

...d: Sunday, Oct 23, 2011 9:34 pm |
...ted: 12:12 a...n Oct 24, 2011.

...y **DEREK HARRIS** Staff Writer

...aul M. Rose...ndly remembers exactly where
...e was in 20... he met Chris Christie as the



Christie standings with the next legislative session in January.

Christie has downplayed his role in legislative elections, telling the Associated Press earlier this month, "In the end, I don't think these Legislative elections are a referendum on (President) Barack Obama or on me. I think they are a referendum on each one of these individual candidates in these individual districts."

For the time, at least, three polls released Oct. 12 show Christie's dalliance with national Republican figures boosted his popularity in his home state to its highest level since he took office in January 2010, numbers that local candidates will try to take to the bank.

A Quinnipiac poll of registered voters showed that 58 percent approved and 38 disapproved of the governor, up from 47 percent and 46 percent in August.

Another poll, by Monmouth University/NJ Press Media, had 55 percent approving and 37 disapproving, up from 50 percent and 41 percent in August.

Finally, a Rutgers/Eagleton poll found 49 percent of state voters saw Christie in a favorable light, while 39 percent thought unfavorable. In August, this poll found state residents saw Christie negatively, by a 47 percent to 45 percent margin.

But beyond Christie's ability to draw the spotlight and the media attention craved by campaigning pols, Christie has also proved to be a solid fundraiser. Cash is the lifeblood of political campaigns, paying for advertisements, office space and campaign workers to get out the message and the vote for candidates.

Reports released this last week by the state Election Law Enforcement Commission showed that the state Republican Party raised \$1.5 million between July 1 and Sept. 30. Of that, \$620,000, or about 40 percent, came from out of state.

By comparison, state Democrats were able to raise \$512,200, with almost all of it coming from inside New Jersey.

This is crucial, because this region is home to some of the most expensive, competitive legislative races in the state, and the cash could be an advantage over Democratic rivals.

Reports released this last week showed that Republicans in the 2nd Legislative District, which includes most of Atlantic County, raised \$942,631 and

spent \$462,916. 1st District Republicans, which includes Cape May, most of Cumberland and a portion of Atlantic County, raised \$209,045 and spent \$30,045.

By comparison, their Democratic rivals in the 2nd District raised \$947,727 and spent \$806,379, while 1st District Democrats raised \$386,895 and spent \$286,114.

For now, at least, Republicans are turning to their star for support. Christie said there were two races he was paying close attention to, this one and one in Bergen County. He promised to return to Atlantic County before the election, and to cheers told the roomful of supporters if they got Polistina over the top early, they could have him at their headquarters to celebrate.

Keith Davis, chairman of the Atlantic County Republican Committee, said volunteers "are going to leave here with 10 times the enthusiasm."

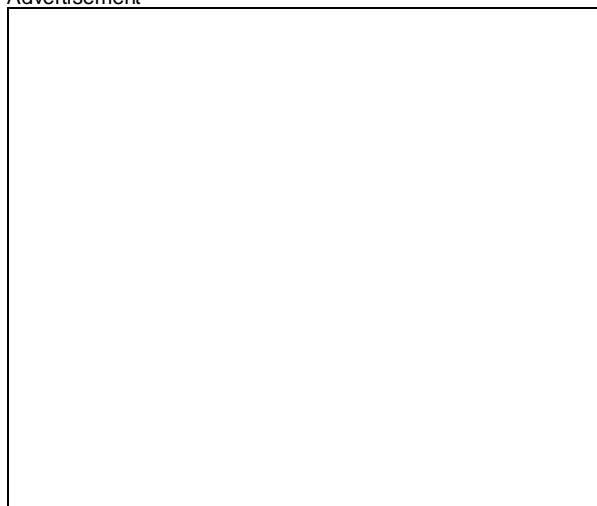
Thursday marked the fourth time that Marissa Mahon, 49, of Northfield, saw Christie. Mahon, a party volunteer, said volunteers had known he was coming for a week, and eagerly awaited his arrival.

On Thursday, she waited for her husband to finish talking with Christie's father, Bill Christie, of Lacey Township. The governor gone, she was ready to get back to work and make the final push for Atlantic County Republicans.

"Yeah, I'm so excited," she said. "I'm really happy to work and volunteer."

Contact Derek Harper:

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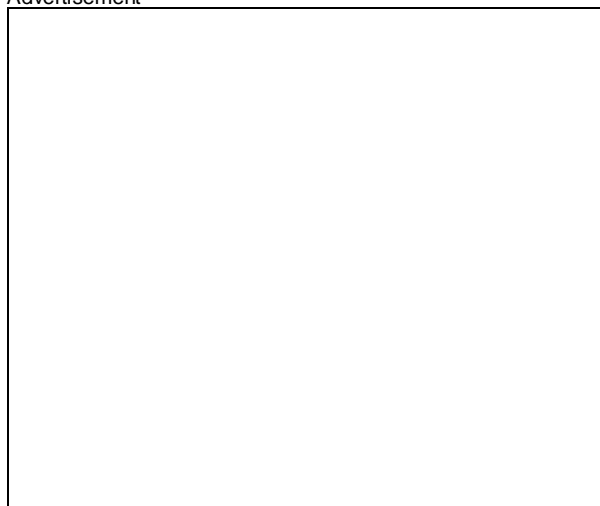




609-272-7046

DHarper@pressofac.com

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