

## Economic issues didn't hurt Christie in election – and won't during a run for the presidency either

Republican Gov. Christie's defeat of Democratic challenger Barbara Buono Tuesday came as no surprise to anyone following poll numbers of the two candidates in the past several months.

But one poll Christie has consistently struggled with has been his performance rating on his handling of the economy and taxes. A Rutgers-Eagleton Poll released late last month had Christie's approval on the economy and jobs at around 42 percent 38 percent on taxes.

David Redlawsk, poll director and political science professor at Rutgers University, said that while voters were not overwhelmingly happy with the job Christie has done in those areas, he proved to still be a more attractive option to the relatively unknown Buono.

In the days leading up to Tuesday's election, Redlawsk said that many voters still did "not really know anything about Buono" and that despite Christie's low ratings on the economy, Buono had "not convinced voters that she's any better."

A separate Rutgers poll conducted in October showed Christie with a lead of 31 percentage points over Buono on issues pertaining to the economy and jobs.

"There's some tendency to say, 'I'd still rather stay with what I know,'" Redlawsk said of voters.

Redlawsk has said that while Christie could have been vulnerable on issues like the economy, Buono did not present a viable alternative. He said it felt as if the Buono campaign "never really got in gear" and was not able to get her message out effectively.

In another Rutgers poll conducted last month, 43 percent of respondents said they had no real impression of Buono at all.

And the debates, Redlawsk said, didn't help either. Ratings for the first one suggested that approximately 550,000 people watched it, well short of anything that would've given Buono the exposure she needed, Redlawsk said.

With Buono in the rearview mirror and his focus potentially set on the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, Christie's approval ratings on the economy and jobs won't necessarily matter going forward, Redlawsk said.

The national electorate will look to his handling of social issues more than economic ones, he says.

"I don't think in the end, his particular approval ratings in New Jersey will be especially relevant," Redlawsk said.

### Andrew George

Andrew George covers the Statehouse from NJBIZ's Trenton bureau. Born and raised in N.J., Andrew has also spent time as a reporter in D.C., Texas and Pa. His email is [andrewg@njbiz.com](mailto:andrewg@njbiz.com) and he is [@AndrGeorge](https://twitter.com/AndrGeorge) on Twitter.

