



Christie.

With less than a week remaining until the Nov. 5 gubernatorial election, the latest Quinnipiac University poll released Monday, had Christie leading state Sen. Barbara Buono, his Democratic challenger, by 66 percent to 31 percent, for a 33-point lead. Another poll released Monday by Richard Stockton College had Christie leading Buono 56 percent to 32 percent, for a 24-point lead.

Still, noting the devastation wrought by Hurricane Sandy last year in her home base of Monmouth and Ocean counties, where she said as many as 20,000 remain without homes to go back to, Guadagno urged Sussex County voters not to take the outcome of next week's election for granted.

"Sussex County has to step up to the plate, and whether you're an independent, Republican or Democrat, we need you to help us make up for the people in Monmouth and Ocean counties. I'd like to go back to Sussex County and say the people in Sussex County have our backs. Can I count on you to do that?" she said to a standing ovation and applause.

She also said the governor, if re-elected, would continue efforts to reform the state's affordable housing rules — efforts, she said, that have been stymied by the state Supreme Court, which last year blocked Christie's attempt to disband the Council on Affordable Housing. COAH, until then, had been responsible for setting and enforcing low- and moderate-income housing requirements.

Guadagno also criticized Democratic leaders in the state Senate for refusing to consider Christie's previous nominees for a vacancy on the state Supreme Court and, more recently, for stalling on scheduling a vote on his latest nominee.

Sparta resident Richard Miner, a supporter of Christie's re-election, asked Guadagno afterward to clarify where she and Christie stand on next week's ballot measure that, if approved, will result in a state constitutional amendment tying future increases in the state minimum wage — currently \$7.25 per hour — to increases in inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index.

Guadagno said enshrining minimum wage increases in the state Constitution would deliver a blow to small businesses and predicted passage of the measure would lead to an exodus from the state of as many as 31,000 small-business jobs. Additionally, she said, policy matters such as the minimum wage should be decided legislatively and not through the constitutional amendment process.

"The governor was willing to compromise by phasing in a minimum wage increase over three years so small businesses could plan accordingly," Guadagno said. "But they (the Legislature) said no and instead, they want this in the state Constitution right up there with life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."