



CHRISTIE'S QUEST: WILL HE BEAT THE ODDS OR QUICKLY BECOME THE ODD MAN OUT?

CARL GOLDEN | JULY 1, 2015

Governor plans to 'tell it like it is' in New Hampshire— but harsh truth about record in NJ could end longshot bid in short order



Carl Golden

On paper at least, Gov. Chris Christie's pursuit of the Republican presidential nomination seems the epitome of a fool's errand.

Even as he campaigned while officially undeclared, he never rose above fifth place in poll after poll and often fell further behind, fighting unsuccessfully to reach double digits while sharing space with others whose candidacies qualified them as also-rans.

He's perilously close to missing the cut for participation in the first GOP candidates debate in early August.

In terms of likeability, Christie exceeds only Donald Trump, whose candidacy is little more than an outrageously entertaining and bizarre side show, while a clear majority expressed their displeasure with the New Jersey governor, by saying they could never bring themselves to vote for him.

His favorability and job-performance ratings in New Jersey are mired in the low 30s --- below even that of former Gov. Jon Corzine when Christie defeated him in 2009 --- and a majority feel Christie would not make a very good president.

Halfway through his sixth year in office, the state has not recovered from the economic downturn and job losses it experienced in the 2008 recession; property taxes are at an all-time high and lead the nation; the state's credit rating has been downgraded a record nine times; the public pension system is the third-most underfunded in the country, and its transportation infrastructure crumbles daily.

The state has been teetering on the ragged edge of becoming a fiscal basket case for nearly his entire term.

And yet...and yet, he's eager to take his case to the nation and stack his record against the early frontrunners.

He's shoved his entire stack of chips into the center of the table --- otherwise known as New Hampshire --- in the belief that Republican voters there will respond positively and in significant numbers to his campaign's "tell it like it is" mantra.

He, his consultants and advisers are convinced that his outspoken persona and combative style will resonate in a small state like New Hampshire, where one-on-one interactions --- the kind

Christie's already attacked Sen. Rand Paul, accusing the Kentucky senator of placing the nation in great peril by opposing the government's program of massive collection of personal data. He has suggested that former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush was guilty of plagiarism for glomming onto some of Christie's ideas for economic growth.

And he has taken a decided lurch to the right, even when it left him open to charges of flip-flopping on issues like the Common Core educational standards and gun-ownership rights.

Like several others in the race, Christie's foreign policy credentials are thin, consisting pretty much of a pledge that if Russia's President Putin wises off to him he'll punch him in the nose. As for other world leaders who might speak against United States interests or policies, Christie will tell them to sit down and shut up.

He'll remind voters that he was elected twice in

Now that he's concluded he is -- combat ready, as he recently referred to his mindset -- the residents of New Hampshire will decide whether a governor with a sharp tongue and equally sharp elbows is just what the nation needs...or whether he's embarked on a fool's errand.

Carl Golden served as press secretary for Republican Gov. Thomas Kean for eight years and as communications director for Republican Gov. Christie Whitman for three years. He is currently a senior contributing analyst with the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University.

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