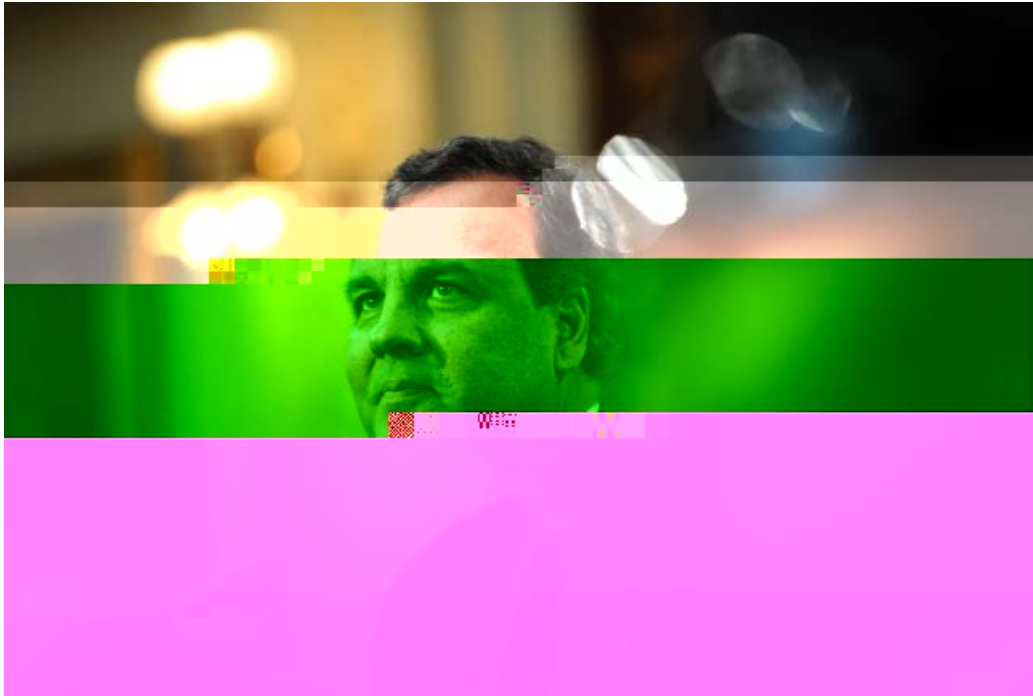


Opinion: Christie's strategy: Change the subject and move on

APRIL 11, 2014, 5:23 PM LAST UP DATED: FRIDAY, APRIL 11, 2014, 5:26 PM

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THE RECORD



TYSON TRISH / THE RECORD

Governor Christie

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WITH HIS ramped up schedule of town hall forums, public appearances and executive actions, it's apparent that Governor Christie has concluded the worst of the GWB scandal is behind him.

Despite an unprecedented decline in public support as measured in numerous polls, Christie is in the midst of a campaign-style effort to re-establish him as a strong, outspoken leader whose energies are concentrated on addressing the state's most pressing problems, particularly fiscal issues.

He's returned to the familiar and comfortable atmosphere of the citizen town hall-style sessions to berate the Democratic-controlled Legislature for failing to act on property tax relief proposals and to implement additional reforms in the public pension system.

It is the old Christie, the one who bulldozed his way through his first term, dominating the political environment and bending the Legislature to his will while engaging in a withering

attack on public employee unions whose demands, he said, were the primary cause of higher taxes and increased spending.

The most recent town hall meetings have been tame affairs — the hecklers and protesters present at a few earlier ones have vanished — and Christie has been able to deliver his message his way and on his terms to receptive and respectful audiences.

Bridgagate, the scandal that has engulfed the administration for four months and remains the subject of two investigations, has been largely ignored both by Christie and those attending his town hall-style meetings.

Matters of substance

Consequently, the governor has regenerated his meat-and-potatoes agenda, imploring listeners to join him in demanding that legislators turn their attention to matters of substance and importance — controlling proper

The growing expense, the court decision, a sense that in the absence of new and damaging revelations the scandal may be losing momentum, and a fear that it will degenerate into partisan political mud-slinging have combined to bleed some of the confidence from support for a continuation of the committee's investigation.

Those troubled by these concerns have a more than acceptable alternative to turn toward — ceding full control of the investigation to the U.S. Attorney and a federal grand jury — both of whom are conducting a parallel probe and are better equipped and more resourceful in uncovering the truth of the scandal than is the Legislature.
