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WHILE THERE'S been unusually little speculation over what [Governor Christie](#) will tell the Legislature in his State of the State address this Tuesday, chances are good that he'll elect to play small ball, suggesting that the year be spent building on accomplishments of the last three years rather than embarking on major new and sweepingly grand programs.



Governor Christie

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Governor Christie

As is his custom, Christie will ack 46 6.45 79dNewst tbipartisanshipth

In all likelihood, the governor will devote a portion of his speech to the storm, its devastating aftermath and the adverse consequences it could inflict on the state's \$38 billion-a-year tourism industry.

The governor may deal as well with the state's chronically high unemployment rate, which has been lodged at over 9 percent for two years. The Democratic leadership in the Legislature has announced its intention to send a package of what it terms pro-growth, job-creation legislation to the governor, potentially forcing a showdown over the use of tax credits and other costly efforts to spur economic development.

While Christie has vetoed a number of the Democratic proposals in the past, he's softened his position somewhat and has promised to consider the bills in light of their budgetary impact and job-growth potential.

Reform of the state's teacher tenure laws — the first in state history — was one of the administration's signature accomplishments last year and it is anticipated the governor will renew his call to build on that success by eliminating seniority as a criteria to determine teacher layoffs. The seniority provision was removed from the original legislation after the New Jersey Education Association vowed a fight to the finish over it, putting the entire proposal in jeopardy. Christie, however, remains committed to it, arguing that genuine and lasting tenure reform is incomplete without it.

Last year's call by the governor for a 10 percent across-the-board cut in income tax rates will likely not be repeated this year. The cut was opposed by the Democratic leadership, which substituted a tax-credit program to be enacted only if the governor's revenue projections were met by the end of the year. Clearly, that didn't happen — and won't happen — and the \$183 million set aside in the budget for the first phase of the reduction will likely be used instead to help overcome the shortfall.

Because the speech is Christie's first opportunity at agenda-setting in his reelection year, it will be scrutinized more closely than his previous addresses. His sentences will be parsed and the search for hidden meanings and subtexts will be heightened. He's already been criticized for spending too much time currying favor with Republican leaders around the country with an eye toward becoming a serious player of influence in the 2016 presidential election.

Conjecture

His speech on Tuesday will afford critics, political observers and commentators alike another opportunity for speculation and conjecture about the governor's plans for his future.

For Christie, choosing to play small ball does not translate into simply standing in place while waiting for events to unfold and reacting to them.

He has demonstrated time after time that he believes deeply in an aggressive approach to governing and has no