

Don't let Christie bully Pinelands panel: Editorial

By [Star-Ledger Editorial Board](#)
on May 20, 2014 at 7:03 PM, updated May 21, 2014 at 8:11 AM



Gov. Chris Christie is tampering with the Pinelands Commission after its members rejected a natural gas pipeline he favored. The project would have run through a protected stretch of forested land. (*Andrew Mills/The Star-Ledger*)

[Print](#)



By [Star-Ledger Editorial Board](#)
on May 20, 2014 at 7:03 PM, updated May 21, 2014 at 8:11 AM

Gov. Chris Christie is known for being vindictive, and not just because his staffers got caught playing in traffic. As we've seen with his approach to judicial reappointments, his attitude has long been, **rule my way or get fired.**

His latest target is the Pinelands Commission, a panel that loyally guards a protected forest reserve and water supply in South Jersey.

Christie is using his bully power to get back at its members for **rejecting a natural gas pipeline he wanted** — and only the Legislature can stop him.

Christie's office **advocated hard for this pipeline**, which was part of his energy plan. But it would have unlawfully cut through a forest area that's been protected by the Legislature for decades, so the commissioners responsibly voted it down.

The governor responded by throwing a hissy fit. He **issued a harsh veto** denying them minimal pay raises that they haven't had in years. Then, in an unprecedented move, he **and his freeholder allies** dumped three commissioners who **voted against the pipeline when they came up for re-nomination**.

Two had served for more than a decade, and the third was appointed by Christie himself — the only thing that's since changed is her refusal to vote for the pipeline.

Christie is replacing them with his own picks, just as he did on the Highlands Council, where he swapped in allies more favorable to development. Once again, he's manipulating a state agency to suit himself, without regard to the democratic system or the rules he is flouting.

Three more commissioners who voted against the pipeline are up for re-nomination in the next few months. Will Christie dump them, too?

Time for the Legislature to stand up to his tactics. Senate President Stephen Sweeney protested when Christie tried to bend the judiciary to his will by refusing to reappoint state Supreme Court Justice John Wallace. Where is his voice now?

Lawmakers must oppose Christie's nominees if they want to protect the integrity of not just the Pinelands, but the entire system. They failed to do so with the Highlands Council. Now's their chance to say, enough is enough.