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TODAY'S POLL

- Republican sweep attributed to turnout in Northampton County; New Jersey GOP says Chris Christie will give them voice

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Chris Christie victory expected to create bigger role for northwest New Jersey Republicans

By Bill Wichert
November 04, 2009, 4:00PM



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Chris Christie celebrates winning the election with a fist pump.

On Tuesday morning, Republicans in Warren and Hunterdon counties were in the shadow of a Democrat-controlled state Legislature and its Democratic governor.

Today, the GOP is ready to occupy a bigger seat at the table presided over by Republican Gov.-elect Chris Christie.

"We finally have an administration that's going to be willing to listen to some of the issues important to us in the northwest," Warren County GOP Chairman Doug Steinhardt said today. "At least now we know we have an audience and an advocate."

Christie and his running mate, Lt. Gov.-elect Kim Guadagno, swept past Democratic Gov. Jon Corzine in Tuesday's election. The victory is a promising sign for local Republicans, who now believe they

will have louder voice in Trenton.

After first joining the State Assembly under Democratic Gov. James McGreevey in January 2002, state Sen.-elect Michael Doherty, R-Warren/Hunterdon, said Christie's election gives more relevance to Republican ideas and increases the GOP's role in shaping legislation.

Republicans, however, are still cognizant of the mistakes made in past GOP administrations, such as increasing debt and lowering the retirement age for public employees, Doherty said.

"There is a resolve among my colleagues that we're not going to let that happen again," Doherty said.

Republican legislators will have greater access to the governor's office, but they must still face a Democrat-controlled Legislature. Christie will have to negotiate with Democrats as he navigates through the state's economic troubles, according to Ingrid Reed, a policy analyst with the **Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University**.

"He'll really see the minority as his ally," Reed said.

Check Thursday for the full story.

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