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Legislative Democrats and state Treasurer Andrew Eristoff on Wednesday traded barbs on who should be blamed for the lengthy computer crash at the state Motor Vehicle Commission that left customers without service statewide on Monday.

“It’s appalling that Governor Christie has taken one of the remarkable success stories in recent New Jersey government history and essentially trashed it in 18 months,” Assemblywoman Connie Wagner (D-Bergen) said. “Motorists across this state had become accustomed to brutal waits at motor vehicle agencies, until the reforms of decade ago changed that reality. Now, motor vehicle agencies are again a mess under Governor Christie.

“That mess was made very clear by Monday’s computer crash that inconvenienced numerous New Jerseyans and brought motor vehicle agencies to a standstill,” Wagner said. “What was the point of closing the agencies on Monday to save \$4 million if the result was going to be lost wages for New Jersey workers forced to stand in line for hours? And that’s if they’re lucky and the computers don’t crash on them, forcing them to come back for another wait.”

Motor vehicle agencies are open on Mondays.

Eristoff described the criticism by Wagner and Sen. Robert M. Gordon (D-Bergen) as hypocritical and laughable and said legislative Democrats cut over \$5 million in funding for state government technology improvements from the 2011-12 state budget.

Eristoff said, "It's ironic that Senator Gordon and Assemblywoman Wagner are calling for hearings into what went wrong when for too long prior administrations and legislatures neglected the obligation to take appropriate action and support system modernization. Governor Christie had the foresight to fix potential issues associated with our network and yet the legislative Democrats eliminated the three line items in his budget that would have addressed the state's need for significant improvement in our IT infrastructure.

"Senator Gordon stated there are questions to be answered as to whether an upgrade is needed and whether the system is flexible enough," Eristoff said. "I can say that the answer to these questions is yes and I would urge Senator Gordon and his colleagues to set political considerations aside and join us in moving forward in critical upgrades in our infrastructure. Our primary concern should be focusing on improving our government systems instead of unproductive theater."

Eristoff said the state's IT infrastructure is over 30 years old and in need of upgrading in order to meet new and increased service demands. In the Treasury's Transition Report from January 2010, it was recommended that there needed to be a fresh focus on IT infrastructure, which is described as severely outdated and unable to handle frequent statutory and contractual changes.

Eristoff said the Democrats cut \$2 million for IT modernization, \$2 million for security improvements, and \$1.5 million to enable the state to purchase data storage and network equipment that is considered essential to meet current and growing demands on the central IT infrastructure.