



Right Turn

Jennifer Rubin's take from a conservative perspective

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Christie travails

BY JENNIFER RUBIN March 12 at 11:00 am



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On the face of it, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie has some pretty nasty poll numbers right now. [Reuters reports](#): “A Fairleigh Dickinson University survey showed Christie’s job approval rating tumbling 20 points, with 41 percent of registered state voters approving of his job performance, compared with 61 percent after his re-election in November. His disapproval rating stands at 44 percent, the first time it has ticked higher than his approval rating, the poll said.” And if that weren’t enough: “A Rutgers-Eagleton poll found Christie’s ‘trustworthiness’ at an all-time low of 23 percent among registered voters, down 20 points from October.”

But if you look deeper, it appears that the erosion is among Democrats who have now returned to viewing him through a partisan lens. In the [Fairleigh Dickinson poll](#) 47 percent of independents and 66 percent of Republicans (down from 66 and 84, respectively) still approve of his performance. In the [Rutgers-Eagleton poll](#), “Fewer than 10 percent of Democrats say trustworthy describes Christie very well, while 52 percent of Republicans are still in this camp. While partisan perceptions have stayed fairly steady, independents are even less trusting than they were in January: just 20 percent say trustworthy fits Christie very well, down 10 points in the last five weeks and 24 points lower than in October.” And in some reassuring news for the Christie camp,



New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie speaks at the CPAC Conference at National Harbor in Maryland. (Mark Wilson/Getty Images)

“While just over half of all voters still see Christie as a strong leader, the numbers have taken a slight dip among Democrats (five points to 35 percent) and independents (six points to 54 percent). Eight in 10 Republicans, however, continue to say that the trait describes their governor very well.”

And then there is the [Wall Street Journal/NBC poll](#) showing 17 percent of voters nationally view him very or somewhat positively, while 45 percent view him somewhat or very negatively.

What does this all mean? Christie still retains his standing with in-state Republicans, but Republicans out of state may not be so forgiving. While they may believe he is telling the truth about the bridge incident, they may not like the scandal hanging over his head — or may fear there is more out there. Especially among donors, uncertainty dampens support. Count a great number of the bigger donors as “queasy” for now about Christie’s presidential prospects. Moreover, one of Christie’s main selling points was bipartisan appeal and electability. If he no longer has that advantage he’ll need other strong selling points to win over skeptical Republicans.

The good news for Christie is that his ratings may stabilize by year’s end, around the time he’ll need to make a decision on 2016. (If he’s not gotten his sea legs back, it stands to reason he might forgo a race, work on his state legacy and avoid a potential presidential campaign loss that his opponents would categorize as a career-ender.) The plethora of candidates and uncertainty about many factors means donors, supporters and staffers will likely hang back waiting for a decision. They’ll want to see if he bounces back overall and especially with Republicans (who might consider him gritty in the face of Democratic overreach and media bashing). But they won’t wait forever. The next six to nine months are critical for Christie.

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