

## OPINION: EVEN BEFORE BRIDGET KELLY, CHRISTIE'S CAMPAIGN WAS FLOUNDERING

CARL GOLDEN | MAY 5, 2015

The former deputy chief of staff in Christie's office says she couldn't be the only one



*Carl Golden*

That Kelly was a central figure in the scheme is indisputable. It was she, after all, who sent the now infamous "time for some traffic troubles in Fort Lee" email to Wildstein, setting in motion the chain of events that ultimately led to last week's indictments.

She also exchanged gleeful e-mails with Wildstein as the extent of the havoc the lane closures produced became apparent. Her efforts to explain away her words as misunderstood sarcasm fell flat.

While Christie and his allies strive to emphasize that nothing in the findings and indictments announced by the U.S. Attorney implicated him, the scandal will dominate the political environment, impacting Christie's effectiveness as governor as well as his future should he decide to continue to remain active at a national level.

While speculation differed over whether the scandal effectively ended any chance of Christie's viability as a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, the reality is that his campaign -- though unannounced officially -- had achieved little traction in any event.

He reached fourth place in a few polls, but in others had fallen deeply into single digits, sharing fifth, sixth, or seventh place with others whose candidacies had already been written off. The scandal may prove to be the coup de grace, but it's more in the nature of the mercy killing of a campaign that has been struggling badly with very little hope of rising to the point of becoming serious.

Sadly, in a state stained repeatedly by corruption throughout its history, it seems likely it will be again.

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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