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ALL SUSPENSE having been drained from the gubernatorial election outcome months ago, speculation is increasingly focused on the size of Governor Christie’s margin of victory and whether his strength will be sufficient to drag Republican legislative candidates across the finish line and into the majority.

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Governor Christie and state Sen. Barbara Buono sparring during their final gubernatorial debate, held at Montclair State University on Oct. 15.

Her positions represent classic, mainstream, left-of-center Democratic Party thought and, while they may have been effective in the past, they fail to resonate now.

In campaign appearances and during her two debates with Christie, Buono has given little attention to the state's economic condition and has tacked it onto her message almost as an afterthought.

In her first network television ad, for example, there is no mention of property taxes, despite a mountain of polling data over many years that it is the primary concern of New Jerseyans, outdistancing any other issue.

While family dinner-table conversations focus on worries about jobs, mortgage payments, college tuition costs and taxes, Buono is discussing issues that, while they may be important to people, are secondary to what is most troubling to them.

She has not forcefully challenged Christie to defend his economic policies, to explain why New Jersey's unemployment rate exceeds that of neighboring states, or — perhaps most tellingly — to justify reductions in the homestead rebate program and aid to local school districts, both of which directly and adversely impact property taxes.

There's been nothing heard from her about the administration's persistent miscalculation of revenue estimates or accused him, as a result, of a