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Poll: Christie's ambitions were no factor in N.J. vote

By Maddie Hanna, Inquirer Trenton Bureau

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Most New Jerseyans expect that Gov. Christie will run for president, and when it came to his reelection, they didn't care, according to a new poll.

While 59 percent of respondents in a Rutgers-Eagleton poll conducted before last week's election said they thought Christie would run for president in 2016, not many were swayed at the ballot box by that possibility. Eight percent said the Republican governor's presidential prospects made them more likely to vote for him, while 13 percent said they were less likely to vote for him as a result.

"Here is the most direct evidence yet that Sen. Barbara Buono's attack on Christie's apparent presidential ambitions was misguided," said David Redlawsk, director of the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll and a professor of political science at Rutgers University.

Buono, the Democratic state senator from Middlesex County who lost to Christie by 22 percentage points, made the case during her campaign that Christie was more focused on running for president than governing New Jersey.

Christie has not announced plans to run for president in 2016, but has not denied the speculation. On Sunday morning, he made the rounds on television talk shows, touting his landslide victory as a model for the Republican Party nationwide.

Though 28 percent of Buono voters said a possible run by Christie made them less likely to support him, "most voters didn't see that as a reason to oppose him," Redlawsk said - even as they said they expected Christie would resign before the end of his second term.

The statewide poll of 804 registered voters, conducted from Oct. 28 to Nov. 2, found that one-third of Republicans and independents surveyed expected Christie would finish his term, while 28 percent of Democrats said he would finish it.

The poll also found that voters, while predicting a Christie-for-president campaign, were less sure their governor and his demeanor would be embraced beyond New Jersey.

A little more than half of Republican poll respondents said Christie's "tough talk" - as the poll described the governor's style - would go over well nationally, with one-third disagreeing. Independents were split with 40 percent on each side, and Democrats were the most negative: 62 percent said the country would not accept Christie's approach.

In a gender gap, women were five points less likely to say Christie's style helps him govern and 10 points less likely to say it would serve him well on the national stage, according to the poll.

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