

Christie's approval continues to soar, but with a few limits

(CNN) - 73%. 72%. 67%. 77%.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie's approval and favorability ratings since his handling of Superstorm Sandy in late October have been the stuff every politician dreams of.

His overall approval rating continues to soar at 73%, a new poll out Friday showed. But [the Rutgers-Eagleton Poll](#) also shows he has work to do in the areas of the economy, jobs and taxes, and it showed some early numbers on how this year's gubernatorial race might shape up.

The Republican's highest marks are for his handling of the Sandy recovery, where 86% of registered voters approve of his job and 11% disapprove. That issue, however, ranks third - by a distance - on New Jersey voters' list of priorities.

More than six in 10 believe that the economy, jobs and taxes are more important than storm recovery now, several months after the storm.

Forty-five percent approved of his handling of the economy and jobs, while 46% disapproved, the poll showed. That issue was the most important to 35% of registered voters.

High taxes came in second in importance - 31% - and just over half - 52% - said they disapproved of his handling of the issue. Only 40% approved.

A majority of voters in both political parties, as well as independents, approved of Christie. His approval rating among Republicans stood at 88%; among independents, 71%; and among Democrats, 59%.

He is seeking re-election this year, and one Democrat, state Sen. Barbara Buono, has announced her interest in seeking the Democratic nomination to challenge him. The polling period closed as she announced her intention to run, and it did not put the two in a hypothetical head-to-head race.

Christie's overall approval rating among registered voters was 70% to Buono's 20%, though he also recorded a higher unfavorable rating: 20% to her 13%. Sixty-seven percent of registered voters said they did not have an opinion or did not know how they felt about Buono.

The governor has suggested his currently high approval ratings should not set a bar to judge him against in the elections later this year.

"Listen, no one's unbeatable, OK. And so, the idea that somehow because you are very popular in February means you are going to be very popular in November - could be, but could not be. There will be a lot of things that will happen in between now and then that will determine that," he told reporters Wednesday. He also faces the reality of being a Republican in a state that has more Democratic voters than GOP voters.

The Rutgers-Eagleton Poll was conducted between January 30 and February 3 and included 698 registered voters reached by phone. It had a sampling error of plus or minus 3.7 points.

– CNN Political Editor Paul Steinhauser contributed to this report