

Chris Christie, New Jersey Voters Have Different Ideas About Governor's Political Future: Poll

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By Edith Honan

NEW YORK, Sept 5 (Reuters) - Chris Christie, the hard-charging, high-profile governor of New Jersey, has been touted as a rising star in the Republican Party, even giving the keynote speech at last week's GOP convention in Tampa. But voters back home aren't all that sure they want to give him a second term.

Asked if they are ready to re-elect Christie, 47 percent of voters said they were, but 46 percent said it is time for someone new, according to a Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

Still, just under half of registered voters say the state is going in the right direction.

Christie took office in 2010 and will face again voters in 2013.

Known for his brash, confrontational style, Christie has spent the summer promoting what he calls the "New Jersey Comeback" and pushing for a tax cut that the Democratic-led legislature conditionally approved at the close of the last budget year.

He has also boasted that his leadership has made the state a model of bipartisan cooperation, despite his frequent and colorful spats with the Democratic-led legislature.

But 63 percent of voters said Christie's "comeback" rhetoric is overstated, and fewer than a third of voters agreed that a rebound is under way.

"Overall, the numbers are a mixed bag for Governor Christie," said David Redlawsk, director of the poll and professor of political science at Rutgers University. "While the number ready to re-elect him is less than a majority, it's not particularly weak at this point."

In June, the Rutgers-Eagleton poll found half of state voters had a favorable view of Christie, up 4 percentage points from three months earlier. The June poll did not ask voters directly about his re-election prospects.

Christie, a popular surrogate for Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney, got mixed reviews following his Aug. 28 convention speech: He was criticized for dwelling on his own story before offering praise for Romney.

Christie is often named as a possible Republican candidate in 2016 if Romney fails to defeat President Barack Obama.

The survey of 916 registered voters was taken in late August - before Christie's convention address - and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points. (Editing by Ciro Scotti; Desking by Eric Beech)