

## INGLE: For Christie, image translates to popularity

**TRENTON** — Chris Christie continues to boggle the minds of people looking for easy answers. The latest Rutgers-Eagleton Poll added fuel. In it, 61 percent of registered voters view the governor favorably, while 28 percent see him unfavorably.

Those are numbers a lot of incumbents would trade anything for, so what's the mystery?

Farther down in the data, the poll shows registered voters don't like the way Christie has handled issues they think are major. One is the economy, on which his approval is 42 percent. The other is taxes, on which only 38 percent approve.

How can that be? It's because of his overall performance and his really high ranking among Republicans (90 percent) and people not affiliated with a party (68 percent).

"Democrats have become less enamored of the governor, as is to be expected during a campaign," according to David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. "But between the increasing support of independents and the fact that many Democrats remain on his side, Christie's favorability and job ratings continue to fly high."

Christie understands a basic fact about the electorate in New Jersey and elsewhere — we love a take-charge guy, even if he doesn't always succeed at what he takes on. We like a leader who says what he thinks, even if we disagree. His performance during superstorm Sandy won him hordes of fans across the nation, but before that he was growing in popularity for standing up to public employee unions and the media.

That's how he was able to oppose same-sex marriage, an issue the majority of New Jerseyans supported, and still have high approval numbers. Jon Corzine would have likely signed into law a same-sex marriage bill had the Legislature sent him one.

Corzine, however, was seen as a guy who didn't seem to have strong feelings about anything.

When Christie ran for governor, he made it clear where he stood on gay marriage. He opposed it and thought voters should change the law if they wanted to.

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