

Panelists uncertain of Christie's policies, plans

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A day after Governor-elect Chris Christie defeated Gov. Jon S. Corzine for the gubernatorial seat, the Eagleton Institute of Politics played host to panelists who analyzed the outcome of this year's election and what the results mean for New Jersey.

All four panelists agreed the future of the state is uncertain under the Christie administration. "Christie campaigned on an anti-Corzine [platform]. There was a lot of anything-but-Corzine sentiment out there," said Associated Press State House reporter Angela Delli Santi said. "We don't have a lot of specifics on Chris Christie. We don't know how he's going to tackle some of these fiscal problems. We don't know what his administration is going to look like."

Political columnist for the Star-Ledger Tom Moran said the state of the economy would influence Christie's time in office.

Regardless of Christie's intentions for New Jersey, everything depends on whether the state economy rises or not, he said.

"Christie made a big deal about one of his top priorities where he said he would like to spend more on higher education. On the other hand we're facing an unprecedented difficult time period," Moran said.

Christie's promises to not raise taxes might be compromised if he intends to improve government organizations such as public higher education, he said.

Moran said Gov. Jon S. Corzine was defeated because of his performance in office.

"The general consensus on [Corzine] from people I speak to is he's a well intentioned man, but really a terrible politician ... He kept trying to do the right thing, but he kept stumbling," Moran said.

Gordon MacInnes, a fellow at the Century Foundation, shared similar views with Moran and said Corzine's lack of aggressive political leadership led to his inability to fix problems in New Jersey. As a one-year member of the Corzine administration, MacInnes often witnessed Corzine submit to the legislative leadership of the state.

"I don't think Gov. Corzine understood the political side [to his leadership]. I think he assumed there were a set of rules that you play by ... that are set by the people you deal with," he said. "The governor is the leader ... The governor has got to set the agenda, particularly in perilous times."

In terms of the election, MacInnes believes Corzine created voter apathy by suggesting the Democratic majority of voters would break the tie between him and Christie, and carry him back into office.

Corzine had many incumbent advantages in this election but still managed to lose, Delli Santi said. Christie's victory was referendum on the Obama administration and there was a deep voter discontent that Republicans tapped into.

"[President Barack] Obama came in and raised the stakes of this election, calling Jon Corzine a partner and his friend, and asking people to give the same commitment to Corzine that they gave to him last year, but it didn't work," Delli Santi said.

A major factor contributing to Corzine's loss was the amount of campaign spending, said Bergen County Clerk Kathleen Donovan. The election's playing field was leveled out when the Democrats spent much less money on campaigning.



Jeff Lazaro / Staff Photographer

Following Republican Chris Christie's gubernatorial election win on Tuesday night, Eagleton Institute of Politics panelists say the governor-elect does not have set plans for the future of New Jersey.



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Governor-elect Chris Christie, above, celebrates his 4 percent defeat over Gov. Jon S. Corzine at his Tuesday night election party in Parsippany. Panelists attribute Corzine's loss to a decrease in spending, which leveled the playing field, and his lack of leadership in office.

“New Jersey is not just a Democrat state. If the playing field is even, you’re going to see a greater mix of Republicans and Democrats,” Donovan said.

Students are uncertain of what to expect from Christie and his plans for higher education.

“In spite of his leanings, I have a feeling he’s going to have to come to the center on some things, because he’s working with a democratic legislature in a state that tends to lean democratic,” said Caryn Miller, a School of Arts and Sciences junior.

Miller remains a little concerned for the future considering the new mix of Republican and Democratic interests in New Jersey, but is certain that whatever happens will be for the betterment of the state.

“Under Corzine I know we weren’t going in the right direction anyway because of [the] plenty of budget cuts he was planning,” said Zaid Abuhouran, president of Rutgers Young Americans for Liberty.

Abuhouran, a School of Environmental and Biological Sciences sophomore, knows Christie’s aims to not raise taxes will leave less money for other state organizations, but he believes the Governor-elect will ultimately find a way to improve higher education.