance to run and have a shot.”

could have done to help his widowed mother as she struggled to pay his father’s medical bills.

“We want to help. That’s government’s role,” Lautenberg said in 1994.

He served in the Army Signal Corps during World War II. With the help of the GI Bill he received an undergraduate degree in economics from Columbia University.

Lautenberg, who lived in Cliffside Park, N.J., is survived by his wife Bonnie and four children.

Bloomberg Announces New Effort on Sandy Repairs

NEW YORK (AP) — New Yorkers still struggling with about 20,000 homes wrecked in “the worst storm ever to hit New York City” will get one-on-one personal help and money to help rebuild, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Monday.

Seven months after Superstorm Sandy, the mayor announced a new effort to speed up remaining repairs: NYC Build It Back.

“We are making our federal aid package simple and understandable and tailoring assistance to the specific needs of the families and businesses most impacted by Sandy,” Bloomberg said at a City Hall news conference.

Eligible homeowners, renters and landlords can seek advice and financing to repair and rebuild or even get reimbursed for work already done. Loans are also available.

The money comes from \$648 million in federal disaster recovery funds passed by Congress as part of the \$1.77 billion the city already received through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

New York City residents may register for the help by calling 311 or visiting the program’s website. Factors determining if a homeowner qualifies include whether they already received aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency or other sources.

The mayor said NYC Build It Back differs from other post-Sandy relief efforts by providing a trained person — with a name and phone number — who will deal directly with each resident.

“Whether it’s personal assistance in the rebuilding process or reimbursements for completed repairs, this program will provide a new infusion of support to help families, neighborhoods and businesses come back stronger and more resilient than ever before,” the mayor said.

Homeowners also have the option of selling flood-prone properties to the city and relocating elsewhere.

“It is true in some cases, based on the level of damage and other factors, owners may want to voluntarily sell their homes and relocate,” Bloomberg said. “The city will work with the communities and developers to strategically redevelop those properties in a smarter and more resilient way.”

Brad Gair, the City Director of Housing Recovery Operations, said he expects 20,000 or more households still need rebuilding.

Sandy “was the worst storm ever to hit New York City and today, we are launching a new program to continue the road to recovery,” said Bloomberg.