Opinion: A matter of trust and compromise

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THE RECORD

Governor Christie is in a tight spot. No frantic, last-minute dancing at the fiscal margins will produce the revenue necessary to replenish the fund, an amount —depending on whose estimate is accepted —that ranges from a half billion dollars to as much as $2 billion.

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AS NEGOTIATIONS proceed privately to craft a legislative package to rescue the Transportation Trust Fund, it will be crucial for those involved to understand that whatever they recommend will be seen in the context of the anti-tax environment created and sustained by Governor Christie for the last five years and its impact on his possible presidential candidacy.

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Christie does not want to be the governor who presided over the death of the Fund, nor does he have any desire — national ambitions notwithstanding — to be the chief executive who signs a tax increase into law without iron-clad assurances that the money will be irrevocably pledged to creating and maintaining a modern transportation network that he can point to as a signature administration accomplishment.

He may be restricted by the anti-tax environment he's nurtured, but he cannot afford to be imprisoned by it.

It is crucial for the Democratic legislative leadership to understand Christie's position and avoid sending him a take-it-or-leave-it tax increase proposal. They should know by now that the governor's bite is as bad as his bark. Forcing him to veto it would be a serious mistake and give Christie the opportunity to blame Democrats for sacrificing the Trust Fund for crass political advantage.