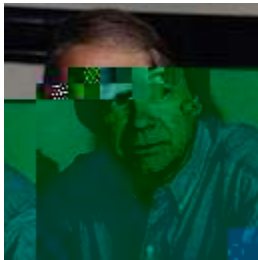




Some Democrats seem more than willing to sacrifice the party -- at least in the short term -- for a better position in 2017

By **Carl Golden**, May 22, 2013 in **Opinion**



Remember the old "Mission Impossible" TV series? The one where Mr. Phelps received his instructions via a tape recording that ended with "This tape will self-destruct in fifteen seconds," followed by a hiss and a puff of smoke.

That warning has become a metaphor for the New Jersey Democratic Party. The state's political establishment has been looking on for weeks now in amusement or in horror as the party self-destructs in a puff of smoke.

The party's presumptive gubernatorial nominee, Middlesex County state Sen. Barbara Buono, has endured months of sniping and

For instance, if Christie -- coming off a landslide this November -- decides to use his victory to vault into the 2016 Republican contest for the presidential nomination, it's likely he'll step down before his term expires in 2017 to devote his efforts toward securing that goal.

In that event, Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno will serve the remainder of the term and, in the Democratic view, will be a far less formidable candidate should she decide to seek the office. If Christie chooses to forego a national run, Democrats are content to await 2017 when the office will be open and their chances greatly enhanced. Moreover, a convincing defeat for Buono this year effectively removes her from any consideration as the potential nominee in four years.

Sweeney, DiVincenzo, and those who share their view appear willing to risk what they believe to be a short-term fracturing of the party to return in four years stronger, more unified, and in a commanding position to win the governor's office.

Buono, in the meantime, continues to struggle with broadening her name recognition and overcoming a disappointing fund-raising effort. While she's made up a small amount of ground in early polling, she trails Christie by upward of 30 points.

She has maintained a remarkable equanimity -- puvete9gn1e ts rese mveJlrese commande pTJ13.Buo 6.7(esatJ13

