

## Analysts: Kwon vote latest example of partisan enmity

<http://www.politickernj.com/55792/analysts-kwon-vote-latest-example-partisan-enmity>

By Minhaj Hassan | March 23rd, 2012 - 3:50pm

[| More](#)

TRENTON - While Gov. Chris Christie and fellow Republicans said Democrats caved in to special interest demands by denying Phil Kwon a seat on the state Supreme Court, political experts said today the Democrats' vote was the latest maneuver from a playbook they've been following since the beginning of the year that shows the party won't automatically accept the tough-talking governor's wishes.

Montclair State political science and law professor Brigid Harrison said the Democrats have successfully drawn a line in the sand and conveyed a pointed message, as they had with the same-sex marriage vote in February, a bill Christie conditionally vetoed.

"This has really been one of the strongest battle lines Democrats have drawn," Harrison said in a phone interview today. "In the past, Democrats have largely acquiesced to his (Christie's) policy proposals. This time, there's a level of cohesiveness we haven't seen before."

Harrison pointed to last year's compromise by the Democrats on pension and benefits legislation as an example.

Ben Dworkin, a political science professor at Rider University's Rebovich Institute, saw the Kwon hearing as a turning point in growing partisan enmity.

"I think it's an unfortunate result of a process that has only recently become extremely political," he said.

He said past judicial hearings have "almost always avoided the kind of bitterness, partisanship and ideological fights that were associated with Washington, D.C."

Dworkin doesn't believe the vote itself on rejecting Kwon to the state's highest court will produce a lot of political points for Democrats.

"This is still a very inside-Trenton game," he said. "I don't think most of the general public knows who the Supreme Court justices are. No one is going to win or lose an election on this issue."

However, the vote may be one of the threads in the political narrative the Democrats are weaving for upcoming elections as a party not beholden to Christie's wishes, but as one that stands on its own representing middle-class residents.

Dworkin said such polarizing issues as same-sex marriage, minimum wage and the amount of taxes one should pay are not just coming up coincidentally.

"It will certainly help in an election year," he said. "The looming gubernatorial election in 2013 will affect the issues. They will have evidence to prove their worth by doing all these things."

Ruth Mandel of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University said it's hard to predict what kind of nominee Christie will pick in place of Kwon, and whether that person will be more moderate.

However, she said, "memories have a long shelf life in Trenton, on both sides."

It appears Democratic leadership will still be willing to work with Christie on such hot-button issues as taxes and education.

Senate President Stephen Sweeney has introduced a tax credit bill that would accomplish a goal Christie shares - reducing residents' tax burden - but on a different scale and via a different method.

Sen. Teresa Ruiz, (D-29), Newark, has been working on an education reform bill that Christie has mentioned on occasion as being a good start toward his more far-reaching goals.

In a statement Friday, Sweeney said Christie must continue to work with the Legislature, as the Judiciary Committee vote on Thursday indicated, to get things done in the state. The Senate President said Sweeney can't "pack" the highest court with those favorable only to him.

"There are still two open seats. The governor talks often of how 'elections have consequences,'" he said. "For him, the consequence of the people electing a Democratic Legislature concerned with protecting the integrity of our legal system is now clear. The governor must work with us to put together a balanced tandem of candidates for the Court. The Senate will not consider anything less."

Yet Thursday evening in the immediate aftermath of the Kwon rejection, Christie was emphatic that he believed the vote was all about Democrats doing the wishes of one of their traditionally key constituents, organized labor.



**Add New Comment**

[Login](#)

---

Type your comment here.

## Showing 4 comments

Sort by oldest first



**candidpachyderm**

The Kwon candidacy was an example of pure political ineptitude nothing more and nothing less



**Creed Pogue**

Again, which governor was the first not to reappoint a sitting justice?

Who said that they want to change the Court?

Who is saying that someone who made contributions to Republicans, served in Republican administrations and was appointed by a Republican governor to a Republican seat on the Court now shouldn't be counted as a Republican?

Who changed their party registration from GOP to unaffiliated right before being appointed?

Whose primary advocate then takes the opportunity to yet again show their level of maturity by comparing a six hour hearing to a lynching?

The other side commits the egregious sins of saying that the Administration should provide more information and also calls out the nominee for various questionable activities and decisions.

Yeah, the partisanship is rampant on both sides!



**8310024**

There can be no question that Mr. Kwon was qualified to sit on the Supreme Court.

His momma's strange habits concerning all that cash could have been forgiven if his nomination had been handled differently. There was just something so cynical -- as in defying "common sense" -- about the political affiliation deal.

Nobody was fooled by a Republican suddenly morphing into an Independent. Hey -- we are from New Jersey and we get it when someone is trying to play fast and loose with the truth.

The public elected Christie as Governor, not as imperial ruler (there is, after all, a real difference there). Christie's disrespect for the two other co-equal branches of government in our constitutional system is starting to have consequences.

I don't expect Christie to learn his lesson and go quietly into the night. He has blamed everyone else for his own shortcomings and he is going to double down and take no prisoners before this is over.

So, move over Shawn Hannity -- there is another angry white guy who wants your job and the big bucks.



**1Prop**

The worse part is that Kwon can't really be classified as a true Republican. He's a Republican of convenience.

[M Subscribe by email](#) [S RSS](#)

TAGS: [STATE STREET WIRE](#)

---

---