

## Christie focus on policy distinguishes him from other GOP candidates, analysts say

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A speech in Camden on his vision for changes in the criminal justice system was Gov. Christie's fifth major policy address this year.

Political analysts say that sets him apart from other Republican candidates in the presidential race.

Rider University political science professor Ben Dworkin does not believe Christie's policy speeches will do much to boost his standing in public opinion polls.

"However, they are important because they cater to a different constituency, an elite constituency of opinion makers and donors, who help propel a candidate in these early stages of a primary season," Dworkin said.

But John Weingart, associate director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, said Christie's policy-centered speeches can be compelling for voters.

"I think there are a fair number of Republican voters who are going to have -- as one major criterion for evaluating the candidates in the primaries -- which one of these is most likely to get in the White House," he said. "And talking about issues is one way to project that image."

Seton Hall political science professor Matthew Hale said talking about specific ideas of what he'd like to do as president does show voters Christie is a viable candidate in a very crowded field.

"The most important thing for Chris Christie right now is to be able to show the voters in New Hampshire that he's got specific ideas of what he wants to do, and he needs to be able have specific points during the debates that are coming up that he can point to," Hale said. "These policy speeches are his way of doing both of those things."

Analysts say Christie has plenty of time before the primaries to increase his poll numbers, which are in the cellar compared with Republican front-runners Jeb Bush and Donald Trump.