

Christie's style in first 100 days: "Not one step back"

By Carl Golden

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History has it that when Nazi Germany launched its invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 and drove to the outskirts of Moscow, the Russian dictator Josef Stalin summoned his generals and issued his orders.

His instructions were simple: "Not one step back."

Gov. Chris Christie's first 100 days in office were like that.

From the moment in January when he lowered his right hand after swearing to uphold the Constitution, Christie charged forward, issuing a blizzard of executive orders, engaging in hand-to-hand combat with public employee unions over salaries and benefits, scrapping ferociously with the New Jersey Education Association, and sending the Legislature a budget more noteworthy than New Jersey's.

full-speed-ahead" individual who stands ready to do battle in pursuit of his agenda.

Nor has he flinched from butting heads with Senate President Steve Sweeney. His decision to replace Supreme Court Associate Justice John Wallace of Gloucester County --- Sweeney's home county --- immediately kicked off an epic struggle between the two, one that has the potential to overshadow even the contentiousness over the budget.

He has succeeded early on in achieving a reputation as someone whose motivation is to wrestle a spendthrift government to the ground, tame an out of control public employee union, demand greater responsiveness from an out of touch bureaucracy, and restore fiscal discipline and lower cost to the taxpayer.

Along the way, he's managed to offend virtually every group or organization which stand to lose substantial financial support if his budget is enacted. Nothing, including areas heretofore deemed politically untouchable, escaped the swath he cut through the budget --- higher education assistance, aid for senior citizens, homestead rebates, school lunch programs, health care for low income families, family planning services, tourism promotion, the State Commission of Investigation and New Jersey Network. And, that's a partial list.

While the Democratic leadership of the Legislature has grouched and grumbled and accused the Governor of favoring the rich at the expense of the middle class by refusing to agree to reinstate the income tax surcharge on incomes exceeding \$400,000, the odds are that the budget which eventually reaches Christie's desk will closely resemble his original proposal. And, if it doesn't, he's vowed to use his line item veto authority to rewrite it to his satisfaction.

Democrats understand all too well that the public discontent which paved the way for Christie's victory last November remains strong and that he has capitalized on it to occupy the high ground in the debate over who can better provide relief to an overburdened taxpaying public. Democrats cannot afford to come out on the losing side of that argument.