



# N.J. Republican primary battle heating up

Front-runner Christopher J. Christie airs his first ad that acknowledges Steve Lonegan, by criticizing his record.

By Cynthia Burton  
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With less than six weeks to go in New Jersey's Republican gubernatorial primary campaign, front-runner Christopher J. Christie yesterday finally acknowledged his closest competitor with a negative radio ad, a sign the race is tightening.

Analysts said Christie had been unable to marginalize Steve Lonegan by ignoring him, and now must take steps to keep him in second place.

Although a Quinnipiac University poll on Wednesday showed Christie

leading Lonegan by 46 percent to 37 percent, analysts say the race is volatile.

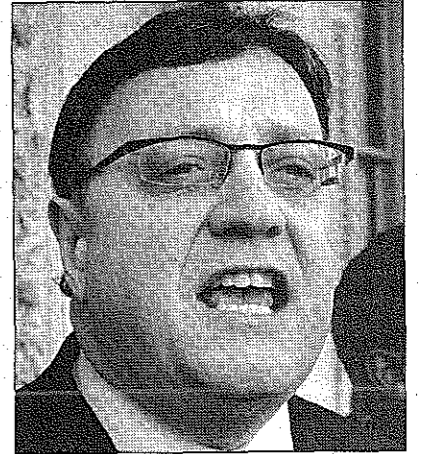
"There is not a lot of clarity, and it is not out of the realm of possibilities that Lonegan could win, because this is New Jersey and he's more conservative than Christie," said Sharon Schulman, director of Richard Stockton College's Hughes Center. "So, now that there is no clear winner, neither one of them can just run against the governor. They have to run against each other."

In Christie's ad, male and female

narrators using shame-on-you tones describe Lonegan's record of losing elections and characterize his policies as expensive to taxpayers.

They chide him, saying, "Steve Lonegan, now desperate, you attack Chris Christie with false, negative ads," according to the spot. Then the crusader music cuts in, and the ad touts Christie's record as a federal prosecutor who won guilty pleas or convictions from 130 elected and appointed officials.

Christie's campaign said it ran the ad because it was tired of Lonegan's radio and mail advertising mischaracterizing Christie's views. See **ELECTION** on B6



Associated Press

Unable to marginalize his opponent by ignoring him, Christopher J. Christie, left, has set his sights on Steve Lonegan, right, with a negative radio ad.

## Election

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on abortion and taxation.

"These things have been misrepresented over the past months, and this ad is a chance to set the record straight," said Christie's campaign manager, Bill Stepien. "Now's the time to start drawing contrasts."

Christie is against abortion,

with exceptions for rape and incest. Lonegan does not make those exceptions, which he says makes him more pro-life than Christie.

Lonegan, a former mayor of Bogota, responded to Christie's attack by cutting two new radio ads. They play off Christie's attack and present Lonegan as the June 2 primary's real conservative.

Conservative Republicans are the primary's battle-

ground because historically they have voted in greater numbers than moderate Republicans. That is why both candidates are talking about abortion and tax cuts.

Lonegan said the ad fight "defines the difference between me and Chris Christie. He supports the progressive income-tax redistribution schemes of Barack Obama and Jon Corzine, including the phoney [property] tax rebates."

Although the Christie ad livens up the race, it has pitfalls for the front-runner.

"It gives credence to Lonegan's candidacy," said political scientist Brigid Harrison of Montclair State University. "In some ways, it indicates the race didn't shape up the way [Christie] thought it would."

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